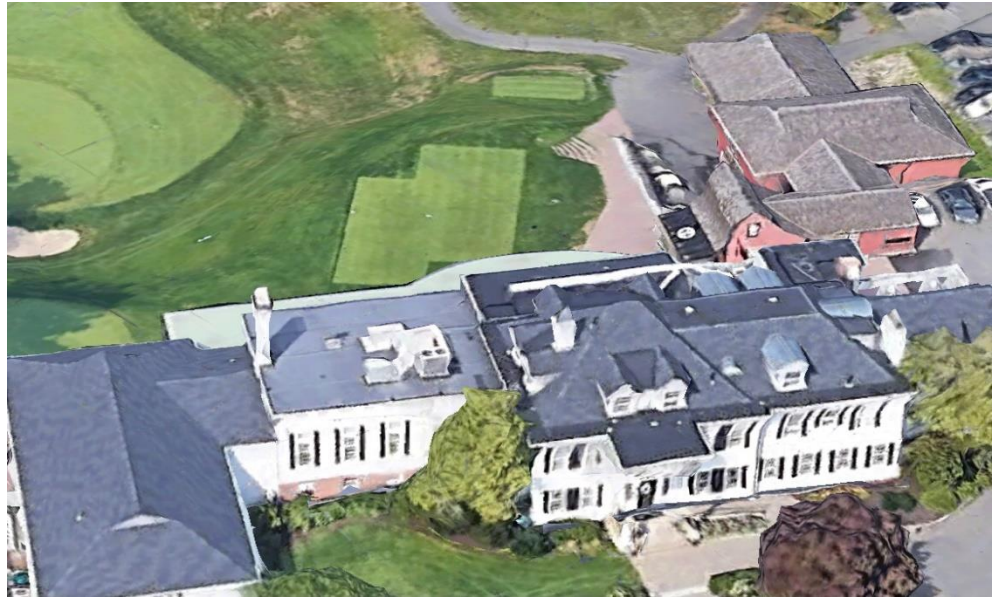


CCF Historical and Architectural Series
Volume 15
By Geoffrey L. Manton

First Impressions.

With the first tee situated so close to the patio, just about every member of our club has an opening tee shot story. Whether it be [Bill Morse's infamous "longest hole in one"](#) that made national news, or a

personal anecdote about a nerve stricken foul ball incited by an unintended gallery. My story took place the first time I set foot on CCF property. After mulling my options of what club to hit, I elected to play it safe and selected a long iron. Feeling the presence of the adjacent patio full of lunch-goers on a beautiful summer



Circa 2018 zoomed-in 3D rendered bird's eye view of the intimate relationship between CCF's first tee, the clubhouse's patio, and the pro shop's steps. *Image - Google Earth*

Saturday afternoon, I struck it pure - *dead center of the hosel* - and screamed inside with fear as I saw my Titleist rocket towards a parking lot full of silver arrow badged sedans worth far more than the insurance policy on my beat-up old Honda Accord. Fortunately, my shank caught a savior limb, and I breathed a sigh of relief as I desperately searched for a place to hide in embarrassment. Aside from the intimacy of the first tee and the patio, a quality shared with the famed Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, PA, what is it about our opening hole that makes it so great?

Devereux Emmet was known for the varied and quirky designs in the golf courses he built. Whether it be the length of holes, features within those holes, or the sequence in which the holes unfolded, Emmet's golf courses were unique. Those characteristics can be seen on the grounds at The Country Club of Farmington, beginning on the first hole. The opening hole on a golf course is believed by some to be a place to warm up, to ease the player into the game. The late, great, Pete Dye held true to this axiom and routinely built a friendly first hole

before revealing the teeth for which most of his designs are known. Eddie Hackett must have had the same principle in mind when he created the first hole at Waterville Links in County Kerry, Ireland aptly named "Last Easy". And so, when a newcomer to CCF reviews the scorecard before pegging his/her first ball, he/she may think light of our first hole given its maximum length of 290 yards. Just as books shan't be judged by their cover, hole lengths tell nothing of the story that lies between tee and green.

