Harry Colt's Sand-Save at Royal Ottawa

Or, How the Golf Course Got Its Bunkers

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Introduction

In 2013, *Links Magazine* declared Harry Shapland Colt (1869 – 1951) to have been "the greatest architect of all time."

Figure 1 Harry S. Colt, circa 1889-90.

Born Henry Shapland Colt in 1869 in Highgate, a suburban area of north London (England), Harry Colt started to play golf as a boy just before he was sent off to boarding school in Bath. At eighteen years of age, he entered Clare College, Cambridge, where he studied law and became Captain of the Cambridge University Golf Team.

Colt established a promising career in law, but he also kept up his golf. He spent holidays in Scotland, where he became a member of the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews. He was a scratch golfer who made the cut in the 1891 Open Championship and won the competition for the Queen Victoria Jubilee Vase at St Andrews in 1891 and 1893. The next year he married Charlotte Laura Dewar (of the famous whiskey family) and in 1895 he gave up his career in law to become secretary of the Rye Golf Club, whose golf course on the south coast of England he redesigned (a photograph of play from one of its bunkers constitutes the cover of this essay). Colt was appointed Secretary of the Sunningdale Golf Club in 1901 and redesigned its golf course, too. While serving in this post, he developed his broader career as a golf course architect but resigned from Sunningdale in 1913 to concentrate entirely on his career as golf course architect.

Working with horse-drawn machinery, entirely without modern earth-moving equipment, he laid down what have become the fundamental principles of golf course creation.

Between the 1890s and the 1930s, Colt designed, co-designed, or re-designed over 300 golf courses in sixteen countries. Among the most famous are the following: Muirfield in Scotland; Royal Lytham & St. Anne's, Royal Liverpool, Sunningdale, and Wentworth in England; Royal Porthcawl in Wales; Royal

Portrush and Royal County Down in Northern Ireland; Pine Valley in the United States; Le Touquet in France; the Toronto Golf Club and the Hamilton Golf and Country Club in Canada.

Colt also redesigned the golf course of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club – a fact unknown to golf historians, and unacknowledged by the Club itself.

Colt arrived on the grounds of the Ottawa Golf Club on May 12th, 1913, and two days later submitted a comprehensive – and controversial – plan for redesigning the golf course

The essay that follows tells the story of Harry Colt's work at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club.

Beginning with Bendelow

When Harry Colt arrived at the Ottawa Golf Club in May of 1913, there was already an 18-hole golf course in play.

In 1902, the Ottawa Golf Club had purchased 113 acres along the north side of Aylmer Road from "M.H. McVeity, of Bank Street." McVeity was a grocer who had opened a store at the corner of Bank Street and Gilmour Street in 1898 (*Canadian Grocer*, July-December, 1898). This property was supplemented by a purchase of several more acres of land for the clubhouse (*Ottawa Journal*, 14 October 1902, p. 10). All this land had until recently been owned by Fred Moore, a member of a family of timber merchants whose patriarch had arrived with Philemon Wright in the early 1800s. Moore had purchased the land from the family of Philemon's grandson Edward V. Wright, who had been granted it as a subdivision of Philemon's son Ruggle's 1,500-acre farm, which ran for a mile along Aylmer Road down to the farm of William Allen at the corner of Aylmer Road and Allen Road, which is now part of the Champlain Golf Course (Anson A. Gard, *Pioneers of the Upper Ottawa* [Ottawa: Emerson Press, 1906], p. 9).

The Ottawa Golf Club anticipated that it would move to its Aylmer Road site upon completion of "the new club house … in the summer or early in the fall" of 1903 (*Ottawa Citizen*, 30 March 1903, p. 6). In fact, the official opening of the new clubhouse did not occur until 17 May 1904, an occasion marked by the taking of a photograph of club members in front of the building and on its balconies.

Figure 2 Opening day of the Ottawa Golf Club, 17 May 1904.

Even after the opening of its new clubhouse on Aylmer Road, however, the Ottawa Golf Club continued to play golf on its old course, conducting "A match for beginners … at the Chelsea golf links" as late as June of 1904 (*Ottawa Citizen*, 21 June 1904, p. 3).

By this point, however, the new course on Aylmer Road was in play. It had been laid out a year before by Thomas ("Tom") Bendelow (1868 – 1936). Claiming by 1903 to have "laid out some of the finest links in America, in all some four hundred," Bendelow would lay out over 600 golf courses before his career ended, and he would be nicknamed "The Johnny Appleseed of American Golf" (30 May 1903, p. 9).

Bendelow's architectural goal in the late 1890s was to design simple courses: they were to be easy to maintain, and they were to promote participation in the new game and to develop the skills of new players. Generally, they were not designed to challenge expert players.

Figure 3 Thomas Bendelow, early 1900s.

But when he was invited to lay out a championship course for the Apawamis Club in 1899, and when the next year the touring British superstar Harry Vardon proclaimed the new Bendelow course one of the three best golf courses in the United States, Bendelow was hired by the Spalding Company as its Director of Golf Course Development, and his architectural career took off.

Although most of his golf courses before World War I were not strategically sophisticated, "When given good sites and adequate resources with which to work, he could produce a very challenging layout, equal to the best work of the day" (Stuart Bendelow, *Thomas "Tom" Bendelow: The Johnny Appleseed of American Golf* [Savannah, Georgia: Williams & Company, 2006).

Such was the case in Ottawa: Bendelow told the *Ottawa Journal* that "The natural features of these links … were the finest he had ever seen" (30 May 1903, p. 9).

Bendelow, in fact, used only natural hazards in his Ottawa layout. He created not a single artificial sand bunker. And Ottawa Golf Club members could not have been happier about this fact.

Bendelow's Bunkers

Bendelow staked out the 18-hole golf course, but he staked out no bunkers.

Instead, in laying out his golf holes in straight lines (as was the practice in the late 1890s and early 1900s), he directed them wherever possible across natural hazards so that golfers would have to carry the ball (that is, hit the ball in the air) across these hazards to avoid loss of strokes. An early-twentieth-century photograph by noted Ottawa photographer William James Topley (1845-1930) shows a tee box on the Bendelow course that requires the drive to carry a ravine with a creek at the bottom of it.

Figure 4 William James Topley, photograph of the Ottawa Golf Club's golf course (no date), Library and Archives Canada, Box no. 00596A.

At the time, golf courses were constructed to test scratch golfers who could carry the ball over such hazards easily enough; there was little sympathy for – or practical accommodation made for – golfers with a tendency to top their shots or otherwise "foozle" them.

Bendelow's greens were typical of the time: flat and square (with sides of from twenty to thirty feet).

Figure 5 An example of Bendelow's square greens at the Ottawa Golf Club. William James Topley, photograph of the Ottawa Golf Club's golf course (no date), Library and Archives Canada, Box no. 00596A.

Bendelow did not remain in Ottawa to supervise construction of the golf course.

Figure 6 John Henry (Jack) Oke (1880-1950). Ottawa Journal, 10 September 1904, p. 15.

Instead, the Ottawa Golf Club's new golf professional, John Oke, took charge of course construction upon his arrival in the early spring of 1904.

Oke was fresh off an apprenticeship under five-time Open Championship winner J.H. Taylor and a 29th-place finish in the 1903 Open Championship himself when he came to Ottawa at the end of March in 1904, and his first job in his first appointment as head pro was to oversee construction work: "The draining, clearing and improvement of a full 18-hole course … was … put through"; "A full course of eighteen holes has been laid out and the ground is in perfect order,

much of it having been done under the supervision of Mr. John Oke, the club professional" (*Ottawa Journal*, 10 September 1904, p. 15).

In no time, it seemed, playing conditions were astonishing: "the links are in splendid shape, far better than was some months ago thought possible they could be this year, and better than were the old Chelsea links at their best" (*Ottawa Journal*, 19 July 1904, p. 2). It was apparently all due to Oke's "ability as to arranging links" (*Ottawa Journal*, 10 September 1904, p. 15).

Note the description of the "hazards" that Bendelow and Oke "arranged" on the golf course: "The ground at present is a fine rolling one, the hazards are sand-bunkers, a small brook travels through the whole course, and there are high bluffs and deep hollows" (*Ottawa Journal*, 10 September 1904, p. 15).

It is important to recognize that the "sand-bunkers" on the Bendelow course were not artificially created; rather, they were areas where sand had been naturally exposed over the years by wind, water, rabbits, and grazing animals – such as the sheep that the Club invited farmers to graze on the links for free (*Ottawa Citizen*, 3 May 1904, p. 1).

The kind of "sand bunker" that Bendelow integrated into the golf course can be seen on the sixth hole. On this short par-3 hole, golfers were required to carry a huge sand pit which stretched from the tee to the green and from side to side of what would otherwise have been fairway (it is fairway today).

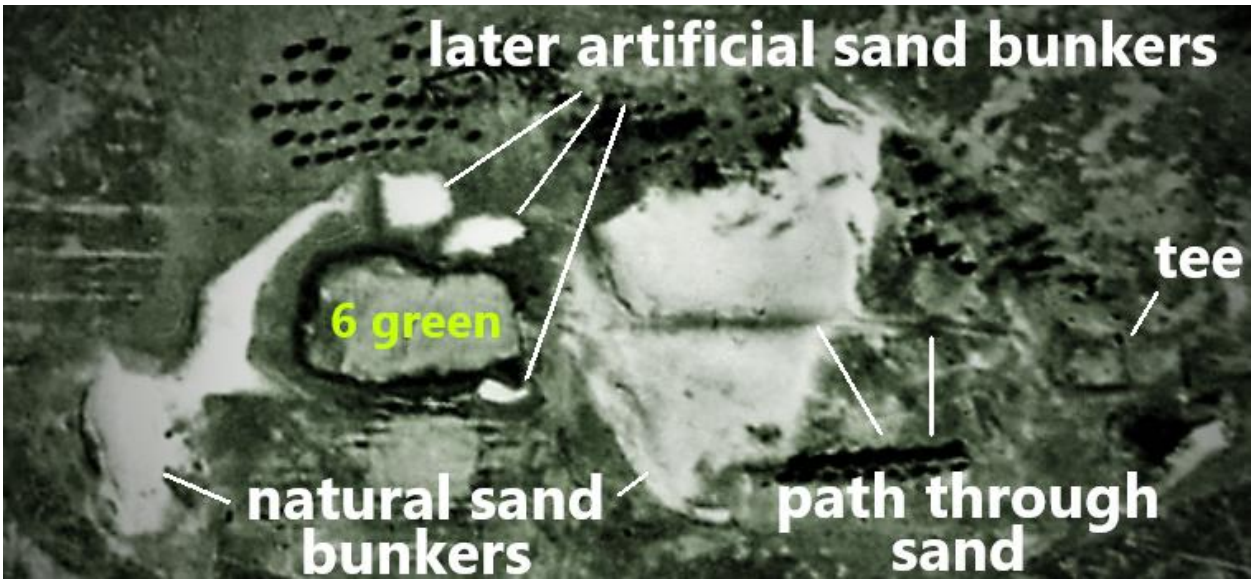

Figure 7 Royal Ottawa 6th hole in detail from National Air Phot Library photograph dated 5 April 1933.

Golfers followed a path through the centre of the sand pit to reach the green. Beyond the green was another natural sand pit that marked the boundary between the fourth fairway and the sixth green.

In the early days, other exposed sandy areas on the golf course might or might not be regarded as constituting an official sand bunker as defined by the rules of golf. On the one hand, the official status of a sandy area depended on how large the area of exposed sand was, and, on the other hand, it depended on who was the ultimate judge of the matter.

The ambiguous status of certain sandy areas of the golf course is demonstrated by a newspaper writer's references to encounters with these areas by the two golfers involved in the final match of the Canadian amateur golf championship of 1906 staged by the Ottawa Golf Club.

Figure 8 George S. Lyon, c. 1914.

The match was between the George S. Lyon and T.B. Reith. Lyon had won the Canadian amateur championship many times, and he had also won the Olympic golf medal for golf at St. Louis in 1904. Reith was an accomplished golfer from Beaconsfield who would play dozens of matches against Lyon in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Reith finished second to Lyon in the 1906 amateur championship, and one week later he also finished second in the Canadian Open.

The description of play on the fifth and sixth holes shows how variously the sandy areas of the golf course were described and defined in the early years of the twentieth century:

Figure 9 Canadian Golfer*, vol 6 no 3 (July 1920), p.191.*

*Reith sliced his next drive [on the fifth hole] into sand to right but made recovery dead on the flag…. Lyon's tee shot was long but a slight pull. His second was a good iron but went a few yards over the green onto a patch of sand, which Reith declared was not a bunker, but which the umpire ruled was one. Lyon missed his third out of the sand …. The 6th hole is 170 yards over the sand basin. Both used mid irons. Reith got to the edge of the bunker at the back of the green to the left. Lyon got under his tee shot and dropped a high one 30 yards short …. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 2 July 1906, p. 2)*

"Sand," "patch of sand," "bunker," "sand basin": not all sand areas were bunkers, and not all bunkers were made of sand.

The word "bunker" was used vaguely to cover all sorts of depressions, hollows, and gullies. The bottom of these "bunkers" might comprise sand or rough grass. In fact, in the newspaper description of the new nine-hole course at Rivermead in 1911, even the

ravine with a creek at the bottom of it that ran across the fifth fairway was described as a "natural 'bunker'" (*Ottawa Journal*, 3 June 1911, p. 2).

At that time, the term "bunker" had both a "loose" and a "strict" meaning. Note how the word "bunker" was defined in 1895 in the glossary of *Spalding's Official Golf Guide*: "*Bunker* – Generally any rough, hazardous ground – more strictly, a sand pit" (vol 3 no 36a [May 1895], p. 40). And so the terms "bunker" and "hazard" could be used interchangeably:

> *A "hazard" shall be any bunker of whatever nature – water, sand, loose earth, mole hills, paths, roads or railways, whins, bushes, rushes, rabbit scrapes, fences, ditches, or anything which is not the ordinary green of the course, except sand blown onto the grass by wind, or sprinkled on grass for the preservation of the links, or snow or ice, or bare patches on the course. (*Spalding's Official Golf Guide*, vol 3 no 36a [May 1895], p. 35)*

Ottawa Golf Club members were proud that the hazards on their golf course were entirely "natural" – a fact that was noted in newspaper accounts of the golf course.

In April of 1905, as the club prepared for the second year of play on its new Aylmer links, the *Ottawa Journal* reported that "outside golfers who have visited the Ottawa club's links are unanimous in declaring them the finest **natural** links in Canada" (15 April 1905, p. 3, emphasis added).

Similarly, founding member and past-president Lieutenant-Colonel D.T. Irwin wrote in 1909 that "The present links have proved themselves to be singularly well adapted for golfing purposes. The soil is sandy and dries rapidly after rain, and the links are traversed by a brook, running for a portion of its course between precipitous banks, which latter form several admirable **natural** hazards" (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 December 1909, p. 17, emphasis added).

When the widely respected English golf writer Henry Leach visited the course in 1912, he also observed that "there are ravines and gullies, and the land is strongly undulating everywhere. The bunkers and other hazards are natural, and indeed in almost every respect the course is natural and excellent" (*Ottawa Journal*, 8 March 1913, p. 13)

The Ottawa Golf Club, however, was not just proud of its natural hazards; it was intransigently averse to the construction of artificial ones.

George Sargent, the golf professional who succeeded Oke in 1906, observed that during his two years at the Club, the idea of installing artificial sand bunkers was anathema to the members: “every time such a thing as putting in a few bunkers has been suggested, it is always met with more or less hostility” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1909, p. 6).

Sargent further noted that “One objection always offered is that the scenery would be absolutely ruined” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1909, p. 6). This objection may seem odd to a twenty-first-century golfer, for well-done bunkers generally enhance the aesthetic impression made by golf courses.

So what was it about artificial bunkers that the members objected to?

Banning Bad Bunkers

Members loathed the ugly artificial cross-bunkers of the Dunn school, as seen in photographs below.

Figure 10 Cross-bunkers laid out by Willie Dunn, Jr., in 1893 at the Golf Club of Lakewood, New Jersey.

Figure 11 On the left can be seen two cross-bunkers that Dunn laid out in 1895 on the Westbrook Golf Course, New York.

Figure 12 A cross-bunker laid out by Willie Dunn's nephew John Duncan Dunn and his collaborator U.S. Amateur Golf Champion Walter J. Travis at the Flushing Golf Club in New York in 1901.

Walter J. Travis helped to lay out the bunker seen immediately above, and then promptly disavowed it.

Figure 13 Walter J. Travis, Spalding's Official Golf Guide 1899*, p. 56.*

In fact, in language that members of the Ottawa Golf Club would later echo, he railed against "the hazards of an artificial character" in "the regular stereotyped patterns" that "tend largely to disfigure so many of our courses":

*Usually, they are represented by huge embankments thrown up transversely the full width of the course, resembling rifle-pits, of uniform height throughout – hideous excrescences on the fair face of Nature. There is a line of these fortifications confronting you from nearly every tee, ranging in distance from 80 to 130 yards, and another line for the second shot, and so on, with little or no diversification throughout the round. (*Practical Golf *[New York: Harper and Brothers, 1901], pp. 184-85)*

The school of "strategic architecture" that Travis helped to found would allow designers to do away with "the putting in of bunkers across the entire width of the course": "Instead of this, I should put in one, irregularly outlined, of about one-third the width across, leaving clear spaces on either side for the shorter player who cannot comfortably carry it" (Travis, pp. 187-89).

Aesthetically sensitive architecture would then become possible: "Instead of the array of steep cops with narrow ditches which disfigure so many courses, aim rather to make the cops more semicircular in shape" (Travis, p. 157). And "vary these artificial creations at each hole"; "make them more picturesque and in keeping with their surroundings" (Travis, p. 185).

Travis's campaign had not succeeded in Canada by 1906, mind you, for the country's premier golf-course architect, George Cumming (of the Toronto Golf Club), was at that time still laying out precisely these sorts of bunkers on the golf courses he was designing. In *A Century of Greenkeeping* (Michigan: Ann Arbor Press, 2001), Gordon Witteveen presents an account by early Canadian greenkeeper Fred Hawkins of George Cumming in the very process of laying out bunkers on a new course in 1906: "What bunkers were put in were across the fairway, pits of about one foot deep, eight feet wide and twenty-five feet long, with the soil thrown to the back about two feet high" (pp 3-4).

These were precisely the bunkers that Travis repudiated in 1901 and that the members of the Ottawa Golf Club loathed as unaesthetic monstrosities. In 1906 and 1907, whenever George Sargent raised the subject of bunkering the course artificially, they shut him down.

In England, Harry Colt voiced the same concerns as Travis and the Ottawa Golf Club members: "how often do we see horrible symmetrical-looking pits, with faces smoothed-out to the same angle, and the pleasant surroundings spoilt thereby!"; "How often do we see a delightful landscape spoilt by the creation of a number of symmetrical pots, or banks, or humps, made apparently at so much a dozen!" ("The Construction of New Courses," p. 4, and "Golf Architecture," p. 85, in Martin H.F. Sutton's *The Book of the Links: A Symposium on Golf* [London: W.H. Smith & Son, 1912]).

And Colt also saw solutions similar to those of Travis: "The shape and nature of bunkers can be varied with immense advantage" ("Golf Architecture," p. 85); "For bunkering work it is impossible to have better materials than … sandy hummocks, as, if the faces are just torn out, we obtain perfectly natural-looking hazards, thoroughly in keeping with the surroundings of the links" ("The Construction of New Courses," p. 4).

Yet Colt thought through the question of natural-looking artificial bunkers much more thoroughly:

> *If we have to make bunkers – and no doubt they will be necessary – we can in great measure conceal their artificiality, and in any event we need not make them of a certain stereotyped pattern. Some can be sunk without banks; some can have rough banks added to them; some can be sand and some rough grass; some can be in the nature of rough, irregular, wide grass ditches, and so on. If they are sunk. Then a little treatment of the ground prior to their commencement will be a help in our attempt to remove the stain of artificiality. The ground can be gradually sloped down to the proposed level of the bottom of the hazard. A small bunker with a draw into it is often*

> *more serviceable than a large sandy waste. But wherever possible let us take advantage of a rise in the ground for a bank or of a hollow for a pot. Nature will often provide us with a small feature which will work in successfully with the scheme for a good hole. ("Golf Architecture," pp. 85-86)*

Yet for all the debate about bunkering that was being conducted by a new generation of golf architects, the good news of alternatives to the Dunn family's bunkers had not reached Ottawa by 1909.

Good News of Better Bunkers

Figure 14 George Sargent circa 1913.

It was not Travis or Colt, however, who brought members of the Ottawa Golf Club news of a new style of artificial bunkers, but rather their old head pro George Sargent.

Sargent wrote an article about the golf course of the Ottawa Golf Club in August of 1909 at the request of the *Ottawa Citizen*:

George Sargent, open golf champion of the United States, and the leading exponent of this most scientific game, has written at the request of the Citizen the following article, which will doubtless be interesting as well as instructive to the golfers of the Capital. (11 August 1909, p. 6).

As the winner of the U.S. Open that summer, Sargent was regarded as an authority on modern golf. The *Citizen* describes the modern game as "scientific," and Sargent's article makes clear that he desires to instruct the members of the Ottawa Golf Club – the only "golfers of the Capital" in 1909 – about the respect in which its golf course is scientifically deficient.

Having been on the Ottawa course on Monday, August 9th, to play an exhibition match against the best ball of the club's head pro Edgar Charles Burrows and its top amateur Clement Edward Gresham Leveson-Gower (comptroller of the vice-regal household of Earl Grey, the Governor General, and the 1907 club champion), Sargent was familiar with existing conditions (*Ottawa Citizen*, 10 August 1909, p. 8).

Although Sargent confesses that he does not think that the golf course is being properly maintained – "As regards the general upkeep of the links I hesitate to speak, but there is lots of room for improvement" – he has other fish to fry: his intention is to speak of the need for "scientific" bunkering to bring the course up to date.

The appearance of Sargent's essay in an Ottawa newspaper was not a matter of happenstance.

Figure 15 Portrait of H.S. Southam by F.H. Varley, 1936.

Sargent had come to Ottawa "On the invitation of a number of members of the Ottawa Golf Club" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1909, p. 6). One might suspect that the Club members who extended this invitation included the publishers of the *Ottawa Citizen* at this time, brothers Harry Stevenson Southam and Wilson Mills Southam and that they arranged for Sargent to write the article in question.

They were both good golfers and active Club members.

Harry played to a handicap of 4 and Wilson played to a handicap of 7 (Wilson would win the Royal Ottawa Golf Club's Perley Cup in 1911). And they were Club stalwarts, playing regularly in intramural competitions as well as representing the Club in matches against other golf clubs from Perth to Montreal.

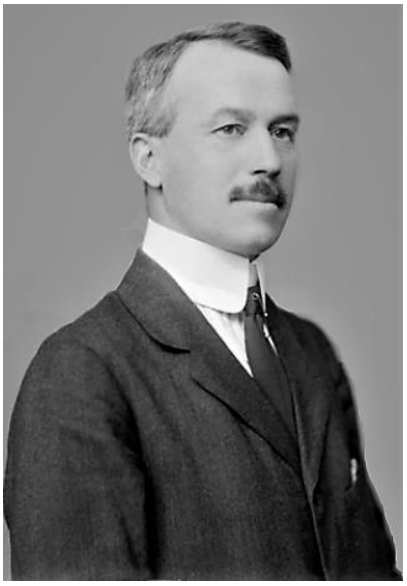

Figure 16 Wilson Mills Southam circa 1911.

I believe that Harry and Wilson Southam were among those members agitating for the introduction of artificial bunkers to the Ottawa golf course and that they were tired of being overruled by members afraid that the natural beauty of the course would be ruined by them.

I expect that they were not only part of the large gallery watching the exhibition match on August 9th ("Officers of the club hope that all members who can possibly attend will be on hand for the occasion"), but that they also afterwards spoke about the golf course to their old head pro Sargent, whom they knew to be sympathetic to their desire for more bunkers on the course, and that during the course of this conversation they solicited his letter advising the construction of scientific bunkers (*Ottawa Citizen*, 9 August 1909, p. 9).

I take Sargent's article cited below to be a summary of what their old head pro told the Southam brothers in person:

> *I have played on a good many different courses, both in the old country and in the United States, but nowhere have I seen a more suitable place for really good links than you have at Ottawa. The natural undulating state of the ground is about as perfect as could be desired, and there are also a good many fine natural hazards across the course; that is, the hazards are nearly all situated so that you have to carry over them. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1909, p. 6)*

Sargent's point was that since Bendelow had routed his holes perpendicularly to natural ravines, creeks, sand pits, and so on, as was the convention in golf course design in 1903, the Dunn family's artificial hazards were not necessary at the Ottawa Golf Club*:*

> *Now, while that style of hazard is very desirable in a good many cases, especially when natural as they are in Ottawa, they are hardly so important as side hazards, which force you to keep straight or get punished, and which make the game far more interesting and scientific. As you know, the whole art of the game of golf is in controlling the ball, and not simply to take a tremendous slash at the ball in a wild desire to get distance, regardless of direction or anything else.*
>
> *How can you expect to have players, or the game, improve if you don't make them play the game as it is intended to be played? As an illustration I will give you my experience of how careless the Ottawa links made me. I feel sure my case is by no means an isolated one. Last winter when I went home and got onto courses where you had to keep straight, I found it almost impossible to do so as a result of playing so long over the Ottawa links, where you never need look where you are going. I had lost my ability to take correct aim, and it took me fully two months to recover my game. Now if that is the case with a professional, how much more so will it affect an amateur or beginner?... He starts in, and of course takes it for granted he will find as much room on other links as there is on the Ottawa course. The result is he never learns to play straight or control his ball in any way. He gets into the habit of taking a swipe at the ball and leaves the rest to providence. The consequence is [that] on a course that is properly bunkered he is hopeless. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1909, p. 6)*

In regard to a Sargent's criticism of the fact that players at the Ottawa Golf Club had the opportunity in 1909 to hit tee shots hard in any direction without having to worry about getting into difficulty, it is

important to note that there were not many trees on the property that the Ottawa Golf Club had acquired from McVeity. The land had been cleared of trees a century before in connection with the farms developed on it and the Club did not begin tree-planting projects until the 1920s. The panoramic view of the Bendelow course below (looking from the northwest corner of the property toward the clubhouse at the southeastern corner) shows how relatively treeless were large areas of the grounds of the Ottawa golf course from 1903 to the 1920s.

Figure 17 A panoramic view of the Bendelow course formed from three photographs of William James Topley, Library and Archives Canada, Box no. 00569A.

Sargent had left the Ottawa Golf Club in 1908 because he felt that his interest in playing competitive golf had not been encouraged, so he emphasized that his criticism of the Ottawa golf course was not animated by hard feelings:

> *Now, I hope that members of the Ottawa Golf club will not take this in a wrong spirit. I am very much interested in the club. As I can see what great possibilities your links have, I would very much like to see the course what it ought to be. When you have accomplished that, you are setting an example to the other Canadian clubs and giving the players every encouragement to play the game as it should be played.*
>
> *In regard to the defects I see in the local links and their remedy, much may be said, or rather written. In the first place, every time such a thing as putting in a few bunkers has been suggested, it is always met with more or less hostility. One objection always offered is that the scenery would be absolutely ruined. I admit that if you were to start and throw up a lot of big mounds, etc., such as used to be considered bunkers in the olden days, the place certainly would not look any prettier for it. Such ugly hazards are, however, out of date, and even if they were not the Ottawa links does not need that style of bunker. As I mentioned before, the bunkers across the course are good, but*

what is badly needed and what will improve the links from something and nothing to a first-class course are side bunkers. Sooner or later you have got to have them, and now is the time to do it. When the big Canadian meet comes here next season, why not let the visitors see that Ottawa has an up-to-date course? Now don't get the idea that by bunkers I mean hazards that if one happens to get into he cannot possibly get out again. No such thing. I would have them so that one may easily get out of them, but you would have to make a very good shot to make up for the bad shot that got you into the bunker.

*The second and thirteenth holes are the only ones on which a straight tee shot gives you any advantage. Therein is the weakness of the local links and that is the reason for the non-success of the Ottawa golfers. Until you remedy that I cannot see how the game is going to improve. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1909, p. 6)*

We know that Sargent's article had the intended effect, for Lt-Col D.T. Irwin, a member of the original committee that established the Ottawa Golf Club in April of 1891, observed in December of 1909 that from the opening of the Aylmer Road links in 1904 the course "has since received but little alteration; a few artificial sand bunkers have been lately introduced to encourage straight driving" (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 December 1909).

We can guess where the first artificial sand bunkers were added to the 18-hole Bendelow course, for Sargent gave explicit suggestions as to how certain holes would be improved by bunkering:

Take the first hole for instance. One man slices his drive, hooks his second, and does not get into the slightest difficulty. Another man plays two perfect shots straight on the flag and is not one bit better off than the man who has gone all over the course. That certainly is not right, as the poorest duffer can see. At any game a bad shot is supposed to be punished. You cannot very well put any bunker in to catch a slice shot off the first tee because of the 18th fair green [i.e. fairway] being alongside, but some pot bunkers might be put in for the second shot, say 70 yards out from the fence [along Aylmer Road]. It would be very difficult for the player who sliced his drive to keep clear of these and in that way he would be paying the penalty for his bad tee shot. If he can make a fine recovery and get clear of everything, all well and good; he has atoned for his bad drive. The idea is this, if you make a bad shot you are making trouble for yourself, and

*that is how it should be. Take the 3rd hole: is it right for a man to slice his drive or a left-hander to hook about a hundred yards off the line and still go unpunished? Certainly not; he should find himself in difficulties, and the man who plays a straight tee shot should have a decided advantage. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1909, p. 6)*

Although their date of construction is unknown, the bunkers recommended by Sargent for the first and third holes can be seen below on an aerial photograph of the golf course dated 5 April 1933.

