

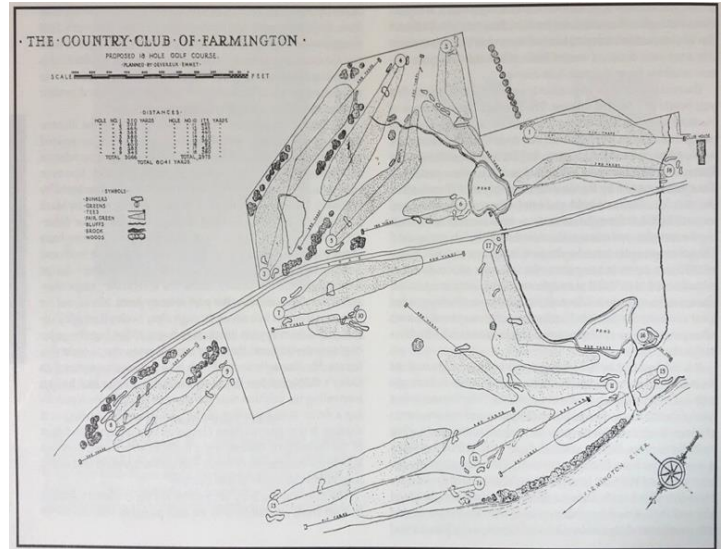
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By Geoffrey L. Manton

Lost Fours - *part 1*

Things don't always go according to plan in golf course construction. Unless a contractor is hired with specific instructions to precisely follow a design plan (and there is no architect supervision), the end-product is rarely a facsimile of what's drawn on paper. Design edits will invariably occur, for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, unexpected discoveries are unearthed during the excavation process that mandate a change. Other times, budgetary constraints require reducing work on one portion of the golf course to compensate for prioritized changes on other areas of the golf course. However, often, many deviations from the original plan are the result of design edits in the field that occur organically as the construction process proceeds. No different than a painter who is inspired by newly laid colors on the canvas, a golf course architect will frequently tweak his/her design as a golf hole is being shaped. And so, for whatever the reason, design edits occurred at The Country Club of Farmington.

Devereux Emmet was commissioned to convert his 9-hole design at CCF into an 18-hole routing in the early 1920s. A design plan was approved in 1921 and golf course construction, which was completed by a local contractor, took nearly 2 years.

While we do not have any documentation of what the golf course looked like on opening day in 1923, the aerial photograph of the golf course in 1934 proves that some significant changes occurred between that time and the 1921



Devereux Emmet's 1921 design plan for CCF (above) and 1934 aerial photograph of Emmet's golf course (below) demonstrate that many of the features of the 1921 design, mainly bunkering, were never built, whereas others were added...supporting the fact that golf courses aren't always built as planned on paper.

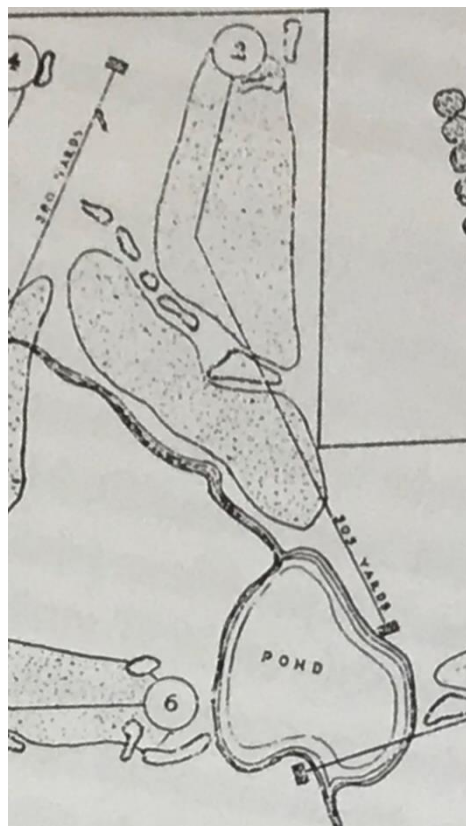


design plan. One of the more striking of those alterations is the appearance of the 2nd hole.

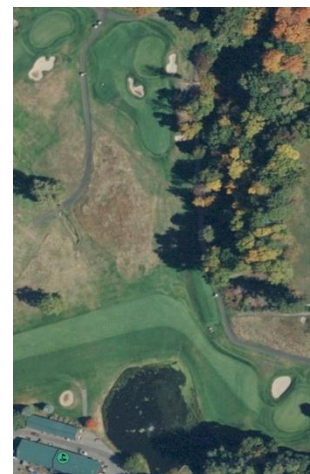
Right above: Zoomed in view of CCF's second hole on Devereux Emmet's 1921 plan. In contradistinction to today, this hole was a par 4. In contrast to what was built, Emmet's 1921 plan called for a fairway dividing centerline of bunkers.