Australian architect, former professional golfer, and architecture editor for Golf Australia, [Michael Clayton wrote](#) that good short par 4s have the same qualities as the best par 5s in that they embody the strategic concept of risk and reward. Restated, these short two-shot holes provide options for play that, if the bold choice is executed successfully, there will be an exponentially increased likelihood of a low score. Conversely, avoidance of hazards by taking a safe road on the initial play will only place the golfer in the face of danger on the next shot. Indeed, a well-designed "drivable par 4" is golf's version of punishing the procrastinator; if you don't confront the challenge now, you'll only meet her later in an arguably more devilishly delicate form.

The obstacles which must be contended with at CCF's first hole are comprised of bunkers, blind approaches, out-of-bounds, and a dastardly cliff. How one navigates these is akin to a [Choose Your Own Adventure book](#); avoidance of one challenge will only reveal another. The chosen adventure on our first hole stems from the decision made on the play from the tee. With a knoll seated ~80 yards from the green [yellow lines], the teeing club one chooses will determine whether the approach to the green shot will be blind.

The safest play, to not challenge the hillock and play short, to the widest portion of fairway [green arrows], is the selection of the procrastinator supreme since all other obstacles will still lay ahead. However, for those conservative



CCF's first hole circa 2018 – green arrows demonstrate the conservative play off the tee below the knoll (yellow hash lines). Image – Google Earth



ABOVE black arrows demonstrate the blinded dangers that await conservative play off the tee below the knoll (yellow hash lines) BELOW blue arrows demonstrate potential results from a more aggressive play off the tee. Images – Google Earth



folk who err to live another day [read: ensure the next shot can be played], this is a reasonable choice since playing from deep bunkers set into the left side of the knoll or from a string of bunkers right of the fairway will make reaching the green far more difficult than hitting a blind shot from the fairway [black arrows]. However, it's probably a good thing that this fairway shot is blind since the consequence of not hitting the green when striking an approach shot the appropriate distance is a result best left unseen.

The more challenging play off the tee is to take a longer club in order to reach the top of the knoll and be on level ground with the putting surface [blue arrows]. Like any well-designed golf hole, length of stroke is only rewarded if the direction in which the ball flies is correct. Conversely, the safe short play on this tee shot does not have to be straight to survive, it only need carry the ravine between the teeing ground and the fairway. However, in order for one's second shot to be void all other obstacles that exist on our opening hole, the lengthy tee shot must be precise. A long ball that flies just right of the optimal position located at the right side of the fairway [purple box] might reach a set of

bunkers which would leave one with the most difficult shot in golf - a

40-60-yard sand shot - compounded by the cliff edge that sits just beyond the putting surface. Even worse, a tee shot that sails even further right, beyond the white stakes at the other side of the bunkers, will result in a re-tee, hitting three. If playing to the meaty left side of the fairway [brown box] to avoid right sided bunkers and OB off the tee, plenty of challenges still remain. The angle to the green that comes with a left-sided approach shot consists of a delicate pitch to a narrow green guarded by a bunker short, cliff left, and out-of-bounds long and right - the type of shot that will test the nerve of even the highly skilled player.

Lastly lies the most difficult of all options - attempting to reach the green from the tee [red arrows]. While this choice carries the greatest reward, an eagle putt, it also will endure the greatest risk since the cliff and out-of-bounds await the stroke that misses its target - a target 290 yards away and only 20 yards wide. After all, as [Clayton wrote](#), "There's absolutely no point to a drivable par 4 if it's easy to get up and down from around the green and the penalties for missing are not severe."

TOP - purple box is the ideal landing site for an open, unimpeded approach to the green. MIDDLE - brown box indicates a safer play off the tee but leaves a tricky pitch to a well-protected green. BOTTOM - red arrows demonstrate minor misses from the most aggressive tee option can have major consequences.



As mentioned in the earliest volumes of this series, the golf course at CCF was originally 9 holes and the general location of our first hole is unchanged from inception. Although Arthur Fenn routed our first hole, its easy to wonder what Devereux Emmet did to refine it given the similarities it holds to the opening hole at the very first golf course Emmet designed, the famous Garden City Golf Club on Long Island. Garden City GC, one the top 50 courses in the United States, greets the golfer with a first hole that has a near identical decision tree as at the opener at CCF. Albeit a bit longer, stretching to a



Side by side comparison of the first holes from CCF (*left*) and Garden City GC (*right*) noting the similarities in distance, strategic options off the tee and ensuing angles to a similarly angled green and fairway which also border out of bounds. Garden City's bunkering is greater in extent, variety, and impact. CCF's first hole plays over a ravine and a knoll, while GCGC's topography is flat, but always firm and fast - defying the measured distance. *Images Google Earth*