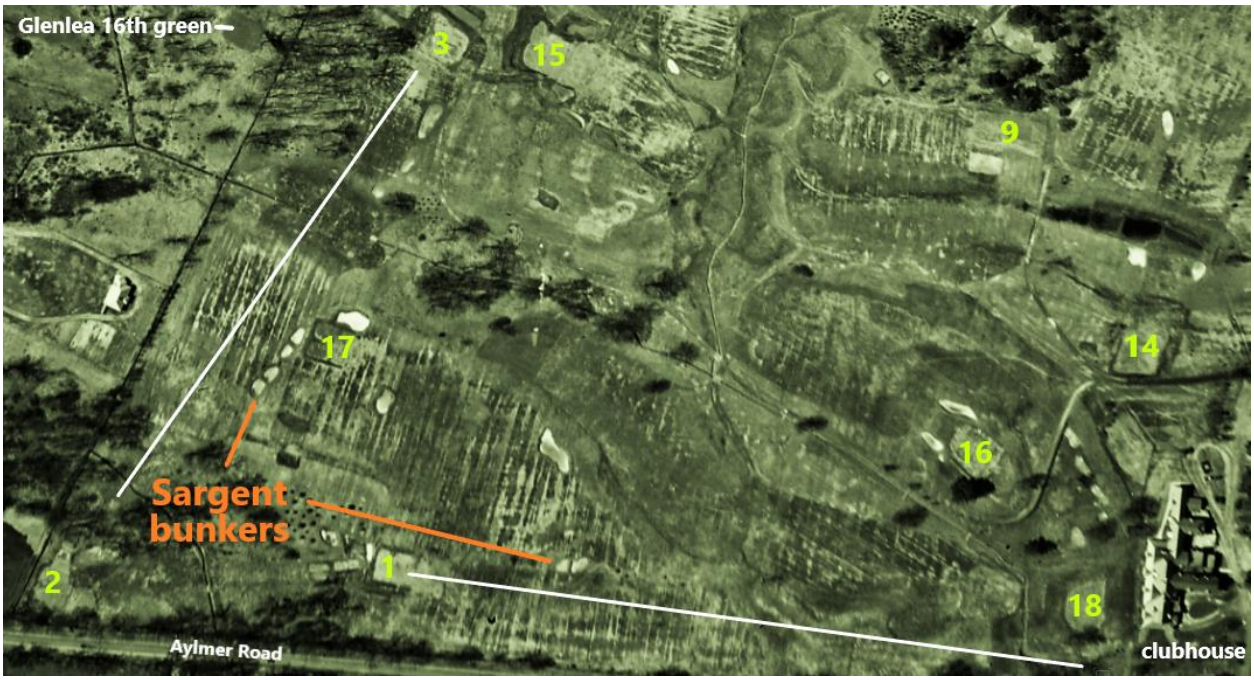

Figure 18 National Air Photo Library photograph dated 5 April 1933 showing the 1st and 3rd holes at Royal Ottawa, annotated to show green numbers and six Sargent bunkers.

These bunkers were probably built in 1909 in response to Sargent's article about the deficiencies of the golf course and they are probably the bunkers mentioned by Irwin in his article about the history of the Ottawa Golf Club published in December of that year.

We know that not many more than these six artificial sand bunkers were added to the course at this time, for it was reported at the beginning of the 1913 golf season that the total number of artificial sand bunkers at Royal Ottawa, including those on the newly opened nine-hole course, was "just 13" (*Ottawa Journal*, 24 April 1913, p. 4).

This fact also suggests that when Karl Keffer laid out the nine-hole short course in the spring of 1911 and in doing so installed a number of artificial sand bunkers on it, there was no longer significant opposition at the Ottawa Golf Club to the judicious installation of artificial sand bunkers on its golf courses. One

presumes that by 1911 the Sargent bunkers had been accepted by once-sceptical members as both an aesthetic and a strategic enhancement of the Bendelow golf course.

Course Stiffening

More than merely accepting of the Sargent and Keffer bunkers, Ottawa Golf Club members in addition to the Southam brothers may have begun to acquire a taste for stiffening their golf courses by means of artificial sand bunkers.

Figure 19 Ralph Reville, circa 1920.

Ralph Reville, editor of *Canadian Golfer* magazine, observed of the Royal Ottawa golf course in the spring of 1917 that its design had been amended since it was first built: "Originally laid out by the well-known golf architect, Tom Bendelow of Chicago, the links have in recent years been stiffened up a good deal" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 2 [June 1917], p. 90).

Since the Club's response to Sargent's 1909 criticism of the course seems to have been to add just a few artificial sand bunkers, these bunkers alone would not seem to be what Reville identified as the significant "stiffening" of the links. After all, the newspaper observation in April of 1913 that the 27 golf holes at Royal Ottawa had a total of 13 bunkers was meant to show how impoverished its bunkering was in comparison to the new course of the Toronto Golf Club, which was said to have had 146 artificial sand bunkers when it officially opened in 1913.

Figure 20 Harry Colt, circa 1913.

Reville's phrase "in recent years" probably refers to the four years since the spring of 1913, for it was at the beginning of 1913 that the Royal Ottawa Golf Club had commissioned plans for a complete renovation of the golf course, and the architect that the Club hired to prepare the plan was the one who had designed the new Toronto golf course and its 146 bunkers: Harry Shapland Colt.

With the official approval on 30 May 1913 of certain aspects of Colt's plan for redesigning the majority of the holes on the Bendelow-designed golf course, perhaps the most important and

most influential golf course designer in history thereby became the Royal Ottawa Golf Club's stiffener-in-chief.

Whence Awareness of Colt?

The idea of bringing the world's most famous golf course architect to the Ottawa Golf Club had been brewing for quite some time.

Before Colt's first trip to Canada in mid-1911 to consult with the Toronto Golf Club, there was a suggestion in the *Ottawa Journal* at the beginning of the year that members of the Ottawa Golf Club were already well-aware of Colt's standing in the game:

> *the secretary [of the Royal Montreal Golf Club] has received a communication from London, Eng., which will be of interest to many of the local followers of the honorable and ancient game.*
>
> *It is to the effect that Mr. Harry S. Colt, a well-known golfing authority, … is coming on a visit to the United States and Canada somewhere about the twentieth of March.*
>
> *Mr. Colt is particularly an authority on the laying out of courses. He has made arrangements by which he will visit the Toronto and Detroit Golf Clubs. (27 February 1911, p. 4)*

Information from the Secretary of the Royal Montreal Golf Club about Colt's visit to Canada had presumably been passed along to the executive committee of the Ottawa Golf Club, probably Secretary J.A. Jackson, which would suggest that Canada's top golf clubs were paying attention not only to the movement in Great Britain and North America to modernize golf courses by means of emerging strategic design philosophy, but also to the seminal role of Harry Colt in this movement.

Between Colt's visit to the Toronto Golf Club in 1911 and the completion of its golf course near the end of 1912, Colt's revolutionary layout became the subject of widespread and approving comment in newspapers and golf magazines throughout Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, and a frequent observation made both in print, on the one hand, and in conversations at golf clubs, on the other, was that the new Toronto golf course would soon displace the Royal Ottawa course as the best championship layout in Canada. In Ottawa, therefore, with each passing year, Colt's architectural theory and practice – especially as exemplified in Toronto – became of even greater "interest to many of the local followers of the honorable and ancient game."


Figure 21 Henry Leach, circa 1912.

Widely respected British golf writer Henry Leach, for example, piqued the curiosity of Ottawa Golf Club members with his observations about Toronto and Ottawa in the fall of 1912. That summer he had been sent to North America by the *Times* of London to report on the exploits of Harold Hilton (British and American amateur champion in 1911, as well as the British Open champion of 1892 and 1897) in the amateur golf championship of the United States in September. Leach afterwards travelled through Canada, writing articles for the *London Sketch* and other British publications about his impressions of Canadian golf courses. Later revised and reprinted in *The Happy Golfer* (London: Macmillan, 1914), Leach's essays were written in the fall of 1912, when the Colt course in Toronto was receiving its finishing touches. Leach wrote glowingly of it:

> *The pretty little course that it had until recently was on the outskirts of the city …. But it met a fate which has been common enough near London but rare elsewhere. The speed of Toronto's expansion brought it about, and, owing to the encroachments of the builders, the club had to move on. I was there at the parting, and it was a sad one. Its members, however, being a very wealthy and enthusiastic body of gentlemen, determined to make for themselves a new home which would be as good as anything that could be done, and their ambition was fulfilled…. It is one of the wonders of the west, and I was the first wandering British player to set his foot upon it. (*The Happy Golfer*, p. 232).*

This was all very well, perhaps, from the point of view of a Royal Ottawa member, who would not begrudge the Toronto Golf Club its good fortune, but Leach also observed that Toronto's rise might lead to Ottawa's fall.

The *Ottawa Journal* devoted an article to Leach's essay at the beginning of 1913, its title showing why the essay published in London had already caught the eye of Royal Ottawa members: "High Praise for Ottawa Golf Course: Best in Canada, Possibly the Best in America – But a Dangerous Rival in Sight." The Ottawa newspaper item amounted to one long quotation from Leach's essay:

> *At Ottawa there is a course which, to say the least, stands very high in the list of the very best on the American continent…. [H]ere there are ravines and gullies, and the*

> *land is strongly undulating everywhere. The bunkers and other hazards are natural, and indeed in almost every respect the course is natural and excellent, the putting greens being perfect …. Owing to its being exposed to a broad reach of river, it is seldom that there is not plenty of wind blowing across it, and in this respect it is different from most American and Canadian courses…. Now for Toronto…. It has the third oldest club [in Canada], and that club is at present time making history on the modern plan just as it did in the old-fashioned ways in the days gone by, I mean specially that it is making a new course for itself which I, as a wandering critic, came to believe will be recognized as the finest in North America. I suppose that at the present time that distinction rests between Myopia, the National Golf Links on Shinnecock Island, the Country Club at Brookline – all these being in the United States – and Ottawa. The new course at Toronto certainly joins this group, and the next few months will tell whether it should not emerge from it and go right to the top. I am half inclined to think it will. (8 March 1913, p. 13)*

By the beginning of 1913, then, Colt's work in Toronto was seen in Ottawa as having produced "a dangerous rival."

Also in the fall of 1912, Harold Hilton himself, who had earlier played a number of matches at Royal Ottawa with Karl Keffer in preparation for the amateur championship contest in the United States, published an article in the *Wolverhampton Express and Star* in which he complimented the golf course of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, but also voiced a reservation:

> *The links in Ottawa are …laid out on a fine stretch of undulating ground which supplies quite a paradise to the hard hitter. There is any amount of freedom at Ottawa, and if a player is in good driving form the golf is most enjoyable. During my recent visit I enjoyed the golf I played at Ottawa more than the golf I played on any other course either in Canada or America. There are great possibilities in the Ottawa links, and personally I cannot think that those responsible for the laying-out of the course quite made the most of their opportunities. It is a really good course as it stands, but I cannot but think that it might have been even a better one. (*Ottawa Journal*, 23 November 1912, p. 5)*

Despite Hilton's regret that Royal Ottawa's golf course was not all that it could be, club members might have been content to rest on the laurels offered by Britain's best amateur golfer but for the fact that Hilton concluded his essay with one more observation: "I was told that the course which will eventually be the finest in Canada is the new course of the Toronto Club, which course, however, I was unable to see" (*Ottawa Journal*, 23 November 1912, p. 5).

Figure 22 Harold Hilton, circa 1912.

By saying that of the Canadian golf courses that he had seen, the Royal Ottawa course was the one with the most potential – "Ottawa certainly struck me as having greater possibilities than the others" – Hilton unknowingly echoed what Sargent had said three years before: "As I can see what great possibilities your links have, I would very much like to see the course what it ought to be" (*Ottawa Journal*, 23 November 1912, p. 5; *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1909, p. 6).

As in the case of Sargent's article, so with Hilton's: the directors of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club became fired with a determination to realize as fully as possible the great potential that everyone agreed that their golf course had.

In the golfing world of 1913, when you are haunted by the experts' suggestion that your golf course is not all that it should be, "Who ya gonna call?"

Royal Ottawa's S.O.S.

Figure 23 J.A. Jackson, Ottawa Journal*, 20 June 1912, p. 9.*

Early in 1913, Royal Ottawa's Secretary Treasurer J.A. Jackson wrote to Colt, inviting him to visit the Club and submit recommendations for the improvement of its golf course. By February, Colt's response had been received:

British Expert to Inspect Royal Ottawa Golf Course Links

*A British golf course expert, Mr. W. [sic] Colt, will visit Canada this summer and inspect the Royal Ottawa and Royal Montreal Golf Club links. The two clubs are bringing Mr. Colt out in order to get his opinion and to have him instal some improvements which will bring their courses up to the standard of the best British links. It is expected that he will make a number of changes in the Royal Ottawa Golf Club links. (*Ottawa Journal*, 22 Feb 1913, p. 4)*

Three months later, Jackson – the long-time Honorary Secretary of the club, who had worked closely with Tom Bendelow when the latter designed the original layout – walked the ten-year-old course with Colt as the latter explained in detail his plan for a redesigned championship layout.

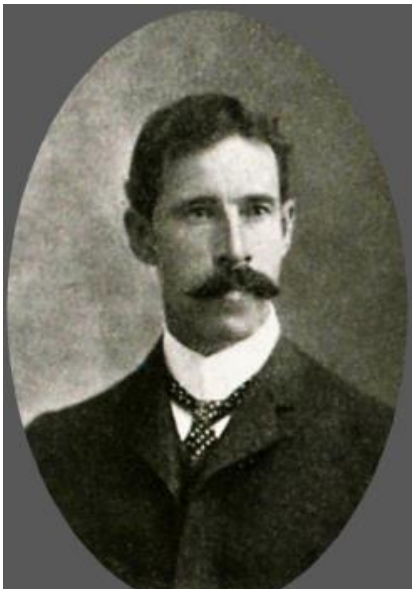

Figure 24 P.D. Ross, circa 1904.

It is likely that the source for information in the *Ottawa Journal* about the particular deficiencies in its golf course that animated the Royal Ottawa Golf Club throughout the period of its engagement with Colt was not Jackson, however, but Philip Dansken Ross: the owner of the *Ottawa Journal*. He was not just the newspaper's managing director but also its managing editor. He was probably the one who had headlined the article about Henry Leach's essay: "High Praise for Ottawa Golf Course: Best in Canada, Possibly the Best in America – But **a Dangerous Rival in Sight**" (emphasis added).

Originally reluctant to take up the game, regarding it as a sport for old women, Ross had become an enthusiastic member of the Club

in the early 1900s when it was still located at its Chelsea links. He served as Club president in 1909-10, and so it was on his watch that the first artificial sand bunkers were constructed on the advice of George Sargent. And when the clubhouse burned down in October of 1909, Ross was energetic in the campaign to design and fund a new and improved building.

Even after his term as president ended, he remained intimately involved in the affairs of the club. In particular, he was extremely interested in Colt's plans for the course.

Ross presumably provided the *Ottawa Journal* with the details that his newspaper published regarding the deliberations amongst Royal Ottawa members at their annual general meeting early in 1913 concerning the need to improve the course:

> *The Royal Ottawa golf course is already one of the most famous ones of the continent, nevertheless it may be radically changed within a year.*
>
> *It may be remembered that recently a well-known English golfer and golf-writer, Mr. Leach, ranked the Ottawa links as among the four best in America, the others being Myopia, Brookline and the new U.S. National course on Long Island. Yet the Ottawa course has two decided shortcomings. One is that on a considerable part of the links, players moving in opposite directions on separate holes come under each other's fire if a shot is played wide, as a great many golfing shots are. This is a serious danger, for a hard-driven golf ball has been known to kill the person it strikes. The other disadvantage of the Ottawa course is that half a dozen "holes" or links run into the west, and when the sun is low, a player with the sun in his eyes can not follow the flight of the ball and is very liable to lose it. At 75 cents per ball, this is no joke.*
>
> *Finally, some of the links are not scientifically laid out. The lengths are not good. A player may almost miss a shot, yet by a long one following may reach a green which another player must use two shots to reach though he does not miss one – in other words, must deliberately play only a medium second shot for fear of over-running. The accepted theory in golf is that no one should miss a shot without being penalized.*
>
> *On these grounds, the general meeting of the Royal Ottawa Club last month recommended the committee to engage Mr. H.S. Colt, a noted English golf-course*

> *architect, to come here, go over the course, and make a recommendation as to changes. (*Ottawa Journal*, 24 April 1913, p. 4)*

The reference to "the general meeting of the Royal Ottawa Club last month" is inaccurate, of course, for the general meeting in question occurred much earlier in the year and Colt had already been engaged by February.

But the observation that the golf course "may be radically changed within a year" was strangely prescient, yet not because the golf course would in fact be radically changed, but rather because certain changes would be rejected because they were too radical.

Without knowing anything yet of Colt's plans, Ross's newspaper knew enough about Colt to know that he did radical things.

Penal versus Strategic Design

Whether or not Ross was the source of information for the above article, the writer's suggestion that the length of a hole determined whether or not it was "scientific" shows an incomplete understanding of what the new generation of golf architects led by Colt meant by the dictum that "no one should miss a shot without being penalized."

In penal theory, players were required to carry the ball over cross-hazards. There was no sympathy for a topped shot: it must be punished by being trapped in a hazard. The penalty for a bad shot was to be the stroke it cost to extricate oneself from the cross-hazard that one had not successfully carried. Sargent suggests that Bendelow had done quite well in routing the holes on his Ottawa course so as to create lots of penal cross hazards in the form of ravines, gullies, and a sand basin. But writer above complains that a few holes at the Ottawa Golf Club are still "not scientifically laid out": since a player who tops a drive can still reach certain greens in two shots, the writer implicitly advocates for more penal cross-hazards to prevent such a possibility.

Sargent insists, however, that according to the standards of modern "scientific" architecture, "the Ottawa links does not need that style of bunker" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11 August 1909, p. 6). From Sargent's point of view, the "science" of the *Ottawa Journal* writer is not quite up to date in this regard.

Sargent's plan for bunkers was quite different. In strategic theory, the penalty for a bad shot is the difficult situation it creates for the next shot. Whether or not one is in a hazard, one is nonetheless out of position. The recovery shot will be difficult. Perhaps from the ball's location there is a sand trap beside the green that must be crossed if the player attempts with the next shot to reach the green. Perhaps the green can be reached without crossing such an obstacle, but the low trajectory of the recovery shot produced by the club required from long distance means that the ball will not hold the green and is likely to run through into a sand trap or hazard. For a strategic architect like Sargent, the golfer who plays a bad shot is not necessarily to be prevented from reaching the green with the next shot, but rather the golfer must hit a very good shot – perhaps even a heroic one – to atone for the bad one.

As it was explained to the members of the Royal Montreal Golf Club in 1920, when their original course at Dixie was to be replaced by two new golf courses designed by Willie Park, Jr:

> *The present course had been designed in accordance with the practice of the period, which was to place obstacles across the path of the player. The new courses have been planned with the modern practice, which aims at giving the player a clear way to the green, laying traps and punishments for those who deviate from the straight. (*Gazette *[Montreal], 1 November 1920, p. 15)*

Such was the design strategy at the Mount Bruno course that Park designed at this time: "Willie Park designed the course to leave an open gate for the straight player, and his pots and traps and patches of rough lying in wait on either side do penalize the unfortunate who wanders to left or right. A trip to the side off the direct line invariably costs a stroke" (*Gazette* [Montreal], 10 June 1922, p. 16).

It was a redesigning of their golf course according to the principles of the strategic golf architect's "modern practice" – first explained to them by George Sargent in 1909 – that Royal Ottawa members sought from Colt in 1913.

Colt's Principles and Practices

Colt's practices as a golf course architect had been mentioned occasionally in newspaper articles in the early 1900s, and from carful attention to the description of his layout of "The New Links at Hopwood" for the "Manchester Golf Club," for instance, one can extrapolate many of his fundamental design principles, but in 1912 he decided to contribute two essays – "The Construction of New Courses" and "Golf Architecture" – to Martin H.F. Sutton's *The Book of the Links: A Symposium on Golf* (London: W.H. Smith & Son, 1912), and these essays comprehensively explain his principles and his practices (*Guardian* [Manchester], 29 September 1911, p. 16).

The goal of Colt and like-minded architects who would usher in what Geoff Shackleford calls *The Golden Age of Golf Design* (New York: Wiley, 2005) was to square golf's circle: making a course that could be enjoyed by all categories of golfers and yet still provide a proper challenge for the expert golfer. As Colt observed, "A few years back one often heard it stated that a course, to be a good test of golf, should be laid out for the scratch player, and there were many instances of quite impossible shots being provided for the long-handicap man, without any opportunity of playing for safety"; but Colt believed that "it is not by any means impossible to construct a course which will give pleasure and amusement to all classes of players" ("The Construction of New Courses," p. 2).

Figure 25 George Cumming, circa 1906.

Colt insisted on the inadequacy of this way of laying out a golf course – the norm "a few years back."

In fact, it was the way Royal Ottawa's new golf professional Karl Keffer (appointed in the spring of 1911), had been shown how to do it by George Cumming, the young golf professional of the Toronto Golf Club under whom Keffer served his apprenticeship from 1906 to 1909.

In *A Century of Greenkeeping*, Gordon Witteveen presents an account by an early Canadian greenkeeper named Fred Hawkins of how George Cumming laid out a course in the Toronto area in 1906:

I would like to tell you of my first experience in seeing a golf course laid out. The club I am speaking of was a 9-hole course under the supervision of the professional [George Cumming], who had under him a head groundsman, as he was called in those days. This professional, who in later years was recognized as one of the leading golf architects, was about to lay out nine more holes and as he was trying to get me interested in golf, he invited me along.

We started out with the groundsman carrying a bundle of stakes and a hammer until we came to a spot where they drove in four stakes 12 ft apart, which they called the 10th tee. After travelling further on, they drove in a stake, walked around it, then decided to take it a few yards further down into a hollow where they drove in four stakes 24 yards apart. This was the 10th green. I asked why they moved it from the first position and was told that the green would get more moisture down there. This was the procedure all around the course. The only difference being that they made one or two greens round instead of square.

What bunkers were put in were across the fairway, pits of about one foot deep, eight feet wide and twenty-five feet long, with the soil thrown to the back about two feet high. Their method of making greens was simply to cut and roll and top-dress with some compost and a little bonemeal and work them up out of the old sod that was there. In six weeks we were playing on them. (Gordon Witteveen, A Century of Greenkeeping *[Michigan: Ann Arbor Press, 2001, pp 3-4)*

Figure 26 Karl Keffer, 1910.

Keffer would have accompanied Cumming on several very similar projects, all accomplished quickly, with the standard artificial hazard introduced to featureless land being the cross-bunker described above.

In 1913, however, just three years after leaving Cumming's pro shop at the Toronto Golf Club, Keffer would walk the golf course of the Ottawa Golf Club with Colt, whose 1912 essays mocked the method of early-twentieth-century architects like Cumming:

[the architect] was introduced for the first time to 150 acres of good golfing ground, and we all gathered round to see the golf course created instantly. It was something like following a water-diviner with his twig of hazel. Without a moment's hesitation he fixed on the first tee, and then, going

> *away at full speed, he brought us up abruptly in a deep hollow, and a stake was set up to show the exact position of the first hole. Ground was selected for the second tee, and then we all started off again, and arrived in a panting state at a deeper hollow than the first, where another stake was set up to show the spot for the second hole. Then away again at full speed for the third hole, and so on. Towards the end we had to tack backwards and forwards half a dozen times to get in the required holes. The thing was done in a few hours. ("Golf Architecture," p. 70).*

If Keffer had read Colt's essays before the famous architect arrived in Ottawa in May of 1913, he would have recognized in this paragraph criticism of his mentor's own practice.

Keffer may well have heard Colt say in person that "it is quite certain that no one can do good work … unless he has plenty of opportunity to consider the subject quietly. If anyone attempts this sort of work on a bleak November day, accompanied by a garrulous committee …, the result will be feeble" (p. 69). Time needs to be spent on planning a course to get the route of the holes right, to get the sequence of long and short and hard and easy holes right, to anticipate drainage problems, to best employ natural features of the land, including hazards, to take account of prevailing winds, the direction of the rising and setting sun, the location of course boundaries, and so on. Not to do so in the first place is to doom a golf club to subsequent re-modelling expenses.

For these reasons Colt had asked the Ottawa Golf Club to send him detailed information about the existing golf course – including maps – that he could study in England well in advance of his visit to North America. When he arrived in Ottawa on May 12th, 1913, he went directly to the Ottawa golf course, and "As he had been furnished some time ago with complete plans of the links, he was familiar with the lay-out, and was able to come to a quick decision about the nature of his recommendations" (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 May 1913, p. 4).

Familiarity with the land at his disposal was the architect's starting point.

Colt explained how he generally spent his time on a golf club's property in preparation for laying out an entirely new course:

> *My own method is first to view the land and walk over it once or twice, and inspect it very carefully, but not to lay out a single hole; then to make a second visit, having considered the scheme in the meantime, and on that occasion to settle, if possible, the*

> *framework, and take two or three days to do so, leaving the bunkering in great part for a subsequent visit. ("Golf Architecture," pp. 69-70)*

When Colt was asked to submit plans for the redesign of an existing golf course, as at Ottawa, he not only walked the golf course, but often played a round of golf on it.

Implicitly outlining for us the conceptual framework within which he would have studied the golf course plans that the Ottawa Golf Club sent him in England, Colt's 1912 essays "The Construction of New Courses" and "Golf Architecture" explain his understanding of how the various elements of a golf course – the routing of tees, fairways, and greens through hazards and bunkers – must be integrated both strategically and aesthetically to interest golfers of all abilities and yet still provide a proper test for the best.

Colt: “Let us start with the tee shots”

Figure 27 Harry Colt follows through on a tee shot circa 1913.

Colt first considers tee shots, especially on par-4 and par-5 holes (called “two-shotters” and “three-shotters,” respectively, in his day}: “A test of accuracy must … be provided for tee shots, and the player learn to take a line, and not just blaze away at right angles to the teeing ground” (“Golf Architecture,” pp. 76-79).

On a certain number of holes, it will certainly be appropriate to force the best golfers to carry their tee shots a certain distance through the air if they are to derive an advantage for their next shot.

But what of beginners or weaker players who cannot reliably strike the ball so as to get it airborne?

> *It is certainly amusing to have a fair number of carries from the teeing grounds; but if these are to be of any use as a test to the first-class driver, they are certain to be impossible to the short player. Therefore, if we want to have a carry of, say, 165 yards or more, let us provide a path of safety, whilst giving advantage in subsequent play of the hole to the player who accomplishes the test provided…. (“Golf Architecture,” pp. 76-79)*

There was generally no such “path of safety” on golf courses built according to the principles of penal design. But to punish weak golfers with an impossible test made no sense to Colt:

> *If anyone has to depend upon skill and judgement as against power alone, certainly penalise him if he fails to place his shot accurately. By all means … trap him in any way you like, and give him no quarter. But if he offend not, let us provide him in the general course of events with something possible and interesting. (“Golf Architecture,” pp. 79-81)*

Forcing the best golfers to carry the golf ball particular distances when hitting a tee shot was one thing, but they should also be made to control the direction of the ball. And so to provide a proper “test for

accurate driving a good sprinkling of lateral hazards is necessary," but "These can be made at such a distance from the tee that the weak player very seldom reaches them" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 76-79).

Similarly, a "central bunker in the course" "with a path on either side" "forces a player to try to place his ball in the desired area" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 76-79). The reaction to colt's attempt to install such a bunker on an English golf course in 1911 is instructive: "Such a bunker was suggested to be included in the alterations at Hale during last winter, but the unorthodox idea of putting a trap to catch a ball hit straight down the middle of the course was genially jeered at" (*Guardian* [Manchester], 19 August 1912, p. 3). This reaction may account for Colt's defensiveness when he writes of this design feature:

> *This class of bunker is always open to criticism from the man who hits a long, straight shot down the centre of the course, without having sufficient intelligence in his head to know that the proper line is to the left or to the right, as the case may be, and that if he takes the wrong line, he deserves no sympathy. Well, in the case of such a hazard the weak player can be kept out of it by placing it beyond the limits of his drive; in fact, in designing the bunkering of a course the object should be to catch the bad or mediocre shot of the good player and punish the long-handicap man for bad strokes less than the former. Give the short player as much pleasure as you can … he is sure to find quite enough difficulty in the remainder of the course on his own account…. ("Golf Architecture," pp. 76-79)*

Perhaps Colt's most famous bunkering practice has become a staple of golf course design ever since: "There is one hazard which has appealed to me very greatly for the last three or four years – the diagonal hazard…. [I]t provides sport for everyone, and the subsequent scheme of a hole can give advantage to the one who bites off the biggest slice of the hazard" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 76-79). Harold Hilton celebrated the decision-making that a diagonal design feature stimulated:

> *It causes a player to weigh up the prospects of possible gain as against probable disaster, and he is called upon to play a shot which, in execution, has something approaching a definite object. You can play for safety, you can play for comparative safety, and you may play with the object of taking a decided risk. You have to make up your mind which it is to be. (*Evening Standard *[London], 18 February 1922, p. 10)*

Colt was also fond of imposing discipline on tee shots even without the use of any hazards in the landing area for the drive. He writes that enforcing a proper "placing of the tee shot, if not overdone, is one of

the best features of modern golf-course construction work; and it can also be easily enforced by the hazards near the green, so that they govern the tee shot even if there be no bunkers for that stroke" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 76-79). For instance, by the installation of bunkers at the right front corner of a green, the architect indicates to intelligent golfers that tee shots must be placed on the left side of the fairway if golfers desire access to the green without having to carry a bunker.

