

Willie Davis and the Apawamis Golf Club's 1899-1901 Redesign



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Cover photograph of Willie Davis: *Golf* [New York], vol 10 no 2 (February 1902), p. 129.

Contents

- Introduction: Bendelow at First, and Then Bendelow Not So Much4
- The Bendelow Course Shrinks Towards a Do-Over7
- Opening the Bendelow Course 11
- Flux 14
- Mixed Reviews 16
- A Draining Concern 18
- Maturin Ballou21
- Willie Dunn?!24
- Davis’s Architectural Chops.....26
- Confusing Willies31
- Golf History’s Second Accidental Davis Slight33
- Assisted by a Professional36
- New Drainage and New Holes.....39
- Apawamis Ambitions41
- Penal Architectural Theory.....43
- Acquiring Davis47
- Davis’s Success53
- The Work of Davis and Ballou.....55
- Seeding and Sodding.....59
- Proper Lengthening61
- New Greens67
- Undulating Greens70
- Four Undulating Greens75
- Davis Does Without Cop Bunkers79

Davis Limits Other Kinds of Cross Bunkers	83
Walter J. Travis and Strategic Design.....	88
Travis at Apawamis.....	93
Travis Plays and Thinks Apawamis	95
The Question of Long Grass	101
The Assertion of Long Grass.....	105
De-Hazarding Grass	107
Davis’s Grass	109
Tending Apawamis Grass.....	112
Leveller Holes	115
Stone Fences and Chocolate Drops.....	117
Apawamis and the “Aviation” Route	128
An Apawamis Funeral.....	133
Conclusion	144

Introduction: Bendelow at First, and Then Bendelow Not So Much

After leasing land between 1896 and 1898 for its first and second nine-hole golf courses at Anderson Farm and Jib Farm, respectively, the Apawamis Golf Club became a first-time homebuyer at the beginning of 1899:

The Apawamis Golf Club of Rye, which has had a very pretty nine-hole course for the past two or three years, is now about to make a decided change.

The old lease expires April 1, and it cannot get a renewal at a reasonable rate.

The club has decided to purchase 120 acres of the Charles Park estate of Rye, where an eighteen-hole course, 6,400 yards long, can be laid out....

The outlay, it is estimated, for the purchase of the property, building of the clubhouse, and laying out the course, will be \$100,000.

(Brooklyn Daily Eagle [New York], 27 February 1899, p. 12)

Called by some the “millionaire club at Rye,” the Apawamis Golf Club would spare no expense to create one of the best golf courses in the United States (*Mount Vernon Argus* [White Plains, New York], 15 May 1897, p. 1).



Figure 1 Thomas Bendelow, circa 1899.

News would emerge in the spring of 1899 that the club had hired Tom Bendelow (fast becoming the Johnny Appleseed of early American golf course design) to lay out its new course:

Thomas Bendelow has been consulted by the Apawamis Golf Club in regard to the planning of the new eighteen-hole course near the station at Rye.

The links, according to the Apawamis men, will be the best on the line of the New Haven Railroad between the City and Connecticut, a fact which they believe will make it very popular.

(New York Sun, 21 April 1899, p. 4)

Although Bendelow’s work at Rye was mentioned in the newspapers only at the end of April, he must have laid out the course in February, for within days of the February 27th report that “an eighteen-hole course, 6,400 yards long, can be laid out,” work on the course had begun: it was reported on March 2nd that “The course is now being laid out, and fine macadamized drives are being constructed through the property to connect it with the main thoroughfares of the village and to furnish convenient approaches for coaching parties” (*Port Chester Journal*, 2 March 1899, p. 4). By October of 1900, these “macadamized drives” may have been incorporated into

the golf course as obstacles on two holes: on the 4th, there was “a road on rough ground on the right”; on the 8th, there was “a road” to be “carried with the drive” (W.G. Van Tassel Sutphen, *Golf*, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], pp. 244, 245).

Several holes of the original Bendelow layout were described in relative detail at the beginning of March 1899:

The new property is well adapted for golfing purposes and there are so many natural hazards that there is no necessity for anything to be added in the artificial line. The stone fences which mark the line of the fields will serve most admirably for bunkers.

There is some very rough ground beyond the first and a ball which does not carry at least 125 yards will be badly punished, while the putting green is guarded by a wide brook, giving the golfers a very sporty hole to start with.

The second hole is also difficult, being a cleek shot over several abrupt hills to a blind green in the bottom of a punch bowl.

Most excellent use is made of a brook which guards the first green as it is crossed on six other occasions during the eighteen holes and in each instance forms a fine water hazard.

The property over which the links are spread is undulating and very inviting for golf purposes.

(Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 2 March 1899, p. 12)

On the redesigned course that opened for play in May of 1900, the first two holes described above would be so significantly lengthened through new green locations that one would be hard pressed to say that they remained Bendelow’s holes.

As Apawamis archivist, Robert A. Doto, pointed out in 2018, a detailed hole-by-hole course description in an “October 1900 story from the USGA publication *Golf* ... is consistent with the 1911 version [of the course] and our 2018 version,” yet, in his opinion, an early account of the length of each of the holes of the Bendelow design that appeared in a *New York Journal* article on 4 May 1899 indicates a layout that is “nothing like what we see today” (see Robert A. Doto, “Early Days of the Apawamis Golf Course,” July 2018, The Apawamis Club Archives, (https://www.apawamis.org/default.aspx?p=.NET_ArticleView&tview=0&plugid=1090427&ssid=327139&qfilter=RSC22481&itemID=314407)).

Doto wonders “what happened between May 1899 [and] October 1900” (Doto, op. cit.).

Several things happened.

First, as it was under construction from February to October of 1899, the Bendelow course got shorter and shorter and original holes were modified.



Figure 2 William Frederick Davis (1861-1902), undated photograph. Golf (New York), vol 2 no 5 (May 1898), p. 16.

Second, in November of 1899, about a month after the Bendelow course was officially opened, the Apawamis Golf Club hired a golf professional named Willie Davis to turn the Bendelow layout into a championship golf course.

Unfortunately, about thirty-five years later, when Apawamis called upon the person who served as the Golf Committee Chairman from 1899 to 1902, Maturin Ballou, to write an account of how the original Bendelow layout was redesigned, he seems to have misremembered the name of the golf professional hired to do this work and instead introduced the name of another architect called “Willie” – but the Willie he named seems to have had nothing at all to do with Apawamis.

Unfortunately, ever since Ballou wrote that letter, William Frederick Davis has not received the recognition due to him for his role in designing the extraordinary golf course that is still played at Apawamis to this day.

The Bendelow Course Shrinks Towards a Do-Over

In February of 1899, the Bendelow course was planned to be 6,400 yards.

In November of 1899, the recently opened course (on which none other than Maturin Ballou set the amateur scoring record that month) was 6,040 yards.

Over the course of ten months, as a physical artifact, the golf course had become almost 400 yards shorter than it had originally been designed to be.

It turns out that Bendelow worked on this layout for many months and changed it many times.

We know that the original holes had been laid out by February of 1899. At the end of August, the *New York Herald* published an article called “New Golf Courses Near New York. Full Eighteen Hole Links to Open This Fall at Tuxedo, Rye and Elsewhere. Apawamis’ Fine Stretch”; regarding the Apawamis layout, the *Herald* reported that “Tom’ Bendelow is now busily engaged putting on the finishing touches to it” (29 August 1899). He was on site at various times over the course of at least seven months.

We know that the 6,400 original layout (described in newspapers on March 2nd) had been reduced in length by 11 May 1899, when work on the course was well underway:

The new eighteen-hole course of the Apawamis Club, at Rye, has been laid out by Bendelow, and already six of the greens are made.

It is to be 6,280 yards, making it one of the longest in the country.

Henry Cooper, treasurer of the club, said yesterday that the links will probably be finished and ready for playing on or about July 15.

(Port Chester Journal, 11 May 1899, p. 4)

The layout was now 120 yards shorter than originally planned.

We can see from the item cited above that the new eighteen-hole course was not expected to open before mid-July. For matches against other clubs in May and June of 1899, Apawamis planned to use its old nine-hole course on Jib Farm. Anticipating a July opening of the new 18-hole course, the *New York Times* reported: “the old course will probably cease to be used after this spring” (*New York Times*, 5 March 1899, p. 8).

But the old course may have been used far longer than expected, for the July opening of the new course never happened. In fact, the course would not open before the end of the summer – the *New York Times* later reporting that September 15th was the new target date: “everything will be in readiness to be used by Sept. 15, when the house and grounds will be formally thrown open with a tourney, either a club or invitation affair, which will last three days” (*New York Times*, 20 August 1899, p. 20).

When the *New York Times* wrote about the Bendelow course on August 20th, it indicated that the length of the course was still 6,280 yards, and it listed yardages for each of the eighteen holes that were identical to those listed in the *New York Journal* on May 4th. But by the fall, the length of the course was 6,040 yards.

A comparison of the yardages for each hole as reported in both May and August, on the one hand, and as reported in November, on the other, is shown below:

May/August Yardages (top)

November Yardages (bottom)

Total

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
240	350	120	330	520	350	420	200	580	460	390	300	275	565	240	160	380	400	6,280
240	342	162	200	333	330	391	240	600	345	347	245	280	528	305	217	512	323	6,040

Three of the November holes are quite different from the May/August holes: 4, 5, and 17 differ by more than 130, 187, and 132 yards, respectively.

Holes 1, 2, and 13, however, have virtually the same yardages, and holes 6 and 9 differ by just 20 yards. We may well have here the same holes in May/August and November.

