

Colt & Alison at Hamilton, 1920



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By Donald J. Childs

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Introduction

Harry S. Colt's 1914 design for the golf course of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club became famous as soon as the course was first opened for play in September of 1915.



Figure 1 Harry Shapland Colt, circa 1914.

Did Colt ever see the golf course?

He made three known visits to North America: 1911, 1913, and 1914. World War I broke out in August of 1914, and Colt is said never to have travelled to North America again.

And so we read the following on the website of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club:

Club historian, Les King, believes Colt would have had to rely on photographs to have viewed his finished product. "I don't think he would ever have seen the completed course at Ancaster through his own eyes," King notes. "But through the photographs of the 1919 US-Canada match and the 1919 Canadian Open, he would surely have 'seen' the course."

Two of the many excellent photographs of the course taken in 1919 can be seen below.



Figure 2 Spectators departing from the 11th tee during play at Hamilton GC, 1919. Leslie J. King, E. McGhie, A. Thomson, The Hamilton Golf & Country Club 1894-2004: An Illustrated History (Ontario 2006), p. 47.



Figure 3 The 9th hole at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, 1919. Leslie J. King, et. al., p. 47.

Colt included the first of the photographs above in his 1920 book, *Some Essays on Golf Course Architecture* (p. 66), which was co-written with C.H. Alison and published in 1920 by *Country Life* in London and by Scribner's in New York. The year before, he had written to most of the clubs where he had done architectural work in the past announcing that he and his new partners Alister Mackenzie and Charles Hugh Alison were available for further advice and design work now that the War was over, and through those letters he may have solicited photographs like the ones above from clubs whose courses he had laid out, for in his preface to this book he acknowledges "receipt of many photographs."

There is interesting evidence, however, that Colt may have seen the Ancaster golf course with his own eyes in the spring of 1920. If he had done so, what would he have thought of what he saw?

A Visit to Canada

Ralph Reville, editor of *Canadian Golfer* magazine, was a huge fan of Colt's work.



Figure 4 Ralph H. Reville, circa 1930.

In the magazine's first issue in May of 1915, Reville celebrated Colt's creation of "A Modern Golf Course" at Ancaster. He referred to Colt as "the well-known English golf architect, who is acknowledged to be the greatest expert in the world," and he recommended that readers pay attention to the yardages of the golf holes he had designed, for "They are the last word from the acknowledged premier expert" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 1 no 1 [May 1915], p. 39).

After regular correspondence with Colt, Reville gained the architect's respect and trust, and at the end of 1919, Reville became Colt's Canadian agent.

Reville had always kept readers abreast of Colt's design work in Europe and North

America, and now he was motivated to do so for business reasons. in January of 1920, he was able to report that Colt intended to return to Canada:

Mr. Colt to Visit Canada

Mr. H.S. Colt, the celebrated golf architect, who laid out the Hamilton and Toronto courses, the Country Club course in Detroit and other well-known links on this continent, writes the "Canadian Golfer" that in company with one of his partners, Captain C.E. [sic] Alison, he expects to leave next April for a business trip to the United States and Canada, the first he has made since the war. It will be quite a flying visit, as he states that there is a wonderful boom in golf course construction work in Great Britain, and he is simply inundated with commissions. Mr. Colt is generally recognized as one of the world's greatest golf course architects. He demands and gets very high fees, but his work fully justifies them. After all, what is a \$1000 or \$1500 expenditure when it comes to securing the last word in golf course construction? The best money any club can invest is in the proper laying out of its links. A penny wise, pound foolish policy in this respect should never be permitted. Canadian golf clubs interested in Mr. Colt's visit can secure his terms by writing the editor of the "Canadian Golfer." (Canadian Golfer, vol 5 no 9 [January 1920], p. 548)

In February, Reville informed readers that Colt would visit the Hamilton Golf and Country Club in particular:

Although the course of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club at Ancaster is recognized as one of the finest inland courses on the continent, the members are not yet satisfied, and some changes will be made in the spring in the way of additional traps and bunkers, which will make the course more difficult and more adapted for championship matches. This was decided on at the annual meeting Thursday evening, February 12th, at the Royal Connaught Hotel, when the business was conducted after the annual dinner. Mr. H.S. Colt, the famous English architect who laid out the course, will be here in the spring, accompanied by Captain Alison, and will offer suggestions on the changes to be made and will personally supervise the work. (Canadian Golfer, vol 5 no 10 [February 1920], p. 605)

This item in *Canadian Golfer* is packed with meaning.

Hamilton's High Anxiety

The members of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club wanted a “more difficult” course “more adapted for championship matches” because they had been shocked and embarrassed in July of 1919 by the low scores achieved by elite golfers on the Ancaster course during three high-profile, well-publicized events.