Similarly, Colt writes that "A dog-leg hole … is to me one of the finest for an accurate test of the game. The player who can place his tee shot just past the corner … gains a big advantage there" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 76-79).

Colt: “Let us now consider the approach shots”

Approach shots to greens also require architects to engage in similar considerations if they hope to force golfers of all sorts to play the game with proper accuracy.

The placement and severity of hazards must be relative to the approach shot that is being tested: “Hazards which would be perfectly fair for a short ‘run up’ may be manifestly absurd for a full shot, as the greater the distance to be covered, the more latitude there must be for error” (“Golf Architecture,” pp. 79-81). For example, encircling a green with bunkers absolutely tight to the putting surface would be fair if the approach shot required by the hole was with a very short iron, but such bunkering would be absurdly unfair if the approach shot required was a fairway wood, which could never hold the green if it cleared the guarding bunkers.

Still, it is fair to impose a version of this test on a three-shot hole:

> *[O]ne or two cross-hazards giving a long carry will be acceptable to most people. No doubt at times it will mean playing short, and thus the benefit of an extra well-hit drive will be lost, but one or two instances … of this class of stroke are advisable. It is not everyone who can pick up a close-lying ball from hard ground with a brassie [a two-wood] and lash it over a big bunker. (“Golf Architecture,” pp. 79-81)*

The depth of bunkers and the height of banks associated with them should also be carefully considered in relation to the escape shot that the architect was willing to allow. A pot bunker, three feet deep with a three-foot high bank, located 200 yards from the green, would allow only a very short iron to be played from it, making the green unreachable. One might even have to play out of such a bunker backwards. Alternatively, a shallow bunker in a similar location, with no banks around it, would allow a golfer to attempt reach the green with a heroic second shot.

Paralleling the function of side-bunkers or lateral hazards in the landing area of the fairway are wing bunkers at the side of the green: “If we are to have wing bunkers near the green, … we can make the passage narrower than for the drive, as a man should have more confidence in playing his second shot than his first. We do not, however, want to see them cut exactly opposite each other and at right angles to the course” (“Golf Architecture,” pp. 79-81). Orienting these bunkers other than at a right-angle to

the fairway is one of the ways of indicating to golfers where their tee shots should be placed in the fairway to achieve access to the green without having to flirt with a wing bunker.

Colt confesses that this kind of approach shot – "one which is vitally affected by the line taken from the tee" – is one that "always appeals to me": "The drive is governed by the difficulties provided for the approach – the two hang together – as the player, when he stands on the teeing ground, is even then compelled to consider his second stroke. We need several holes of this description in our course" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 79-81).

Figure 28 Harry Colt plays an approach shot circa 1913.

The approach shot by means of a "pitch" stroke particularly interested Colt: "Many think that the golfer who would be well equipped in the matter of approach should be able to play three classes of strokes …. He must be able to pitch high and stop quickly, to "pitch and run," and to "run up," and thus the ground is covered in three distinct ways" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 81-84).

According to Colt, in fact, "there are few more interesting things in golf" than tests of this sort of approach shot ("Golf Architecture," pp. 81-84).

Colt emphasized, however, that installing bunkers near greens and locating greens near natural hazards was not sufficient as an architectural strategy for testing the accuracy of approach shots.

The problem again lay in balancing the interests of expert players and average players:

> *if we are ambitious in trying to provide opportunities for testing the abilities of the real artist in approach play … we shall probably find that we need further materials than bunkers and hazards of the ordinary description. If we had to depend alone upon them, the course would be either too easy for the championship player or too hard for the ordinary one. ("Golf Architecture," pp. 81-84).*

For all degrees of golfing expertise, the three types of approach shot can be just as effectively tested by "plateau greens and 'hummocky' ground":

> *A narrow plateau for a green, or a few hummocks in front of one, will very likely cause just as much trouble and amusement to a player as a gaping chasm stretching right across the course…. As an instance of a good plateau green, take the 12th hole at St. Andrews …. [T]he real difficulty in getting close to the pin … is the narrow plateau and the two shoulders on each side…. And, again, as an instance of a hummock, let us take the 4th hole on the same course…. It has proved of just as much value for the purposes of a hazard to make us try to play the right class of shot as the deepest bunker in existence…. For another purpose, undulations and hummocks are of great value "through the green," as they provide difficult stances and lies, without which no golf course can be said to be quite perfect. ("Golf Architecture," pp. 81-84).*

And then there is what Colt calls the "turf hollow," a golf course feature today called a "grass bunker." Turf hollows were staple features of Colt's golf courses: "the turf hollow, with a 'draw' into it, practically forming a part of the putting green itself, will also help in our endeavour to extract the very best from the champion himself" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 81-84).

Plateau greens, hummocks, and turf hollows test the skills of champion golfers as effectively as bunkers, but they have a special value for the golf architect who wants to accommodate weaker golfers:

> *these difficulties do not call for the sacrifice of those of humbler merit. They are all certainly obstacles in their path, but the long-handicap player probably derives as much pleasure from them as the scratch man, and this cannot be said of the ordinary type of sand bunkers. The good player can almost invariably extricate his ball from the latter with comparative ease, whereas the bad player finds them fearfully retentive. ("Golf Architecture," pp. 81-84)*

Not surprisingly, then, Colt calculated the proper depths for turf hollows and the proper heights for plateau greens and mounds surrounding greens just as surely as he calculated the proper depths for sand bunkers and the proper heights of banks that fronted them.

Colt: “Eighteen flat greens are to me an abomination”

Until the early 1900s, greens laid out on inland courses in Great Britain and North America tended to be flat, level surfaces – usually square in shape. We recall that Cumming’s greens were of this sort in 1906. And such was the case at the Trafford Park Links, the original golf course of the Manchester Golf Club, which Colt was called upon in 1911 to replace with a new layout at Hopwood Park, which would have very different greens:

> *The condition of the greens … is extremely good. Contrary to the plan adopted at Trafford Park, not one of them has been made perfectly level, so that putting will have to be done with more judgement than is necessary on the flat greens which detract from the merits of the Club’s present course. (*Guardian *[Manchester], 29 September 1911, p. 16).*

Colt made clear in his 1912 essay “Golf Architecture” what his work for the Manchester Golf Club the year before had implied: “Eighteen flat greens are to me an abomination, and the pleasantly undulating green … is far preferable” (“Golf Architecture,” p. 86). “On the other hand,” he continued, prizing variety and contrast, “two or three examples of the flat green are an advantage. (“Golf Architecture,” p. 86)

So Colt made recommendations for the location and nature of putting greens that were of course just as carefully and strategically thought-out as his recommendations for tees, lateral hazards, diagonal hazards, wing bunkers, and so on.

We recall that Colt liked plateau greens for holes where pitch shots were to be tested. He also found that a plateau green was useful on a par-4 hole of from 230 to 300 yards, which could be reached by a drive. The elevation of the green would prevent balls not hit hard enough from dribbling onto the green, and it would encourage balls hit a little bit too hard to dribble off the green. Similarly, the shoulders would deflect away a ball not approaching the green from the right direction.

Whereas Cumming chose hollows for the location of his greens, Colt says, “I like to select a ridge or low plateau in preference to a hollow. The green is obviously more visible to the player, which is a feature after which I strive” (“Golf Architecture,” p. 86). Colt generally preferred to avoid blind approach shots to greens.

Colt also found that a natural formation called a hog's back (a long hill or ridge with steep sides) provided particular strategic advantages for architects: "if we can select a wide hog's-back for the purpose, we shall not need much, if any, artificial help in the nature of bunkers" ("Golf Architecture," p. 86). The image below shows his 1922 drawing of his "Hogs Back" hole for the Granville golf course in France.

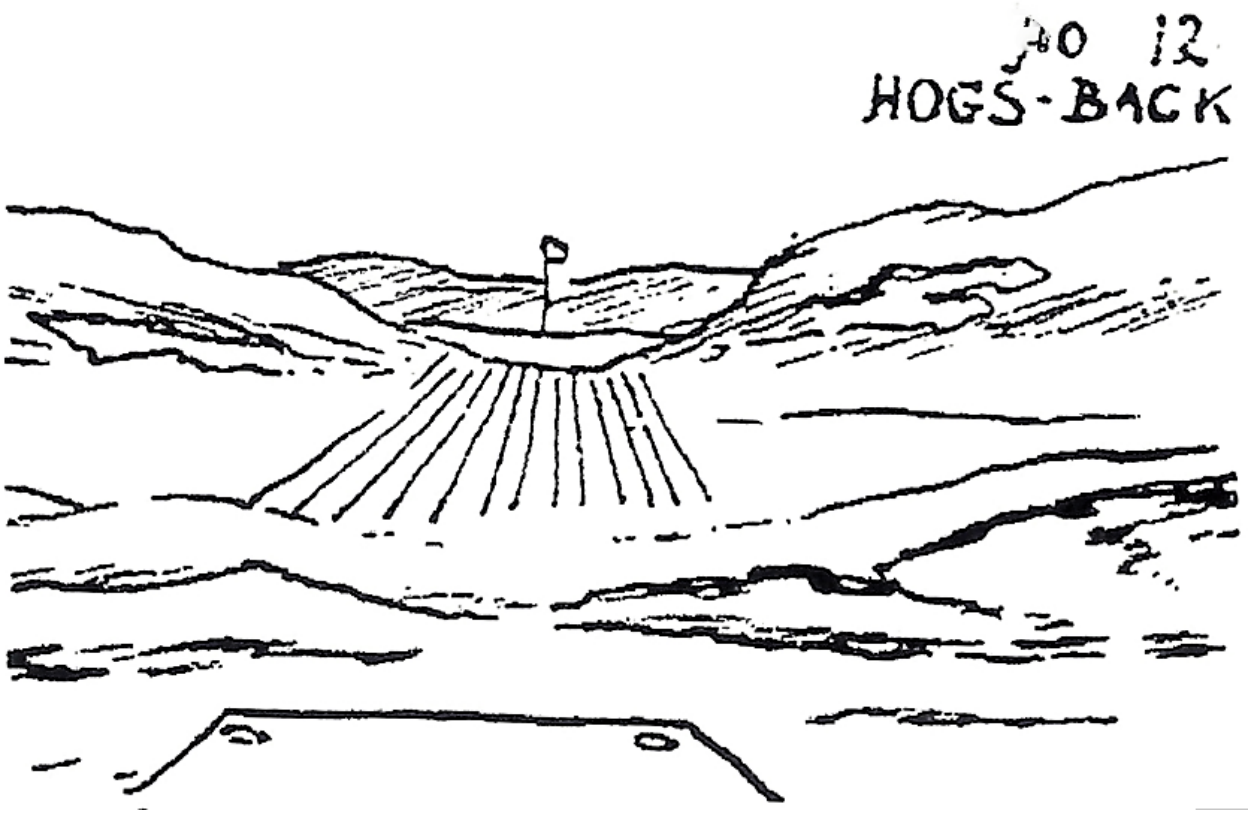

Figure 29 Colt's drawing for his 12th hole at Granville, France: the "Hogs-Back."

And then there was the "punchbowl" green.

In the days before irrigation systems were installed on golf courses, golf architects noted the usefulness for green construction of natural land formations that offered a bowl large enough to accommodate a proper golf green: rainwater would funnel down the sides of the bowl onto the putting surface, thereby keeping this grass healthy and green when dry spells stressed grass elsewhere on the golf course. In appearance, the green and its surroundings resembled a punchbowl – hence the name golf architects use for this kind of green construction.

As was the case for the greens that Cumming laid out in hollows, the development of watering systems for twentieth-century golf courses obviated the need for the punchbowl green as a way of catching

rainfall. Nonetheless, Colt observed: “Still I would not by any means wish to eliminate altogether the punch-bowl green from a course, as, although weak from the point of view of a test of skill, it is delightful in other respects” (“Golf Architecture,” p. 86).

A punchbowl green typically has raised mounding all the way around it or on at least three sides of it. It is “weak from the point of view of a test of skill” if it merely funnels the golf ball toward the hole. Golf architects find that a well-conceived punchbowl green can indeed prevent some offline shots from going further astray by containing them within the bowl surrounding the green, yet in the case of poorly hit shots that do not even find the bowl, it can push them even further away from the green. If grass on the sides of the bowl is cut short, balls can roll down off the sides of the bowl onto the putting surface. Alternatively, if the sides of the bowl are left as rough, golfers may be required to play shots onto the green from a relatively steep downslope.

Colt: “the artistic side of golf courses”

Unlike his architectural forebears of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Colt insisted that aesthetic considerations be accorded a prominent place in all golf course architecture:

> *Golfers are … becoming now more and more sensitive to the artistic side of golf courses …. I know it well from the outcry which is raised if a hole is changed and an intruding Scotch fir-tree has to be sacrificed. The old custom of squaring off the course and greens in rectangular fashion is departing, and instead we find an irregular course. (“The Construction of New Courses,” p. 14).*

Particularly when building an inland or parkland golf course, the architect ought to strive to make it appear natural in the landscape, allowing local vegetation to infringe on the borders of fairways “as if it were naturally growing into the turf,” so that “the artificiality be further reduced” (“The Construction of New Courses,” p. 14).

Similarly, the architect must ensure that “the sods used for the banks of bunkers are all in keeping with the character of the district” (“The Construction of New Courses,” p. 14).

Furthermore, the “naturalness” of the golf course can be enhanced by the architect’s construction of certain kinds of holes. For instance, “Ground should be selected … for a dog-leg hole, which presents some natural features insisting upon or emphasising the class of shot which we are trying to develop; otherwise the effect will be labored and artificial.” (“Golf Architecture,” p. 78).

He explained his overarching conviction at the beginning of his essay, “Golf Architecture”:

> *I firmly believe that the only means whereby an attractive piece of ground can be turned into a satisfying golf course is to work to the natural features of the site in question. Develop them if necessary, but not too much; and if there are many nice features, leave them alone as far as possible, but utilise them to their fullest extent, and eventually there will be a chance of obtaining a course with individual character of an impressive nature. (“Golf Architecture,” p. 69).*

And he returned to this theme in his conclusion:

> *Too much stress cannot be laid upon the necessity of seeing and using the natural features present on each course to the fullest possible extent. It is only by doing this and selecting them judiciously for their special purposes that we can arrive at the success at which we aim. We must seize upon them with a grasping hand, and if possible not let one of them escape us. ("Golf Architecture," p. 87).*

Not surprisingly, then, when Colt arrived on the site of the Ottawa golf course, his first remarks to newspaper reporters concerned the "natural features of the site" and the need to "leave them alone as far as possible," on the one hand, and to "utilise them to their fullest extent," on the other: "Mr. Colt expressed much admiration yesterday for the course as it is …. He said that the natural advantages were very great. He hopes that his suggestions will enable an improvement without losing the strong points of the present course" (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 May 1913, p. 4).

The *Ottawa Journal* Promotes Colt, But Draws a Line in the Sand

News having reached Ottawa that Colt had arrived in the United States after crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the *Ottawa Journal* anticipated his imminent arrival in Ottawa by celebrating his accomplishment in Toronto, but the writer – whom I take to be Ross himself or someone passing along information from Ross – also added a warning.

The writer was well aware of Colt's work for the Toronto Golf Club and lauded his architectural achievements there – with one reservation:

> *Mr. Colt laid out the new Toronto Golf Club course last year. His work gave the greatest satisfaction in every respect but one. This was his lavish use of land. Usually a first class course occupies about 100 acres of territory. The Ottawa 18-hole course covers 105 acres. The Toronto Club, which owns over 200 acres, suggested to Mr. Colt that he might use up to 150 acres for the new course, leaving the balance to provide a secondary 9-hole course for over-flow use. But by the time Mr. Colt got through, it was found that his 18 holes had used up 190 acres, and it is said that no possibility is left of a secondary course.*
>
> *The Ottawa Golf Club owns about 200 acres, and in addition to the 18-hole course have a secondary course of 9 holes in good condition. A good deal of curiosity is felt as to what Mr. Colt may want to do to the territory. Of course, the club Is not bound to accept the whole or any of the recommendations he may make. There would certainly be strong opposition to any proposition which would limit the club to one course.*
>
> *With the exception of the amount of land used, Mr. Colt's work has aroused unanimous enthusiasm in the Toronto Club. That no contingency has been missed by the Englishman may be illustrated by the fact that on the Toronto course, in addition to good natural hazards, he has provided no less than 146 artificial bunkers – trouble areas. On the two Royal Ottawa courses combined there are just thirteen. (*Ottawa Journal*, 24 April 1913, p. 4)*

Recall that Ross was Club president when the first artificial sand bunkers were added to the Ottawa course in 1909: he seems envious in 1913 of the number of bunkers that the Toronto golf course has.

In his observation about Colt's use of land, however, Ross sounds not a note of envy, but rather a note of warning. It seems that the Royal Ottawa Golf Club will not tolerate what the Toronto Club tolerated: the loss of a nine-hole course as the price to be paid for a Colt-designed 18-hole championship course.

One wonders whether Colt was advised of the likelihood of "strong opposition" should he go down this road.

For Colt indeed went down that road.

Colt's 1913 Itinerary

After his arrival in the United States from England, Colt kept the Royal Ottawa Golf Club aware of his itinerary throughout the spring of 1913: "Mr. Colt is in America now, going over some courses in the United States, and has sent word that he may be expected here May 20" (*Ottawa Journal*, 24 April 1913, p. 4).

Colt and his wife Charlotte sailed for the United States "in the Franconia" at the beginning of April, arriving on April 7th for a stay in North America of "two months or more" (*Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 5 April 1913, p. 252).

Figure 30 RMS Franconia near Boston Harbor. Launched 1910, commissioned as a transport ship during World War I and torpedoed and sunk in 1916.

Colt first proceeded to Chicago where he worked with Doanld J. Ross in laying out a championship golf course for the Old Elm Club (Colt provided the drawings; Ross was charged with supervising the construction). Colt's plans for the layout are dated 27th April 1913, fifteen days before he would arrive in Ottawa.

Colt seems then to have proceeded to Detroit, where he laid out an 18-hole course for the Bloomfield Hills Country Club, whose original golf course had also been designed by the Ottawa Golf Club's first architect, Tom Bendelow.

After his work in Chicago and Detroit at the end of April and beginning of May in 1913, Colt next seems to have gone to Montreal, where "Early in the season it was decided to have Mr. Colt, the well-known English golf course architect, come over from the Old Country and look over tracts of land on the Island of Montreal that would be suitable for a new golf course" (*Gazette* [Montreal], 20 October 1913, p. 13).

Because the Montreal club needed time to negotiate purchase prices for the sites recommended by Colt, he was able to visit Ottawa a week earlier than the May 20th date he had originally indicated.

So the greatest golf architect of all time arrived in Ottawa on Monday, May 12th.

Hosting Harry Colt

Colt charged by the day.

In 1920, his fees were specified by a newspaper in advance of his proposed visit to the Hamilton Golf and Country Club to advise it further on the better realization of the plans for its layout that he had drawn up in 1914:

> *Mr. Harry S. Colt, … with his partner Captain Allison, arrives in this country in April. He will go over the Hamilton course and arrange for its further bunkering and trapping. He will also be called upon by several other Canadian clubs for advice and counsel whilst here. His charges are $200 per day and expenses, but what is that when securing an up-to-date golf course? A few hundred dollars in this connection is a mere bagatelle. (*Calgary Herald*, 5 March 1920, p. 6)*

When he originally laid out the Ancaster golf course for the Hamilton Golf and Country Club in 1914, Colt stayed in the city for "about a week," and he charged the Hamilton Golf and Club 300 guineas (about $1,500) for his services (*Gazette* [Montreal], 28 April 1914, p. 15).

Note, however, that just how many days it took Colt to do his work on a golf course varied according to which of two jobs he was doing. In 1915, he explained to champion U.S. golfer Chick Evans how long it generally took him to prepare architectural plans for a golf club:

> *Early in January I had a very interesting letter from H.S. Colt, the eminent British golf architect. As he is a great authority on golf course construction, I have been asking him a few questions about his work and the average length of time he finds necessary to spend over each course…. Mr. Colt tells me he usually requires about six days to lay out and present plans for an absolutely new course; for the alteration of an old one he can generally make a report to the committee after two or three days. (Chick Evans, "Golf Gossip,"* Knoxville Sentinel*, 6 March 1915, p. 6)*

Ottawa sought alterations for an existing golf course, and so Colt stayed in Ottawa for just three days.

Still, before Colt arrived in Ottawa, the Club had made plans to minimize the bill for his services.

Figure 31 A recent photograph of Rideau Cottage.

On the one hand, Club member Lieutenant-Colonel H.C. Lowther offered to put up the Colts for the duration of their Ottawa visit in his home called Rideau Cottage on the grounds of Rideau Hall.

And Lowther also entertained them royally each evening.

Henry Cecil Lowther (1869-1940) was the secretary to the Governor General, His Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught, and so he was granted Rideau Cottage as his residence on the grounds of Rideau Hall, the Governor General's official residence. He regularly hosted important visitors from the United Kingdom.

Figure 32 Circa 1913, Lieutenant Colonel H.C. Lowther, left, and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught, Governor General of Canada, right.

A soldier since he was 18 years old, Lowther had fought with distinction in the Boer War, being mentioned in despatches twice. He had joined the staff of the Duke of Connaught in the fall of 1911 and was posted with him to Canada in 1912 and rapidly made friends in Ottawa. A newspaper reporter described him as a "big-physiqued, big-hearted English gentleman" (*Montreal Weekly Witness*, 21 May 1912, p. 4).

Unmarried, he was fond of entertaining guests, and it was said that "his stag dinners are unique functions" (*Montreal Weekly Witness*, 21 May 1912, p. 4).

He was of course welcomed as a member of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club and in 1913 competed for both the Blair Cup and the Leveson-Gower Cup. His handicap was 16.

Lowther returned to Britain to rejoin his regiment, the Scots Guards, in October of 1913, and he later served in World War I, during which he was severely wounded. But before he left Ottawa, he offered the Colonel Lowther Cup to the club, the one-time bogey competition for it occurring in September,

with virtually all male playing members of the Club participating in the tournament. The cup became the property of the winner.

Colonel Lowther entertained Harry and Charlotte Colt to an informal dinner at Rideau Cottage on the Monday night they arrived in Ottawa. Tuesday evening, he took the Colts to the fourth annual Ottawa Horse Show: Lowther's party was one of "several small parties" "in the royal box" at this event that drew 4,000 people to the Howick Pavilion at Lansdowne Park (*Gazette* [Montreal], 14 May 1913, p. 2).

Figure 33 Howick Pavilion, Lansdowne Park, Ottawa. Early 1900s.

The Colts were also entertained to a supper later that night at the Chateau Laurier, the guests again of Lowther, who also invited several of his friends to attend, most of whom were Royal Ottawa members.

Colt had arrived in town on May 12th. He departed on May 14th. He was able to submit a detailed plan of his alterations for the golf course before he left.

Colt's Plans

Until and unless Colt's actual blueprint and hole-by-hole drawings of his plans for alterations and improvements of the golf course are found hidden in the archives of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, these plans must be reconstructed from contemporary newspaper accounts.

To expedite Colt's work while on site at the golf course, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club had sent to Colt in England as much information about the golf course as possible so that he could get a head start on his redesign plans before sailing for Canada. When he arrived in Ottawa, Colt went directly to the golf course:

> *Mr. H.S. Colt, the English Golf Architect, who was recently engaged by the Royal Ottawa Golf Club to visit the Ottawa links and suggest improvements to the course, arrived in Ottawa yesterday, with Mrs. Colt. Mr. and Mrs. Colt are the guests of Col. Lowther at Rideau Cottage, and will be in the city for some days.*
>
> *Mr. Colt spent yesterday at the Ottawa links, going over the grounds with Mr. J.A. Jackson, honorary secretary of the club, and Carl [sic] Keffer, the club professional.*
>
> *As he had been furnished some time ago with complete plans of the links, he was familiar with the lay-out, and was able to come to a quick decision about the nature of his recommendations. (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 May 1913, p. 4)*

Colt was able to submit his formal plans to the club the day after he arrived, and word of the changes he proposed to make was disseminated quickly.

> *The chief drawbacks to the present course are two, namely, first the fact that six of the present links run directly westward into the glare of the sun, and secondly that a number of the links lie so close together that balls struck by players on one hole are liable to strike players coming in the opposite direction.*
>
> *Mr. Colt yesterday framed a new route of play which, if adopted, would do away with both troubles – requiring, however, the construction of a number of additional greens. This new course would start at what is now the fourteenth green of the present course,*

> *which is close to the clubhouse, and from this tee the players would drive north to a green at the point where the present fourteenth tee is.*
>
> *In addition to planning a new route of play, Mr. Colt staked out yesterday a large number of prospective bunkers, and some of the long handicap stalwarts of the club are likely to have to order snowshoes to get around among the sands. (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 May 1913, p. 4)*

The "number of additional greens" that Colt recommended was "ten," and he also recommended "taking in half of the new nine-hole links" for his new 18-hole championship routing (*Ottawa Journal*, 30 May 1913, p. 4).

Note that Colt's plan to build ten new greens does not necessarily mean that he was planning to build ten new holes, and it need not even mean that he intended to change the location of ten old greens. If the sin of an original Bendelow green was not its location, but rather the abomination of being too flat, Colt may simply have planned to create an undulating green on the very site of the flat green that offended him.

Furthermore, a Bendelow green might simply have been too large for Colt's strategic purposes, for Colt advocated "the use of smaller greens on all one-shot holes and those which are laid out for a drive and a mashie [equivalent to a 5-iron today] so as to demand that the shot to the green must be very accurate as to distance and played with a sufficient amount of cut upon it to hold in a small place" (*Atlanta Georgian* [Georgia], 20 July 1913, p. 2c).

We also learn that "Some of the holes may be shortened and others lengthened, but the home green will likely remain as it now is" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 30 October 1913, p. 9).

The newspaper writer's reference to shortening and lengthening holes may reflect a misunderstanding of Colt's revolutionary introduction of multiple tee boxes on his golf courses:

> *There is … one great feature that appeals to me – the elasticity of a course…. There is no doubt that a series of tees, whereby the length of a hole can be altered with varying conditions, is an advantage…. If we take a new course, for instance, the run of the ball will increase with the age of the links, as the surface of the ground becomes firmer with play. The distance of a tee shot will also vary enormously in summer and winter…. So that at holes where, under normal conditions, there is no long carry off the tee it will be*

> *advantageous to be able to obtain more length by using a back tee to suit the varying conditions of the surface of the ground, and also possibly the wind. ("Golf Architecture," p. 72).*

Furthermore, "In making the different teeing grounds it will be possible to gain a little extra variety by playing the tee shot at different angles to the course; thus a teeing ground made at some thirty yards or so to the right or left of the one in front will very likely create additional interest in the round, and be better than one made exactly behind it" ("Golf Architecture," p. 75).

Colt's Drawings

Among his many innovations, Colt pioneered the drawing of detailed diagrams of the layouts that he proposed to build.

After spending about ten days in the spring of 1911 on the land in Etobicoke recently acquired by the Toronto Golf Club for the construction of its new 18-hole golf course, Colt submitted a detailed scale-drawing of the layout – a portion of which is shown below.

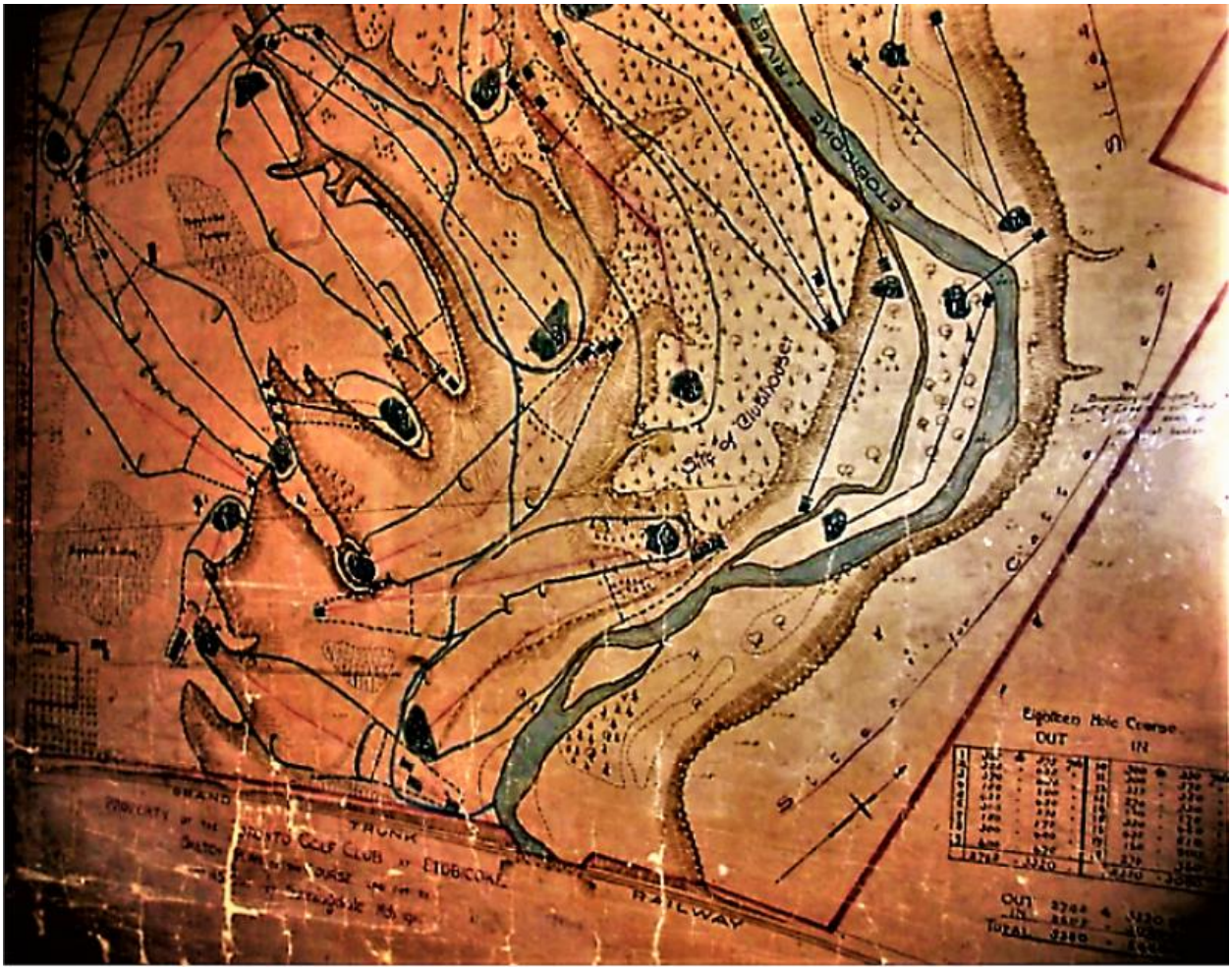

Figure 34 A detail from Colt's 1911 design for the 18-hole golf course of the Toronto Golf Club as displayed in the clubhouse of the Toronto Golf Club.