In the fall, holes 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 18 differ from their earlier lengths by between 29 and 77 yards: these November holes might be May/August holes made longer (in six cases) or shorter (in three cases). Or some of them may have been significantly redesigned. It is impossible to know for sure.

And so, the November yardages probably represent a combination of original May holes, slightly revised May holes, and several new holes made after 20 August 1899 – shortly after which Bendelow was reported on site again “busily engaged putting on the finishing touches to” the course.

I presume that the yardages reported in November (some of which are very different from the yardages reported in both May and August) were the result of these “finishing touches” apparently applied by Bendelow between the end of August and the opening of the course in the early fall.

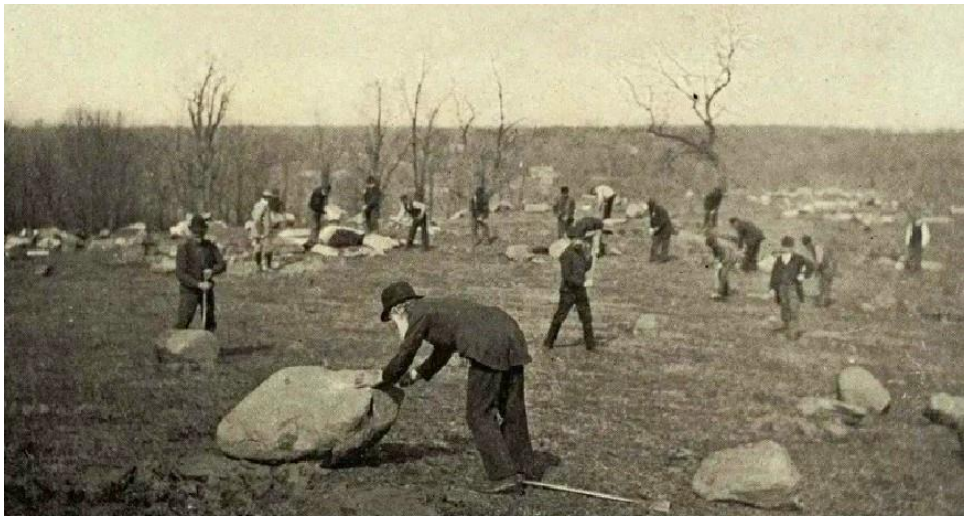


Figure 3 Clearing stones March 1899 from Bendelow's new nine holes at Van Cortland Park, New York City. “Thomas Bendelow ... began his labors on Monday of last week [13 March 1899], when he staked off the nine new holes and started a gang of workman at clearing up the course, picking off the loose stones and blasting the big rocks in the line of play” (Brooklyn Daily Eagle [New York], 19 March 1899, p. 9).

As superintendent of the Van Cortland Park public golf course, to which he had added nine holes beginning in March of 1899 in work that exactly paralleled his work at Apawamis, Bendelow was living and working less than twenty miles from Rye: up

to the official opening of the new course, he could be on site virtually any day he was required.

It is reasonable to assume that the 6,040-yard November course is the one that Ballou describes in his mid-1930s letter as “our original layout” – a Bendelow course that had been shortened and revised several times between its original conception in February of 1899 and its official opening in the fall of that year (Maturin Ballou, cited in William H. Conroy, *Fifty Years of Apawamis* [New York: Apawamis Club, 1940], p. 36).

Ballou’s explanation in his mid-1930s letter of how the “original” holes of the “original layout” were changed between 1899 and 1901 also makes clear that there was no other period of design between what he calls the “original layout,” which we know was produced by Bendelow

between February and the fall of 1899, and the one produced by Golf Committee Chairman Ballou and the golf professional hired to assist him at the beginning of November in 1899.

Note Ballou's description of the first two holes of the original course: "In our original layout, the first green was considerably short of the present one and to the left, near the present spring.... The second hole was at the foot of the hill on which our present green is now located" (cited in Conroy, p. 36). We know from what Ballou says here that the first and second holes of the original Bendelow layout were lengthened by Ballou and the golf professional who assisted him and we know that these two holes thereafter remained the first and second holes that have come down to the present day in pretty much the same form.

And note that Ballou reveals that the same is true of other holes: he indicates that the original fourth green was in a different location, identifies where "the **original** fifth hole" was located, describes how narrow the original seventh fairway was, explains how "the **old** ninth" tee was moved back and forth, indicates where the tenth and eleventh holes were "**originally**" found, and explains how "the **original** seventeenth hole" was problematic, and so on (cited in Conroy, pp. 36-38, emphasis added). In each case, he points to the original Bendelow hole and contrasts it with the hole revised by Bendelow and the professional hired to assist him – the hole that has come down to the present day.

There were just two periods of design between 1899 and 1901: the first between February and the fall of 1899, representing the original design work by Bendelow; the second between November of 1899 and January of 1902, representing the redesign work by Maturin Ballou and the golf professional hired to assist him.

Opening the Bendelow Course

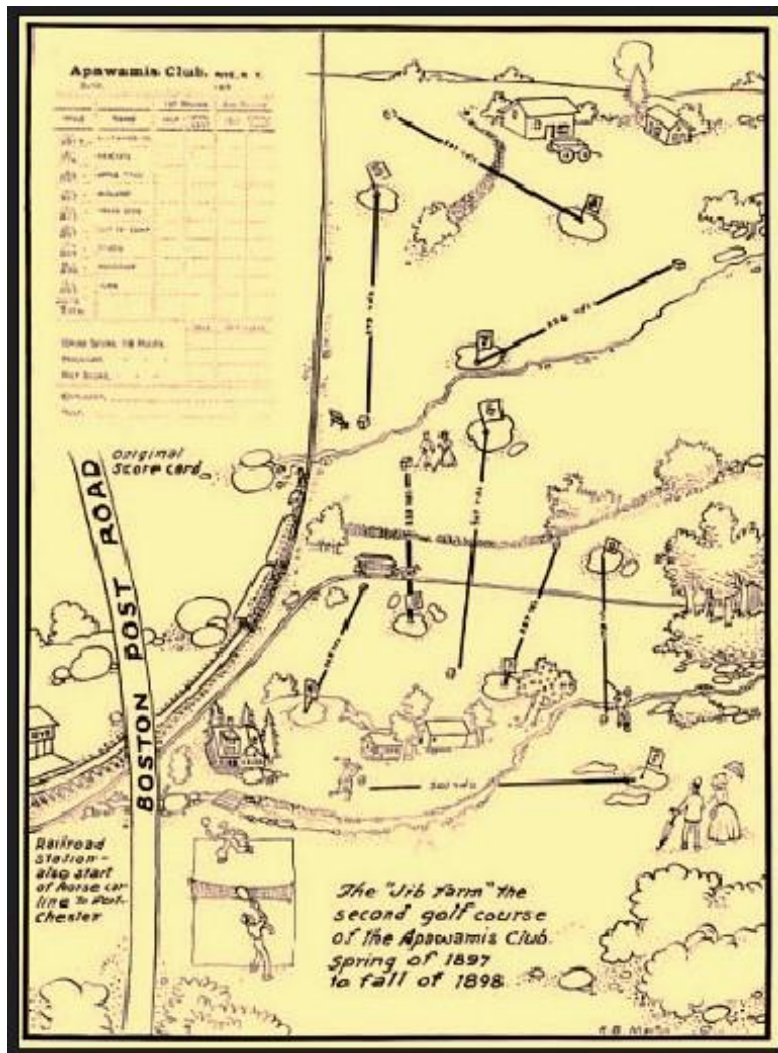


Figure 4 The "Jib Farm" 9-hole course. Michael McCormack, "The Evolution of a Golf Course," *Apawamis Now* (Winter 2021-2022).

As we know, it was reported early in the 1899 golf season that "the club will continue to use the old nine-hole course until the new links are completed," but precisely when the new 18-hole course opened for play is not clear.

The day before the August 20th *New York Times* announcement of a mid-September opening for the new course, the local golf report in the *Daily Standard Union* referred on August 19th to the "usual handicap" matches at Apawamis (*Daily Standard Union* [Brooklyn, New York], 19 August 1899, p. 20). Since the new course was not yet open, presumably this "usual" event – a "mixed foursome handicap sweepstakes" – was held on the

old nine-hole Jib Farm course (*Port Chester Journal*, 17 August 1899, p. 4).

Then there was a "Women's Handicap" held on the days of August 29th and September 1st, "fifteen holes to be played each day" (*Port Chester Journal*, 24 August 1899, p. 4). And there were fifteen competitors on Labor Day in the "handicap sweepstakes for men" (*Port Chester Journal*, 7 September 1899, p. 4). Given, on the one hand, that Bendelow was on site putting "finishing touches" to the layout at the end of August, and given, on the other, that the *New York*

Times' anticipated a mid-September opening for the new course, one presumes that these late-August and early-September tournaments were also held on the old Jib Farm course.

There were no more club events reported for the month of September.

And so, it may be that Bendelow's "finishing touches" required work on the new course throughout September. Such work may even have extended into October.

The *New York Times* had indicated in August that the club expected to open the new course and the new clubhouse simultaneously: "the house and grounds will be formally thrown open with a tourney, either a club or invitation affair, which will last three days" (*New York Times*, 20 August 1899, p. 20). It may well be, then, that the new course was opened at the same time as the new clubhouse was opened (with great fanfare) on October 7th:

The Apawamis Golf Club opened its new quarters at Rye on Saturday with a parade, band concert, informal reception, dinner and dancing.

The club house is 50 x 100 feet, Colonial style, over-looking the Sound.