Recently selected by the Connecticut State Golf Association as one of the most difficult par 3's among its member courses, our 2nd hole is a rude awakening after the strategic and fun first hole. Dubbed "The shortest par 5 in CT", this one-shot hole is a demanding test of golf. Not only is a long uphill tee shot required while avoiding out of bounds to the right, but the 3 shallow tiers on a green that slopes severely from back to front have no easy hole location. Some pin positions are downright diabolical when green speeds are high. So taxing is this hole that one of the favorite sayings of former head golf professional of 40 years, John Murphy, was "if you're even par on the 3rd tee, then you must have birdied #1." But this golf hole hasn't always been so demanding. For the first 2 decades that CCF played as an 18-hole course, it took 2 shots to reach the 2nd green, by design. However, not long after WWII, changes were made to the closing 2 holes that necessitated altering the second hole as well. Like a game of musical chairs, the 18th hole was converted to a par 3 and the 17th hole was elongated into a par 4. To make room for play to the new 17th green, the tee box for the second hole was shifted forward (from the shallow shelf in front of today's 17th green) to where it sits today; an easy short par 4 became a difficult par 3.

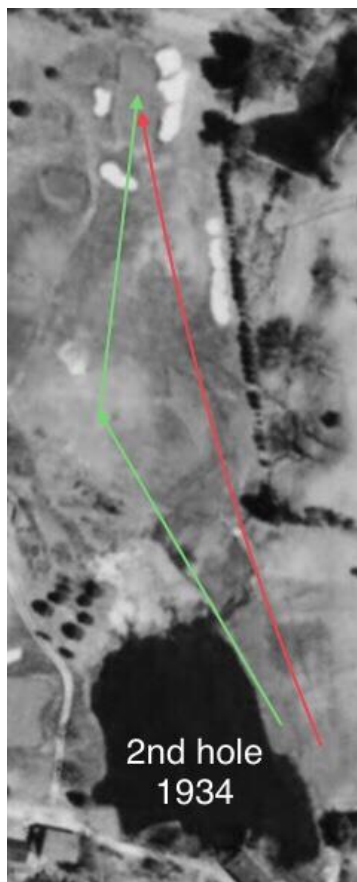
Right below: 1934 aerial view of CCF's 2nd hole. Note the absence of the centerline bunker complex that was called for on the 1921 design plan, replaced by a single bunker at the left side of the fairway.



In 1934, the section of land on which our current native area resides was once the intended landing zone for the second hole's tee shot. As are present today, a row of bunkers guarded the right side of the fairway. However, a solitary bunker was present at the far-left side of this since abandoned fairway, a bunker meant to protect the angle from which to best attack the green. Today's front left green-side bunker was once directly in line with the



Above: Google image of CCF's 2nd hole today. The native area on the left was once fairway



2nd hole
1934

preferred angle to the green and had to be carried to reach the putting surface. However, comparison of the 1934 version of CCF's second hole to the 2nd hole Emmet proposed on his 1921 course diagram depicts a far different design style - one that magnifies the element of risk and reward.

Left image: 1934 aerial view of CCF's 2nd hole depicting the 2 routes of play to the green - the more conservative path (green arrows) or the aggressive play (red arrow). Note how the angle of the green falls in line with the approach from the more conservative play, albeit over the path of a front greenside bunker.
Right below: Theoretical routes of play on CCF's 1921 design plan. While all paths encounter some element of risk, the green arrows depict the choice with the highest margin for success.



While the bunkers right of the fairway present today and in 1934 do little more than provide a buffer to the adjacent out of bounds just further right, the line of bunkers on the 1921 design plan demand a decision. If this string of bunkers bisecting the fairway are successfully challenged, the approach shot to the green is a mere chip, defended only by the contours of the green itself (and the thoughts that mingle between one's ears). A more safely played tee shot that stays right of the bunkers and yet avoids out of bounds results in a tricky pitch over a front green-side bunker to a shallow green. However, when electing to play it safest from the tee by hitting a more manageable, shorter shot that steers left of the bunkers to an island of fairway set above the creek and lowlands below, one is faced with a longer uphill pitch to a putting surface completely blinded from view.



Overlay of how routes of play on CCF's 2nd hole in 1934 would lie on the landscape as it exists today.

When walking this portion of the golf course, it's easy to visualize how Emmet routed his original plan for the 2nd hole. The existing natural contours would require little earth movement to construct his 1921 fairway and bunker design. So, one can only wonder why the 1921 plan for the second hole was never built. (Or perhaps it was built and then abandoned before 1934, although this is unlikely). Were costs of construction too high? Did the contractor or some other agent make his own edits in the field?

Regardless, the hole that Devereux Emmet put on paper in 1921 is captivating to the architecture aficionado. It embraces all the fun and intriguing elements of this great game - the sense of adventure and discovery that comes with traversing ground contours, elevation changes, and blind shots - the rise and fall of emotion that result from risk/reward choices and execution. Rather than golf that's composed of hit the ball, find it, and hit it again, the 1921 version of CC Farmington's 2nd hole is interactive and engaging. After the drama associated with the quirky and fun first hole, a similarly interesting follow-up would be quite the one-two-

punch to start off a gleeful round of golf. Or maybe we'd rather be tortured instead?

(Up Next: Part 2 - Other lost 4s at CCF)