3 colored arrows demonstrate strategic options off the tee at Garden City GC's first hole. The more aggressive line (blue arrow) requires a forced carry to a firm fairway that's easily sends balls to the road in the distance - Google Earth

maximum of 350 yards and much more heavily bunkered thanks to the fine work of Walter Travis, the concept is the same: play an easier shot off the tee [green arrow] and be faced with a delicate pitch to the green or take the challenge on more directly [red and blue arrows] and risk out of bounds or landing in a deep sand quarry. Like at CCF, it's a genius design that makes repeated play enjoyable; the kind of hole in which par should be guaranteed, but bogey or worse is always within reach.



LEFT INSET - Approach to the green from the more conservative tee shot must contend with a forced carry over deep bunkers with trench bunker and OB guarding the rear...a delicate pitch for any player. - Google Earth



ABOVE - Approach to the green from the more aggressive shot from the tee is mostly void of obstacles in the direct line of play - Google Earth

At the end of the 2021 golf season, The Country Club of Farmington, with the help of proceeds raised by the 1892 Restoration Fund, recaptured much of the original design on our first green. The

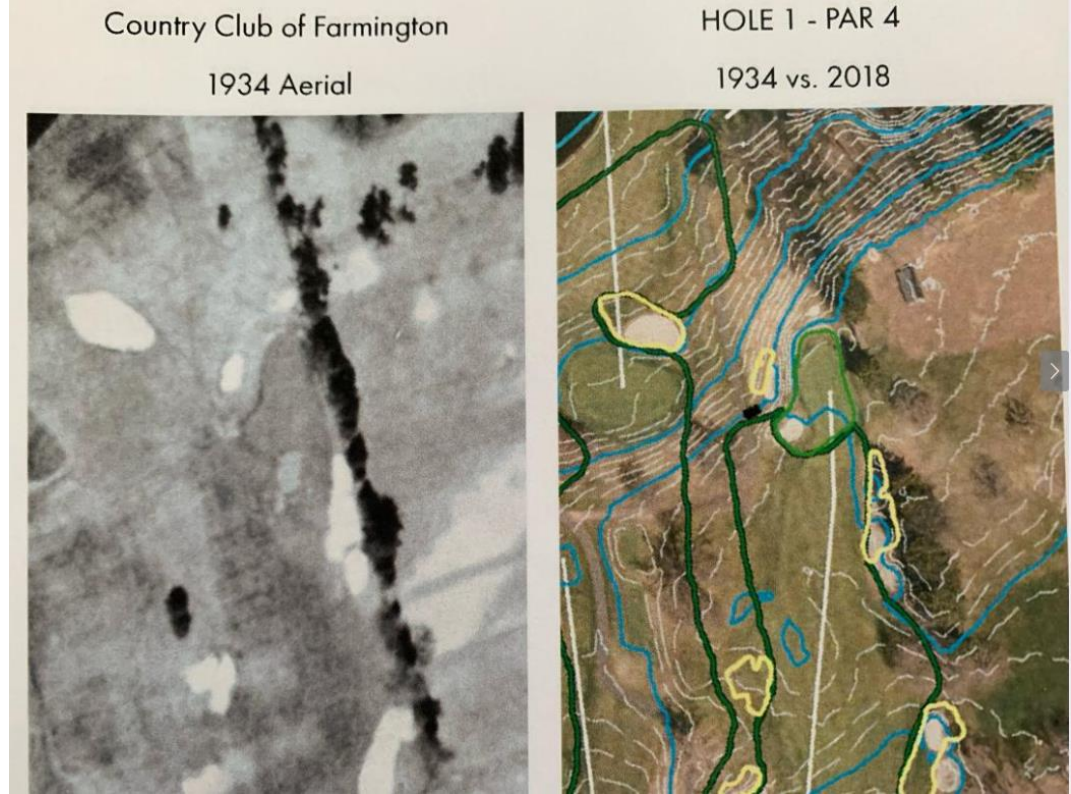


View of CCF's first green as the expansion process was beginning. Inset photo shows the regraded approach which resolved a perennial drainage issue and created a distinct ground contour to add variety. *Photos: Matt Dusenberry*