The course is 6,400 yards. [presumably a typographical error, for by this point, the length of the course was 6,040 yards]

(White Plains Argus [White Plains, New York], 10 October 1899, p. 2)

After the Labor Day weekend events that were probably held on the old nine-hole Jib Farm course, the next club golf event seems to have been an October tournament, and it was held on the new 18-hole course. This event was a three-week match-play contest beginning late in October, with entrants qualifying for match play by means of a preliminary medal-play tournament:

On Saturday, October 21st, there will be an 18 hole medal play handicap for men on the Apawamis Golf Club links. The best 16 scores will qualify for match play.

The winner will receive a cup presented by the President of the Club.

The first match play round of 18 holes will be played on the morning of Election Day, November 7th, second round in the afternoon.

Semifinals and finals to be played Saturday, November 11th.

(Port Chester Journal, 12 October 1899, p. 4)

We know from the description of a contest for a cup "given to be played for by the women members of the Apawamis Club" on October 31st that women were playing the new course 18-hole course – but not all of its holes: "Handicap match eleven holes, to be played either morning

or afternoon, the first nine and the last two” (*Port Chester Journal* [New York], 26 October 1899, p. 4).

The final match of the men’s contest for the President’s Cup was deferred from November 7th to November 18th, and it produced an amateur course record for the new 6,040-yard course:

A new record was established for the Apawamis Golf Club links on Saturday by Maturin Ballou while playing the final match for the President’s Cup with F.H. Wiggin, whom he beat by 6 up and 5 to play.

The course is 6,040 yards long and Ballou covered it in 89 strokes.

(Brooklyn Daily Eagle [New York], 20 November 1899, p. 14)

This Bendelow course had taken the better part of a year to complete, but the Club never seems to have regarded it as satisfactory.

Flux

As we know, the yardages for the holes indicated in the *New York Journal* on 4 May 1899 are identical to the yardages indicated in the *New York Times* on 20 August 1899 – just before Bendelow was reported on August 29th to be on site applying “finishing touches” to the course. Bendelow seems to have been shortening the 6,280-yard May/August course even more, producing a playing length of 6,040 yards by the fall.

The state of certain holes seems to have been in such perpetual flux throughout the late summer and early fall that their playing lengths escaped reporting in contemporary newspapers. But thanks to Ballou’s mid-1930s letter, we know of the existence of these otherwise unrecorded holes.

For instance, Ballou says the original 13th hole was a “one-shotter” (cited in Conroy, p. 37).

He does not indicate the yardage of this version of the 13th hole. Note, however, that on the 6,280-yard version of the course, the 200-yard 8th hole was expected to take four shots to complete, so we know that it was regarded as a two-shotter. On that 6,280-yard course, the two one-shotter holes were 120 yards and 160 yards (*New York Times*, 20 August 1899, p. 20). And so, we know that Ballou’s reference to a one-shot 13th hole indicates that there was at some point a version of this hole that was significantly less than 200 yards.

Yet the 13th hole on the 6,280-yard course was 275 yards, and the 13th hole on the 6,040-yard course was essentially the same: 280 yards.

And so, there is no recorded version of what Ballou calls the original one-shot 13th hole.

Similarly, on both the 6,280-yard version of the course and the 6,040-yard version of the course, the 14th hole was 512 yards. Yet Ballou implies that there was at one time a shorter version of this hole: “the green, which was on the flat just across the brook, was moved back beyond the present green” (cited in Conroy, p. 37). We know, then, that the 512-yard hole was produced by a lengthening that came from moving the green back, yet there is no newspaper reference to the length of the “original” shorter 14th hole that preceded the 512-yard hole.

And Ballou says that “the eighteenth green was this side of the present green, but in the first year it was moved back” (cited in Conroy, p. 38). In other words, the original 18th hole was also

lengthened by moving the green. Yet the length of the 18th hole both on the 6,040-yard course in the fall of 1899 and on the 6,205-yard course in the spring of 1900 was 323 yards. And so, the shorter version of the 18th hole to which Ballou refers also seems to have escaped mention in contemporary newspapers.

It seems that the Bendelow course never achieved more than a provisional final form, for it was being revised and redesigned perpetually throughout the spring, summer, and early fall of 1899.

Mixed Reviews

The Bendelow course had received good advance press.

From its first mention in the newspapers, it was anticipated that it would “be one of the finest in the country” (*Port Chester Journal* [New York], 2 March 1899, p. 4). The Apawamis Golf Club (“its membership ... composed of New York millionaires”) “will overshadow every other club in the country and make even the New York millionaires envious at their golf links at Ardsley-on-the-Hudson” (*Inter Ocean* [Chicago], 12 March 1899, p. 41). Similarly, we read: “The links, according to the Apawamis men, will be the best on the line of the New Haven Railroad between the city and Connecticut” (*Sun* [New York], 21 April 1899, p. 4). The drumbeat of approval continued through the summer: “The golf grounds, it is said, will be one of the finest in the United States” (*Port Chester Journal* [New York], 27 July 1899, p. 4).

Late in August, the *New York Times* expressed hearty approval of the Bendelow design, characterizing it as a state-of-the-art accomplishment:

With all the expensive and carefully planned courses in this country ... there are not a dozen which are laid out so as properly to penalize a poor shot, and to stop letting luck and not good play turn out the winner.

There are some courses, however, which are all that could be desired, and one which will shortly be added to that class is the new eighteen-hole links which the Apawamis Golf Club of Rye expects to throw open for play on Sep. 15.

(*New York Times*, 20 August 1899, p. 20)

Yet for all the confidence in the Bendelow design that prevailed from the winter to the end of the early fall of 1899, Ballou indicates that there was almost immediate controversy about some of the original holes.

On the front nine, he noted that fairways on at least two holes were judged to be too narrow. And “there was a great deal of argument about the old ninth, the tee of which was moved back and then ahead and finally back again There was always a great deal of doubt as to the righteousness of this hole” (cited in Conroy, pp. 36-37).

And the back nine, he observes, really needed stiffening. The 10th hole “was a comparatively easy par 4”; the 11th was “a very indifferent hole”; “the old thirteenth was a one-shotter and of no particular merit”; “the fifteenth was an easy two-shotter” (cited in Conroy, p. 37).

Most importantly, “the original seventeenth hole was a despair. The tee was at the foot of the hill and stretched across the entire fairway was a wide, deep trap. It took some years to correct this impossible hole” (cited in Conroy, p. 37).

It is no wonder that Ballou was eager to hire a golf professional to assist him with the redesign of the golf course.

A Draining Concern

That significant construction complications arose during work on the Bendelow course is implied by two things.

First, the opening date seems to have been continually deferred.

Granted, at the beginning of March 1899, the *New York Times* had heard from some Apawamis members that “in the Fall it is hoped to have an excellent eighteen-hole course in playable condition,” but it is clear that many more members anticipated a much earlier opening (*New York Times*, 5 March 1899, p. 8). These optimists told the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* that they were anticipating they would be able to play golf on the new course by Decoration Day, May 29th (it is now called Memorial Day): “The property has been pasture land for some years and is covered with a rich turf, consequently it can be put in a playable condition, without much difficulty, before Decoration Day, when the club members are desirous of holding an informal opening” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 2 March 1899, p. 12).

We know, of course, that there was no golf at the end of May. The targeted opening date became July 1st. Then July 15th. Then September 15th. And then, perhaps, October 7th.

Second, as we also know, there was a continual reduction in the playing length of the course. The 6,400 yards planned in the winter became 6,280 yards by the spring, and then 6,040 yards in the fall.

Since the original layout seems to have been planned on a land bound by snow in February, it may well be that when the snow melted, Bendelow found conditions on certain parts of the course to be other than he had expected them to be. That is, since there were many swampy areas on the club’s new property, wet ground may have intruded into areas where Bendelow had originally thought he would be able to route some of his golf holes.

Note that in the fall of 1900 (a year after Bendelow had left the site), the property was still described as comprising a “Fair green of good old pasture sandwiched between boggy swampland and pebbly ridges” (*Golf*, vol no [October 1900], p. 242). Since in the fall of 1900, “boggy swampland” was still a prominent feature of the property – even after the installation in December of 1899 of what was characterised as a tremendously successful “new drainage system” – we may surmise that on the property acquired by the club at the beginning of 1899

(that is, well before a new drainage system had installed), there had been even larger areas of “boggy swampland” on the club’s property (*New York Tribune*, 29 January 1900, p. 9).

And even after the new drainage system was installed, of course, there remained low-lying areas and hollows prone to soggy during periods of heavy rain.

It is certainly the case that by the end of the 1899 season, inadequate drainage of the property had become a significant problem, as suggested by the terms in which the new drainage system was celebrated at the club’s annual meeting at the end of January 1900:

As an instance of the care with which the new drainage system has been put in, it may be said that during and immediately after the recent heavy rain, coming upon the frosty ground, a combination usually fatal to a links, the course was playable and was played upon by many of the members.

(*New York Tribune*, 29 January 1900, p. 9).

By observing that now, **even** when the ground is frozen, heavy rain is no problem, the writer implies that the new drainage system has overcome a more serious difficulty that had prevailed hitherto: previously, heavy rain falling on ground **that was not even frozen** could make the course unplayable.

And so, It may be that Bendelow progressively shortened his original design at various points in 1899 because of drainage problems that progressively emerged as the seasons changed – emerged, that is, not just with the spring melt, but also when there were periods of heavy rain during the spring and summer.

That is, before the new drainage system was installed, perhaps it became clear that neither a 6,400-yard course nor even a 6,280-yard course was feasible along the lines of the original Bendelow routing.