In addition to a detailed drawing of a golf course as a whole, such as he submitted to the Toronto Golf Club, Colt came to provide detailed drawings of each of his layouts' eighteen holes -- although apparently not at Toronto.

As noted by Dr. Martin Hawtree, the architect responsible both for the widely acclaimed Colt-restoration at the Toronto Golf Club and for similar projects at twenty or so of Colt's other courses, and third in a line of golf architects beginning with his grandfather Frederick George Hawtree (1883-1955), followed by his father Frederick William Hawtree (1916-2000), the latter also the author of *Colt and Co.: Golf Course Architects*, one can see from "reading between the lines of his Toronto report" in 1913 that Colt "was clearly a little disappointed in what he found during his return visit and it has always been my feeling that he began to realize something more than a layout plan was needed for the realization of his ideas and so proceeded to prepare very detailed plans" for his subsequent projects (email to the author, 29 November 2021).

Colt had begun to prepare the “very detailed plans” in question before submitting his plans for the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, as we can see by the comprehensive hole-by-hole drawings that he submitted to the Old Elm Club of Chicago on 27 April 1913, less than three weeks before his visit to Ottawa.

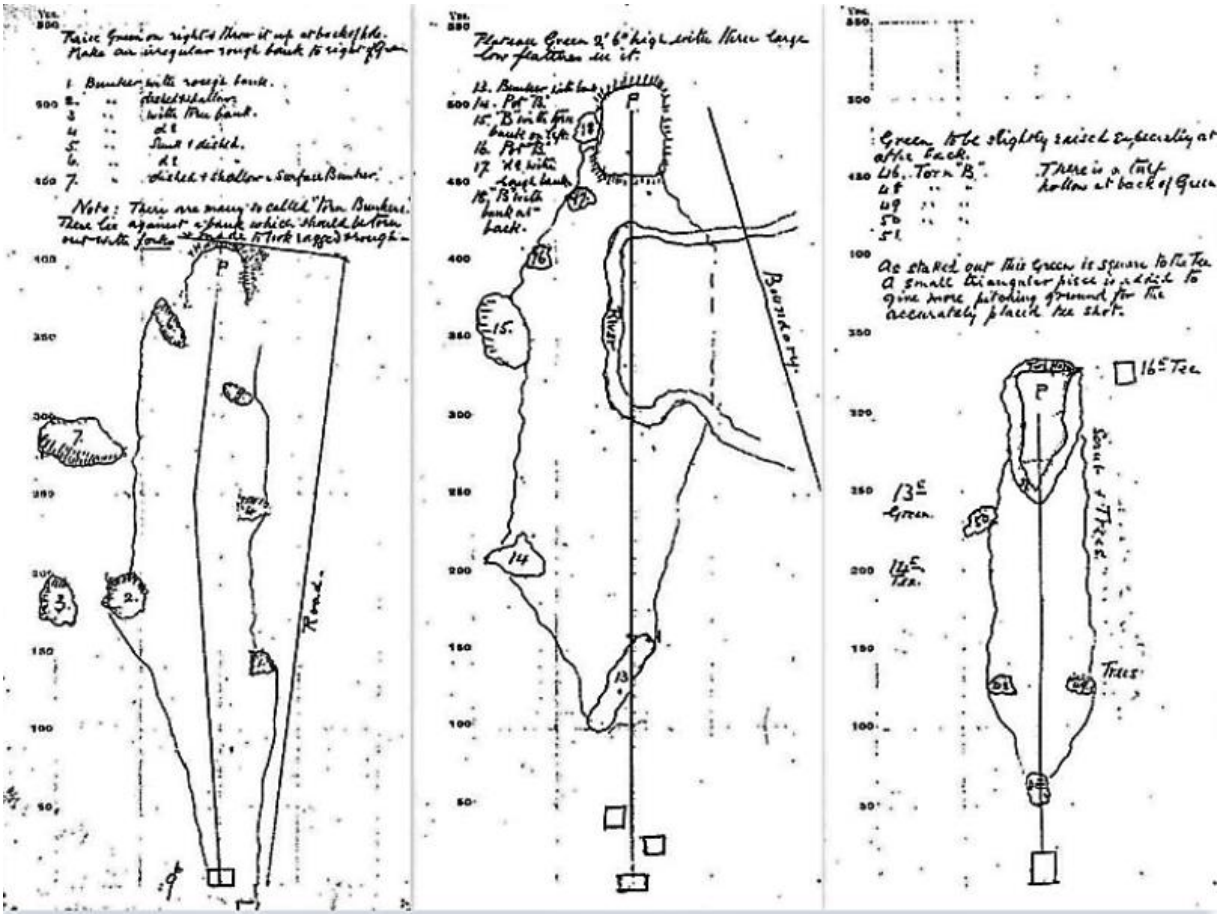

Figure 35 Colt's drawings for the 1st, 4th, and 15th holes of the Old Elm Club, Chicago, Illinois, 27 April 1913.

Below is an image of Colt’s drawing of the par-five fourth hole.

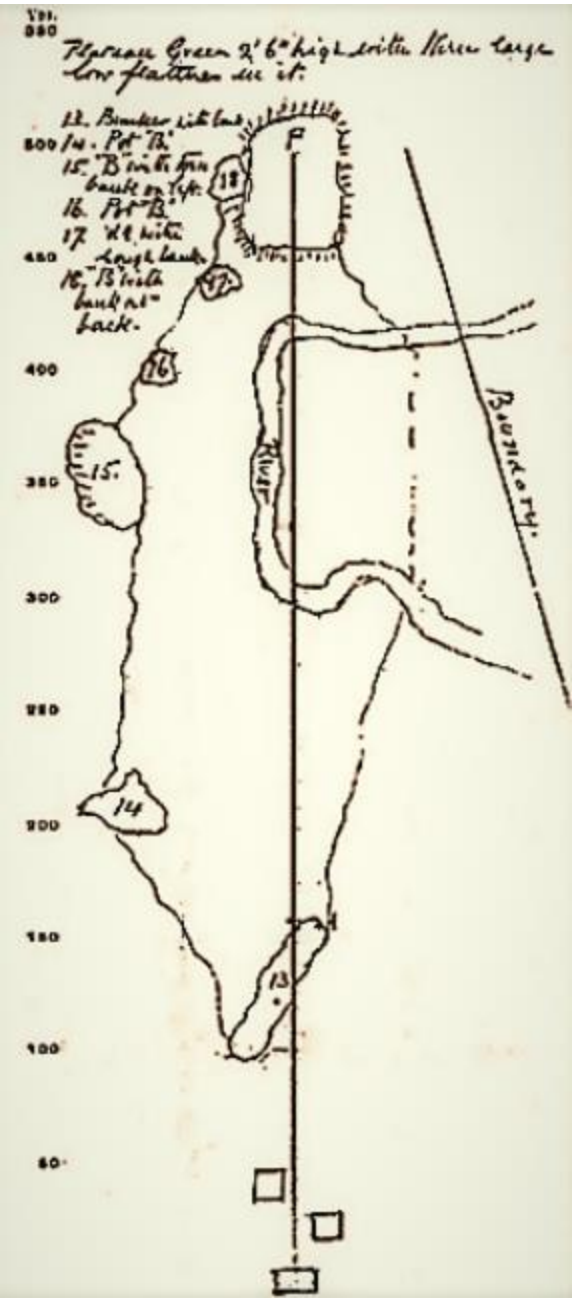

Figure 36 Colt's drawing of the 4th hole for the Old Elm Club, Chicago, Illinois, 27 April 1913.

The left border of Colt's design pad shows distance in yards from 0 to 550 (he made 500 yards the limit for the par-five holes he designed). He perhaps used the same pad for his Royal Ottawa drawings.

The hole begins with three tee boxes located variously in relation to the centre of the line of play, which twice crosses the Skokie River that cuts across the boundary line into the golf course property. A green and six bunkers are marked in relation to the outline of the fairway. (The bunkers are numbered in relation to the first and last bunkers on the course: these are the thirteenth to eighteenth of the total number of bunkers.)

Colt's instructions read:

Plateau Green 2' 6" high with three large low features in it.

13. Bunker with bank.

14. Pot "B."

15. "B" with torn bank on left.

16. Pot "B."

17. ditto with rough bank.

18. "B" with bank at back.

Shortly after Donald J. Ross completed his collaborative work with Colt in Chicago, he returned to east coast and explained to a New York newspaper the goals of the Old Elm Club course design, in general, and he also described in particular detail how the design features of the fourth hole sketched above would provide a true test of golf for players of all abilities:

There seems to have been a change in ideas regarding course construction in recent years, according to various golf architects, as the laying out of links for the "tired businessman" evidently has been put into the discard. Instead, there now appears a demand for something that will provide as far as possible a true test of golf.

The time was when members of clubs in contracting for the laying out of a course stipulated that it should not be "too severe," for the reason that fun and exercise were the paramount issues. Nowadays, however, the desire is quite the other way. Bunkers on the putting greens would be acceptable if it would ensure a modern circuit.

Donald Ross, the former open champion of Massachusetts, who has done considerable traveling of late for the purpose of planning courses, takes this as an encouraging sign for the best development of the game. There are others who agree with him. There is no doubt that the general standard of golf in America can only attain as high a plane as the British Isles when links in the United States are made more exacting. Accuracy is thus compelled, and good results to a player's game are bound to come. The resourcefulness in the golfer to overcome either natural or artificial hazards is thus developed.

Not long since Ross returned from a trip to the west and, in the course of his peregrinations, collaborated with H.S. Colt of Sunningdale, England, one of the best-known links experts, in planning the new circuit for the Old Elm Club of Chicago….

The ground obtained by the club covers some 160 acres of rolling, undulating land, declared ideal for golf purposes. One of the features is the ground lends itself admirably to the construction of bunkers, much after the style of the hazards on seaside courses in Europe….

An example of what the player will be up against is at the fourteenth [this word represents a typographical error; it should read "fourth"], some 440 yards long. The Skokie River intersects the fairway. For the second shot there are three traps to the left to be avoided and the river to the right, with about thirty yards of fairway between the two. More bunkers guard the drive. The long player can keep to the left, and either carry the bunkers near the green or go through the narrow neck of the fairway between the traps and the river.

> *For the shorter and more cautious player the drive will be to the right, and the second shot across the river to a piece of fair green on an island, about forty-five yards wide. He will then have to cross the river again on his approach. (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 21 August 1913, p. 9)*

Colt and Ross clearly agree that golf courses need to be laid out in such a way as to provide for expert and average players alike both pleasure and a proper test of ability. Ross clearly explains above how the fourth hole at the Old Elm Club accomplishes this goal.

Presumably, Colt and Ross found themselves in agreement about a wide range of fundamental design principles.

To his Old Elm Club plans, Colt added an important general instruction regarding construction practices: "There are many so-called 'Torn Bunkers.' These lie against a bank which should be torn out with *forks* and made to look ragged rough."

He left even more detailed instructions for the construction of particular bunkers and turf hollows, as well as for the banks associated with them: he did this because his construction techniques for ensuring that these elements of a golf course would prove both strategically effective and aesthetically pleasing were absolutely new, and he also knew that he would not be on site to supervise their construction. Although in Great Britain he would often visit the site where his golf courses were being built, he was never present in the United States or Canada during the construction of any of the golf courses that he designed or redesigned.

And so, in the drawing for the fourth hole of the Old Elm Club golf course, he specifies the height of the plateau green right down to the inch: "2' 6" high." He would do the same for bunkers, turf hollows, and earth banks.

Similarly, in his essays and books about golf course architecture, Colt provided photographs of various greens and bunkers that demonstrated the results he expected from the construction of greens and hazards according to his instructions.

For example, in his 1912 essay "Golf Architecture," Colt offered the photograph below as an example of what he called "A Good Bunker": it happens to be one of his "Torn Bunkers."

Figure 37 H.S. Colt, "Golf Architecture," in The Book of the Links*, ed, Martin H.F. Sutton [London: W.H. Smith & Son, 1912], pp. 74-75. The photograph is called "A Good Bunker."*

The bunker is built against a bank of grass typical of the grass in the area, with the edge of the bank torn away with forks so as to produce a ragged and rough appearance as though it were produced by nature.

After he completed his work at Chicago, Colt was waylaid on his way to Canada by representatives of Detroit's Bloomfield Hills Country Club, which, like Royal Ottawa, was interested in having its Tom Bendelow design of 1909 modernized:

> *in the Spring of 1913, at the Board's direction, the club's first professional, Wilbur Oakes, convinced Henry Shapland "Harry" Colt, the famous English golf architect, who was designing a golf course in Highland Park, Illinois (Old Elm Club), to stop in Bloomfield Hills on his way to other venues [in Montreal and Ottawa] …. Being intrigued by the rolling terrain in the Detroit suburbs, Harry Colt advised the Bloomfield Board that if they could purchase fifty more contiguous acres of land, he could most definitely design a superb new golf course for them.*
>
> *Colt's routing of the course was completed in short measure, but, as was his custom, he left the physical building of the course to others, and he continued on his travels. (https://www.bloomfieldhillscc.org)*

We can see below examples of Colt's bunkering for Bloomfield Hills: in the foreground is the eighth green, guarded by a wide, deep bunker running across its front edge. On the left side of the photograph is the ninth green, located between two bunkers in front of the clubhouse.

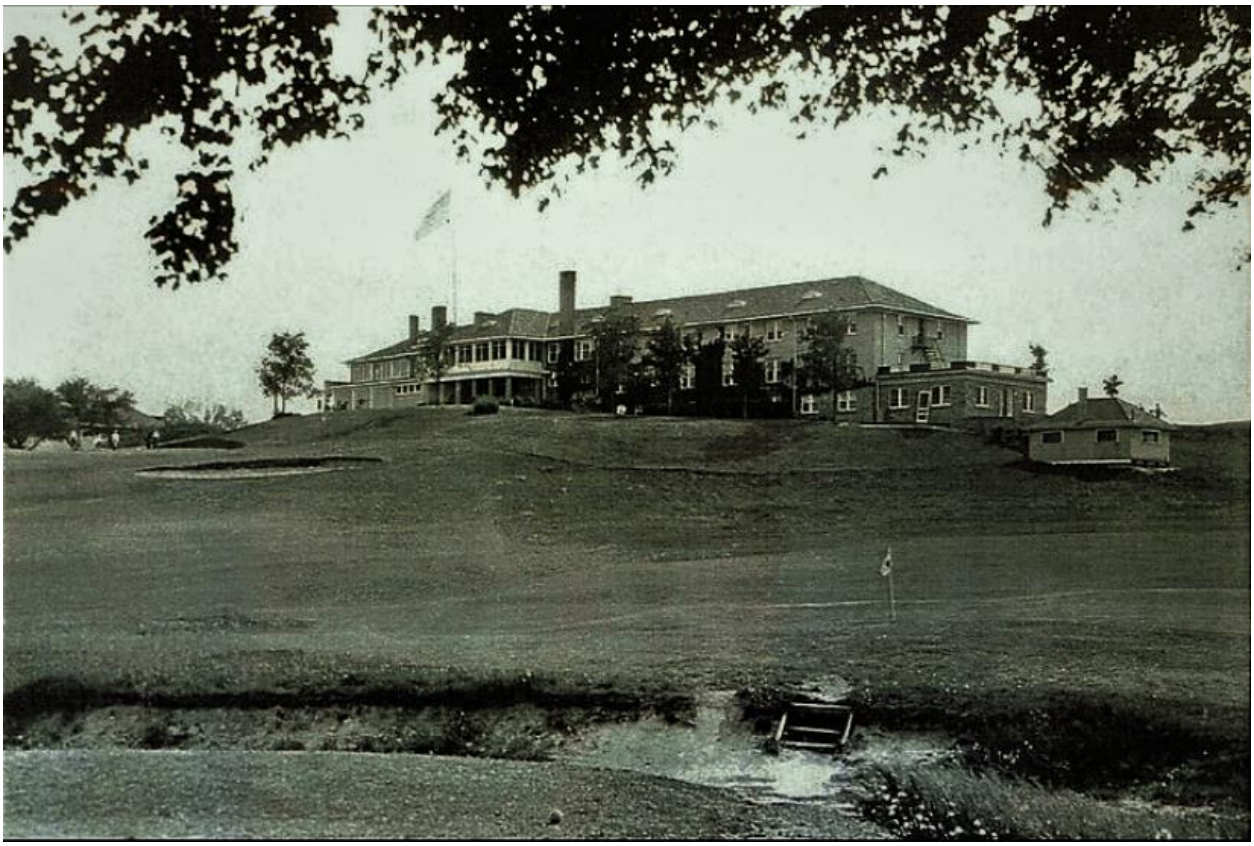

Figure 38 Bloomfield Hills Country Club's golf course, designed by Harry Colt in 1913. 8th green beyond bunker in foreground; 9th green between two bunkers on left side of photograph.

After leaving Canada in late May of 1913, Colt travelled to New Jersey where he spent a week advising owner George Crump on the routing of his 18-hole course at Pine Valley. Crump had provisionally routed a golf course on his land in 1912 but was uncertain in the face of certain problems, especially in regard to how to move play across the river running through the property. Before sailing back to England at the beginning of June, Colt submitted a plan for an 18-hole golf course. (Crump integrated much of Colt's plan into his own preliminary design, which began a process of collaboration between Crump and a variety of golf architects and the best golfers of the day as he sought advice on the development of his course until he took his own life in 1918.)

Colt's plan for the 18-hole course, drawn up just two weeks after submitting his plan for a new 18-hole routing for the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, can be seen below.

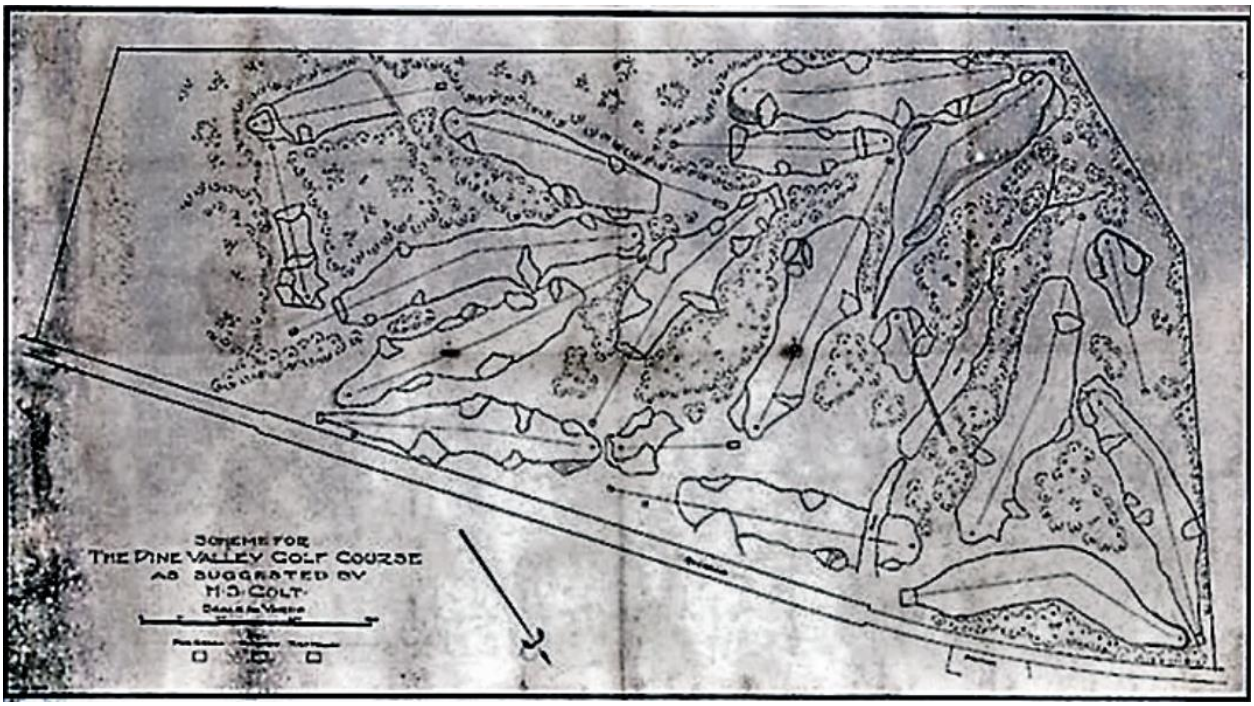

Figure 39 Colt's plan for Pine Valley Golf Course, June 1913.

As he did in Chicago in April, Colt submitted hole-by-hole drawings for Pine Valley in June.

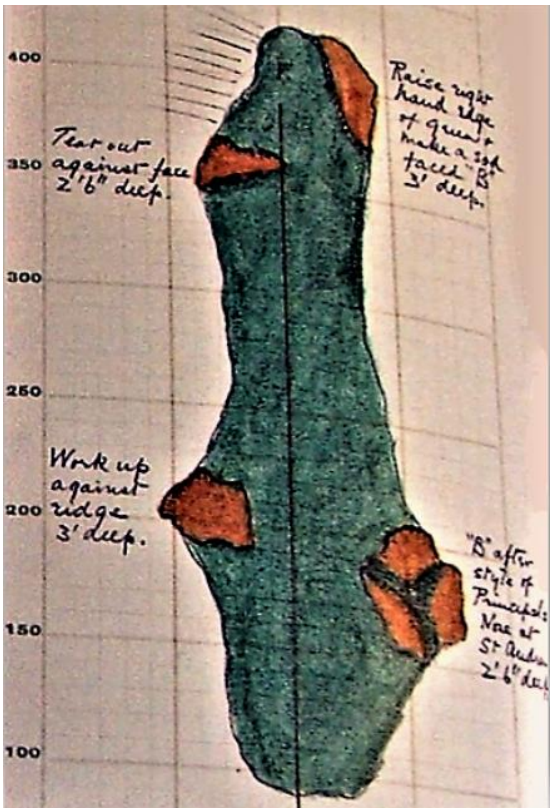

Figure 40 Harry Colt's drawing of the fairway and green for his planned 9th hole at Pine Valley, June 1913.

Unlike the hole-by-hole drawings done for the Old Elm Club, the Pine Valley drawings were painted with water-colours.

Colt did the same less than a year later when, as we know, he laid out an 18-hole golf course in Ancaster, Ontario, for the Hamilton Golf and Country Club at the end of April and beginning of May in 1914.

Fortunately, both his blueprint for the golf course and his drawings for each of the 18 holes survive.

On the blueprint reproduced below, the golf holes are all drawn accurately according to scale. The length of the holes, the shape of their greens, and the location of the tee boxes, as well as the size and location of bunkers and turf hollows, are all marked accurately on this blueprint.

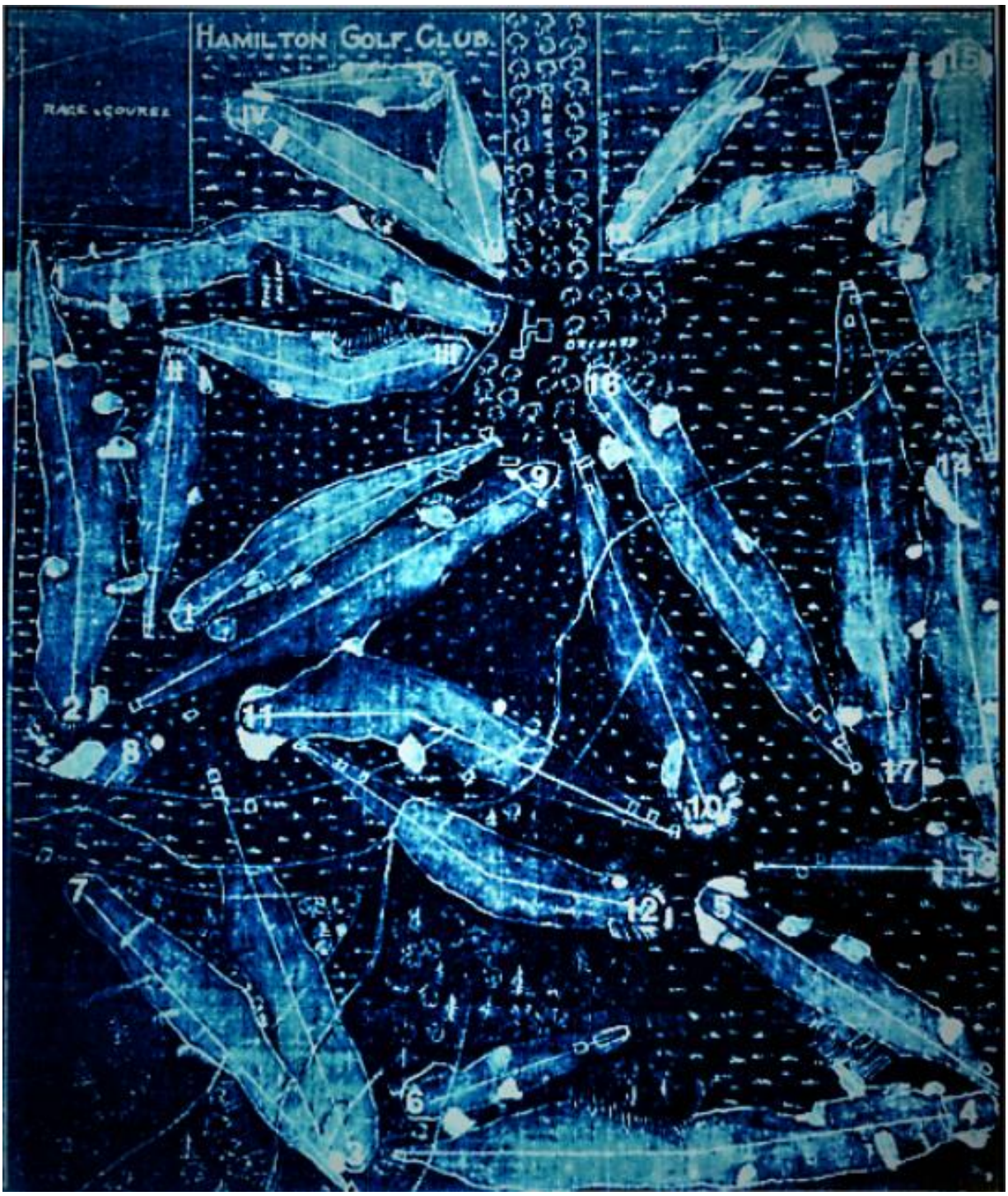

Figure 41 H.S. Colt, blueprint for the 18-hole Ancaster course of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, May 1914.

In his detailed illustration of each hole drawn above, Colt specified the exact depth of bunkers and the exact depth of what he called "turf hollows" (more commonly called "grass bunkers" today), as well as the precise height of banks to be built along the sides of bunkers, turf hollows., and greens. See below,

for example, his illustration of the fourteenth hole (which appears in the middle of the far-right side of the blueprint above).