Accidentally, I think, Reville had helped to stir up a hornet's nest at the club by casually suggesting in his nationally syndicated newspaper column that low scores at the Ancaster golf course were the result of golf holes that had become too easy for the modern golfer:

The links of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club at Ancaster have certainly been in the golfing spotlight lately. First of all, along comes “Chick” Evans, U.S. amateur champion, who during the tour in July of American experts in aid of the Red Cross, breaks the amateur record of the course by notching a 69, certainly a wonderful performance. Two or three weeks afterwards, the international match [between Canada and the United States] was staged there and an exhibition of golf was seen which it was thought for a long time would be unbeatable. Seventies and seventy-ones were as thick as blackberries. Five-hundred-yard holes were common occurrences in fours, and threes were registered time and again at all the long ‘uns.
(Vancouver Sun, 12 August 1919, p. 8)

Perhaps the biggest shock to club members, however, came at the end of July with James Douglas Edgar's low scores in winning the Canadian Open.



Figure 5 James Douglas Edgar, circa 1919.

Just arrived from England and based at the East Lake Golf Club of Atlanta, where he was mentoring 17-year-old Bobby Jones, Edgar won the tournament by 16 strokes, beating future, present, and past golfing greats Jones, Jim Barnes, and Karl Keffer into a distant second place. Edgar made headlines around the world with the lowest score ever compiled in a 72-hole championship tournament: 278.

He played four rounds with an average score of 69.5. He scored 66 in the final round. The members of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club were not happy.

Reville seems to have got wind of the fact that the members of the club were becoming distressed by the thought that their Ancaster golf course had acquired the reputation of being a pushover for top-class golfers, for he dramatically reversed the way he talked about the golf course in his newspaper column two weeks later:

There is no question that the course at Ancaster is entitled to championship recognition. It has a length of 6,350 yards, and though not “bunkered up to the eyes” 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)

Reading between the lines, we can see that Reville had grasped – as the club members must also have done – that what was at stake in the wide discussion of what was responsible for the low scores at Ancaster was whether Hamilton Golf and Country Club would ever again be asked to host important championship tournaments.

Horried at the thought that its golf course was being seen as inadequate to championship standards, the club reached out to Colt. Its Honorary Secretary, F.J. Morrison, wrote to him in August:

I think it quite likely some 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. Now that the war is over, I hope that we may expect you on this side not later than next year. (Some Essays on Golf Architecture, p. 65)

When Colt’s partner Alison arrived at Ancaster over a year later in September of 1920, club directors were still animated by the issue: they seem to have explained to him that they wanted to keep the low scores shot in July of 1919 from ever happening again, prompting Alison to warn them: “It is of vital importance to avoid being influenced by one or two phenomenal scores” (pp. 5-6).

Alison’s warning is perhaps the architect’s version of the lawyer’s adage: “hard cases make bad law.” To proof the course against sensational rounds such as Edgar’s might well ruin the experience of the average golfer – a belief shared by Alison, Colt, Mackenzie, and other “Golden Age” architects. One must proceed carefully in this matter of stiffening course design.

Secretary Morrison had indicated that Hamilton Golf and Country Club wanted help with the new bunkering and trapping it had in mind “not later than next year.” Faced with this implicit deadline, and probably informed by Reville that the Hamilton club was not the only Canadian club eager for advice on how to upgrade its golf course now that the War was over, Colt publicly affirmed his intention to visit Canada in the spring of 1920 by placing advertisements in *Canadian Golfer* in January and March:

Golf Course Construction

Mr. H.S. Colt would be glad to hear from any clubs which might be likely to require advice regarding their courses, as he anticipates visiting Canada in the Spring of 1920, with one of his partners, Captain C.H. Alison. Address either Editor, “Canadian Golfer,” or H.S. Colt, East Hendred, Berks, England. From either of whom particulars of terms can be obtained. (Canadian Golfer, vol 5 no 11 [March 1920], p. 700)

Also in March, in his newspaper column, Reville again wrote about Colt’s impending visit to Hamilton Golf and Country Club, and he confidently announced that Colt would arrive in April:

Mr. Harry S. Colt, ... British golf architect of great repute, 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)

As Colt’s Canadian agent, Reville presumably knows what he is talking about when he indicates both that Colt “arrives in this country in April” and that Colt has lined up work at various courses in Canada in addition to the work planned at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club.

Reville, however, writes nothing more of Colt’s proposed visit to Hamilton.

Was this visit cancelled? Was it deferred?

Or did the visit take place without notice, having been, as Reville put it, “quite a flying business” – so quick that it was not recorded in Canadian newspapers or magazines?

It may be that Colt sent a surrogate in his stead: his partner Alison.

Alison's Excellent Architectural Adventure

Captain Charles Hugh Alison certainly visited the Hamilton Golf and Country Club in 1920.



Figure 6 Captain Charles Hugh Alison, circa 1914.