In the fulness of time, Apawamis must have congratulated itself on the wisdom of exercising great care in installing the new drainage system, for (as fate would have it) heavy rain bedeviled the first big tournament played at Apawamis – the Metropolitan Golf Association Championship held in May of 1901:

“The recent rains left the course soggy in the hollows, while the putting greens were slow and not very true”;

[former U.S. Amateur Champion Findlay S.] “Douglas drove a high ball, which frequently buried itself in the ground”;

[the championship match was played in] “the most distressing weather conditions”;
“the rain spoiled matters just about as much as possible. The course was soggy and wet when they started, and rain soon began to fall. It ceased just as the morning round was finished but came down in torrents soon after the afternoon play was begun.”

(Brooklyn Daily Eagle [New York], 22 May 1901, p. 2; p. 2; 26 May 1901, p. 10; p. 10)

There can be little doubt that without the new drainage system, this tournament would not have been playable.

But the drainage system did its job, carrying water away and keeping the course playable every day: “The hard rain of last night left the Apawamis Golf Club links no better or no worse than it was yesterday” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 23 May 1901, p. 2).

The person responsible for the careful installation of this new drainage system was Maturin Ballou, who was by the end of 1899 being described as the “effective chairman” of the Golf Committee.

Maturin Ballou

As of May 1899, the official chairman of the Apawamis Golf Committee and thereby captain of the men's golf team was prominent New York City real estate agent, appraiser, and auctioneer Herbert Augustus Sherman (1863-1919). It seems, however, that it was also in 1899 that Sherman "went into the real estate business" and immediately became busy and successful, which may explain why by the end of the year, one of the members of Sherman's committee seems to have become the "effective chairman" in his place: Maturin Ballou (*New York Tribune*, 15 January 1919, p. 9; *New York Tribune*, 29 January 1900, p. 9).

In April of 1900, Sherman duly resigned as Chairman of the Golf Committee and was formally replaced by Ballou (although Sherman would continue to serve both on the committee and on the men's golf team). Ballou would thereafter officially chair the Golf Committee until he was nominated to serve as Secretary of the United States Golf Association in January of 1902 (the same month, coincidentally, in which Willie Davis unexpectedly died).



Figure 5 Maturin Ballou (1853-1938). New York Tribune, 17 March 1902, p. 9.

Ballou had been born Levi Maturin Ballou in North Orange, Massachusetts, in 1853, a son of Reverend Levi Ballou and Mary Chase. In Franklin County, Massachusetts, he attended the co-educational Dean Academy (now Dean College) in the late 1860s and early 1870s, then enrolled in Tufts College (where his uncle had served as the first president). He was a keen athlete, playing throughout his time at Tufts for both the college football and college baseball teams, graduating in 1878. He also got married in 1878 and in the fall of the same year dropped his first name, legally changing his name to Maturin Ballou.

Ballou would live in Rye from the 1880s until about 1913 and then spent much of the year on a farm in Connecticut.

Although living in Rye, he worked as a broker in New York City, acquiring by the late 1890s an office at the prestigious address, 10 Wall Street. He served two years as secretary of the USGA

from 1902 to 1904. Ballou died in Connecticut in 1938 but was buried neither in Connecticut nor in Rye, but rather back “home” alongside family members in Franklin County, Massachusetts.

From the early 1900s onward, Ballou was widely credited as the Apawamis official most responsible for the design of the present Apawamis course. In 1902, the *Boston Globe* observed: “Maturin Ballou ... is a prominent member of the Apawamis Club of Rye, N.Y., and it is largely due to his efforts that the course of that club now ranks among the best in New York state” (*Boston Globe*, 30 March 1902, p. 36). In 1911, the club awarded Ballou an honorary membership in recognition of the fact that he was “instrumental in bringing the club links up to their ... excellent condition” (*New York Daily Tribune*, 18 February 1911, p. 12).

As William H. Conroy (Club president from 1915 to 1927) observes in *Fifty Years of Apawamis* (1940):

Maturin Ballou, who was then Chairman of the Golf Committee, a proficient player and a man of vision, undertook the difficult task of developing from this large area the course over which we now play.

How unusually sound was his judgement is evidenced by the fact that there have been comparatively few changes in the original design.

(William H. Conroy, Fifty Years of Apawamis, 1940, p. 36)

Note that it was a habit in the 1890s and early 1900s for the wealthy members of golf clubs to give public credit for the “creation” of their golf course not to the lowly golf professional who designed it, but rather to the Chairman of their Golf Committee. After all, laying out the golf course and keeping the green were part of the job description of the golf professional in 1899. There was no such thing, yet, as a “golf course architect.” And so, although it was the golf professional who indicated where the tee should go, where the fairway should run, where the green should be located, and where the hazards should be placed, from the point of view of a golf club’s managers of banks, businesses and investments, it was the club’s manager of this employee who deserved credit for the results of his work.

From the point of view of Apawamis members, then, it was Ballou who, as a member of the Golf Committee in 1899, participated in the hiring of the golf professional with whom he would work from 1899 to 1901 to redesign the Bendelow course. He deserved credit for that. And it may well be that by November of 1899, when Willie Davis was hired, Ballou was already acting as

“effective chairman” of this committee and had taken the lead in hiring Davis. If so, he deserved even more credit.

Furthermore, as official Chairman of the Golf Committee beginning in the spring of 1900, he was the one who won approval from the club for the extensive redesign plans, and he was the one who regularly secured from the treasurer the funds necessary to keep the work going. So, of course, the Club accorded him an honorary membership in recognition of the fact that he was “instrumental in bringing the club links up to their ... excellent condition” and the fact that it was “largely due to his efforts that the course ... ranks among the best in New York state.”

But whether “proficient player” Maturin Ballou (who was accorded a handicap of 8 by the Metropolitan Golf Association in 1902) deserves credit for the sophisticated golf architecture introduced between 1899 and 1901 is another question altogether.

As Ballou himself acknowledged in the mid-1930s, he “was assisted” by a golf professional (cited in Conroy, p. 36).

Willie Dunn?!



Figure 6 Willie Dunn, Jr, 1894. Dunn wears the medal awarded him as winner of the U.S. professional golf championship of 1894.

In his celebration of Maturin Ballou as “a man of vision” and “unusually sound ... judgement” who “undertook the difficult task of developing ... the course over which we now play,” Conroy quotes a letter written by Ballou “several years” before *Fifty Years of Apawamis* was published in 1940: “I was assisted by Willie Dunn, a young Scotch professional who came to this country to build the links at Shinnecock Hills” (cited in Conroy, p. 36).

Apart from Conroy’s 1940 quotation of Ballou’s mid-1930s letter, however, I can find no other document that connects Willie Dunn, Jr, to Apawamis in any way.

We recall that regarding design work on the course between May of 1899 and October of 1900, Apawamis archivist Doto observes:

There are a number of stories, some documented, some shared from conversations with members over the years, about designers of our golf course.

Maturin Ballou, an important force during Apawamis’s early days at our current location, and Willie Dunn, a well-respected golf course designer, are generally credited with the design.

(Doto, “Early Days of the Apawamis Golf Course,” op. cit.)

A similar situation prevailed at the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club for a century. Willie Dunn was “generally credited with the design” until it was discovered that Willie Davis had come down from the Royal Montreal Golf Club in July of 1891 and laid out a nine-hole course for men and a nine-hole course for women. Dunn did not arrive at the Club until May of 1893.

From the moment he first arrived in the United States, Dunn regularly made sure to provide news of his dozens of golf course designs to any newspaper he could think of. He was nothing if not a determined self-promoter. The fact would be remarkable, then, if, during Ballou’s three years as Chairman of the Golf Committee from 1899 to 1902, Dunn were to have designed a

course for Apawamis and yet no contemporary newspaper or golf publication would ever mention him in connection with Apawamis.

Dunn, in fact, seems never even to have played the Apawamis course, let alone helped to design it.

Furthermore, contemporary newspaper references to the people who were responsible for the 18-hole Apawamis course mention just one golf professional as the original designer and just one golf professional as the redesigner:

The Apawamis course is situated about half a mile north of the Rye station

The property is the old Charles Park farm, consisting of about one hundred and twenty acres, and the financial outlay as the club appears today represents nearly \$100,000.

The course was laid out two years ago by Thomas Bendelow and has since been improved and enlarged by "Willie Davis," the man whom Apawamis players brought from Newport to aid them in securing a championship stretch of country.

(New York Tribune, 18 February 1901, p. 3)

Willie Dunn was well known to New York golfers by the time of this 1901 item, and, more important, he was extremely well known to the golf writers of all the main New York and Brooklyn newspapers, to whose offices he paid regular visits to make sure that his name stayed in the news. If he had ever been involved with the Apawamis design, it is surprising (to the point of being shocking) that his name is omitted from the above account of the designers of the course.

I suggest that thirty-five years after working with Willie Davis (thirty-five years during which Davis was thoroughly forgotten after his premature death), Ballou mixed-up the two Willies.

Is this possible?

Davis's Architectural Chops

In working with Willie Davis, Ballou was correct in recalling that he had worked at Apawamis thirty-five years before with a “professional who came to this country to build the links at Shinnecock Hills.”

As mentioned above, Davis had designed the first two nine-hole courses at Shinnecock Hills in 1891. Then there followed several layouts for the Newport Golf Club between Davis's first arrival in Newport in November of 1892 and his departure for Apawamis at the beginning of November 1899: he laid out a nine-hole course on rented property in 1893; on new land that the club purchased subsequent to his recommendation, he laid out a nine-hole course (as well as a six-hole practice course) in 1894; he lengthened this nine-hole course in 1895; and he added nine new holes in 1897 to create Newport's first 18-hole course.