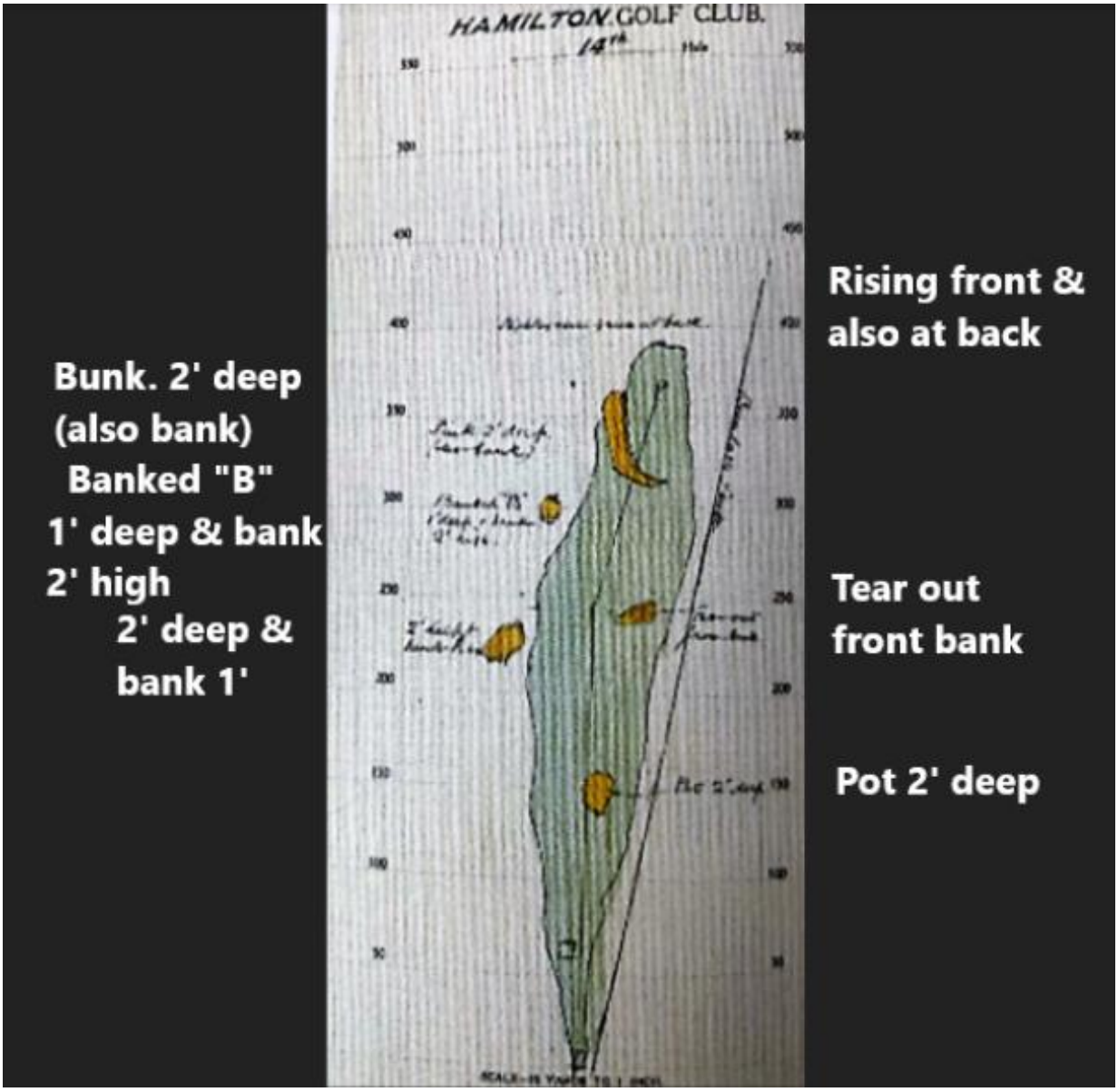

Figure 42 Colt's drawing for the par-three 14th hole of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club located at Ancaster, Ontario, dated May 1914. Colt's handwritten instructions are reproduced in the margins above as printing left and right of the relevant text.

As it is depicted in the drawing seen directly above, the green that Colt designed for the fourteenth hole at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club in 1914, with a 2-foot-deep bunker curling around its front left quadrant, is reminiscent of the fourth green at the Sunningdale golf course that Colt had designed several years before. As can be seen in the photograph below, which Colt included in his 1912 essay "Golf Architecture," the similarly oblong fourth green at Sunningdale has a bunker of similar depth ranging alongside the same front left quadrant of the green.

Figure 43 The 4th green at the Sunningdale Golf Club, in H.S. Colt, "Golf Architecture," pp. 74-75.

With its own blueprint, detailed drawings for each of the 18 holes that Colt designed, specific written directions regarding construction techniques, the height and depth indicated for bunkers, turf hollows, banks, and so on, and photographs to be consulted in Colt's essays in *The Book of the Links*, Secretary Jackson, head pro Keffer and greenkeeper James McCarthy (or McCartie) would have been in no doubt as to how to proceed with alterations and improvements at Royal Ottawa.

Since Colt recommended that ten new greens be built, and yet seems not to have planned ten new holes (after all, only six holes were problematically oriented toward the setting sun and just the fourteenth hole was to be reversed), he may have planned new green complexes for a number of existing holes, in which case he would have provided a detailed drawing for the suggested new greens.

An example of Colt's drawings for the creation of new greens on existing holes can be seen below in a drawing called "Suggested New 17th Green" which he presented to the stewards of the Eden Course at St. Andrews, Scotland. Colt had been asked to design this new 18-hole golf course at St. Andrews in late 1913 and early 1914, and so, also contemporary with his work at Royal Ottawa, we see here another example of the kind of explicit instructions that were part of the drawings submitted in support of his redesign proposals.

Figure 44 Harry S. Colt, "Suggested New 17th Green," Eden Course, St. Andrews.

Three sand bunkers guard the front of the green, each with a bank two or three feet high on its green side. There is a mound on the right side and a mound at the back, each three feet high. And there are turf hollows on the right and left, each three feet deep.

The plan for “re-laying” the Ottawa golf course that Colt submitted to the Royal Ottawa Golf Club in the middle of May in 1913 must have comprised drawings and text like those seen above in connection with the holes planned for the Old Elm Club, the Pine Valley Golf Course, the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, and the Eden course at St Andrews – plans submitted at these other golf clubs immediately before and after his work in Ottawa.

Colt’s detailed plans for the Ottawa course were made available for inspection by Royal Ottawa members almost the day they were submitted, and reaction to them was swift and intense.

Immediate Resistance to Colt's Plans

The proposal to reverse the fourteenth hole became a symbol of the radical nature of Colt's plan – for many, "too radical" (*Ottawa Journal*, 30 May 1913, p. 4).

The hole in question remains the same today; it can be seen in the contemporary photograph below which looks south from an area between the fourteenth and tenth fairways towards the green of the fourteenth hole (which Colt proposed to make a tee).

Figure 45 Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 2 (June 1917, p. 91. The caption reads: "The Royal Ottawa Golf Course. Looking towards the 14th green and the 10th and 15th tees. Clubhouse in the distance."*

Less than two days after Colt's arrival in Ottawa, word of his plans for the fourteenth hole began to spread. A reporter for the *Ottawa Journal* noted on Wednesday, May 14th, that "Mr. H.S. Colt, the British golf links expert, who is now laying out a course for the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, suggests that play be started from the present 14th hole" (p. 5). Another writer in the same edition of the newspaper turned the idea into a joke: "Mr. H.S. Colt, the British golf link expert, who is now laying out a course for the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, suggests play be started from the present 14th hole. Good idea. We'll start there and let the other fellow begin at [the] first, as usual" (14 May 1913, p. 5).

But for Club members, Colt's plans were no joke.

Although some argued that Colt's proposals should be accepted and that construction should begin immediately, a majority of members wanted nothing to do with the proposals for rerouting golf holes. Few people were neutral.

It took just two weeks for a vote to be organized to put a stop to the most radical elements in Colt's plan:

> *Ottawa Golf Club Votes Down Plan*
>
> *Will Not Remodel Links on Expert's Advice*
>
> *Plans Would Involve Heavy Bill of Expense*
>
> *Members Decide that Improvements in Clubhouse are More Important – Changes on Links Too Radical – Several Suggestions Will Be Acted Upon*
>
> *After a two hours' discussion, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club decided against acting upon the advice of Mr. Colt, the British expert who recently made an inspection of the local club links and planned a number of radical changes. The expense in connection with the proposed changes, coupled with the fact that the club already have a heavy bill of expense on their hands with the laying of a new drainage system at the club house, caused the rejection of the motion to proceed with the work. Some of the suggestions will be taken up, mostly in connection with improving the present course.*
>
> *Colt's advice consisted of the laying down of ten new greens, taking in half of the new nine-hole links, as well as many minor alterations. The cost of such alterations would be very large and the taking in of a section of the new nine-hole course would necessitate the laying down of another course. (*Ottawa Journal*, 30 May 1913, p. 4)*

Colt had crossed the line in the sand that Ross's *Ottawa Journal* had mentioned 18 days before his visit. Perhaps Colt had planned to integrate half of the new nine-hole course into his new 18-hole course even before he left England for North America.

Keeping Colt's Plans Alive

Ross had warned in April that any plan that would cost the Club its new nine-hole course would likely fail.

And he was right.

But Ross certainly was not happy to have been proven right, for he supported Colt's plans. A few months later, he was probably responsible for the following observation in the *Ottawa Journal*: "Mr. H.S. Colt … was recently invited to go over the links here. He did so, and submitted a new plan for the course which is recognized to be likely to be a great improvement on the present one" (8 July 1913, p. 4). Convinced that Royal Ottawa's golf course needed the "great improvement" promised by Colt, Ross sprang into action at the Club meeting on May 29th when it became clear that the tide of opinion was running against approval of Colt's plans. Rather than see these plans die ignominiously in the face of myriad objections by those who could not be brought to acknowledge that the golf course would be improved by them, at a decisive moment, Ross presented a motion that would defer a final decision on the matter:

> *Vice-President H.K. Egan was in the chair at the meeting and between fifty and sixty members were present. After nearly two hours' discussion the following motion was moved by Mr. P.D. Ross:*
>
> *"That the question of adopting the course recommended by Mr. Colt be left in abeyance until next annual meeting, and that meanwhile the committee be requested to proceed with improvement upon the lines suggested by Mr. Colt of such parts of the present course as Mr. Colt's plan utilizes." (*Ottawa Journal*, 30 May 1913, p. 4)*

"The next annual meeting" would not be until the early months of 1914. Ross had bought Colt supporters another 8 months to work on their recalcitrant fellow members.

The fifty to sixty Club members who attended the May meeting were the regular golfers in the Club, which had over 300 members. Ross had pragmatically engineered a compromise between those, like himself, who wanted to proceed with Colt's plans and a larger group with a variety of opposing views: artificial bunkers would be ugly; the cost of the alterations was too great; the new nine-hole course should not be tampered with; the Bendelow course was fine as it was.

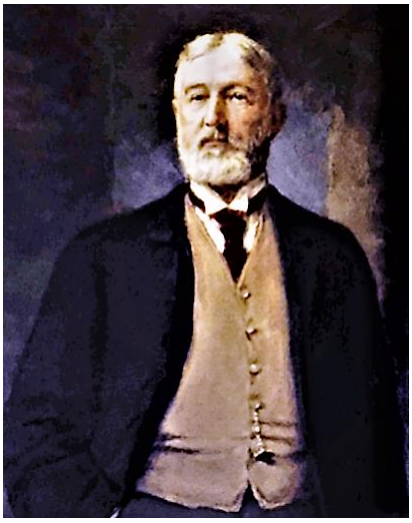

Figure 46 Portrait of Sir Walter James Pringle Cassels.

Judge Walter G.P. Cassels, Chief Justice of the Exchequer Court of Canada (to be knighted in 1917), was impatient of such a compromise and tried to force the issue: "Judge Cassels moved in amendment that the club adopt the plans and that they proceed with the work as rapidly as finances would permit, but this amendment was defeated by a large majority" (*Ottawa Journal*, 30 May 1913, p. 4).

As a result of Ross's motion, then, there was to be a theoretical and a practical "meanwhile."

In the one meanwhile, a decision about the parts of Colt's plans that involved reversing the fourteenth hole, rerouting other holes, and using half of the new nine-hole course in a new championship layout, would be deferred until January or February of 1914 so that debate about the matter could continue.

In the other meanwhile, the executive committee was directed to "proceed with improvement upon the lines suggested by Mr. Colt of such parts of the present course as Mr. Colt's plan utilizes."

If, in addition to reversing the fourteenth hole, the "radical" parts of Colt's plan involved some combination of either rerouting the six holes played into the setting sun or replacing them with holes from the nine-hole course, then most of the holes on the "present course" mentioned in Ross's motion – perhaps eleven of them – would still have been used in Colt's plan and so his drawings for alterations on these holes would presumably have been used to guide the improvements authorized with the approval of Ross's motion.

1913 Work According to Colt's Plans

And so, on 30 May 1913, Colt's plans for alterations to more than half of the holes on the Bendelow course were approved.

The modernizing strategy behind the plan that Colt presented clearly persuaded a majority of members that "some of the suggestions" it contained – "mostly in connection with improving the present course" – should immediately be taken up, in advance of the decisive vote at the 1914 annual meeting about whether the plans as a whole should be approved (*Ottawa Journal*, 30 May 1913, p. 4).

The "several suggestions" that would be acted upon with regard to "the present course" were described as "minor alterations." And no doubt any kind of work on existing golf holes seemed minor in comparison to rerouting and abandoning holes on the original golf course. The work undertaken seems to have involved construction of some new tee boxes and new bunkers, and may also have involved changing the contours of certain areas in fairways and around greens, as well as lengthening or shortening certain holes (which could have been achieved relatively quickly and simply with new tee box construction) – and perhaps even adding slopes to certain greens, and elevating others.

Probably the first work undertaken was the building of new bunkers.

Colt had actually staked out the bunkers in question on May 12th, so construction could have proceeded as of May 29th bunker by bunker as labourers were available for the task. And of course starting with the construction of bunkers that had been staked-out along the sides of fairways, as opposed to those that would be built around greens, would probably have allowed play on the course to continue during the golf season.

Wing bunkers for the greens could have been built in the fall.

In Ottawa in 1913, however, the end-of-the-season construction work on the golf course seems to have involved more than installation of bunkers.

Club member E.L. Howard wrote a poem in the fall of 1913, called "Some Personal Golfing Characteristics," in which he refers to Colt's backers who "Propose a bunker here, / With slopes to run your shot" (*Ottawa Journal*, 18 December 1913, p. 5). These lines are important, for they suggest that the motion passed in May to "proceed with improvement upon the lines suggested by Mr. Colt of such parts of the present course as Mr. Colt's plan utilizes" authorized not just bunkering, but also the

contouring of various areas – fairways, rough, and perhaps even greens – with "slopes to run your shot" down into a bunker.

As we know, these sorts of bunkers with a "draw" into them were a standard feature of Colt's designs: "The ground can be gradually sloped down to the proposed level of the bottom of the hazard. A small bunker with a draw into it is often more serviceable than a large sandy waste" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 85-86).

Even without rerouting any golf holes as called for in the "radical" parts of Colt's plan, these changes would impact playing strategy on the Royal Ottawa golf course: with bunkers to catch wayward shots, and with slopes to run poorly played balls into these bunkers or away from the green, there would be no more reckless blasting away, heedless of the direction or the distance that one's golf ball travelled.

The Colt-inspired alterations of the golf course undertaken fairly early in 1913 seem to have sufficiently impressed the directors of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club that by the fall of 1913, in order to undertake the full scope of Colt's recommendations for radical alterations of the golf course, they were considering giving up the opportunity to host the Canadian amateur championships in 1914:

> *It is Ottawa's turn for the championship, which has not been held here for several years, but at present the officers of the Royal Ottawa Club are considering a plan for the altering of their entire course. The re-laying of the links was recommended by a British expert, who visited the grounds last year [actually, in May of 1913], but his suggestions were left in abeyance for the time being. Recently the executive re-opened the matter and now it is said that they favor many changes on the present 18-hole course. It would take some time to carry into effect and if the club votes in favor of renovated links, it would not be advisable to undertake also the holding of the championships next summer. The matter may not be decided, however, until the annual meeting of the club takes place in the winter….*
>
> *While the Ottawa course is one of the finest in America, certainly the most picturesque and attractive, it has often been said that it is "too easy." Beginners, of course, may not find it so, but experts like Harold Hilton and others, who have gone round in 75 or under, believe that additional traps and hazards would improve it from a golfer's point of view. Some of the holes may be shortened and others lengthened, but the home*

> *green will likely remain as it now is. Many suggested changes are under consideration. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 30 October 1913, p. 9)*

The directors were among Colt's strongest backers at Royal Ottawa, and it seems they were determined not to take "no" for an answer from members.

At the closing prize-giving meeting of the 1913 season, members were reminded of the seriousness of the question of course improvements, and they were also apparently informed that significant aspects of Colt's plans had already been realized:

> *President Read and Secretary Jackson impressed upon members the importance of being present at the annual meeting in January, when the question of altering the links of the club will again come up for consideration. Considerable improvements have been made on the grounds during the past season, the changes embodying in minor degree some of the features of the plans submitted at the last annual meeting. The entire scheme will cost about $5,000 to carry out, and it will be for the members of the club to say whether they shall authorize the expenditure of this sum. As the Canadian championship tourney will be held over the course of the club next summer, action may be deferred until 1915. (*Ottawa Journal*, 18 December 1913, p. 5)*

The directors seem to have imagined that the Club's membership could be made as keen on the plan as they were and that, at worst, "action may be deferred until 1915" so as not to interfere with the Canadian amateur championship to be held on the course in the summer of 1914.

On this score, the directors were wrong.

Pro-Colt Propaganda

Over the course of the 1913 golf season, any particular bunkering work that occurred on the golf course was paralleled by propaganda work in support of Colt bunkering in general. That is, as a way of drumming up support for Colt's bunkering plans for Royal Ottawa, there seems to have been a concerted campaign by some of Royal Ottawa's best golfers to talk-up the genius of Colt's bunkering work in Toronto.

Figure 47 Gerald Oscar Lees, Ottawa Citizen*, 22 August 1912, p. 8.*

The Canadian amateur golf championship was held on the new course of the Toronto Golf Club in the summer of 1913. Ottawa sent 13 golfers to the tournament, including P.D. Ross, and it asked Karl Keffer to accompany one of the largest contingents of competitors sent to Toronto: his instructions were to help the Ottawa amateurs to cope with the challenges of a golf course the likes of which they had never seen before: "Karl Keffer, the Ottawa professional, leaves tomorrow for the tournament. He will not take part, of course …. Keffer will go along to assist the Ottawa players in their efforts to master the many hazards on the new Toronto links" (*Gazette* [Montreal], 27 June 1913, p. 6).

Keffer's reconnaissance work perhaps helped Royal Ottawa's club champion Gerald Lees to a second-place finish in the tournament. Lees had partnered with Keffer the year before in a celebrated match against Harold Hilton and Norman Hunter at Ottawa. Lees, alas, was fated for death: he would soon die in battle at the Belgian town of Langemark during World War I.

Keffer's study of the new course at Toronto in the summer of 1913 paid further dividends the following year when Keffer won the 1914 Canadian Open on the celebrated Colt course. This was the last Canadian Open held until 1919, for the

tournament was cancelled for the duration of World War I, in which Keffer would also serve.

The first members of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club to play the new course of the Toronto Golf Club came back to Ottawa not just complimenting its design in general, but raving about its use of hazards and its artificial bunkering:

> *The return of Ottawa golf players from Toronto from the championship meet of the Royal Canadian Golf Association has caused talk about vigorous steps to improve the course of the Ottawa Golf Club. The Toronto course was a revelation to Ottawa men in the line of a perfect fairway. The turf was splendid, and nowhere in the course could a bad lie be found – alas, a spot where the ball could not be hit well. On most golf courses in Canada, a first-class shot is quite liable to land a ball in a depression or worn spot or tuft of weeds where a second shot can not be played as advantageously as the first one merited. From this reproach the Toronto course is absolutely free. Also, the holes are so well laid out with regard to natural hazards, and in addition are so well "bunkered" with artificial hazards, that every wild shot is penalized. The course is no place for people whose whole idea of golf is to hit a ball hard. On the other hand straight hard-hitting is necessary to make a good round. (*Ottawa Journal*, 8 July 1913, p. 4).*

Colt would have been gratified by the way the Ottawa players recognized that he had achieved his objective of penalizing the "wild shot" by judicious incorporation of "natural hazards" into the layout and by the creation of bunkers as "artificial hazards."

The *Ottawa Journal* extensively quoted a Royal Ottawa member on the bunkering in particular:

> *The bunkering of the course has been little short of a work of genius. The bunkers are splendidly placed and splendidly constructed. About one hundred and thirty show on the course, but they are so well laid out that far from being blots on the landscape, the majority of them look like natural features, and rather add to the picturesqueness of the outlook.*
>
> *Notwithstanding the number of bunkers, the course need not worry any average player who exercises moderate care to keep straight. Each hole is provided with from two to four "tees" or starting points, so that a hole can be kept of moderate length and*

> *moderate difficulty for the average player in ordinary play, while in a championship meeting the longer and more difficult tee can be put in use. And nearly everywhere, the fair green is of generous width. (*Ottawa Journal*, 8 July 1913, p. 4)*

The anonymous, but knowledgeable, member of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club quoted by the *Ottawa Journal* was doing two things: first, articulating an appreciation of the principles of strategic design that Harry Colt had opposed to prevailing theories of penal design; second, reassuring Royal Ottawa members with average golfing abilities that a strategically bunkered golf course in Ottawa would not diminish their pleasure in the game or the natural look of their course, but rather would enhance both.

And so, the 13 Royal Ottawa players returning from the Toronto tournament, and no doubt their head pro Keffer also, confirmed the fears that had spread as a result of the essays published by Hilton and Leach at the end of 1912:

> *the Toronto course has set a new standard for golf courses in Canada. The Ottawa course is a magnificent one naturally, and has hitherto ranked as one of the best, if not even the foremost, in this country – but as a test of good golf, it is now felt to be not even a good second to the Toronto links. (*Ottawa Journal*, 8 July 1913, p. 4)*

A dangerous rival indeed!

The *Ottawa Journal*, however, was quick to tell readers – and to remind Royal Ottawa members – of the solution to this problem:

> *The Toronto course was laid out by the English architect, Mr. H.S. Colt, who was recently invited to go over the links here. He did so, and subsequently submitted a new plan for the course which is recognized to be likely a great improvement on the present one. However, as the cost and trouble would be serious, a decision as to what to do was postponed until next annual meeting. (Ottawa Journal, 8 July 1913, p. 4).*

It seems that no one who went to Toronto was in any doubt about the decision that Royal Ottawa should make: "The admiration excited by the new Toronto course among Canadian golfers in general will undoubtedly strengthen the feeling in the Ottawa club to set about improvements on the links here, particularly as the Canadian championship meeting has been offered to the Ottawa club for next year" (*Ottawa Journal*, 8 July 1913, p. 4).

The *Ottawa Journal*'s depiction earlier in the year of the Colt golf course of the Toronto Golf Club as a "dangerous rival" is now supplemented by a subtle suggestion that Royal Ottawa owes it to "Canadian golfers" to "set about improvements" of its links to match the standard set by Toronto's staging of the "Canadian championship meeting."

Ross's newspaper appeals first to Club members' pride, and then it appeals to their conscience.

It seems that Ross really wanted a Colt-designed golf course.

Anti-Colt Poetry

Some Personal Golfing Characterists.

Come list to me and you shall hear
Some golfing stories true,
Of famous games played by the boys,
Don't weary 'till I'm through.
For golf's a game of endless talk
And many a homely jest,
So I'll write my impressions down
And get it off my chest.

There is a movement in the air
To change our lovely ground,
Each time a member plays abroad
(With wisdom most profound)
He'll come back home and talk and talk,
His influence to exert,
'Till all the critics think they are
Golf architect's expert.

And so we hear that number one
Is easy for a three,
And number two's a perfect cinch
(Unless you hit a tree),
While number three and number four
Are easy for a child,
Unless you slice or pull your ball
Or otherwise go wild.

And so around the course they go,
Each hole's an easy par
(Unless you miss a drive or two)
(Or knock the ball too far).
So they propose a bunker here,
With slopes to run your shot,
'Tis my opinion 'fore they're through
They'll spoil the whole darn lot.

Figure 48 E.L. Howard, "Some Personal Golfing Characteristics," Ottawa Journal*, 18 December 1913, p. 5.*

But however farsighted P.D. Ross or the directors of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club might have been with regard to the ultimate advantages to be derived from Colt's plan, they perhaps did not see what was right in front of them: a confident and determined majority of members who were not just pretty happy with the Bendelow golf course as it was, but also very suspicious of the golf know-it-alls among them who pooh-poohed the course as old-fashioned, too simple and easy, and hopelessly unscientific.

In two columns of newspaper type below and beside the *Ottawa Journal* article about the reminder by President Read and Secretary Jackson of the importance of the annual Club meeting at the beginning of 1914 for deciding the contentious matter of course alterations, Club member E.L. Howard (an Ottawa architect) published a poem about the golf course and various Club members: the poem began with observations about the question of golf course alterations.

The first four stanzas of this poem, called "Some Personal Golfing Characteristics," are reproduced above. In them, Howard explains that he wants to get a few things "off [his] chest": he is not impressed by Club members who play abroad and come back home presenting themselves as profoundly wise golf

architects who are expert enough "to change our lovely ground": "'Tis my opinion 'fore they're through / They'll spoil the whole darn lot."

So much for the baker's dozen of Club members who went to Toronto and came back raving about the golf course made by the genius Harry Colt!

Howard also devotes a stanza of the poem to a portrait of fellow Club member P.D. Ross, depicting him as a good golfer, but also as a golf fanatic:

> *'Tis said that P.D. Ross's style*
>
> *Is something quite unique.*
>
> *'Tis ease and grace personified*
>
> *With brassie and with cleek.*
>
> *Each night before he goes to bed,*
>
> *His clubs he swings them all,*
>
> *And in his room you'll find he's knocked*
>
> *The plaster off the wall.*
>
> *(*Ottawa Journal*, 18 December 1913, p. 5)*

For all the compliment that Howard offers Ross in terms of his golf swing, he also implies that Ross is one of those "critics" of the Royal Ottawa course, with "wisdom most profound," who played "abroad" in Toronto and came "back home" to "talk and talk, / His influence to exert" – as though knocking the plaster off the walls of his bedroom made him a "Golf architect's expert"!

Note that Howard writes his poem as some of Colt's alterations for the existing golf holes are being put into effect. Printed in the *Ottawa Journal* right above the first stanzas of his poem, we find a report that "Considerable improvements have been made on the grounds during the past season, the changes embodying in minor degree some of the features of the [Colt] plans submitted" (*Ottawa Journal*, 18 December 1913, p. 5).

One notes that Howard expresses no concern about Colt's "radical" proposals to reverse the fourteenth hole or to use half of the recently completed nine-hole course in a new championship course: he is

perhaps confident that these “radical” proposals will not be accepted, for a large majority of members had expressed pretty determined opposition to this aspect of Colt’s plans at the meeting at the end of May.

Instead, as we can see by his disdainful reference to those who “Propose a bunker here, / With slopes to run your shot,” Howard is worried about the “minor alterations” approved with the passing of Ross’s motion at the May meeting to “proceed with improvement upon the lines suggested by Mr. Colt of such parts of the present course as Mr. Colt’s plan utilizes.” These alterations, already underway in the fall of 1913, seem to have struck Howard not as “minor” (to use the term from May) but rather as indeed “considerable” (to use the term from October), and he was not at all convinced that they were “improvements.” In fact, he worried that “’fore they’re through / They’ll spoil the whole darn lot.”

So we know from contemporary reporting that although the improvements undertaken in 1913 were a “minor” part of Colt’s “radical” plans, their impact on the present golf course was “considerable.”

Howard’s reference not just to bunkers but to slopes that run inaccurate shots into a bunker shows that he had studied Colt’s drawings carefully enough to recognize how they would impact play on the course. They may even show that he had read Colt’s essay on “Golf Architecture”: “The ground can be gradually sloped down to the proposed level of the bottom of the hazard. A small bunker with a draw into it is often more serviceable than a large sandy waste” (“Golf Architecture,” pp. 85-86).

The plans that Colt submitted to the Royal Ottawa Golf Club in May of 1913 undoubtedly reflected the state of his art.

Royal Montreal's 1913 Colt Bunkers

So far, I have been unable to find contemporary photographs of the Colt bunkers that were built at Royal Ottawa either in 1913 or during the years of World War I (1914-19) – the years before the next architect, Willie Park, Jr, was hired in 1920 to update the golf course.

His work in Ottawa completed by mid-May of 1913, Colt was called back to Montreal "after … prices had been submitted" for the purchase of various possible golf course sites and "the club came to the conclusion that the figures asked were too high": "Mr. Colt was then instructed to go over the present course at Dixie and suggest improvements that could be made to better it" (*Gazette* [Montreal], 20 October 1913, p. 13).

His main suggestions for Royal Montreal involved bunkering, and, as in Ottawa, a number of the improvements recommended by him were undertaken before the end of the year:

> *The course was recently visited by Mr. H.S. Colt, who has made a name for himself in England and Scotland as a golf course architect. He made several suggestions for alterations which will be carried out during the coming autumn at the close of the season. Mr. Colt's suggestions will result in the course being made more difficult, by the addition of several bunkers of the hummock and pot varieties, which have been used so freely of late years on courses in the Old Country. (Gazette [Montreal], 5 July 1913, p. 8).*

Enthusiasm for Colt's plans must have been quite general, for "improvements had already started" even before the Club's annual meeting in January of 1914 when they were officially to be approved: the "chairman of the green committee outlined the proposed alterations to the course … and the plans were adopted by the gathering" (*Gazette* [Montreal], 31 January 1914, p. 18).

Images of Colt's bunkering work at the Dixie course of the Royal Montreal Golf Club between Colt's visit in 1913 and the reconstruction of the golf course in 1920, also by Willie Park, Jr, are few and far between.

In the photograph below, however, taken on 10 August 1916, one can see bunkers installed at the edge of the thirteenth green of Royal Montreal's Dixie course – bunkers likely to have been designed by Colt.

Figure 49 Colt bunkers tight to the green on the 13th hole of Royal Montreal's Dixie course, 10 August 1916.

On a different hole, one can also make out similar bunkers in a photograph taken one month later.

Figure 50 Colt bunkers tight to another green on the Royal Montreal Dixie course, 9 September 1916.

Placing bunkers close to greens to encourage accuracy became a staple of Colt's design work.

In 1913, however, such a bunkering practice was revolutionary. Even in the American South, where Colt never travelled, let alone laid out a golf course, he made news for the "placing of traps much closer to the green than ha[d] heretofore been customary" (*Atlanta Georgian* [Georgia], 20 July 1913, p. 2c).