In the September issue of *Canadian Golfer*, Reville announced that Alison was on the way, sailing from his home in Lancashire:

Captain Alison, a partner of Harry S. Colt, who laid out the Toronto and Hamilton golf courses, sailed from Liverpool to Quebec the 6th of this month, and will proceed direct to Hamilton, where he will go over that famous course with the view of further improvements. Captain Alison has of recent years taken a very high rank as an expert on golf architecture. It is understood he has other commissions on this side in addition to Hamilton. (Canadian Golfer, vol 6 no 5 [September 1920], p. 401)

Canadian immigration records confirm Alison's arrival in Canada in mid-September and confirm that he had declared his destination to be the Hamilton Golf and Country Club. (Curiously, the immigration officer also notes that parts of the little finger on each of his hands had been amputated because of War injuries!)

And an item in the *New York Herald* elaborates on Reville's vague reference to Captain Alison's "other commissions":

*Captain C.H. Alison, who, with Dr. Mackenzie, has formed a business partnership with the well-known golf links architect, H.S. Colt, arrived in this country the other day to start preliminary work on a campaign of course construction work **booked by Colt in his visit here last spring**. Capt. Alison stated before leaving for the Middle West that the game abroad, both from an architectural and playing standpoint, is showing the greatest activity in its history. During the war Dr. Mackenzie made a name for himself*

in gun emplacement work and field camouflage. He held the rank of Major, and was lecturer on these subjects to the Allies. Both he and Colt will arrive in this country within a few weeks, according to Capt. Alison. (New York Herald, 15 October 1920, p. 13; emphasis added).

It would seem that Alison himself was the one who told the *New York Herald* that Colt had indeed visited North America in the spring of 1920 (just as Reville had been saying he would all winter long) and that during that visit Colt had lined up a considerable number of commissions.

Before beginning work at Ancaster, Alison seems to have had to await the completion of the Canadian Women's Golf Championships held at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club at the end of September.



Figure 7 Competitors at the Canadian Women's Golf Championships at Hamilton Golf and Country Club, 21-25 September 1920. From right to left: Effie C. Nesbitt and golf superstars Alexa Stirling and Ada Mackenzie. Canadian Golfer, vol 6 no 6 [October 1920], p. 431.

He would not have been able to stake out the location of new bunkers and traps, and he would not have been able to draw his famous chalk lines on the turf, until the last week of September at the earliest.

Since he arrived in Canada on September 13th or 14th, and apparently had many commissions to attend to, Alison is unlikely to have cooled his heels in Hamilton for ten days waiting to get out on the course. Reville had said that Alison would “proceed direct to Hamilton,” but he probably went to Michigan first.

When his plans for “enlargement and improvement” of Tom Bendelow’s 1912 nine-hole course at Michigan’s Port Huron Golf and Country Club were approved in mid-November (he would design nine new holes and reroute six of the old ones), it seems that these plans had been submitted “several months” before, so there is reason to assume that Alison had visited Port Huron in September, which may have been his first port of call (*Times Herald* [Port Huron, Michigan], 16 November 1920, p. 16).

Presumably having arrived in Hamilton at the end of September after his work in Port Huron, Alison submitted to the club a comprehensive plan for further bunkering and trapping after perhaps a week of study and reflection. The observations and suggestions in his 13-page proposal seem to be entirely Alison’s own. He does not refer to any conversations with Colt about the course, nor to any directions received in writing from him. Yet he certainly presents his “proposals” in direct relation to Colt’s intentions: he assures the club that his plan is “sufficient to fulfill the original design” (C.H. Alison, “Hamilton Golf & Country Club,” 5 October 1920, p. 13).

Alison’s proposal was dated 5 October 1920, and the address he gave at the top of the first page was “1230 Penobscot Building, Detroit” (p. 1). He indicated that letters to him should be mailed to this address care of a friend. Alison’s comments about the imminent work in America by Colt, Mackenzie and Alison appeared in the *New York Herald* in mid-October. He subsequently established his main office in Detroit’s Penobscot Building, and he also maintained a subsidiary office in New York. Alison, then, was here, there, and everywhere throughout September and October of 1920, working not just at Ancaster but also in New York, Detroit, and the surrounding area.

But by the end of October, he was working for many weeks on construction at Ancaster. Golfers learned in November about certain aspects of Alison’s work on the golf course when Reville reported interesting details in *Canadian Golfer* (which came out around the middle of each month):

Captain Alison, partner of H.S. Colt, the celebrated English golf architect, was in Hamilton a few weeks ago and laid out a very comprehensive plan of bunkering and trapping for the celebrated course of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club at Ancaster. He only made one radical change in the lay-out of the links. The 13th one-shot hole at Ancaster has always been recognized as the one poor hole on the course. Captain

Alison is making a new green here and also changing the tee. The celebrated 8th hole is to be trapped in front of the green, raised at the back, the changes calling for a perfect mashie shot. New traps and bunkers are being constructed on nearly every other hole. The fine fall weather permitted the work to be prosecuted with vigor. Next spring all the improvements will be completed and Hamilton will then have a championship course unexcelled, if equalled, on the continent. (Canadian Golfer, vol 6 no. 7 [November 1920], p. 533)

Alison had presented the club with an option regarding the 13th hole. He could fill in the bunker in the centre of the fairway, add a new diagonal bunker to the green's left, put a new pot bunker on its right edge, put a turf hollow on its left side, and emphasize the rise at its back; or "an alternative scheme would be to make a new green ... further to the right. This would undoubtedly be more satisfactory but also rather more expensive" (p. 10).