And there were many other notable layouts.



Figure 7 Golfers drive from the tee of the first hole (called "Oshkosh") of the 1891 Davis course of the Ottawa Golf Club. Collier's Once a Week, vol 11 no 45 (30 September 1893), p. 4.

Before his initial architectural venture in the United States at Shinnecock Hills, Davis had become famous in Canada for his “perfect greens” on Royal Montreal's golf course at Fletcher's Field. First laid out in 1873, eight years before Davis was hired, the course was re-laid several times on Mount Royal before Davis left for

Newport in 1893 and Davis will have had a role in redesigning many holes. He also designed the first golf course for the Royal Ottawa Golf Club (Ontario, Canada) in April of 1891, and he may also have laid out at this time the new golf course for the reconstituted Kingston Golf Club (Ontario, Canada).

Several years after arriving at Newport, Davis listed in an autobiographical essay the courses that he had laid out in the United States between 1893 and early 1896:

Since I came to Newport, I have laid out links for the Country Club, Brookline, Mass.; Country Club, Providence, R.I.; Mr. Jas. Lawrence, Groton, Mass.; Dr. W. Seward Webb, Shelbourne Farms, Vt.; Messrs. Ogden Mills and W.B. Dinsmore, Staatsburg, N.Y.; at Hot Springs, Virginia; for Mrs. Wm. Goddard, East Greenwich, R.I., and George W. Vanderbilt, N.C.

(William F. Davis, autobiographical essay, undated, courtesy of Royal Liverpool Golf Club)

Davis's list seems to be chronological: he laid out his nine-hole course for the Country Club of Providence late in the fall of 1893 or early in the winter of 1894; in Vermont, a nine-hole course was laid out for Webb early in 1894, with another nine holes added by Davis in the fall of 1895); begun in 1893 or 1894, the nine-hole Staatsburg course was opened for play in 1894 (anticipating the language of Ballou, a New York *Evening Post* article in 1896 says that this course was laid out by club member William Dinsmore, Jnr, **assisted by** Davis); Davis's nine-hole Hot Springs course seems to have been laid out by the summer of 1894, when a newspaper referred to the imminent formation of a golf club in connection with the Hot Springs Hotel; his nine-hole course for Vanderbilt was laid out late in December of 1895 and early in January of 1896.

After 1896, Davis designed or redesigned several more layouts.



Figure 8 Thomas S. Barker, Spalding Golf Guide, 1898.

Early in 1898, he was called in to assist the local golf professional Thomas S. Barker in adding nine holes to the Chevy Chase golf course in Maryland. He continued to improve bunkers and tees on the course over the next two years.

In April of 1898, he was called to Wellesley College (Wellesley, Massachusetts), where the students at this women's college had been playing golf since 1893, and where in 1898 it was said that the popularity of tennis "has been more than equally shared by golf perhaps There seems to be a larger number of young women at Wellesley whose collarbones are of masculine length and who can get a remarkably good swing of driver or lofter; and the tam and short golf-skirt are ubiquitous" (*Times Union* [Brooklyn, New York], 30 April 1898, p. 8). Davis was said to be "getting the links in good

shape for playing" (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 30 April 1898, p. 6). "Superintendent Davis of the Newport golf Club" is unlikely to have been called to Wellesley simply to perform greenkeeping

duties; I suspect that he was asked to improve the layout (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 30 April 1898, p. 6).

Late in the summer of 1898, as the Morris County Golf Club prepared to host the U.S.G.A. Amateur Championship on its newly renovated course, "W.F. Davis" was celebrated as one of the four "professionals who have had most to do with planning it": "It offers for the championship the most playable and the longest eighteen-hole course in this country and one that is better than many courses in Great Britain.... In brief, the championship course has arrived" (*Sun* [New York], 11 September 1898, p. 27).

In the fall of 1898, the Point Judith Country Club in Rhode Island decided to redesign its course: "Willie Davis of the Newport Club has been engaged to get the links in order.... The new course takes in four of the old and five new holes, which average about 300 yards" (*Sun* [New York], 14 June 1899, p. 9).

In the winter of 1899, in implicit acknowledgement of his high standing among contemporary golf course architects, Davis was commissioned by the USGA "to examine and report on all the golf courses available for either of the two national championship tournaments – the open and the amateur – for the coming season" (*Baltimore Sun*, 11 March 1899, p. 6).

In Baltimore, which hoped to host either the Amateur or the Open championship that year, excitement was great when Davis arrived in March "for the purpose of making a report to the Golf Association on the feasibility of using the links of the Baltimore Country Club for one of the national tournaments to be held by the United States Golf Association" (*Baltimore American*, 11 March 1899, p. 4). Club members were gratified by Davis's generous extemporaneous comments on the day of his visit:

Mr. Davis, after going over the course, spoke in most enthusiastic terms about it.

He was so much delighted with the picturesque beauty of the links, the natural hazards, and the way the course is laid out that the members believe there may be a chance for the Country Club to get one of the national championship events.

The fact that the national association should consider Baltimore seriously enough to send Mr. Davis here to see the links ... is considered a great compliment in itself

(Baltimore Sun [Maryland], 11 March 1899, p. 6).

There was a worry, however, that the golf course would be considered too short for a championship competition.

But Davis reported that “There is considerably more golf in it than you get on many golf courses that are much longer” (*Golf* [New York], vol 4 no 4 [April 1899], p. 2344). And he offered the USGA “his assurance that the total distance could be stretched to over 5400 yards” (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 18 March 1899, p. 20).

In fact, he planned the necessary changes himself: “W.F. Davis, professional of the Newport golf club, says he can lengthen the course at least 400 yards by moving back a number of the tees. The club has agreed to make the proposed alterations for the championship” (*Standard Union*, 16 March 1899, p. 8). Davis assured the USGA that “the character of the country is such that the distance of the course, as it will be, will equal any average course of 5800 yards” (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 18 March 1899, p. 20).



Figure 9 During the 1899 US Open, two golfers prepare to play from the 18th tee of the Baltimore Country Club course lengthened that year by Willie Davis. *Golf* (New York), vol 5 no 4 (October 1899), p. 281.

Such was the USGA’s confidence in Davis that a week after receiving his report, it chose the Baltimore Country Club as the host of the 1899 US Open.

In 1897, after Davis added nine new holes at Newport to create the club’s first 18-hole layout, a Rhode Island newspaper noted:

“Mr. Davis is one of the foremost ...

layout men in the business in America” (*Evening Telegram* [Providence, Rhode Island], 9 November 1897, p. 10). Five months after Davis moved to Apawamis and began his alterations on the course, the *New York Times* averred that “The name of Davis on a golf course is

indication that the links will be worthy of a good test of golf” (*New York Times*, 11 March 1900, p. 20).

Clearly, since his first design work in the United States in 1891, Davis’s skill as a golf course architect had come to be widely respected and admired. It should be no surprise, then, to find Conroy declaring in *Fifty Years of Apawamis* that Davis’s premature “death in 1902 was a real loss, as he had done much to improve the layout” (p. 42).

Confusing Willies

As mentioned above, there seems to be no room for Dunn in the account of the creation of the present Apawamis golf course.

Bendelow was on site applying “finishing touches” to his layout at the end of August 1899. How long it took him to do this finishing work is not clear. Was he finished before the end of September? Willie Davis was hired by Apawamis during the first week of November. He was working at the club by 10 November 1899. After this, there was no need for any other architect’s advice, for Davis had laid out about twenty golf courses by this point, including the nationally renowned layouts at Shinnecock Hills and Newport.

What would have been the point of inviting Dunn to Apawamis after Bendelow left in September or October of 1899, only to replace any possible Dunn influence several weeks later with that of the celebrated architect and newly arrived resident golf professional, Willie Davis?

I think the more likely explanation is that when Conroy asked Ballou – shortly before the latter died in 1938 at eighty-four years of age – to write about the redesign of the original Apawamis course, Ballou misremembered the name of America’s first golf professional, Willie Davis, as that of America’s second golf professional, Willie Dunn, who in the interim had become much more famous.

When Ballou wrote in his mid-1930s letter, “I was assisted by Willie Dunn, a young Scotch professional who came to this country to build the links at Shinnecock Hills,” he was correct in recalling that he worked with the “professional who came to this country to build the links at Shinnecock Hills” – but that professional was Willie Davis. When discussing ideas with Ballou regarding the Apawamis redesign between 1899 and 1901, Davis no doubt mentioned to Ballou some of the things he had done at Shinnecock – thereby cementing in Ballou’s mind the connection between Shinnecock Hills and the golf professional named Willie who had assisted him thirty-five years before.

If Ballou indeed subsequently mixed up Willie Davis and Willie Dunn, he made the same error as Shinnecock’s founding member Samuel L. Parrish when the latter was asked in the early 1920s to write up for the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club his recollections of the laying out of Shinnecock’s original course more than thirty years before. Although Parrish had personally worked with Davis

as the latter inspected Shinnecock Hills sites in 1891, thirty-two years later, he misremembered his name as Dunn.

Indeed, it is possible that Ballou was familiar with Parrish's account of the founding of Shinnecock Hills and was accidentally led by Parrish to mix up the two early pioneering Willies in the same way.

Golf History's Second Accidental Davis Slight

If I am correct in my surmise that in his old age, Ballou misremembered his old golf professional's name as Dunn rather than Davis, he was thereby accidentally responsible for American golf history's second slight against Willie Davis, for, as mentioned above, exactly the same case of mistaken identity had occurred at Shinnecock Hills a decade earlier, with the same result: Davis's fundamental role in laying out an iconic golf course was obscured for a century.