The photographs above were each taken during a Red Cross Patriotic Match, a popular form of war-time match-play golf staged between celebrated golfers in order to raise money for war charities. The money came from tickets sold to spectators who were eager to watch match-play competition among the best professional and amateur players in Canada and the United States. In the first photograph, the well-attended match was the first leg of a home-and-away contest between the Ottawa team of Karl Keffer and Davie Black, on the one hand, and the Montreal team of brothers Charles and Albert Murray, on the other. In the second photograph, the Murray brothers take on Toronto golf professionals George Cumming and Willie Freeman.

The bunkers located tight to the greens in these photographs were presumably designed by Colt in the spring of 1913 and then built in the fall of 1913 or the spring of 1914. They no doubt reflect the kind of bunkering around greens that was installed at Royal Ottawa in accordance with Colt's plans. Colt illustrated this kind of bunkering in the photograph below of his 1908 fifth green at Stokes Poges.

Figure 51 The Book of the Links*, pp. 144-45.*

Aerial Photo Info

The earliest overhead aerial photograph of the 18-hole golf course that I can find is from a series of photographs in the National Aerial Photo Library dated 5 April 1933. In the photographs taken at this time, tees and greens are clearly visible, as well as most of the bunkers on the course. Note however, that the photographs were taken from a height of 10,200 feet with the camera technology of the early 1930s, so evidence of small bunkers – such as pot bunkers – is difficult to detect.

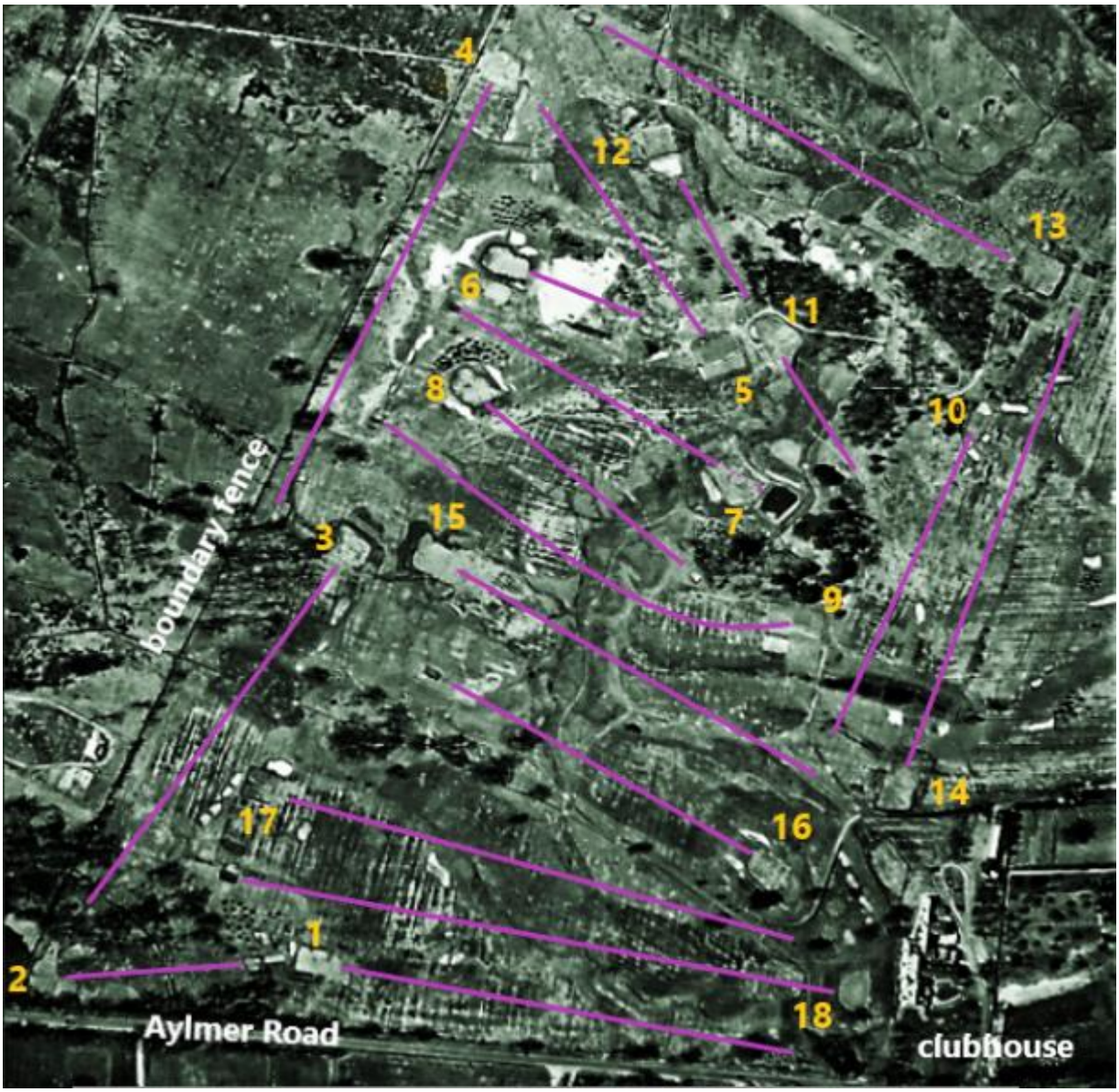

Figure 52 Aerial photograph dated 5 April 1933, enhanced, and annotated.

On the aerial photograph shown above, I can make out about 70 bunkers that have been laid out on the 18-hole golf course at some point since the apparent installation in 1909 of the bunkers on the 1st and 3rd holes on the recommendation of George Sargent.

Dating from 1903 would have been both the natural "sand pit" across which the tee shot on the short par-3 sixth hole was played and a similar natural sand bunker located between the sixth green and the fourth fairway.

There are earlier aerial photographs of the Ottawa-Gatineau area that contain a glimpse of the golf course, but the angle from which the photograph is taken is oblique, and to enlarge the photograph sufficiently to make out the holes on the golf course makes the image blurry.

Still, in the enlargement below of a detail from an aerial photograph taken around 1928, as the Champlain Bridge was nearing completion, most of the 18 holes can be made out and, more importantly, specific green complexes with large bunkers can also be identified.

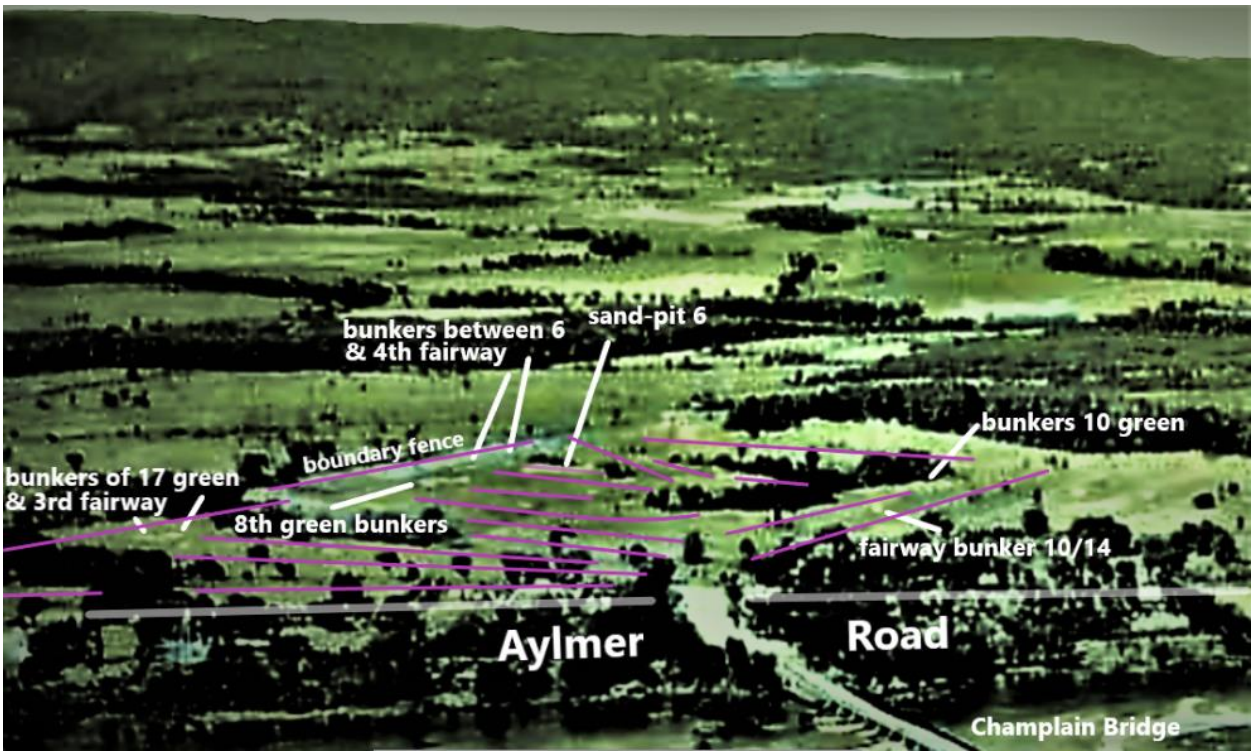

Figure 53 Aerial photograph circa 1928, enlarge, annotated.

There is an even earlier – and blurrier, and even more oblique – image from 1925 in which some of the same bunkered areas can be discerned.

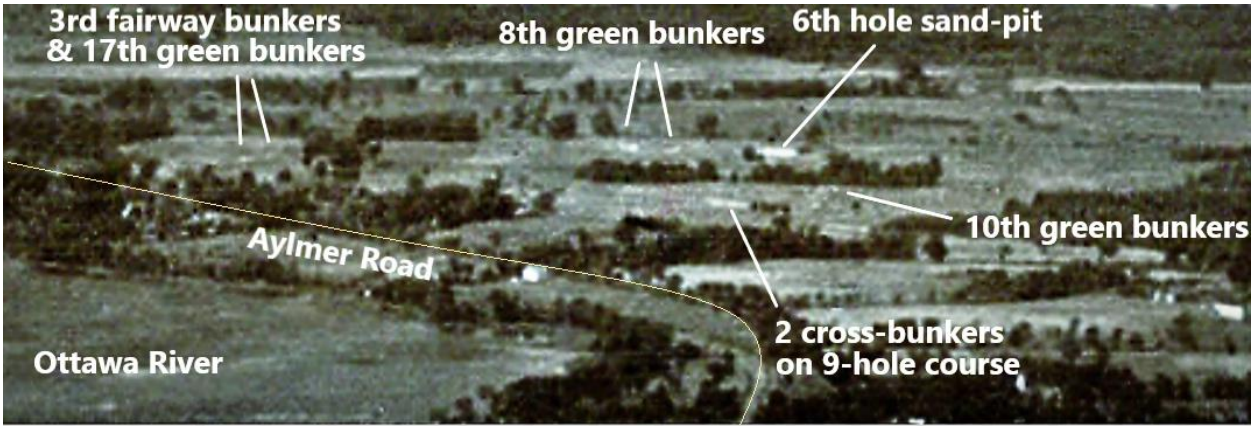

Figure 54 Enhanced and annotated aerial photograph circa 1925, Toronto Public Library.

On the one hand, perhaps eight of the 70 or so bunkers discernible in the 1933 aerial photograph one page above date from between 1903 and 1909.

On the other hand, in 1920, Royal Ottawa commissioned Willie Park, Jr, to submit redesign plans. Subsequently, alterations according to these plans were slowly introduced over the next four years, producing by the spring of 1925 a longer course of 6,440 yards (just under 200 yards longer than the 6,270-yard course that Tom Bendelow laid out in 1903).

How many of the bunkers that can be made out in the 1933 aerial photograph might be attributable to the plans of Willie Park?

I suggest below that several forms of evidence indicate that most of the bunkering visible in the photographs above was installed according to the plans of Harry Colt.

Colt Bunkering 1915 - 1917

Intriguing references to bunkering at the Royal Ottawa golf course appear in various newspapers and magazines published well before Willie Park arrived in Ottawa in the spring of 1920. They deserve careful attention in terms of what they might indicate about Colt's influence on bunkering at Royal Ottawa between 1913 and 1919.

In anticipation of the national championships to be held at Royal Ottawa in the summer of 1914, reference was made to players not familiar with the course intending to "come to Ottawa a day or two in advance in order that they may become accustomed to the traps and hazards of the local course" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 13 June 1914, p. 1). This distinction between "traps and hazards" on the Ottawa golf course is implicitly a distinction between artificial sand traps and natural hazards. This is the first time in the Ottawa newspapers that "traps" on the course are mentioned as something to be conjured with.

I take this 1914 reference to "traps" as an indication that a significant number of Colt's proposed bunkers had been added to the course between his visit in May of 1913 and the Canadian amateur championship in the summer of 1914.

When World War I broke out in August of 1914, however, golf courses soon experienced labour shortages, as men under the age of 30 enlisted by the hundreds of thousands in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force.

The result at Royal Ottawa and Rivermead was not just a slowing down of plans for improvements and alterations, but also a deterioration in course conditions generally. Before the opening of the 1917 golfing season, the *Ottawa Journal* recalled problems in this regard during the 1916 season:

> *Last summer found neither of the courses in very good shape. This was, of course, mainly due to the difficulty in securing laborers to attend to the upkeep of the greens and fairways. Naturally, with its larger expanse of land, the Royal Ottawa suffered more than its neighbour the Rivermead in this regard.* (Ottawa Journal*, 31 May 1917, p. 22).*

In June of 1917, Ralph Reville devoted long articles in *Canadian Golfer* to each of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club and the Rivermead Golf and Country Club. He enthusiastically celebrated their golf courses, but he wanted more of one thing in particular:

> *You don't know your Canadian golf courses if a visit to Ottawa has not been on your itinerary. The Capital has nothing to fear in comparison with the links of the Dominion, East or West, North or South. She measures up, and measures up exceedingly well with the best of 'em. Traps and still more traps are the only requirements of the Capital's courses twain. They have everything else in Royal and Ancient reason. (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 2 [June 1917], p. 98)*

Still, that a large number of the bunkers that Colt had staked-out were built in the years that followed his submission of his plans in 1913 is suggested by a humorous essay about the two Ottawa golf clubs published in *Canadian Golfer* in the fall of 1917 by Major H.B. McConnell: "Tribulations of the Royal and Ancient: An Ottawa Major Sees the Funny Side of Golf" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 5 [September 1917], pp. 257-61).

Pretending to be a gentleman being introduced to golf for the first time at a golf course called Livermeet (an alias for Rivermead), which was quite near Oily Rottenways (an alias for Royal Ottawa), McConnell depicts many of the indignities that golf inflicts upon the player new to the game.

McConnell, the City Fuel Superintendent in Ottawa during World War I, was not really new to the game. In fact, he was not only a very good golfer, but also an active member of Rivermead, where he played in intramural competitions and also represented the Club in team matches against the Royal Ottawa Golf Club. McConnell simply took on the writerly guise of a golf neophyte to provide a wry perspective on the game.

He speaks of the nervousness of his first tee shot in front of members at the clubhouse, the embarrassment of the whiff, the horror of breaking a golf club, and so on, but more than anything else, he clearly relishes the opportunity to vent about artificial sand bunkers:

> *Bunkers are to a pure white golf ball what the sins and stains of a wicked world are to innocent young mortals. A lily white ball will fall, after a long fascinating flight through the pure ozone, in one fell swoop into the mire of a bunker.*
>
> *Later, both ball and player emerge, the ball stained, dirty and bruised, the player spoiled in spirit and in mind.*
>
> *I wish to refrain from saying anything definite about the conversation which took place between myself and the ball in this particular bunker. Suffice it so say that I exhausted*

the English language and part of the French, broke three irons, rent my shirt, filled my eyes with sand, and – picked the ball up and threw it out of the bunker. My friend rushed over and informed me that balls must be played out of bunkers, and I replied that I had tried in every known way to play with that ball but it simply would not reciprocate. It didn't want to play and to humour it I had lifted it out.

Referring to previous remarks anent the English language, I made then by that bunker side (sort of a death bed vow) that I would study several foreign languages, as I had found that golf was quite too strenuous for the limitations of one tongue, and my mother tongue at that.

But I was describing bunkers. Bunkers are unsightly holes that are dug in perfectly good golf courses by a lot of simple-minded working-folk who act under the direction of some sort of super-Kaiser. He is the know-it-all of a golf club, the presiding genius who thinks out the diabolical schemes that later on his minions put into practice. Satan must smile every time a new bunker is made.

Not content with the hole, he then conspires with another party to cart sand to spread over the bottom of it. Sand, especially soft sand, and golf balls have a perfect affinity for each other, and once brought together, they are almost inseparable.

*Bunkers are usually placed in the least noticeable places and lie in wait to spring upon some witless player who thoughtlessly ambles onward, patting himself on the back for being a good player so long as he keeps out of them, and cursing fate, mankind, and everything in general if his ball falls into one. Bunkers of this sort, the sneaking kind, are very thick on the Oily Rottenways course, which is quite near Livermeet. (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 5 [September 1917], pp. 260-61)*

McConnell may mean by bunkers of "the sneaking kind" Colt's fairway pot bunkers or his flat-and-shallow lateral bunkers without raised banks to alert golfers to their lurking presence.

An example of these kinds of bunkers can be seen in the photograph below of play on the Colt-designed Ancaster course of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club during the 1919 Canadian Open.

Figure 55 Colt-designed Ancaster course of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club during the Canadian Open of 1919.

Colt's greenside bunkers are easily visible, but the other bunkers in the fairway much less so.

That artificial sand bunkers had become "very thick" at Royal Ottawa by the late summer of 1917, when this article was written, certainly indicates that there were many more bunkers on the championship course than the 13 total bunkers shared between the championship course and the nine-hole course before Colt's visit.

McConnenells description of Royal Ottawa as "very thick" with bunkers also recalls newspaper observations about the bunkers that were staked out on 12 May 1913: Colt proposed "lots of bunkers likely to make tribulation for the weaker brethren in the game"; "In addition to planning a new route of play, Mr. Colt staked out yesterday a large number of prospective bunkers, and some of the long handicap stalwarts of the club are likely to have to order snowshoes to get around among the sands" (*Ottawa Journal*, 13 May 1913, p. 4).

During the War years, the fact that Royal Ottawa had many more artificial sand bunkers than Rivermead was a common observation.

Expressing confidence that Royal Ottawa's near neighbour would soon develop first-class championship course, P.D. Ross still could not resist criticizing its lack of bunkers when the 18-hole course at Rivermead first opened in 1915:

> *Speaking of the two golf courses in Ottawa, Mr. Ross said that golf courses could be divided into two classes: scenic and scientific. The Royal Ottawa course, with its natural hazards, undoubtedly presents greater scientific attractions than the Rivermead, but of all the courses in Canada, and he has played on practically them all, he knew of none*

> *which had more beautiful scenic attractions than the Rivermead Golf Club, or more suitable soil and turf for the game, and he was sure that with the installation of a few more hazards the Rivermead course would be not only the most beautiful, but would become the most scientific in the country. (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 1 no 8 [December 1915], p. 510)*

Two years later, just before the opening of the 1917 golf season, an unidentified writer using the pseudonym "Out of Bounds" wrote in the *Ottawa Journal* that Rivermead still lacked the number and kind of bunkers that were essential if it wanted to be seen as having a proper championship course. The writer begins by talking about conditions at Ottawa's two golf courses – he observes that last summer the courses were in poor shape, and he also notes that spring has arrived early and that there seems to have been little winter kill at either course – but he soon focusses exclusively on Rivermead to "censure the course for being too simple" (31 March 1917, p. 22).

"Out of Bounds" then goes on to make an argument about the deficiencies of the Rivermead golf course that is remarkably similar to the one that George Sargent made in 1909 about the deficiencies of the Ottawa Golf Club course: the golf course needs "Bunkers!" (p. 22).

"Out of Bounds" wants golfers who top a drive straight down the fairway to end up in a bunker just as much as he wants the long driver who hooks or slices to end up in a bunker, so he implicitly advocates for old-fashioned penal cross-bunkers as well as for strategically-placed side bunkers, but his main focus is to urge a more modern, scientific, strategic bunkering to force Rivermead members to learn how to control the direction of their golf balls:

> *A course which makes a man play the orthodox game of golf must have bunkers: not singly, but in series so that each pit is not an individual trap, but just one link in a chain which should extend from tee to green, penalizing alike a hook, slice, top or schlaff…. Off the tee the man who misses his drive finds himself trapped and instead of using a brassy for a second he has recourse to a club he knows little or nothing about – his niblick!*
>
> *With luck he may get out in one or it may cost him three of four. At any rate his hopes of getting a par or perhaps a bogey have gone ….*

> *No hard-hitting player who has cared not an iota for direction except when near the green should be exempt from hazards. Even though he may hit a ball … over 200 yards, he will be in trouble if he stray very far from the straight and narrow.*
>
> *He being nearer the green than the man who dubbed his drive finds himself in a deeper pit with sides more nearly perpendicular. He not only has to get out of his present trouble, but finds himself confronted with numerous traps between himself and the green.*
>
> *Then, and only then, will he realize what his inaccuracy should have cost him in the past. A hole which formerly had been an easy four if played correctly remains quite as easy, but if played with utter disregard for direction takes on a very formidable aspect.*
>
> *A course such as Rivermead, to enter into the championship class, should have about 130 additional traps. (*Ottawa Journal*, 31 May 1917, p. 22)*

Since we are investigating the bunkering at Royal Ottawa in the wake of Colt's visit in May of 1913, perhaps the most interesting thing about this article is its silence about Royal Ottawa's bunkers – a silence that seems to imply that Royal Ottawa no longer suffers from the lack of modern scientific bunkering that Sargent had identified as a deficiency back in 1909.

In not suggesting the need for any more bunkers at Royal Ottawa, let alone 130 of them, "Out of Bounds" also implies that Major McConnell's humorous article, which would appear in *Canadian Golfer* later the same year, is apparently accurate: compared to Livermeet, Oily Rottenways is "thick" with bunkers.

That is to say, in the article by "Out of Bounds," Royal Ottawa's bunkering is "the elephant in the room." The author explains that his goal is to prepare Rivermead members for competition with golfers better-trained by better-bunkered courses, as we can see from his concluding paragraph, where he says that one his purposes in advocating 130 bunkers for the Rivermead course is to prepare its golfers to be more competitive in their matches on "foreign turf":

> *The advantage of having a course well trapped are many. It makes beginner and old-timer alike recognize direction as a very important part of the game. It makes a man play clubs, which though necessary on foreign turf, have been unknown at home and*

*generally rounds out and develops a game which will feel at home on any links (*Ottawa Journal*, 31 March 1917, p. 22).*

During the War years, the only other golf club with which Rivermead competed was Royal Ottawa, almost exclusively in charity matches to raise money for War-related causes, so the well-bunkered "foreign turf" for which "Out of Bounds" wished to prepare Rivermead members would seem to have been Royal Ottawa's golf course.

Less than two weeks after it appeared, this article by "Out of Bounds" may have influenced decisions at Rivermead's annual meeting on 10 April 1917, for it was agreed by members at that meeting that "This season … a number of additional bunkers will be installed and the links otherwise improved" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3no 1 [May 1917], p. 27).

Although this bunkering work was underway at Rivermead early in 1917, and although Major McConnell said later in 1917 that Royal Ottawa was "thick" with bunkers, after Reville himself visited the two golf courses in June of 1917, he asked for even more bunkers: "Traps and still more traps are the only requirements of the Capital's courses twain" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 2 [June 1917], p. 98).

In his article about Royal Ottawa, however, Reville refers enthusiastically to examples of important and successful bunkering. Specific observations about a number of holes suggest where particular artificial sand traps had been built. They were located on holes not mentioned by George Sargent and so we might presume that they were installed in connection with the part of Colt's plan that was approved in May of 1913.

Reville first speaks of the fourth hole which ran parallel to the fence marking the border between Royal Ottawa and what would in 1929 become the Glenlea golf course: "No. 4 is especially well trapped to the right and to secure [a score of] four calls for the straightest kind of play" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 2 [June 1917], p. 91). The boundary fence along the left side of the hole forced golfers to aim right for safety, but without bunkers along the right side of the fairway, there had been no incentive to be particularly accurate with either the drive or the approach shot.

Reville was even more enthusiastic about the trapping on the 7th, a short par-4 running from west to east: "No. 7 is a corking fine hole – one of the finest on the course and well merits a rather detailed description. The length is 325 yards. Drive must be straight on pin, bunkers or natural hazards to right and left. Second shot must be very straight for same reason …" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 2 [June 1917], p. 91).

In an aerial photograph from 1933 (seen below), the bunkers on Royal Ottawa's fourth and seventh holes that Reville discusses in *Canadian Golfer* appear just where he describes them as being located in the spring of 1917.

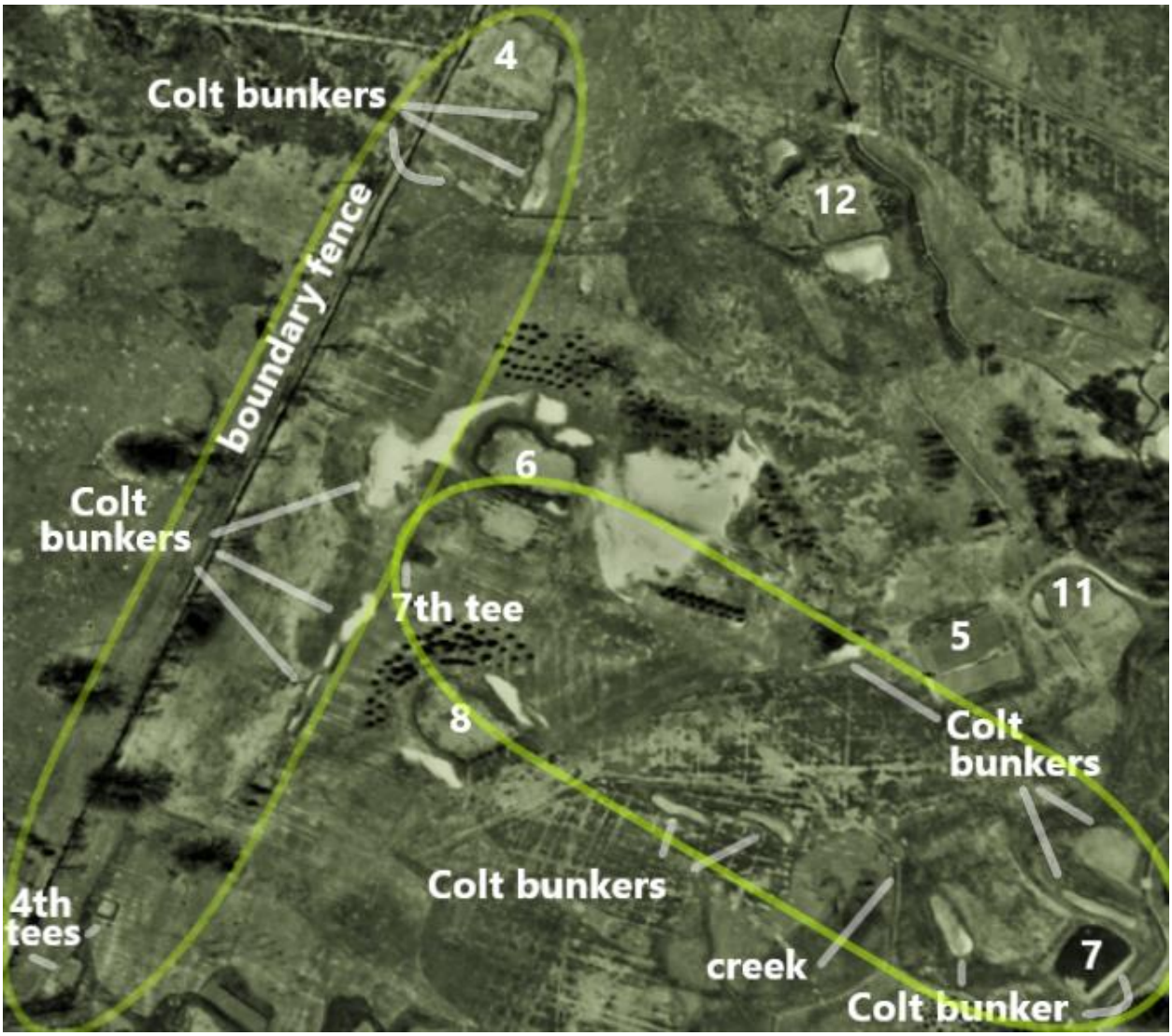

Figure 56 Annotated detail from an aerial photograph dated 5 April 1933.

Alas, of the bunkers marked in the photograph above, the only one that remains today is the bunker to the left of the seventh green.

Delayed Bunkering

Precisely how many bunkers that Colt staked out in the presence of Secretary J.A. Jackson and golf professional Karl Keffer is unknown. Colt's blueprint and his drawings for the individual golf holes do not seem to have survived.

And in connection with the installation of such bunkers as his plans recommended for the original Bendelow routing, it is not clear how many were built in the fall of 1913, and how many might have been built in the years that followed during World War I.

One factor necessitating a slow and easy approach to course alterations recommended by Colt was the tight budget that Royal Ottawa faced in 1913, and the even tighter budget in subsequent years caused by the absence of more than 100 of its approximately 350 members as they were gone from Ottawa serving in the Canadian armed forces during the War.

From the moment that Colt's plans were submitted, their cost was cited as a factor in concern about them and resistance to them. As we know, just two weeks after Colt submitted them in the middle of May in 1913, Club members voted down a motion to proceed with the plans, and the reason offered was the cost to implement them: "The expense in connection with the proposed changes, coupled with the fact that the club already have a heavy bill of expense on their hands with the laying of a new drainage system at the club house, caused the rejection of the motion" (*Ottawa Journal*, 30 May 1913, p. 4).