Amazingly, within a few weeks of submission of the plan dated 5 October 1920, the club not only approved it, choosing the expensive option of building a new green for the 13th hole, but it also called Alison back to Ancaster to begin construction right away.



Although Alison generally advised golf clubs that they should "allow him time to ... arrange for the personnel, implements and material to arrive at the site," it is hard to imagine that he was allowed such time at Ancaster (*Times Union* [Brooklyn, New York], 25 March 1925, p. 26). Yet work crews, Fresno scrapers, and horse handlers were nonetheless all vigorously in action on

Figure 8 Fresno scrapers scoop out bunkers and build up a green complex circa 1920.

the golf course by the end of October.

To have authorized this work so quickly, Hamilton Golf and Country Club must have had an extremely agile and efficient management system in place. It makes me wonder if it was understood from the beginning that Alison's mandate was effectively "to put the finishing touches on the original design" (phrase crossed out on p. 13). If so, the plan he submitted may have been processed quickly by club directors as an ostensibly *pro forma* confirmation of their agreement with Colt, Mackenzie and Alison that the company would "fulfill the original design" (p. 13).

Alison returned to Ancaster in the new year as work on the course continued. Club members received at their annual meeting in February of 1921 "a very interesting description of the work on the course that is now under way, under the direction of Captain Alison" (*Canadian Golfer*, vol 6 no 10, [February 1921], p. 712). Alison was not permanently based in Hamilton from February to May of 1921, mind you (in April, for instance, he was in Chicago laying out a golf course for the newly formed Briergate Golf Club), but rather continued to supervise work on a variety of projects, as he had done during the previous fall.

Bunker Contradictions?

In August of 1919, we recall, Reville wrote that the golf course is "not 'bunkered up to the eyes,'" but he insisted nonetheless that it "is well trapped," and yet he hastened to add that "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). Reville, who lived in Brantford and who had been to the Ancaster golf course many times before the Canadian Open was staged there by the Hamilton Golf and Country Club in the summer of 1919, had presumably been told by people at the club that Colt had all along intended more bunkers than had so far been installed, or perhaps in their correspondence throughout the War years (before the low scores recorded at Ancaster during the spring and summer of 1919) Colt had told Reville of his intentions regarding further bunkering at Ancaster.

In the same month, however, the club's secretary, Morrison, writes, "I think it quite likely some 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" (*Some Essays on Golf Architecture*, p. 65). He refers to the possibility of new bunkers being installed. And he writes as though it is not simply a matter of fulfilling the original "plans got out by Harry S. Colt" that Reville mentions. He frames the matter as a question of

“change”: will it be Colt who changes the course or an “amateur” architect who will perhaps make “one change and another which we should [eventually] like to undo”?

Neither Reville nor Morrison complains of the existing bunkers. Similarly, Alison assured the directors of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club that in building the golf course they had followed Colt’s plans pretty faithfully: “I have compared the 18-hole course with Mr. Colt’s plans, & find that the work has been conscientiously carried out, and that there are no serious discrepancies between the course and the plans” (p. 1).

Both Reville’s reference to additional bunkers that had all along been planned by Colt, on the one hand, and Morrison’s reference to a need for bunkering not built as part of the original plans, on the other hand, probably refer to the same thing: further work intended by Colt that had not been formally arranged. For as a matter of proper practice, Colt deferred an important stage of the bunkering of a new golf course to a visit subsequent to the actual construction of the layout, as he indicated in his 1912 essay, “Golf Architecture,” when explaining how he spent his time in laying out a 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,” in Martin H.F. Sutton’s The Book of the Links: A Symposium on Golf [London: W.H. Smith & Son, 1912], pp. 69-70)

When he planned bunkering for a new 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. As Colt observes of drives: “If we take a new course, 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.

Colt proceeded in precisely this way at the Hopwood Park golf course that he 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 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).

So the further bunkering to which Reville and Morrison refer would seem to have been bunkering that Colt had all along planned to add on a subsequent visit to the golf course – a visit subsequently deferred by the outbreak of World War I in August of 1914.

Yet it does not seem to have been bunkering of this sort that Alison ended up concentrating on.

Bunkering Discrepancies

Note that Alison’s assurance that “there are no serious discrepancies between the course and the plans” nonetheless acknowledges discrepancies of some sort. And upon further consideration by Alison, they seem to have proved more serious than he had initially thought (p. 1).

Alison observes that at Ancaster in 1920 “the majority of the existing bunkers have not been constructed in such a way as to form real, live hazards, capable of **retaining** the shots which they are intended to trap” (p. 5, emphasis added). That the bunkers did not “retain” shots suggests perhaps that certain shots that landed in them nonetheless splashed out, allowing a golfer to escape proper punishment for a bad shot. Perhaps they were not dug deep enough, or perhaps their banks had not been built high enough, or steep enough.