In the early 1920s, when the president of the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club asked Samuel L. Parrish, one of the few founding club members still alive at that time, to share his recollections of the origins of the golf course more than thirty years before, Parrish mistakenly attributed the original design to Willie Dunn:

We asked the late Charles L. Atterbury, who was about to visit Montreal on a business trip, if he would interview the authorities of the Royal Montreal Golf Club (organized in 1873, the oldest golf club in Canada, and therefore in the western hemisphere) and arrange with them to have their professional come to Southampton and look over the ground.

As a result of this interview, the scotch-Canadian professional, Willie Dunn by name, arrived at Southampton with clubs and balls in the early part of July, 1891, consigned to me.

Immediately upon his arrival, we drove out to Shinnecock Hills but had proceeded only a few hundred yards ... when Dunn turned to me and remarked in a somewhat crestfallen manner that he was sorry that we had been put to so much trouble and expense, but that no golf course could be made on land of that character.

We had already turned our faces homeward toward Southampton when I said to Dunn: "Well, Dunn, what do you want?" He then explained that ground capable of being turned into some sort of turf was necessary I then drove him to a spot in the valley ... composed of sandy soil comparatively free from brush and capable of some sort of treatment appropriate for golf at a reasonable outlay of time and money.

(Samuel L. Parrish, Some facts, reflections, and personal reminiscences connected with the introduction of the Game of Golf into the United States, more especially as associated with the formation of the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club [privately printed by Samuel Parrish, 1923], pp. 5-6)

The Montreal golf professional in question was of course Willie Davis, as Parrish himself well knew when he told the very same story – this time correctly – to the *New York Times* in 1896, less than five years after his day spent with Davis:

Mr. Atterbury, who had learned something about the celebrated Scotch professional, Willie F. Davis, now at the Newport Golf Club, but who at the time had charge of the Montreal Golf Club course, suggested that the Shinnecock Club secure the services of Willie Davis to lay out a course in the vicinity of Southampton. Davis was accordingly requested to come down and look over the sand hills of Long Island and pass his opinion upon their golfing merits.

He did not at first sight launch forth into eulogies of their similarity to the old St Andrews course in Scotland.... That portion of the Shinnecock Hills over which Willie Davis was first taken did not meet with his favor at all.

Mr. Parrish, in telling the result of this walk over hills, says that at one point, Willie Davis was anxiously asked what he thought of the grounds, [where] there was a large growth of underbrush, particularly thick. "With a sad voice and troubled look, Willie Davis replied," Mr. Parrish said, "Well, Sir, I don't think you can make golf links out of this sort of thing."

At this point, however, it was suggested that they visit the hills across the railroad track ... where the ground had more of the qualities of a sandy turf, and it was while viewing this section ... that Willie Davis's face lighted up, and with true golfing ardor he exclaimed: "This is more like it."

(New York Times, 8 March 1896, p. 25)

Davis was on the Shinnecock site for between four and five weeks in July and August of 1891, residing in a nearby cottage as he supervised members of the Shinnecock Indian tribe in the laying out a nine-hole course for men and a shorter ladies' course of about 1,800 yards.



VIEW OF THE GOLF GROUNDS FROM CLUB HOUSE SITE.

Figure 10 Some days ago ... I drove over to the farm house near Southampton which Mr. Davis has made his temporary home and induced him to escort me to the links he has planned out at Shinnecock In half an hour or so, we halted on the brow of a low hill just below the well-known windmill. Here Mr. Davis directed my attention to a round green clearing twenty-five or thirty feet in diameter. "This," said he, in tones which sounded strangely solemn, "is a putting green. We golfers hold it sacred as a sanctuary." (New York Herald, 30 August 1891)

The *New York Herald* sent a reporter to interview Davis. She was very impressed by the young golf professional, whose instruction in the game led her to overcome her scepticism about golf: "A professor at St Andrews once defined the game as 'knocking little balls

into little holes with clubs extremely ill adapted to their purposes' I have shared the vulgar view myself, and it was only this week that I recanted, after taking a hand in an informal game on Long Island under the skilled guidance of that prince of golfers, Mr. Davis" (*New York Herald*, 30 August 1891).



W. F. DAVIS, THE CRACK GOLF PLAYER.

Figure 11 "W.F. Davis, the Crack Golf Player." *New York Herald*, 30 August 1891.

In the summer of 1891, Davis's work to develop grounds for this exotic foreign game was of such interest that the newspaper had Davis sit for a portrait by its sketch artist (seen to the left).

Yet so widely was Parrish's inaccurate 1920s narrative disseminated, and so authoritative did his mistaken recollection thereby become, that Willie Dunn was credited as the original architect and Willie Davis's responsibility for the original golf courses was entirely forgotten. It took almost ninety years for Shinnecock Hills to correct the record.

Parrish had personally accompanied Davis around Shinnecock Hills as Davis inspected possible golf sites, and Parrish had personally interrogated him about what was requisite for the construction of proper golf links. And, not surprisingly, he had a perfect recollection of Davis's name five years later when he recounted the events of 1891 to the *New York Times*. Yet thirty years later, he confused Davis with Dunn.

Similarly, Ballou worked with Davis on the redesign of Apawamis from 1899 to 1901. He even served as a pall bearer at Davis's funeral in 1902. Yet more than thirty years later, he, too, seems to have confused Davis with Dunn, also obscuring – for more than a century – Davis's fundamental role in the design of the Apawamis course that is still played today.

It is not too late to set the record straight.

Assisted by a Professional

Davis had laid out or redesigned some twenty golf courses in North America by the time he met Ballou in 1899, so we know which of them had the greater knowledge and experience of golf course architecture and construction when they began working together at Apawamis that year.

Ballou has been regarded by the Club as the main designer of its remarkable layout, but his mid-1930s letter about the Apawamis redesign between 1899 and 1901 does not come across as written by a person with much interest in or sophistication about golf course architecture. He describes the many changes that were made, but he is curiously silent about architectural motivations for them.

Ballou notes that fairways on at least two holes were judged to be too narrow. And he notes that the tee box of the 7th hole was moved to increase the angle for entering the 7th fairway. Apart from these hints regarding architectural concerns, he merely lists changes: a tee was here first and then it was there; a green was here first, and then it was there; a hole originally took one shot, and then it took two.

For instance, he remarks that “there was a great deal of argument about the old ninth, the tee of which was moved back and then ahead and finally back again There was always a great deal of doubt as to the righteousness of this hole” (cited in Conroy, pp. 36-37). But he sheds no light on the nature of the debate about the architectural “righteousness” of this hole. What were the golfer’s arguing about?

And his observations about how several holes on the back nine needed stiffening – the 10th hole “was a comparatively easy par 4”; the 11th was “a very indifferent hole”; “the old thirteenth was a one-shotter and of no particular merit”; “the fifteenth was an easy two-shotter” – provide no insight into how these holes were thought to be architecturally deficient or how these deficiencies were addressed by better architecture (cited in Conroy, p. 37).

Similarly, his observation that “the original seventeenth hole was a despair” – “The tee was at the foot of the hill and stretched across the entire fairway was a wide, deep trap” – does not offer an explanation of its architectural deficiency, and his remark that “It took some years to correct this impossible hole” provides no hint as to how the hole’s architecture was corrected (cited in Conroy, p. 37).

Writing in the mid-1930s, not only does Ballou not sound like an architect; he does sound as though he ever thought like one. If Willie Davis had lived long enough to have been asked to write about the Apawamis redesign of 1899-1901, I imagine that he would have mentioned architectural reasons for the changes made to the Bendelow design.

In fact, at the time of the 1899-1901 redesign, the golf writer for the *New York Times* seems to have talked to Davis about the new course and Davis seems to have explained why the opening holes were being redesigned:

Professional Willie Davis is still at work on the greens, and until May 1 temporary ones will be in use.

Some changes in distances of the first few holes are being made, so as to prevent an overcrowded condition on the links on big days.

The first hole is being lengthened to 375 yards, from 240 yards, and this will ensure more speed in getting players off.

(*New York Times, 22 April 1900, p. 9*)

Architects have always thought about how a first hole should be designed to get a round of golf underway, and Davis seems to have been no exception. Note that Davis explained why the first hole was lengthened, whereas Ballou observed only the fact that it was lengthened: “In our original layout, the first green was considerably short of the present one and to the left, near the present spring” (cited in Conroy, p. 36).

I suspect that this was the relationship between Davis and Ballou: Davis explained the need for changes; Ballou received the explanation and decided whether the changes would be made.

And so, I suggest that the primary redesigner of the Apawamis layout was Willie Davis and that Ballou, as Chairman of the Golf Committee, was credited with the design because “his efforts” were so “instrumental” in getting the course made.

In 1897, this sort of relationship obtained at the Newport Golf Club between Davis and the Chairman of its Green Committee, A.M. Coates. But the latter gentleman was celebrated more than the golf professional for the creation of the new layout:

The Newport Golf Club is now having its links extended [by nine holes] and by the middle of July, when the work of alteration is expected to be finished, members and visiting players may play over a links second to none in this country.

The course was laid out by W.F. Davis, the resident professional and clubmaker, and approved by A.M. Coates of the Greens Committee, who has made it his business to

look after the condition of the grounds and to everything pertaining to the welfare of the sojourning players of this classic summer resort.

Mr. Coates has gone abroad, but before leaving he went carefully over the details of change and expressed his belief that it would be a fine sporting course and that visitors coming here for the open tournament in the early fall will have ample opportunity to use every club in their set as a round of the links calls for an endless variety of golf.