Club members were told that "The entire scheme will cost about $5,000 to carry out" (*Ottawa Journal*, 18 December 1913, p. 5). In each of 1904 and 1905, the amount spent "on the upkeep and improvement of the course" was anticipated to be "between four and five thousand dollars," so it would seem that to have enacted Colt's plan would have doubled that year's budget for greenkeeping (*Ottawa Journal*, 15 April 1905, p. 3). Interestingly, of the approximately $60,000 that Colt spent on the construction of the new golf course of the Toronto Golf Club between 1911 and 1912, he was said to have spent $10,000 on just one hole, so the cost of his plans for Royal Ottawa were extremely modest by comparison (*Ottawa Journal*, 8 July 1913, p. 4).

It was anticipated that cost would be the deciding factor in the vote at the annual general meeting in February of 1914 about whether to proceed with Colt's plan to reroute the championship course. It was noted that the year before, "The club nominally ran at a loss" ("Higher cost than in 1912 for wages and

supplies is the explanation of a less favorable financial statement for 1912"), and so in regard to the "important question to come up at the annual meeting …, the adjourned consideration of changing the course, as recommended by the plan made last summer by the English architect, Mr. H.S. Colt," we read that "In view of the present narrow margin between receipts and expenditure, adoption of Mr. Colt's plan is not considered to be likely at present" (*Ottawa Journal*, 9 February 1914, p. 4).

And so it turned out a week later: "At the annual meeting of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, held Saturday afternoon, it was decided that the links would not be altered and that the plans of Mr. H.S. Colt, the English golf course expert, for a revision of the links, would not be acted upon" (*Ottawa Journal*, 16 February 1914, p. 4).

Royal Ottawa's financial situation would not have been the only factor leading to an incremental approach to course improvements recommended by Colt, for not only were the cost of labor and supplies increasing, but the availability of labor was decreasing because of the War. And so at Canadian golf clubs generally there was "difficulty in securing laborers to attend to the up-keep of the green and fair ways" (*Ottawa Journal*, 31 March 1917, p. 22). If golf clubs found it difficult to find laborers to maintain greens and fairways, they certainly would not have found it easier to find the extra laborers required for large-scale golf course alterations.

In this context, one can understand why Rivermead spent five years bringing its new 18-hole course to the state planned by the architect. In 1915, "George Cumming, the Toronto golf architect, laid out Rivermead, and he is responsible for an exceedingly well-balanced course of 5,935 yards – a course that when all the bunkers and traps called for in the plans are placed in will be well worthy of championship recognition" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 2 [June 1917], p. 95). Further bunkering was undertaken in 1917, but at least two more years of work on the course were required to realize Cumming's vision for it. It was not until 1919 that the course reached its full length and acquired its full complement of bunkers, as we know from the RCGA's justification of its decision to award the 1920 Canadian Open to Rivermead:

> *The committee in making their decision were greatly influenced by the very favorable report received from Karl Keffer…. his letter stating that in his opinion the Rivermead links were very suitable for the tourney. He stated that in the past the course had lacked length, but this year measured 6,000 yards, while the greens, which had always been excellent in the past, had wintered well; besides, considerable bunkering had been done during the past year. (*Ottawa Journal*, 19 May 1920, p. 17).*

Similarly, the Hamilton Golf and Country Club was forced by war-time circumstances to take a slow approach to the construction of the golf course that Harry Colt had laid out in the spring of 1914. As Reville observed after the 1919 Canadian Open was held at Hamilton's Ancaster course, although "not 'bunkered up to the eyes,' [it] is well trapped, although there are many more hazards to be put in before the plans got out by Harry S. Colt, the English golf architect, are completed" (*Ottawa Journal*, 23 August 1919, p. 23).

Things had been so difficult for golf courses in Canada and Britain during the War that in 1920, when Colt sent his partner Charles Hugh Allison to Hamilton to "fulfill the original design" of 1914, Allison observed that "The course seems, in general, to have been nursed very successfully through the War period," but he suspected that the poor condition of the putting greens might be due to "lack of material and labour during the War" (C.H. Allison, "Hamilton Golf & Country Club [Plan]," 5 October 1920, pp. 13, 5, 1)

So it may be that Royal Ottawa took an incremental approach to Colt's plans for improvements of its existing golf holes, undertaking alterations from year to year as funds permitted and as labor conditions allowed.

Deferred Bunkering in Deference to Colt

But even in the United States, a country that would not enter World War I until 1917, the Detroit Country Club took its time in fulfilling Colt's 1912 plan.

This layout had become famous in 1913 when golf's first superstar Harry Vardon played it and declared that it was the best golf course in the United States, a statement printed in newspapers around the world (*Ottawa Citizen*, 16 December 1914, p. 8). Still, over a year later, the Detroit Golf Club had not fulfilled Colt's plan:

> *no attempt was made to complete the course when it was first opened, the club adopting the view that the details should be attended to gradually, and as a result of experience instead of theory. A number of new traps have been installed during the past season in places where they were found to be necessary, and more will be put in next year, as the club intends to continue its policy of gradual development. (*Sun *[New York], 26 October 1914, p. 8).*

The phrase above explaining that gradual installation of bunkers at Detroit occurred because of "the club adopting the view that the details should be attended to … as a result of experience instead of theory" might be taken to imply that members distrusted Colt's design theories and wanted to see how their course played in practice before installing the bunkers he had staked out and drawn on his blueprint and hole diagrams.

Certainly, every golf club had its conservative member's like E.L. Howard who were resistant to "radical" ideas: they might not write poems, but they found ways to make known their objection to what they regarded as excessive bunkering and contouring likely to "spoil the whole darn lot."

And Colt knew about them.

When Colt was called to New Jersey after his work in Ottawa and Montreal "for advice on the Pine Valley links," he was interviewed by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* about how new golf-ball technology and better greenkeeping practices "together have necessitated more or less alteration in all old links" *(Philadelphia Inquirer, 15 February 1914, p. 34).* As though describing precisely what was happening at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, he told the newspaper of the resistance he faced whenever he was called upon to make alterations in a venerable old links:

> *The task of making alterations to a classic course is not an enviable one. Sentiment attaches to the well-known landmarks. Historic battles have taken place over the old links. A change of any description is hotly resented by a section of members, although it is generally admitted that alterations are necessary to enable the club to retain its position. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 February 1914, p. 34)*

Perhaps it was to bring along this reluctant cohort that the Detroit Country Club, the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, and Royal Ottawa made it a policy to proceed slowly and incrementally with the implementation of the plans that Colt had given them.

Yet the phrase above to which I have drawn attention – "the club adopt[ed] the view that the details should be attended to … as a result of experience instead of theory" – is actually an ambiguous reference to the advice that Colt himself gave all the golf clubs for whom he planned bunkers at this time. When he planned bunkering for either a new or a revised golf course, he recommended that there be a delay in the installation of certain bunkers until the Club had observed the run of balls on the golf course in all conditions and by various classes of players.

Such was the case at the Hopwood Park Links laid out for the Manchester Golf club in 1911: "It is not intended at present to construct many bunkers, or sand-scrapes, but guards and difficulties will be added as experience suggests the best positions" (*Guardian* [Manchester], 29 September 1911, p. 16). This is what Colt means in his 1912 essay "Golf Architecture" when he writes that he likes to take a week to lay out a new golf course – "leaving the bunkering in great part for a subsequent visit" (p. 70).

What Colt and the green committees in charge of implementing his plans needed to understand by experience was primarily the run of the ball on the golf course. As Colt observes of drives: "If we take a new course, for instance, the run of the ball will increase with the age of the links, as the surface of the ground becomes firmer with play" ("Golf Architecture," p. 72). And on all golf courses, "The distance of a tee shot will also vary enormously in summer and winter" ("Golf Architecture," p. 72). The same is true, of course, for approach shots played along the ground and for pitch-and-run shots.

In the wake of practical experience at these golf clubs, Colt's theories seem more often than not to have been proven correct.

For instance, when the U.S. Open was held on the golf course of the Detroit Country Club in 1915, it took just one day of play for the U.S.G.A. to recognize that the not-yet-built tee box that Colt had planned for the twelfth hole could wait no longer:

> *The new tee at the twelfth hole which was used for the last three days of the championship was built by order of the U.S.G.A. executive committee. It was constructed in a few hours at the spot where Harry Colt, the designer of the course, placed it in his plans. For various reasons that part of his plan was not followed until this week. (*Evening Star *[Washington], 6 September 1915, p. 10).*

Similarly, after the Canadian Open was held at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club in 1919, Colt was invited back in the spring of 1920 to determine, in the words of C.H. Allison (the partner he sent in his stead), whether "Mr. Colt's plans" had "been conscientiously carried out" or whether there were perhaps "discrepancies between the course and the plans" (Allison p. 1). As J.F. Morrison, the Secretary of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, had informed Colt in August of 1919, the Club had learned by experience the difference between Colt's work and the work of the "amateur":

> *I think it quite likely some [more] trapping may be required, but we are not going to have any amateur work and probably be let in for one change and another which we should like to undo. The course will stand as it is until you can come out here…. I hope you won't think it purely 'blow' when I say that we have nothing so good [as Hamilton's] in Canada in the way of a course, and not many as good in the States and few better. (Harry S. Colt and C.H. Allison,* Some Essays on Golf-Course Architecture *[London: Country Life, 1920], p. 65)*

It would be surprising, then, if the leading figures at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club had not found that their own experiences showed over and over again that the parts of Colt's plans that had been instituted in the fall of 1913 were beneficial to play on the course, leading them to conclude that the plans Colt had submitted for improvements on the Bendelow holes could be used as a golf mine of sound recommendations for course improvements for years to come.

1918 Colt Alterations?

In this regard, it is interesting to note that for several years, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club had on its "to do" list renovation projects regarding the "fair greens" (that is, the "fairways") of the fifteenth and sixteenth holes. From the Club's annual report for 1917, however, we learn that "It was decided, until the termination of the war, not to undertake the special and costly work necessary to improve the fair green conditions of the fifteenth and sixteenth holes" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 12 [April 1918], p. 652).

We are familiar with this question of budgetary constraints during the War.

It is somewhat surprising, therefore, to learn that despite the decision in the spring of 1918 to defer this work until the end of the War, it was in fact carried out later that year: "Considerable improvements … were undertaken during the year, including the ploughing up and re-seeding of the 15th and 16th fairways" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 4 no 11 [March 1919], pp. 587-88). Furthermore, expensive improvements to the course did not stop there, but also included "the building of new tees and bunkers, besides the bringing of the course as a whole into a higher state of perfection" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 4 no 11 [March 1919], pp. 587-88).

In 1913, there had been "Considerable improvements … made on the grounds during the past season, the changes embodying in minor degree some of the features of the plans submitted" by Colt (*Ottawa Journal*, 18 December 1913, p. 5). Were the "considerable improvements" of 1918 based on the same plans?

The "building of new tees and bunkers" were of course part of the 1913 Colt plans. It would be hard to believe that Royal Ottawa undertook construction of these new tees and bunkers in 1918 without availing itself of any relevant hole-by-hole drawings for such things that Colt had provided in 1913.

On the one hand, as we know, thirteen of the most influential Club members had been convinced by their experience in 1913 of the new Colt golf course at the Toronto Golf Club that intelligent development of multiple tee boxes and strategic location and natural presentation of artificial bunkering were the sine qua non of a modern and "scientific" parkland golf course.

On the other hand, with each year that passed after his visit to Ottawa, Colt's work was celebrated in North America more and more frequently, and with increasing enthusiasm, as the state of the art of golf course architecture. When the new directors of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club were elected at the

beginning of 1923, for instance, they promised to continue to improve the golf course so that “the Royal Ottawa course will hold its own with the more recent efforts by such master golf architects as Park, Colt and Donald Ross” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 12 February 1923, p. 10).

Plans for improvements had been submitted by Colt in 1913 and by Park in 1920. Perhaps Royal Ottawa had it in mind that the next architect to consult was Ross!

New Tee Boxes

Perhaps the simplest and quickest part of Colt's plans for Royal Ottawa to execute would have been the installation of new tee boxes.

A new tee-box construction strategy was a feature of all of Colt's course designs from well before he arrived at Royal Ottawa in 1913, and his proposals to lengthen and shorten certain holes on the Bendelow course will have included plans for new tee boxes.

In 1915, as work was completed on Colt's 1914 design for the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, the golf writer for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* learned through Colt's work there of the revolutionary effect of building multiple tee boxes for each golf hole: "it is interesting to note the difference in the three stretches at the Hamilton (Can.) Club's fine new course, laid out by Harry Colt, of England, and said to be the last crack in the tee box, as to up-to-dateness. The back tees' total distance is 6300 yards, the front, 5820, and the women's, 5350" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 October 1915, p. 17).

This aspect of Colt's golf course design philosophy created an increasing buzz in the golf world each year that passed after his visit to Ottawa.

In 1916, for instance, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*'s golf writer informed readers that Colt's multiple tee boxes were likely to become the norm:

> *there is strong prospect of three sets of tees being ultimately installed [everywhere], as is coming to be the rule at all modern courses of importance. For instance, there could be tees for old women of both sexes moved far enough ahead to provide 5350 yards play. Mid-way then might be installed the men's front tees, about 5800 yards…. [I]t is worthy of note that Harry Colt, the eminent English course architect, … allowed 6350 yards for the men's back tees last season at the Hamilton Club, Ancaster, Canada, supposed to be about the last gasp in golf tailoring. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 April 1916, p. 23)*

Colt also recommended that the additional tee boxes built on a hole should include a tee box with a different orientation toward the fairway or green:

> *In making the different teeing grounds it will be possible to gain a little extra variety by playing the tee shot at different angles to the course; thus a teeing ground made at*

some thirty yards or so to the right or left of the one in front will very likely create additional interest in the round, and be better than one made exactly behind it. ("Golf Architecture," p. 75).

Precisely this feature appears on the eighth hole of the Royal Ottawa golf course in the 1933 aerial photographs shown below.

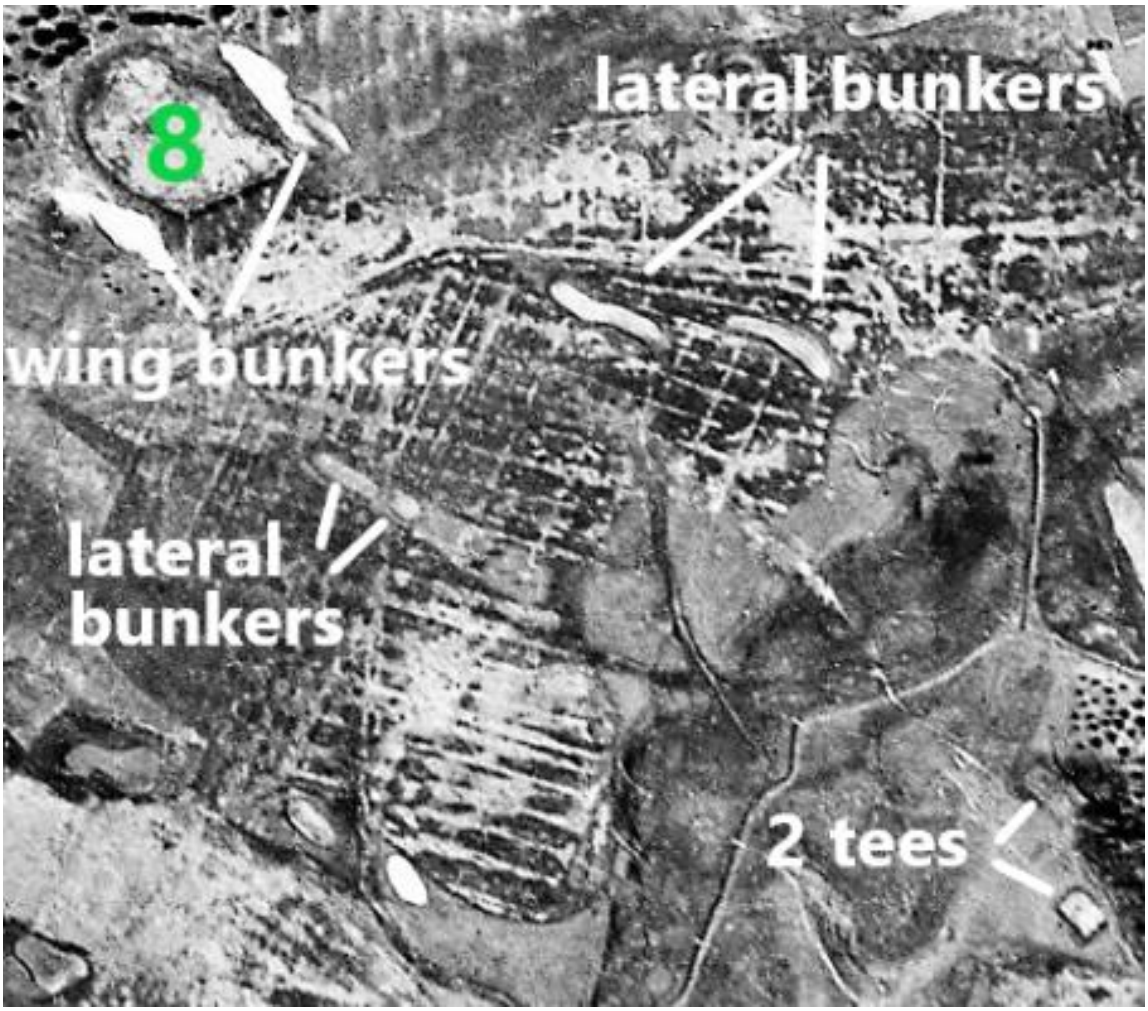

Figure 57 Detail enhanced and annotated, of National Air Photo Library photograph dated 5 April 1933 showing the 8th hole at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, Gatineau, Quebec.

A similar tee-box strategy is evident on the original second hole (recently removed from play). There seem to have been as many as four tee boxes on this par-3 hole. Three of these were arranged in a straight line pointing directly toward the green, but there is a fourth tee box beside the one that is the furthest forward of these three tee boxes. Its location allows the angle of the shot played to the green to be changed slightly.

Figure 58 National Air Photo Library, 5 April 1933. Detail, enhanced and annotated, showing the 2nd hole of the golf course of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, Gatineau, Quebec.

Since we know that Colt already had a good number of important and influential backers at Royal Ottawa in 1913 (such as Justice Cassels, as well as P.D. Ross and the other 12 golfers who played in the national amateur championship in Toronto in 1913), it seems likely that the number of Colt backers only increased with each year that passed as Colt's design work came to be regarded more and more as the gold standard of modern golf course design.

So when members of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club made the suggestion that their golf course should have multiple tee boxes as so many other first-rate golf courses did, any plans that Colt had drawn up in this regard must have been consulted.

Post-War Bunkering

How much of the bunkering that we see in the earliest aerial photographs of the Royal Ottawa golf course were designed by Willie Park, Jr?

It was in 1920, according to *Ottawa Citizen* writer Tom Casey, that Park visited the course: "In 1920, Willie Park, Jr, the winner of the 1887 and 1889 British Opens, was in the area to design the Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club, but also provided plans for improvements at the Royal Ottawa" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 8 August 2000, p. 15).

Figure 59 Willie Park, Jr., circa 1920.

Park's visit to Royal Ottawa would seem to have been at the end of April: "Mr. Willie Parke [sic], the famous golf architect, is in the capital and is registered at the Chateau Laurier. Mr. Parke … came here for several purposes, including the laying out of the new course at the Ottawa Hunt and Motor Club" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 27 April 1920, p. 16). He arrived in Ottawa on April 26th, and "was in Ottawa four days" (*Ottawa Journal*, 1 May 1920, p. 26). He arrived on the site of the Ottawa Hunt and Motor Club the morning of April 27th and completed the laying out of the golf course at 4:30 pm on April 28th.

And so Park's last day in Ottawa, April 29th, may have been devoted to inspection of the Royal Ottawa course.

Royal Ottawa set to work on Park's plans almost immediately, *Canadian Golfer* reporting late in the summer of 1920 that at "present Royal Ottawa … is undergoing extensive improvements, two or three of the holes being considerably shortened in the meantime" (vol 6 no 5 [September 1920], p. 364). Initially, the work was expected to take just one year: "When the alterations now being made are completed next year, the Royal Ottawa will have links of championship calibre" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 6 no 5 [September 1920], p. 375). But the newly renovated course did not officially enter play until the spring of 1925.

Under the heading "Altered Greens," the following newspaper account from the summer of 1925 provides information about Park's work on the course in its account of the "radical" changes to the "majority" of holes on the newly completed golf course:

> *Better treatment, owing to the built-up green, is accorded to an overplayed drive on the second hole at the first corner, and while the third remains unchanged, the new level fairway short of the bunker on the fourth eliminates the chance of an awkward downhill lie, which so often confronted the blameless golfer as a prospect for his second shot.*
>
> *The sixth green has been altered so that chance of over-running the green has been lessened and the tee enlarged to permit varying distances to be used, while the contours of the lower fairway on the seventh have been remodelled. A sloping green on the eighth has been designed to make the pitch up the hill less awkward.*
>
> *The eleventh, which has been made in one more than any other hole on the course, while previously measuring only 105 yards, has been lengthened and iron shots of varying lengths are required to reach the new green under the twelfth tee.*
>
> *The twelfth and thirteenth have been given built-up greens, and the latter has been lengthened, this feature having been also applied to the fifteenth across the gully.*
>
> *Shifting the tee back on the sixteenth has constituted an invitation to cultivate long driving and the same may be said of [the] seventeenth, but here with the added incentive for accuracy on the second shot to the hole, which has been placed in closest proximity to the gully. Long drivers will have no anxiety for the fate of their tee shots on the home hole as the chance of being left with a lie on the side of the slope has been eliminated by placing the tee far back. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 26 June 1925, p. 10)*

The writer mentions work of one sort or another – some of it major, some of it minor – as having been completed on 12 of the holes on the championship course.

Interestingly, he observes that "The majority of the individual holes have since 1914 undergone radical alterations," which might be taken to mean that the alterations he describes above could be attributable to either Colt's 1913 plan or to Park's 1920 plan. But his reference to 1914 is not intended to recall a period of alterations that began in 1914 after Colt's visit so much as to mark the last occasion that the

Canadian amateur championship was held on the Royal Ottawa golf course. His point is that competitors "will find the layout of the Royal Ottawa Golf course has been considerably changed from that which confronted their predecessors on the previous occasions when the competition has come to Ottawa" (*Ottawa Citizen*, 26 June 1925, p. 10).

We should take this article as an account of changes made according to Park's 1920 plan, and we can see that the article confirms the part of its headline that reads, "Alterations to Greens Minimize Liability of Unjust Penalties to Well-Played Golf." Willie Park's work seems to have focussed on improvements to various greens and their surrounds.

We know from an article published in 1923 precisely when the thirteenth green was altered: "The new green on the 13th hole is the object of considerable admiration. This was begun last fall. It makes this hole one of the sportiest on the course. A very good test of the ability of the player is afforded as the green slopes upward from the fairway and is surrounded by mounds and traps" (*Ottawa Journal*, 28 April 1923, p. 15).

Yet the article above about the "radical" changes to the golf course also indicates another important aspect of Park's plan: the lengthening of the 1903 Bendelow layout of 6,270 yards.

When RCGA officials visited Royal Ottawa in the spring of 1925 to determine if the renovated golf course was appropriate for the national amateur championship, they liked the longer course that they found: "The Royal Ottawa course is well up to championship requirements as regards length and all other requirements. It measures 6,400 yards long, having been reconstructed a couple of years ago from the plans of noted golf architect, Willie Park" (22 June 1925, p. 10).

When *Canadian Golfer* reported in connection with the Senior golf championship held at Royal Ottawa late in the summer of 1920 that "the present Royal Ottawa … is undergoing extensive improvements," it was noted that "two or three of the holes [have been] considerably shortened in the meantime" (vol 6 no 5 [September 1920], p. 364). The holes that were shortened while construction was underway were presumably the ones with greens being altered (2, 6, 8, 12, 13, 15) or the ones with greens being made from scratch (11 and 17). Because of the work on various greens, the golf course seems to have introduced temporary holes short of the construction area, which reduced the playing length of the golf course for several years.

Beginning with its 1922 edition, the *American Annual Golf Guide* indicated that the yardage of the 18-hole course was 6,015 (p. 389). As the *Guide*'s information was usually gathered from club secretaries

during the previous calendar year (in this case, 1921), the information supplied by Royal Ottawa for 1921 probably indicates how much yardage was lost while the improvements suggested by Park were being carried out.

The holes to be lengthened, we know from the 1925 description of the work in question, were the eleventh, sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth. Tees were moved back in each case. The writing about the thirteenth and fifteenth holes, however, is ambiguous: “The twelfth and thirteenth have been given built-up greens, and the latter has been lengthened, this feature having been also applied to the fifteenth across the gully.” The grammar of the sentence says that the thirteenth and fifteenth **greens** have been lengthened, but it is possible that the writer meant to say that the holes themselves were lengthened.

The only explicit reference to any work on bunkers that Park’s redesign was said to have involved was on the thirteenth green, which was “surrounded by mounds and traps.”

So my assumption is that the majority of the extensive bunkering of the golf course that appears in 1933 aerial photographs is attributable to Colt. It had probably been installed in the years after Colt’s visit and before Park’s.

The Dog-Leg Hole

Apart from the question of which bunkers and tee boxes at Royal Ottawa were designed by Harry Colt, there is also the question regarding who designed the dog-leg ninth hole?

Park apparently left the ninth hole completely untouched. Pre-dating his arrival at the golf course in 1920, the ninth was the only dog-leg hole on the course.

Tom Bendelow is unlikely to have laid it out, for when he designed the course in 1903, all holes were laid out in straight lines, variation in holes consisting of their different lengths and the nature of the hazards to be crossed between tee and green.

In the early years of the twentieth century, golfers were liable to complain if they were not allowed to shoot straight in the direction of the green with their drives. Even as late as 1916, as Rivermead member T.G. Gray observed, many Ottawa golfers resented the waste of distance that occurred, so to speak, when they were forced to hit their drives at an angle away from the direct line to the green, which was of course their ultimate target:

> *In many of the better courses in the Old Country bunkers are so placed that it will be found necessary to play your tee stroke towards a certain part of the course and at an angle which will land the ball perhaps fifty yards off the straight line for the putting green…. To many such play may seem foolish, and they might argue that the straight line through the play must always be the best. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 24 April 1916, p. 8).*

A British golf writer going by the pen-name of "Mid-Spoon" observed in 1909 that "Some … are made miserable by the appearance of a 'dog-leg' hole: they feel as if they were standing crooked on the tee, they look crooked down the course, and they end by hitting the ball crooked – off the course" (*Times Union* [Brooklyn], 20 August 1909, p. 2). Weaker players, especially, complained that on a dog-leg hole they would usually have to spend an extra shot to reach the corner of the fairway where an avenue to the green opened up, for until they had done so, the green would not be accessible to them.

Such dog-leg holes as existed before the early twentieth century tended to have been built as the result of the architect's accommodation of awkward property lines, as in the case of the famous seventeenth hole on the Old Course at St Andrews, where a dog-leg fairway maneuvers around the property of a hotel, over which today's golfers hit their tee shots.

My suspicion is that the dog-leg ninth hole of the Royal Ottawa golf course was probably drawn-up by Harry Colt.

Ralph Reville singles out this hole for special praise in his 1917 article about Royal Ottawa: "There is nothing like a 'sporting proposition' to end up the first nine and the Royal Ottawa has it in a dog-leg hole which is quite one of the features of the course…. Fortunate the course that has a good 'dog's-leg'" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 2 [June 1917], p. 91).

Golf historians sometimes attribute the "invention" of the intentionally designed dog-leg hole to five-time Open champion and renowned architect James Braid, but Harry Colt was the architect who justified it in terms of architectural theory. On the one hand, Colt explains its value in terms of the test it poses to golfers: "A dog-leg hole … is to me one of the finest for an accurate test of the game. The player who can place his tee shot just past the corner … gains a big advantage there" ("Golf Architecture," pp. 76-79). On the other hand, he found that judicious design of a dog-leg hole enhanced the "naturalness" of a layout: "Ground should be selected … for a dog-leg hole, which presents some natural features insisting upon or emphasising the class of shot which we are trying to develop; otherwise the effect will be labored and artificial." ("Golf Architecture," p. 78).

Colt immediately became famous for his use of the dog-leg hole:

> *Realizing that the yearly increase in the distance gained by the introduction of new makes of balls must be overcome in some manner if the [par] value of the hole is to be preserved, H.S. Colt, who is probably the most famous golf course architect in the world, advocates the doing away, in a great many instances, with the present style of straight-away holes and, instead, having holes with a decided angle to them. By this method he hopes to force the placing of the tee shot in this angle and thus limit the amount of distance secured by the tee shot, and in this way maintain the value of a hole as to the second shot. (*Atlanta Georgian *[Georgia], 20 July 1913, p. 2c)*

Reference to "dog-leg" golf holes are rare in newspapers and magazines before 1909, and it was still such an unusual feature on golf courses at the end of World War I, ten years later, that newspapers published illustrations showing readers the different strategies that would be used to play such holes by expert players, on the one hand, and average players, on the other.