According to Alison, then, the bunkers in question were “**intended** to trap” shots, and yet they did not, so there was a significant discrepancy, after all, between what had been intended by Colt and what had been realized through the construction work (p. 5, emphasis added). It is not clear, however, whether Alison indicts Hamilton’s builder of the bunkers for having failed to follow the instructions Colt wrote on his detailed diagrams for each hole, or whether he indicts Colt for having not designed bunkers appropriate to the implicit requirements of the golf holes he designed.

The implementation of Colt’s 1914 layout for the land at Ancaster was placed “in the capable hands of course superintendent John Sutherland, who supervised construction for the next two years” (http://www.hgcc.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3&Itemid=121). But there is a question as to how “capable” any North American course superintendent could have been in 1914 when charged with implementing the revolutionary ideas of Harry Colt. A builder could easily go wrong by

misunderstanding Colt's drawings or simply by not being familiar with the variety of bunkers he used, as Colt had found at the Toronto Golf Club.

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.

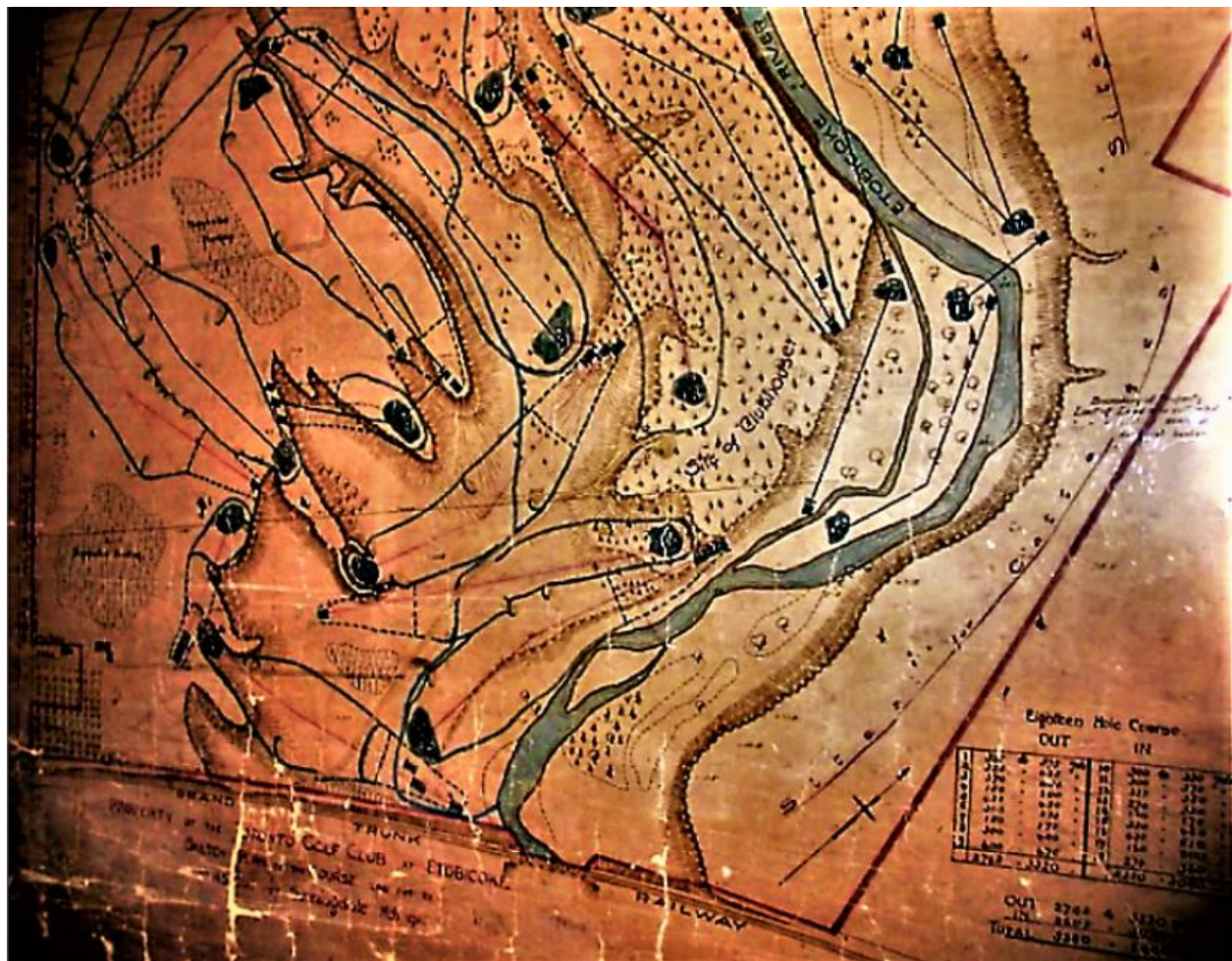


Figure 9 A detail from Colt's 1911 design for the 18-hole golf course of the Toronto Golf Club as displayed in the clubhouse of the Toronto Golf Club.