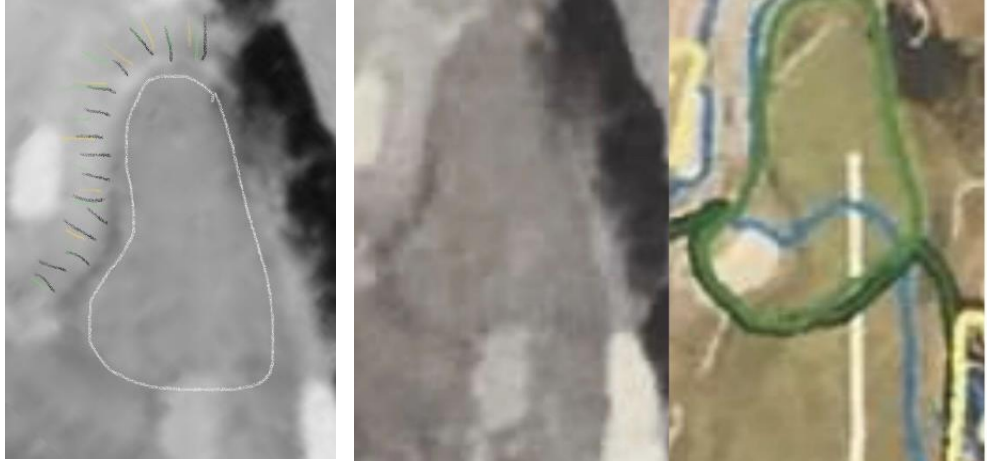
Sunset view of CCF's first green before green expansion sod was laid. Note the proximity of the restored putting surface to the property line and the cliff. The infinity edge creates a dramatic vista.

putting surface was expanded to the edges of the original green pad which sits directly against the property line to the right and the cliff edge at the rear and left. The result is



not only a larger putting surface with more available pin locations, but a target with a narrower boundary between victory and defeat. Inspection of the 1934 aerial photograph of our golf course supports on-ground evidence that we have expanded the green to its original boundaries. However, this photograph also indicates that the front left corner of the green has been replaced with a bunker since Emmet's era. In consultation with Dusenberry Design, it's proposed that recapturing this segment of our first hole would not only restore the full original footprint of this green, but the result would embody a quirky and fun feature distinctive of Devereux Emmet's work. So, next time you find yourself playing a shot to the

Magnified views of CCF's first green as it existed in 1934 (B&W images) with outline of 1934 green margins overlaid on 2018 aerial image of the same green. Note how today's greenside bunker was originally part of the putting surface.



putting surface from the left green-side bunker on our opening hole, ask yourself: where would your ball have come to rest if this bunker didn't exist and was instead short turf? Would you be faced with a unique putt up and over a roll or would you be further down the hill, pitching back up to the green surface? In either case, would it be more interesting? Would you be having more fun?

(Up next in the H&A series: Lost Four)



Pre-expansion view of the first green from behind looking toward CCF's clubhouse.
Photo: Matt Dusenberry

Over the past 3 years, contributions to the 1892 Restoration Fund have enabled CCF to begin restoring the original features and intent of our unique Golden Age era golf course. With improvements ranging from wider fairways and approaches to expanded green surfaces with more dramatic contours and surrounds, the golf course has become a more enjoyable place to play. The philosophy of the Green Committee and Dusenberry Design is to make the golf course more navigable for the less skilled player or shorter hitter while adding challenge to the lower handicapped golfer. In either case, the intent is to create grounds for golf that are more interesting and fun. If you have enjoyed the metamorphosis that CCF has been undergoing and would like to see it continue, please consider becoming an 1892 Donor. Even the smallest monthly contribution can have a big impact. While our capital dues fund capital and deferred maintenance items, the 1892 Fund focuses on restoring/creating interesting golf course features. The most immediate future projects entail continuing on our path of green expansions (for more information, see [Volume 10](#) of this series). With enough club support and funding, larger projects such as the improvements on holes 3/15/16 as discussed in [Volume 14](#) of this series could be undertaken. Restoring the unique fairway bunkering on our 10th hole as discussed in [Volume 6](#) is another major project that would result in a dramatic enhancement of our golf course, making one of our less strategic golf holes into one that's unforgettable. Aside from these Volumes mentioned above, a reread of [the entire series](#) will give one a sense of how much we have accomplished since this journey began. We've come a long way, but there's so much more we can do.

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