(The Golfer, vol 5 no 1 [May 1897], p. 21)

Newport members will have regarded Coates just as Apawamis members regarded Ballou: as a proficient player (Willie Davis regarded Coates as the equal of 1895 US amateur Champion Charles Blair Macdonald) and as a man of vision (with unusually sound judgement about golf course design). But today, of course, architects and golf historians alike regard Davis, and not Coates, as the designer of Newport's 1897 course.

In the pages that follow, I treat the primary architect of the Apawamis redesign of 1899 to 1901 as Willie Davis, rather than Maturin Ballou.

New Drainage and New Holes

Solving drainage problems seems to have entailed substantial grading work on certain parts of the property:

The Apawamis Club grounds are well adapted for championship games; it is one of the longest and is the finest course in the country.

The large grounds, which a few years ago were used as farm land, have been graded and remodeled until today they are like a vast lawn extending far from the clubhouse over the green hills to the valley beyond.

(Port Chester Journal [New York], 23 May 1901, p. 4).

This grading and remodeling must have produced new slopes and ditches designed to move water across the property – slopes and ditches that would have constituted a new terrain over which and through which certain of the original Bendelow holes would have had to have been rerouted.

Observing that “With all the expensive and carefully planned courses in this country,... there are not a dozen which are laid out so as properly to penalize a poor shot, and to stop letting luck and not good play turn out the winner,” the *New York Times* acknowledged that “There are some courses ... which are all that could be desired, and one which will shortly be added to that class is the new eighteen-hole links which the Apawamis Golf Club of Rye” (*New York Times*, 20 August 1899, p. 20). The newspaper’s point is that Bendelow’s course had been designed on rational, scientific principles: the hazards were disposed on each hole at distances from tees and greens proper for the purpose of penalizing certain badly played shots.

Adding ditches to the land across which the Bendelow course was laid out would add hazards in places that Bendelow had not placed hazards and had not intended hazards to be found. Shots would now be penalized (by new slopes and ditches) that were not meant by Bendelow to be penalized. Unless the golf course were redesigned, it would no longer be a rational, scientific layout.

Similarly, significantly changing the length of a hole on Bendelow’s celebrated layout would change the way the existing hazards functioned on this changed hole. First, lengthening or shortening a hole would change the location of hazards relative to the tee shot. Second, on a lengthened or shortened two-shot hole, the subsequent approach shot would also be

lengthened or shortened, changing the golfer's challenge in relation to fairway hazards placed between the golfer and the green, on the one hand, and changing the golfer's challenge in relation to hazards surrounding the green, on the other.

To make the disposition of hazards rational and scientific on a property with new slopes and drainage ditches, Ballou recognized that he would need the assistance of a golf professional.

Apawamis Ambitions

The first Amateur Championship of the Metropolitan Golf Association was conducted in April of 1899. The Apawamis Golf Club was ambitious to be recognized within the Metropolitan Golf Association as one of the best clubs – with one of the best golf courses – and so, it was eager to host a future MGA Championship tournament on its new course. Since the best and most accomplished amateur golfers in the United States at this time were members of the MGA, this championship tournament was second in standing only to the USGA Amateur Championship itself.

To be competitive with its bid for this honour, however, the Club knew that the question of proper drainage and the question of proper length would have to be addressed.

Fearing that golf clubs would be reluctant to dedicate a week to a championship tournament during the summer months (the busiest part of the golf season), the MGA had decided that it would stage its championship in May, and so, in determining the site each year of its championship, the MGA sought not only an eighteen-hole golf course of championship length, but also a course that was dry in the spring:

In regard to the championship course, it is generally understood that the Apawamis links, of Rye, will be the one selected.

This course offers an opportunity for early play – something the Association has always insisted on – while recent improvements there brings it within the requirements of a championship links.

(New York Tribune, 28 January 1901, p. 8).

Without proper drainage, there would have been no possibility of “early play” at Apawamis, and it seems that only because of the unspecified “recent improvements” made by Davis had the club’s eighteen-hole course now come to be regarded as a “championship links.”

These “recent improvements” had been undertaken in the fall and winter of 1899-1900:

The Golf Committee, under its effective chairman, Maturin Ballou, has had a large force of laborers at work all winter and recent changes and improvements have brought the total playing length up to 6,200 yards.

William F. Davis, formerly with the Newport Golf Club, is the club’s professional, and under his care the links promise to be the best in the State by another season.

(New York Tribune, 29 January 1900, p. 9).

The “changes and improvements” had no doubt been planned in conjunction with “the new drainage system.”

As suggested in the previous section, it was probably recognized by the club that the work of properly draining the course would not only allow a re-laying of certain golf holes through newly drained areas but would also require the re-laying of certain golf holes to make their hazards rational and scientific – “rational and scientific,” that is, according to the tenets of penal architectural theory.

Penal Architectural Theory

Following the tenets of the penal theory of golf course architecture that prevailed in the 1890s and early 1900s, golf architects made sure to arrange for each hole at least one hazard (whether natural or artificial) stretching across the entire width of the fairway. On a two-shot hole, a second fairway-wide hazard would be placed between the golfer and the putting green – often directly in front of the green. And there was generally an additional fairway-wide hazard to be crossed on a three-shot hole.

Note the following 1901 “suggestions by an expert on constructing hazards” in a newspaper article called “Bunker Building on American Links”:

Take a 150-yard hole If there are no natural hazards, it is advisable to place two cop-bunkers 110 yards from the tee, side by side clear across the course. About one-fourth of the bunker in front should overlap one-fourth of the other, leaving a path [for golfers] running sideways, and not straight for the hole, to prevent balls rolling through.

Each of these bunkers should cover one-half of the width of the course. The trap should be twenty feet wide and two and one-half feet deep, while the height of the cop should be three feet....



Figure 12 Along the lines of those described above, a series of inked cop-bunkers (designed in 1901 by Walter J. Travis and John Duncan Dunn, a nephew of Willie Dunn, Jr), with a sand-filled ditch in front of each, crossing the entire 8th fairway at the Flushing Country Club. Golf (New York), vol 9 no 1 (July 1902), p. 11.

For a hole 340 yards long, the theoretical arrangement of artificial hazards would be:

Place two bunkers two feet deep, end for end eight[y] yards from the tee, with cops eighteen inches high to catch topped or fozzled drives....

For variety, and in order to add to the picturesqueness of the course, mounds [instead of cop bunkers] are sometimes erected to guard the green. They should be placed 285 yards from the tee, and built about six or eight feet in height, twelve feet wide, and extending almost across the course. The end of one mound should overlap the other with a patch between, sunning sideways [for golfers to walk through]

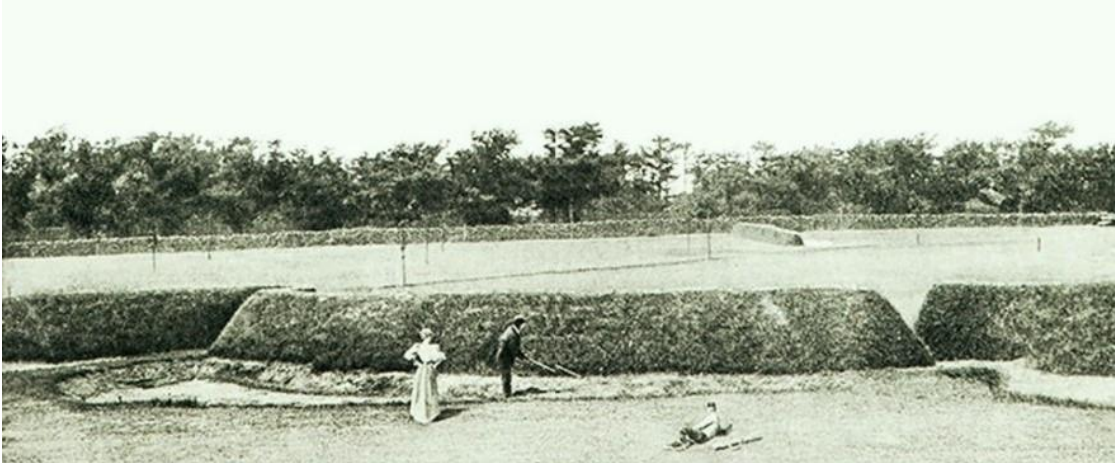


Figure 13 Willie Davis's overlapping cop bunker mounds on the 5th hole of the Newport Golf Club, 1895. Frederick Waterman, The History of the Newport Country Club (Newport, Rhode Island: Newport Country Club Preservation Foundation, 2013), pp. 118-19.

The player who can consistently negotiate a 500-yard hole laid out as follows in anything like bogey figures should make a dangerous opponent:

[First] Build a cop in two sections about three to five feet high, with a shallow bunker in front, extending across the course about fifty yards from the tee....

[Second] About 240 yards from the tee, it would be advisable to place a cop bunker twenty feet wide, three feet deep, and as long almost as the width of the course will permit....

[Third] Within fifty yards of the hole, an ordinary cop-bunker should be placed clear across the course to protect the green.

(Inter Ocean [Chicago], 19 May 1901, p. 49)

A person playing a golf course for the first time could tell the par of any hole by counting the number of cross bunkers on it: par equals the number of cross-bunkers plus two strokes for putts.

The idea was to punish golfers who could not get the ball into the air to carry it over these obstacles, for the general conviction, at a time when championship golf was almost exclusively decided by match play, was that it was unfair on a two-shot hole, for instance, to allow players first to top a drive and then top a fairway shot and thus roll a ball all the way to the putting green with two bad shots, thereby still having a chance to be “level” with the player who had reached

the green with two perfect sots. Such a hole was called a “leveller” hole, and it came to be despised by scratch players and golf architects alike.