Colt found, however, that a drawing of this sort was not sufficient to guide Toronto's builders. According to 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

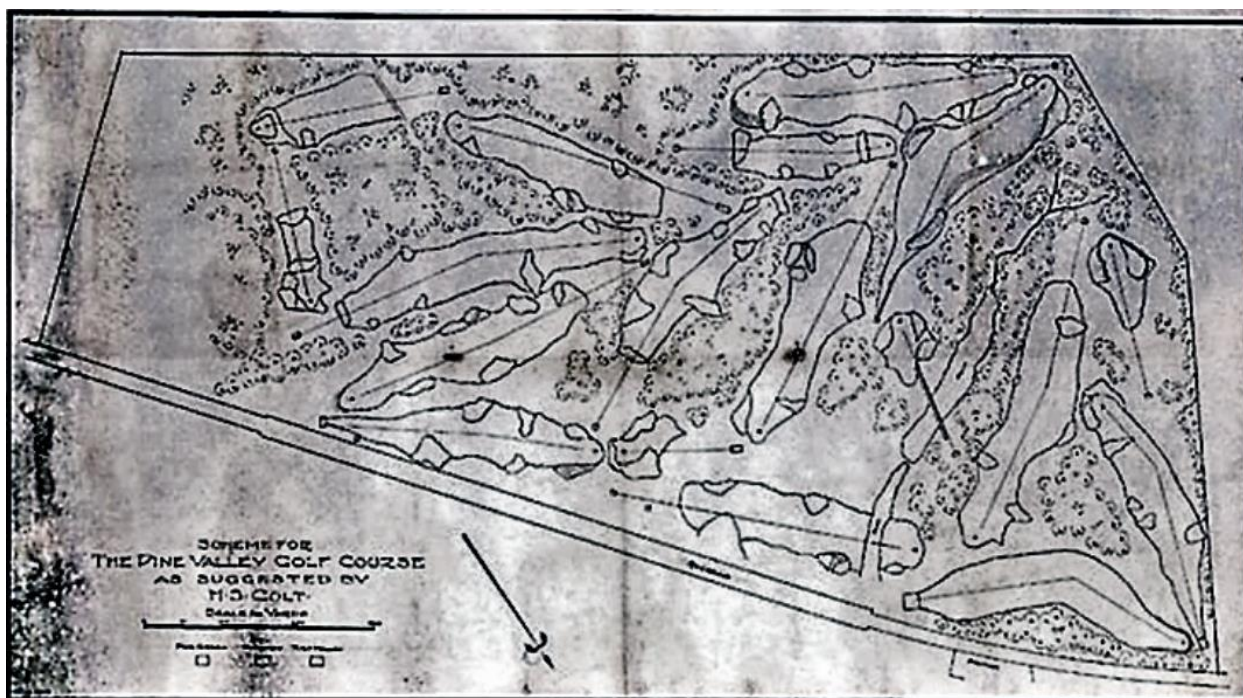


Figure 11 Colt's plan for Pine Valley Golf Course, June 1913.

And as he had done at Chicago in April, Colt also submitted hole-by-hole drawings for Pine Valley.

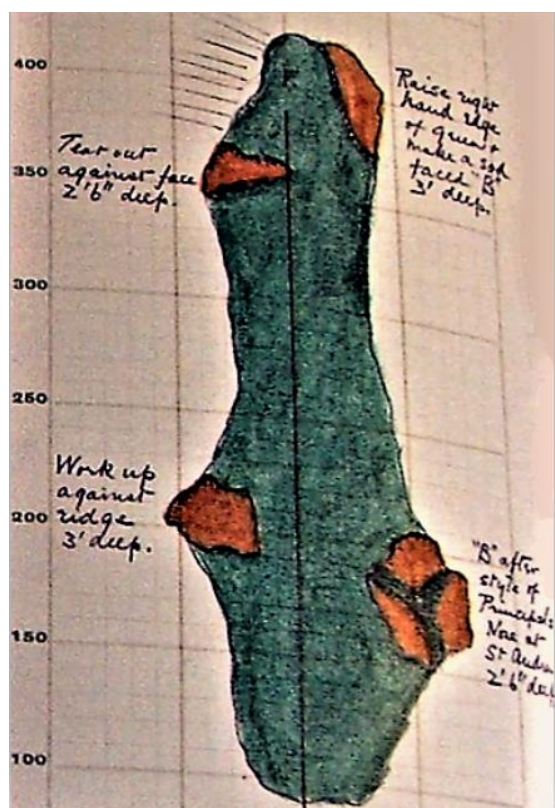


Figure 12 Harry Colt's drawing of the fairway and green for his planned 9th hole at Pine Valley, June 1913.