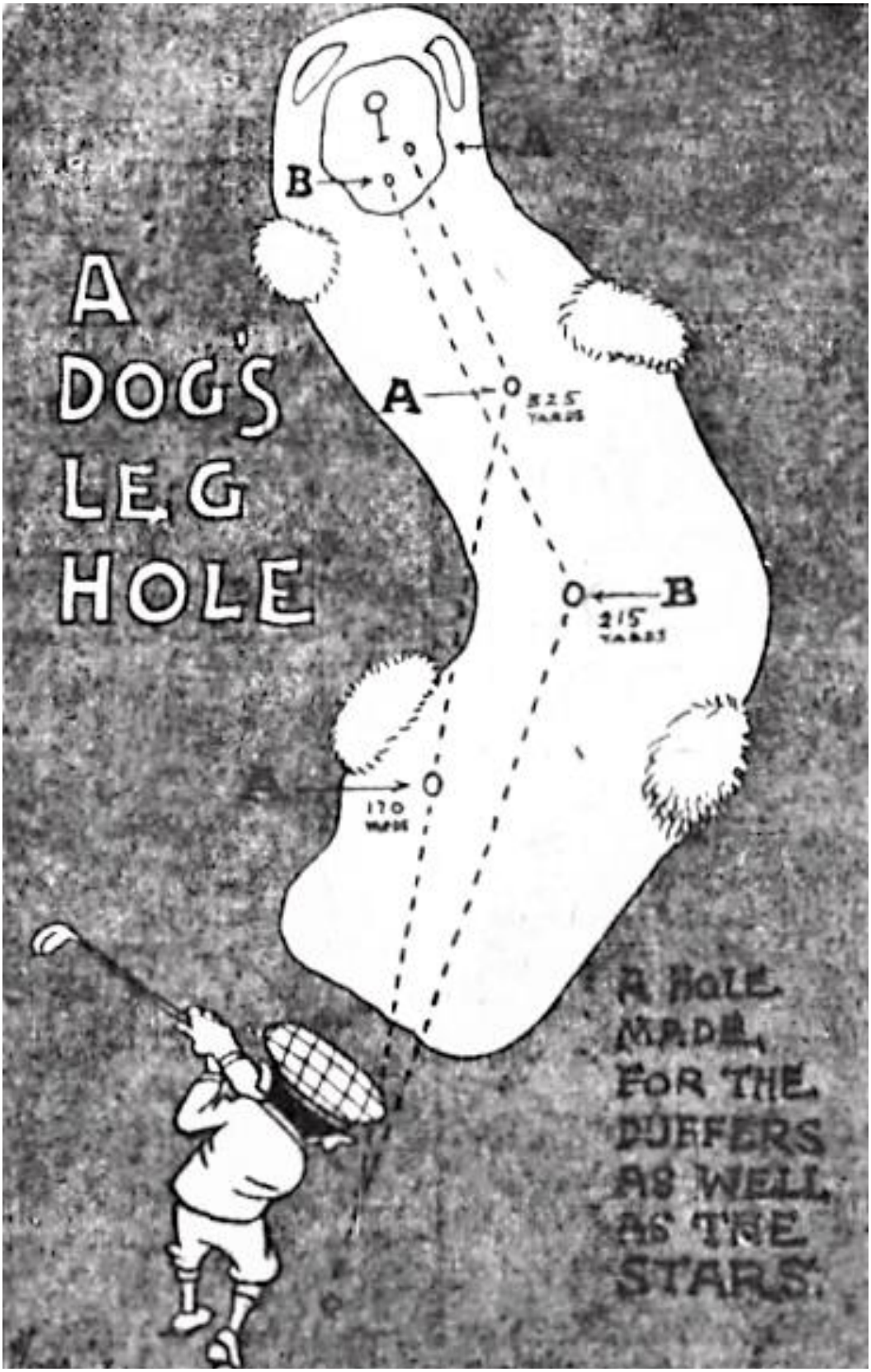

Figure 60 Saskatoon Daily Star*, 13 August 1919, p. 6.*

Colt included at lest one dog-leg hole on most of the golf courses that he designed. The image below

shows his 1922 sketch of the dog-leg hole that he designed for his links course in Granville, France.

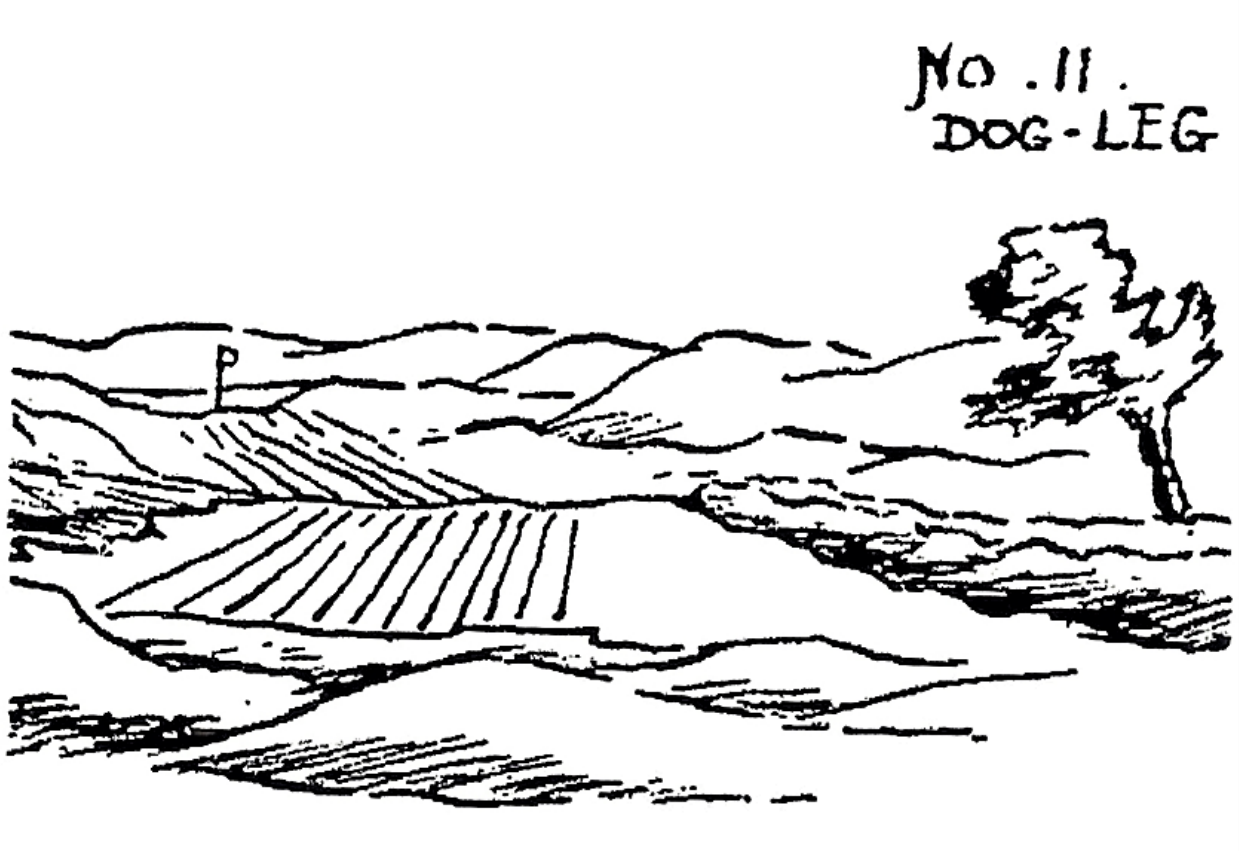

Figure 61 Harry S. Colt, "No. 11. Dog-Leg," Granville, France, 1922.

Coincidentally, the sketch above resembles the angle of the dog-leg ninth hole at Royal Ottawa, and the dip in the fairway where the crook of the dog-leg is located in the sketch also corresponds to the location of the gully on Royal Ottawa's hole (the gully starting around 230 yards from the tee).

If Colt indeed was responsible for making the dog-leg in this fairway, he may have accomplished this goal simply by moving the tee box closer to the eighth green than it perhaps had originally been. Lateral bunkers on each side of the fairway emphasize that the centre of the fairway departs from the straight line toward the green, as measured from the tee box, by perhaps 22 degrees. Depending on where the tee shot ends up, the elbow in the dog-leg at a point just before the gully might be 30 degrees.

These measurements are estimated with regard to the location of the green as shown in a 1933 aerial photograph shown below. Note, however, that it is possible that this green had been moved closer to the stand of trees to its left than Bendelow had originally placed it. Perhaps this green was one of the ten greens that Colt had planned to build.

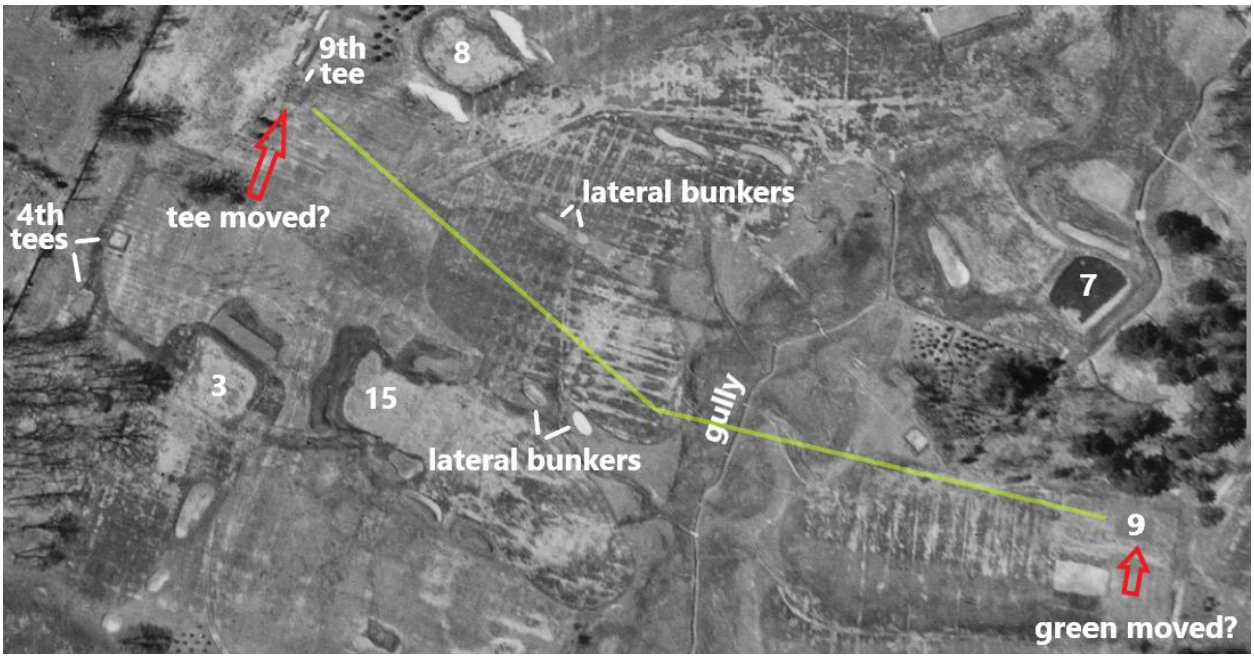

Figure 62 National Air Photo Library, 5 April 1933, showing the 9th hole of the golf course of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, Gatineau, Quebec. Detail enhanced and annotated.

Colt and Keffer

Apart from the detailed drawings of his designs for individual golf holes and individual greens that Colt submitted to the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, he also will have imparted important knowledge of design principles and strategies to the Royal Ottawa golf professional Karl Keffer who walked the Ottawa golf course with Colt as they staked out bunkers. Colt was thereby poised to influence golf course development for years to come at Royal Ottawa, for Keffer remained the Club's increasingly respected and influential head pro until 1943.

Figure 63 Karl Keffer, 1912.

The chance to discuss with Colt the thinking behind his strategic deployment of bunkers and natural hazards, his contouring of run-offs in fairways and around greens, and his location of new tee boxes will have been invaluable to Keffer's own development as an architect.

Better than reading any essay written by Colt was the opportunity Keffer had to walk the golf course with him. Geoffrey Cornish, a well-known disciple of Stanley Thompson in the 1930s and 1940s, and subsequently a celebrated golf course designer himself, observed that "course architecture is learned not in a classroom but in the field, and going to work for an established architect remains the primary path to knowledge" (*Sports Illustrated* article cited on "Stanley Thompson Society" website). Colt knew that he would not be on site to supervise a redesign of the Royal Ottawa course, so the fact that he was accompanied around the golf course by Secretary Jackson and head pro Keffer was presumably part of a strategy for depositing with the key member of the board of directors and the key figure in supervision of the golf course a solid practical awareness of how the redesign work that he proposed should be done.

Intimately familiar with Colt's vision for improving the golf course, Keffer and perpetual member of the executive committee Jackson may well have instituted as many of these improvements as they could between 1913 and 1919, given the various War-time constraints faced by the club.

In this regard, the question of the origin of alterations to the fourteenth hole is particularly interesting.

We recall that Colt wished to reverse it, and so he presumably did not draw up for it the kind of “minor alterations” that he drew up for the Bendelow holes that he intended to use in his own design. After all, he planned to turn the fourteenth green into a tee and the fourteenth tee into a green.

Yet the fourteenth hole was subsequently bunkered in a “Coltish” way, especially insofar as its diagonal bunkers and its other side bunkers were concerned.

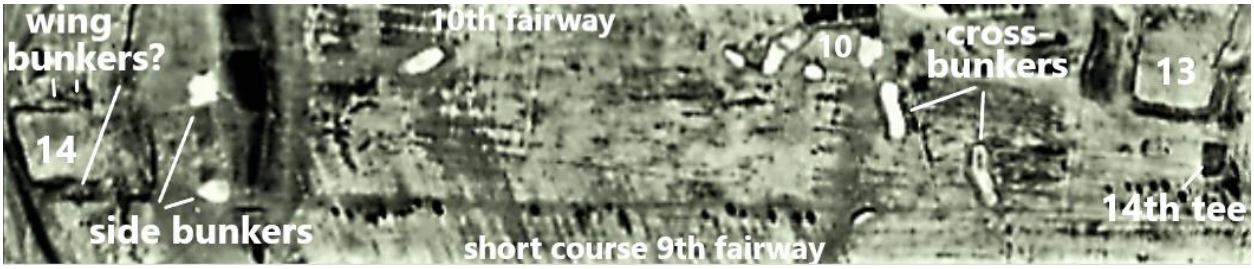

Figure 64 National Air Photo Library photograph dated 5 April 133. Detail, enhanced and annotated, showing the 14th hole of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, Gatineau, Quebec.

Did Keffer design this bunkering in light of the principles he had learned from Colt?

The cross-bunkering of the fourteenth hole duplicates the cross-bunkering on the fourth and seventh holes of the short course. Is it possible that these short course holes were designed by Colt and that Keffer copied some of their design features for the fourteenth hole?

Colt and the Royal Nine

As Colt had intended to use half of the 1911 short course in his 1913 redesign of the championship course, he will have included these holes on the short course on his blueprint for the new golf course, and he will have submitted drawings for each of the holes on this nine-hole course that he intended to use in his redesign.

Recall the 1913 newspaper report about the May 29th meeting at which a majority of Royal Ottawa members approved Ross's motion to defer a final decision on Colt's plan and to proceed meanwhile with alterations that he had drawn up for holes on the present course that he intended to include in his redesign: "Some of the suggestions will be taken up, mostly in connection with improving the present course" (*Ottawa Journal*, 30 May 1913, p. 4). Since the suggestions that "will be taken up" were "**mostly** in connection with improving the present course," it is implied that **some** suggestions **not having to do with the present course** will also be taken up (emphasis added).

Could this vague reference to other planned work be a reference to alterations to holes on the short course – the ones that Colt planned to use in his new 18-hole championship routing?

After all, whether or not Colt's overall plan were approved or rejected at the annual general meeting scheduled for the beginning of 1914, there was no reason not to take advantage of Colt's advice for improving a few holes of the short course: these holes might become part of the new Colt course; at worst, if the Colt plan was rejected, several holes of the short course would be improved.

It seems certain that Colt staked out bunkers on "half of the new nine-hole links" for his new 18-hole championship routing (*Ottawa Journal*, 30 May 1913, p. 4). Yet a further question arises as to whether instructions that he left regarding alterations and improvements for holes on the short course perhaps served as a guide to alterations and improvements undertaken many years later.

After the completion of the new nine-hole course in 1911, I find no references in newspapers to any architect subsequently being hired to renovate this golf course. Yet aerial photographs in 1933 show that this layout has many more bunkers than it had when originally laid out by Karl Keffer in the spring of 1911.

Recall that in the spring of 1913, just before Harry Colt's visit to Ottawa, the 18-hole course and the 9-hole course together shared a grand total of 13 artificial sand bunkers. If the *Ottawa Journal* writer who

provided this figure counted among this number the natural sand bunkers that Bendelow incorporated into his layout (one found in front of the sixth green and the other found between the sixth green and the fourth fairway) and if six of this total of bunkers were the ones on the 1st and 3rd holes apparently installed in response to Sargent's 1909 letter about Royal Ottawa's deficient bunkering, then the nine-hole course laid out by Keffer in 1911 probably had no more than five artificial sand bunkers in 1913.

In 1933, however, there were at least 23 bunkers on the short course.

Furthermore, this bunkering work on the nine-hole course occurs on a limited number of holes. In 1933, no bunkers at all can be found on the fifth, sixth, and eighth holes.

Were the holes with bunkers in 1933 the ones that Colt had intended to use in his 18-hole championship routing? Had these bunkers been added accorded to Colt's drawings? Were some of them added in 1913 in connection with "Some of the suggestions … taken up" then?

Particularly suggestive of Colt's influence is the bunkering of what was in 1933 the fourth hole of the short (today's first hole on the "Royal Nine").

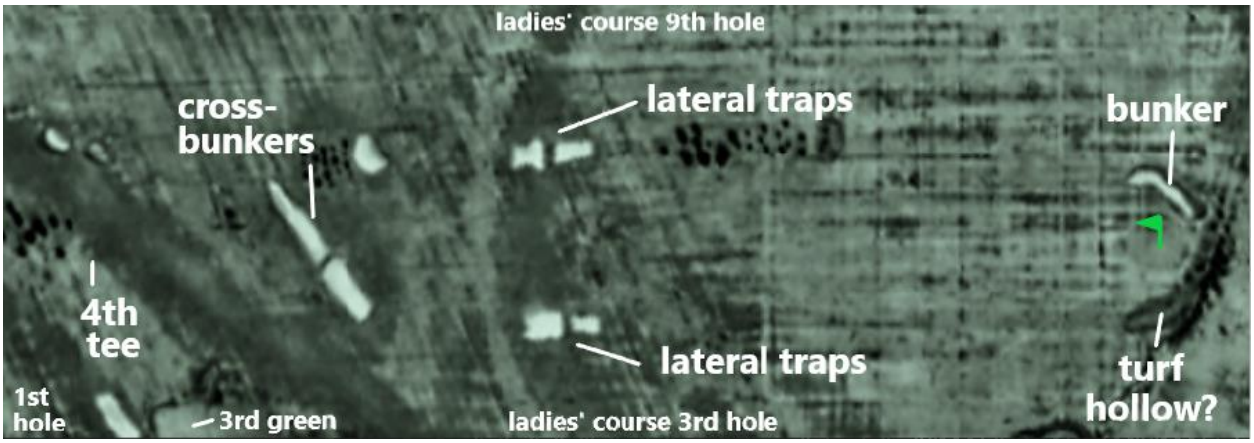

Figure 65 National Air Photo Library, 5 April 1933, enhanced and annotated.

One finds diagonal cross-bunkering like that favoured by Colt to offer golfers a choice as to how far they will try to carry the ball (these cross bunkers are evident in the 1925 aerial photograph shown above in figure 50), and there are lateral hazards beyond these cross-bunkers to encourage those driving for distance to hit their shots straight. Similarly, there is a wing-bunker on the left side of the green and perhaps a turf hollow or second bunker on the right side.

In regard to its cross-bunkering, lateral hazards, and bunker on the left side of the green, the fourth hole on the Royal Ottawa short course as seen above resembles quite closely the drawing that Colt made in

the spring of 1914 for the second hole at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, as we can see in comparison of the side-by-side images below.

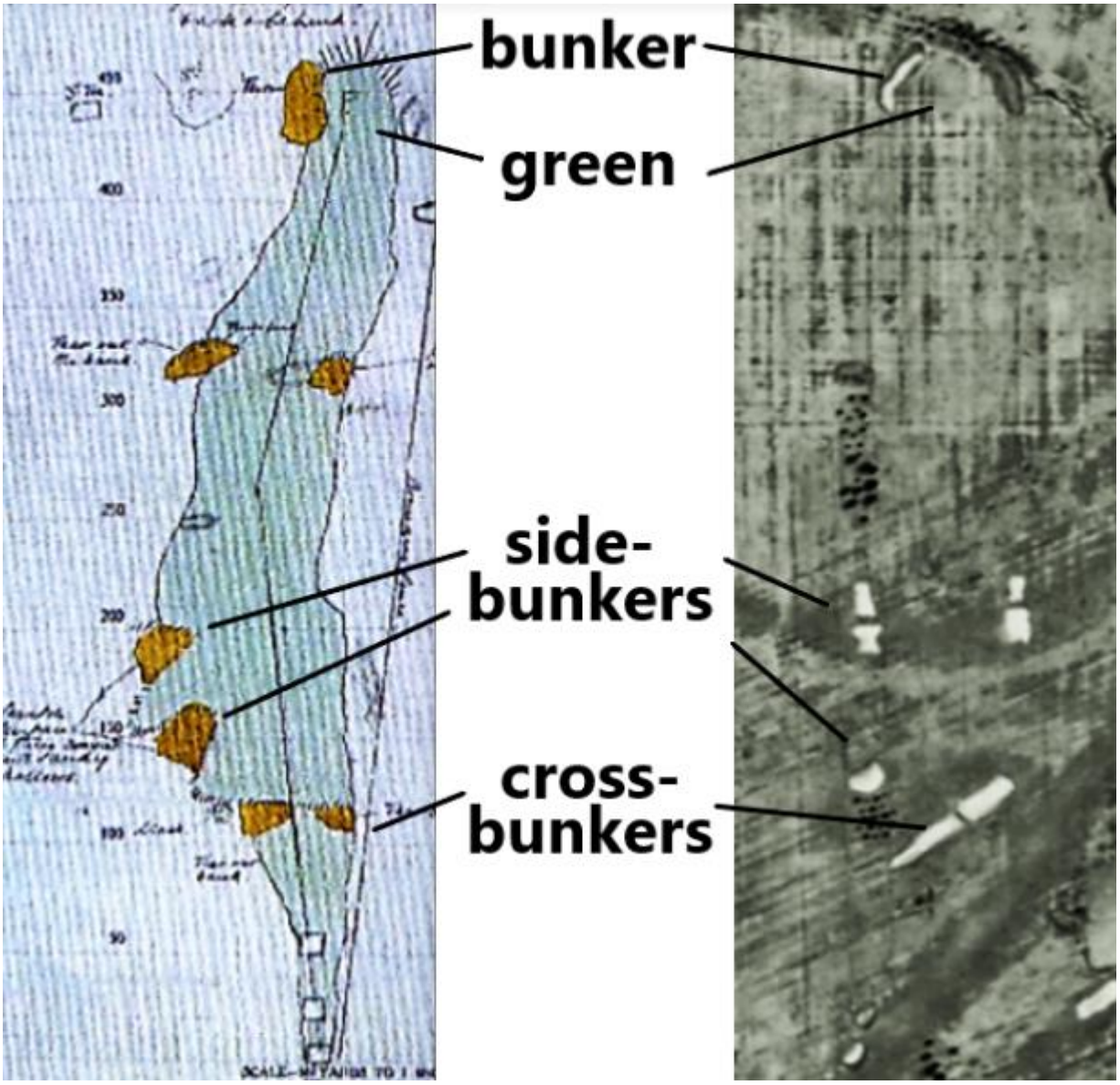

Figure 66 Left: H.S. Colt drawing for 2nd hole, Hamilton Golf and Country Club, May 1914. Right: National Aerial Photo Library, 5 April 1933, 4th hole of the short' course, Royal Ottawa Golf Club, Gatineau, Quebec.

Just a portion of one of the eight or nine bunkers on the fourth hole of the short course in 1933 remains on today's first hole of the Royal Nine.

Ralph Reville wrote to Colt in 1917 and asked him "what was the proper distance of a cross bunker from the tee," and Colt obliged him with a carefully considered reply:

> *I personally try always to avoid giving a compulsory carry off the tee of more than about 120 yards. Unless, however, one has much longer carries on a course than this, driving is a very tame business for a good player. So what I do in many cases is to make two or three sets of tees, and have always teeing boxes on each set. Players can settle before starting what tees are to be used (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 3 no 1 [May 1917], p. 38).*

The cross bunkers on the Hamilton and Royal Ottawa holes shown above, as well as the cross-bunkers on the fourteenth hole, were located at the distance that Colt recommends, and so were the diagonal pair of bunkers on the seventh hole of the Royal Ottawa short course, as seen below.

Figure 67 National aerial Photo Library, 5 April 1933. 7th hole, short course, Royal Ottawa Golf Club, Gatineau, Quebec.

Just one of the diagonal bunkers on the seventh hole of the short course in 1933 remains on the same hole today.

Any such bunkering of the short course by 1933 that is characteristic of Colt's work could have been installed at any time between 1913 and 1933.

As we know, Keffer had accompanied Colt on the day they walked the grounds at Royal Ottawa staking out the bunkers for the new 18-hole course, and so he will have walked with Colt on the holes of the short course that were to be made part of Colt's redesign. He may well have been responsible for the subsequent bunkering of the nine-hole course, following the design plans that Colt had submitted in 1913.

Many of these bunkers remained on the 9-hole course right down to its redesign in 2017. Even today, notwithstanding the loss of some of the original 1911 short course holes, several of the ostensible Colt bunkers remain in place.

Conclusion

The new officers of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club elected in 1923 affirmed a long-term ambition to "continue to improve" the golf course in order to match the standards of the best golf course architects of the day:

> *It is thought that the policy, evident during the post-war years, of gradually bringing the course up to the standards required by the constantly changing conditions, brought about by the golf ball manufacturers, will be continued: and under such circumstances there is little doubt that the Royal Ottawa course will hold its own with the more recent efforts by such master golf architects as Park, Colt and Donald Ross, for the improvement in the course since the start of the period of renovation has been most remarkable. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 12 February 1923, p. 10)*

I take the *Ottawa Citizen* writer here to be paraphrasing comments actually made by the directors at Royal Ottawa. If so, Club members obviously continued to follow Colt's career. They knew that his reputation as a "master golf architect" had only grown since his visit to Royal Ottawa in 1913.

Just when did members mark "the period of renovation" in question as having begun?

Was it with Park's visit in 1920, leading to the five years of "post-war" work that gradually fulfilled the plans he submitted in 1920?

Or did they mark the period of renovation as beginning with Colt?

After all, the "policy, evident during the post-war years, of gradually bringing the course up to the standards required," seems to have been an extension of the policy from 1913 to 1919 (forced on the Club by war-time constraints) of gradually implementing Colt's plans for new bunkers, tees, and contours on the Bendelow holes that he proposed to include in his redesign.

It may be that with the newly added tees and traps of 1918, along with the other improvements undertaken that year, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club had gone as far as Colt's plans could take it. Since the plans that the Club could enact after Colt's visit in the spring of 1913 encompassed just the part of the Bendelow course that he intended to incorporate into a newly routed championship course, there was a limit to the guidance his plans could give. The total of Bendelow holes for which he submitted design diagrams seems likely to have been perhaps five on the short course and at least eleven (and perhaps as

many as thirteen) on the championship course. So, there were probably between five and seven holes on the championship course that required the eye of a modernizing architect: Willie Park, Jr, in 1920.

Afterword

Any golf club in North America that has a connection to Harry S. Colt now cherishes it.

The case of Bloomfield Hills Country Club in Detroit is instructive. Long having assumed that the course had been designed by Donald Ross, a historian hired to tell the story of the Club for its 100th anniversary in 2013 discovered contracts and drawings indisputably proving that Harry Colt had designed the golf course in 1913.

So much for Donald Ross. His great courses are a dime a dozen in North America. The artefact that is historically rarer, and more significant, is a Harry Colt course!

So Bloomfield Hills hired Mike DeVries (DeVries designs, Inc.) and Frank Pont (Infinite Variety Golf Design) to restore their Colt course. The duo undertook the rebuilding of several greens and "renovating bunkers to a Colt style" (Richard Humphreys, *Golf Course Architecture*, 25 November 1920).

Figure 6 "Bunkers have been rebuilt to an early Colt style." Richard Humphreys, Golf Course Architecture*, 25 November 1920.*

It turns out that by an accident of historical proportions, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club may have a claim to uniqueness among the few North American golf clubs that can claim a remaining connection to Harry Colt.

By eventually rejecting Colt's plan to integrate half of the holes from its 1911 short course into its 1903 Bendelow course to create a new 18-hole championship course, the Royal Ottawa Golf Club is today the only golf club in North America for whom Harry Colt designed parts of two golf courses!

If the archives of the Royal Ottawa Golf Club can provide information in addition to that found in the public resources cited in this essay, and if such information more fully and accurately indicates the extent to which Colt's architectural plans were realized in the years after his 1913 visit, restoration of some of his bunkering might be undertaken and Royal Ottawa's connection to Colt might be acknowledged, and even emphasized.

Colt's North American golf courses remain the preserve of exclusive private golf clubs, and these clubs have found that there is significant value in their connection to Colt. The Colt-designed championship courses of both the Toronto Golf Club and the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, for instance, were recently renovated to restore features designed by Colt (Martin Hawtree did the Toronto course and Martin Ebert did the Hamilton course, each an expert architect heading a company specializing in Colt restorations).

Prospective golf club members of a certain kind, it turns out, desire connections in their lives to something bigger than themselves – something with a history and a significance extending well beyond their moment in time. According to John Paul Newport, in "Country Clubs Dig Up Their Histories: Why Older Clubs are Exploring Their Past," in the domain of leisure and recreation, this desire has increasingly been realized by membership of a club with a golf course connected to the greatest architect of all time (*Wall Street Journal*, 13 December 2013).