Unlike the drawings done for the Old Elm Club, however, the Pine Valley drawings were painted with water-colours, and they included precise instructions for the depth of bunkers (as can be seen in the example shown to the left).

Colt did the same less than a year later when he laid out the Ancaster course at the end of April and beginning of May in 1914: he provided both a comprehensive layout for the golf course as a whole and also individual drawings for each of the 18 holes.

On the blueprint reproduced below, the golf holes are all drawn accurately according to scale. The length of the holes, the shape of the 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 13 H.S. Colt, blueprint for the 18-hole Ancaster course of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, May 1914.

As he had done at Pine Valley a year earlier, Colt often indicated in his detailed illustration of each hole at Ancaster the precise depth of a bunker or turf hollow in feet and inches, and he often did the same for the height of the bank of a bunker or the height of a mound around a green.

At other times, however, his directions were more vague: he might simply draw a bunker on his diagram of a particular hole and indicate that the builder should “Tear out the bank,” as seen below on his diagram of the 14th hole at Ancaster.

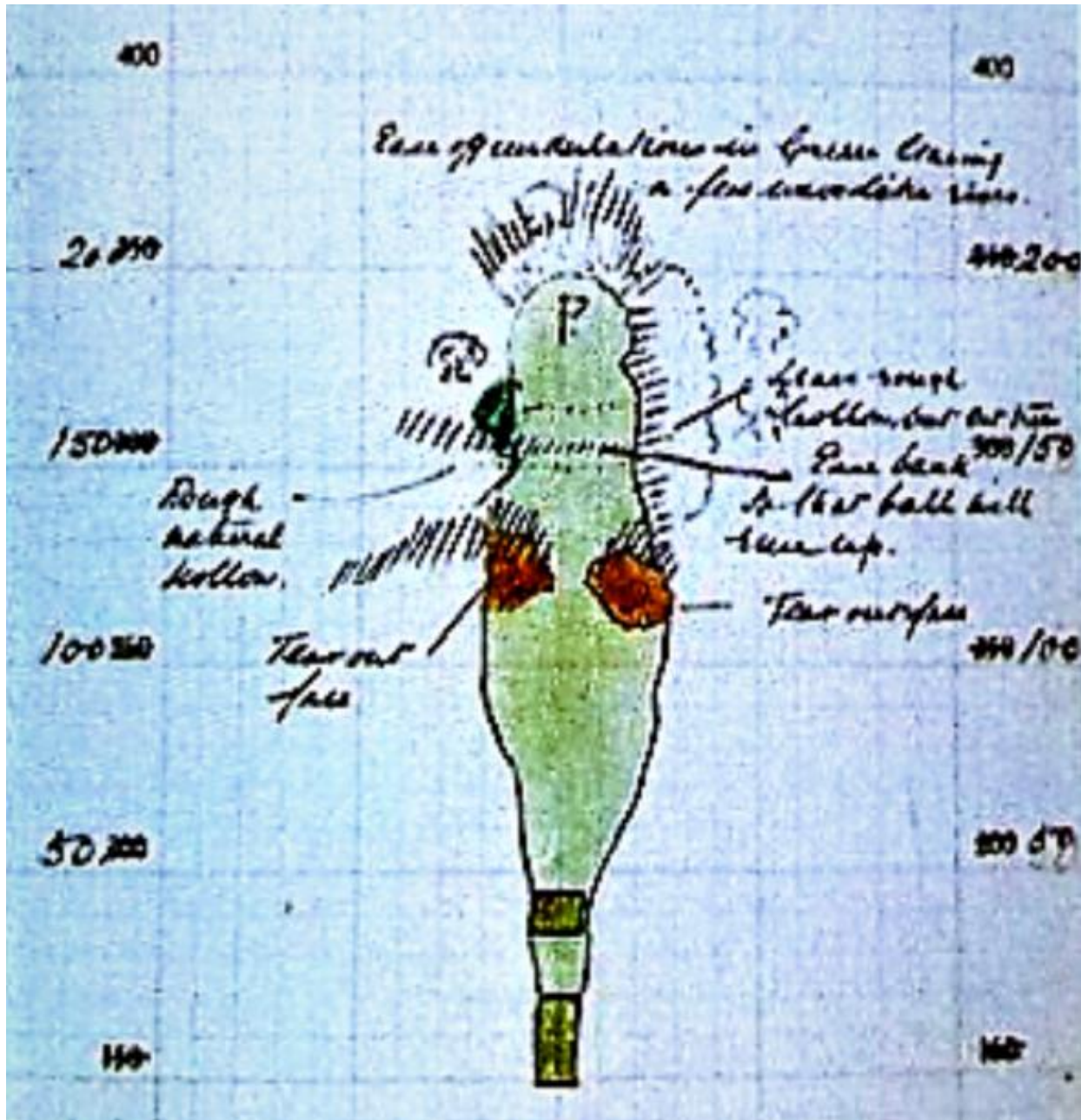


Figure 14 Colt's diagram for the 6th hole at Ancaster. Reading clockwise from the top, his instructions read: "Ease off undulations in green leaving a few mound-like rises"; "Leave rough hollow but not tree"; "Ease back so that ball will run up"; "Tear out face"; "Tear out face"; "Rough natural hollow."

So there was definitely opportunity for Sullivan to have gone wrong at Ancaster, despite his best efforts, for in certain situations he had not much more guidance than the builder at Toronto two years before.

As the architect on site, however, Alison might have found that Sullivan's construction of the golf course had faithfully adhered to Colt's diagrams but that many bunkers were nonetheless inadequate to the requirement that they trap certain shots on certain holes.

That Alison's report to the Hamilton Golf and Country Club might have constituted implicit criticism of Colt's 1914 bunker designs is certainly possible given that Alison became notorious for the size and depth of the intimidating bunkers he designed when laying out golf courses of his own. He definitely had his own bunkering philosophy. And he makes very clear that if he had had his druthers at Ancaster, he would have remodelled every bunker on the course – what! not one bunker had realized Colt's intention? – but he knew that such wholesale reconstruction would have been too expensive, so he provided a comprehensive list of "exceptions": bunkers that could wait to "be remodelled as opportunity offers" (p. 12).

So although Alison preferred to say that he was merely fulfilling Colt's implicit intentions, it seems that Alison's work on bunkers at Ancaster actually supplemented Colt's intentions with certain of his own.

Conclusion

The evidence that Harry Colt visited North America in the spring of 1920 so far consists of the single reference to such a visit in the *New York Herald*.

But since Colt's partner Alison seems to have been the source of the report in question, the evidence is substantial enough to require us to entertain the possibility that Colt indeed saw in person the outcome of his 1914 design work at the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, and that he had made a point of visiting the club in the spring of 1920 to allay its fears about the championship calibre of its golf course, arranging during this visit that his partner Alison would be the one to come to Ancaster in the fall and "put the finishing touches on the original design" (p. 13).

If so, Colt may well have agreed with Alison's assessment of the bunkering at Ancaster as the latter found it in September of 1920. He may even have warned Alison of what he would face at the golf course.

But whether or not Colt visited Hamilton in the spring of 1920, there is an interesting sense in which Colt and Alison – regardless of when they were at Ancaster – were in their own minds at work on the same construction site and so were actually collaborating on the original building of the course, which had simply been interrupted by the War.

Defining his work at Ancaster neither as a renovation of Colt's original 1914 design nor as a restoration of it, but rather as a "fulfilment" of that design, Alison implies that, technically, he is still involved in a laying out of the original golf course. As he frames it, this final stage of the work was merely delayed by the War: as though the golf course had been wounded like millions of soldiers in World War I, he observes that "The course seems, in general, to have been nursed very successfully through the War period" (p. 5).

Now, however, it is time "to put the finishing touches on the original design" (p. 13).

These finishing touches would have included bunkering that Colt had all along planned to add on a subsequent visit to Ancaster. But one can see that Alison is not merely "channelling" the spirit of Harry Colt in the plan he submits to the Hamilton Golf and Country Club. Assessing the Ancaster course as it exists in the fall of 1920 from the perspective of his own knowledge and experience as an architect, Alison determined that a range of further work was required to realize the full potential of the original Colt design. And this work included touches that only an onsite architect could add during the final stage of golf course construction.

Alison saw the final stage of golf course construction as one of the most important for realizing an architect's vision: it was a creative phase of design in its own right.

He saw the creation of a golf course not so much as like the creation of a building, but rather more like the creation of a painting:

I desire to lay special emphasis on the benefit which clubs can derive by employing a golf course architect to supervise the work of construction. No one who is spending from \$50,000 to \$150,000 on building a house would leave the work in the sole charge of the builder Yet this procedure is frequently followed in the case of golf course construction, where precise specification is more difficult and where the concluding stages should resemble the painting of a picture rather than the building of a house. (Times Union [Brooklyn], 16 March 1924, p. 18)

Although Alison wrote the above paragraph three years after concluding his work for the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, his experience at Ancaster informs the conviction he expresses here.

In light of these comments, we can see why Alison had first written in the concluding paragraph of his report about the Ancaster golf course that he would “put the finishing touches on the original design” (p. 13). He was in Hamilton to see to “the concluding stages” of the creation of a golf course, and in his mind that was to put the finishing touches on the “painting of a picture” (*Times Union* [Brooklyn], 16 March 1924, p. 18).

Colt and Alison had occasionally collaborated before World War I (as, for instance, at Stoke Poges in England), but they are said not to have done so after the War. Yet perhaps we should revise this statement, for what Alison implicitly defines in his report to the Hamilton Golf and Country Club as a two-stage construction of the original Colt design might be seen in retrospect as a post-War collaboration between partners – partners who understood themselves to be using slightly different brush strokes to paint the same picture at Ancaster.

Of course, history has judged their work to be a masterpiece.