And so, at Apawamis, new ditches that had been made for drainage purposes would in some places have introduced a capriciousness in the way the original Bendelow layout punished shots. For instance, according to penal theory’s understanding of proper punishments, a drive should clear a ditch 80 to 100 yards from the tee (deserving to be in the ditch if it did not), but a perfect 200-yard drive should not be punished by finding a ditch 200 yards from the tee. After the drainage work, however, ditches would have been introduced where they had not been when Bendelow designed his version of the course. Good shots would have rolled into ditches that were never intended to roll into ditches.

On certain holes at Apawamis, therefore, it would have been necessary to reconfigure distances and lines of play to ensure that ditch hazards were located in the appropriate places on fairways and at the appropriate distances from tees and greens.



Figure 14 W.G. Van Tassel Sutphen (1861-1945), circa 1900.

When he reviewed the redesigned Apawamis golf course in the fall of 1900, W.G. Van Tassel Sutphen, editor of *Golf* (New York), found that the new course had achieved the objective of correctly punishing misplayed shots: “in this country of kopjes [that is, mounds or hillocks] and sluits [a gully or dry ditch], ... the punishment is made to fit the crime with unfailing regularity” (*Golf*, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 242).

He implicitly awards kudos to Davis for routing holes across and through mounds, on the one hand, and across and alongside ditches, on the other hand, so that players who ended up in these areas got what they deserved as punishment for the bad shot that put them there.

Golf course designs that meted out punishments rationally rather than randomly were regarded as “scientific,” to use the contemporary term.

And so, Sutphen observed about the 14th hole what he thought was true of the course in general: “the course is wide, the lies are good, and the hazards come at the proper distances for first-class play” (p. 247).



Figure 15 Walter J. Travis.
Spalding Official Golf Guide
1899, p. 56.

Sutphen understood the relationship between distances and “first-class play” as US Amateur Champion and golf course architect Walter J. Travis did in 1901:

We will assume that we can drive from 175 to 210 yards; brasseys, 170 to 190 yards; get from 150 to 180 yards with cleek or driving-mashie; 120 to 150 yards with a mid-iron, and lesser distances with a mashie.

There is nothing extravagant in these distances with class players.

(Golf, vol no 5 [May 1901], p. 355).

And at Apawamis, the work of Davis in matching hazards to the distances that first-class players hit the ball was not just a matter of adjusting the length of holes to new ditches; as Sutphen observes, Davis also eliminated a ditch that had been regarded as unfair since Bendelow laid out the original course: on “No. 1, the walled ditch that used to unfairly trap a well-hit ball has been covered over”
(Golf, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 243).

Both Davis and Sutphen, that is, regarded the original ditch on the 1st hole as irrational and unscientific.

Acquiring Davis

Apawamis seems to have specifically targeted Davis as the man “to aid them in securing a championship stretch of country,” and probably approached him through its “effective” Golf Committee chairman in 1899, Maturin Ballou – the reigning club champion, and the player who would one year later partner Willie Davis in a best-ball match against Harry Vardon at Apawamis in November of 1900.

Davis was well-known in the United States as the first person to have earned a living in North America as a golf professional: that is, by instruction, club making, greenkeeping, and laying out courses.



Figure 16 Willie Davis in Montreal, circa 1890. The Golfer, vol 2 no 2 (December 1895), p. 51.

Born in Hoylake, Cheshire, England, in the fall of 1861, Davis was taught to play golf in the early 1870s by Young Tom Morris and Davie Strath, for each of whom he caddied when they visited Royal Liverpool Golf Club to play in professional competitions. Davis then apprenticed at Royal Liverpool from late 1876 or early 1877 to the spring of 1881 under Young Tom’s first-cousin John (“Jack”) Morris. During this period, he instructed young Harold Hilton, who would win the 1911 US Amateur Championship on the Davis-redesigned course at Apawamis.

Davis was hired by the Montreal Golf Club in 1881 and spent the next 12 years in Montreal. He served as the club’s golf professional in 1881 and from 1889 to 1892, earning a living as a club maker and ball maker in the interim.

As we know, during his last two years in Montreal, he began to lay out golf courses. In 1891, he was borrowed from Royal Montreal by golf enthusiasts in Ottawa and (perhaps) Kingston (Ontario, Canada) and Shinnecock Hills (Southampton, New York) to lay out the golf courses at these sites. In 1892, he provided a surrogate designer for the first

nine-hole layout of the Tuxedo Golf Club (for which he had supplied clubs and balls in 1889) and at the end of the year he travelled personally to Newport to choose a site for a golf course he would build there when hired as the Newport Golf Club's professional at the beginning of 1893. When the Newport Golf Club moved to a new site in 1894, Davis laid out a new nine-hole course (as well as a six-hole beginners' course), and then added another nine-holes in 1897. In fact, up to 1899 (when he left), Davis "aided materially in the many improvements and extensions ... made at the links of the Newport Golf Club" (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 23 September 1899, p. 24). And, as we know, he also designed or redesigned other golf courses in Rhode Island, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, and Virginia.

By the summer of 1899 (before its new Bendelow golf course was completed), the Apawamis Golf Club had decided to hire a golf professional. It may have set out in quest of Davis as early as September of 1899 – around the time that Bendelow was putting the "finishing touches" on his layout.

In September, Davis was in the news. He had become embroiled in a disagreement with the Greens Committee of the Newport Golf Club:

Davis Summoned Home by Green Committee of Newport Golf Club and He Resigns Position

Willie Davis, the professional golfer of the Newport Club, returned from Baltimore yesterday and handed in his resignation, to take effect Nov. 1.

Davis went to Baltimore to play in the Open tournament now in progress there, and when on the links Wednesday, received a telegram from the Green Committee of the Newport Club, summoning him home immediately.

Davis says that as the Committee knew he was going to Baltimore, his recall was a great surprise to him, and he did not feel that it was treating him fairly to order him home in such a peremptory manner. He obeyed the order, however, and handed in his resignation as soon as he got here and could prepare it.

One of the Green Committee said that Davis did not leave a satisfactory man in charge of his business.

Davis says that he did.

(Providence News [Rhode Island], 15 September 1899, p. 5)

Davis immediately became a hot property, with other clubs interested in hiring him. The anonymous club that was mentioned in the last line of the item above – "He has an offer from

another club” – may have been the Apawamis Golf Club (*Providence News* [Rhode Island], 15 September 1899, p. 5).

If so, Apawamis would not get Davis without a fight.

It had been just “One [member] of the green committee” that had called Davis home: founding club member Victor Sorchan. And the Newport Golf Club was not happy that he had done so.



Figure 17 Victor Sorchan, circa 1900.
In Jeffrey Jacobsen, *The Castle*
(Cornwall, Connecticut: Cornwall
Historical Society, 2015), p. 4.

The officious Sorchan had mortified the very proud Davis (famous for his probity in all matters private and public) by sending him a telegram alleging that he had neglected his duties – a telegram that was delivered to Davis on the golf course of the Baltimore Country Club as Davis participated in a U.S. Open practice round with his fellow golf professionals.

The Newport Golf Club did not want to lose Davis and so tried to soothe his wounded pride by publicly acknowledging that Sorchan was in the wrong:

His resignation was not accepted.

Davis insisted

But so much dissatisfaction was expressed by many [club] members that the offending member of the Greens Committee [Victor Sorchan] also resigned.

(*New York Times*, 12 November 1899, p. 10).

For a short while in mid-October, it seemed that the matter had been resolved: “Mr. W.F. Davis will continue to perform his duties as professional coach at Newport Golf Club, his difficulties with the green committee having been amicably adjusted” (*Newport Mercury* [Rhode Island], 14 October 1899, p. 1).

Within a week, however, all had changed again.

A local newspaper reported: “W.F. Davis ... will sever his connection with the club on Nov. 1 He will then go to the Washington Golf Club for the winter. For next year, he has made no definite plans, as he has received a number of offers from the leading golf clubs of this country” (*Evening Telegram* [Providence, Rhode Island], 28 October 1899, p. 7).

Whether or not Apawamis had first approached Davis in September, it was certainly among “the leading golf clubs of this country” that had offered Davis a position by October. From Davis’s point of view, Apawamis may have been the leading club among these “leading clubs,” for as soon as his Newport contract terminated on 1 November 1899, Davis immediately travelled to New York: “Former Supt. W.F. Davis of the Newport Golf Club has gone to New York for a brief stay” (*Evening Telegram* [Providence, Rhode Island], 2 November 1899, p. 6).

Davis’s “brief stay” in New York lasted a week and it must have included a visit to Rye (*Evening Telegram* [Providence, Rhode Island], 9 November 1899, p. 6).

Whether he visited any other golf clubs in New York at this time is not known, but he certainly visited Apawamis, for the very day he arrived back in Newport, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* broke the news: “The Apawamis Golf Club have secured the services of Willie Davis, who for the past seven years has been the professional of the Newport Golf Club” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 9 November 1899, p. 14). It was further reported that he had “accepted a flattering offer” (*Buffalo Courier*, 10 November 1899, p. 9).

The *New York Times* warmly congratulated Apawamis on its success:

One of the most interesting announcements in the line of professional changes comes from Newport in the statement that Willie Davis, who lately resigned from the Newport Golf Club, has accepted an offer from the Apawamis Golf Club of Rye to take charge of its links.

The Apawamis Club may be congratulated on securing so capable a professional, for among the host of Scotchmen who have come to America to help promote the game, Davis can be numbered in the top ranks.

With a thorough knowledge of all the technicalities of the links, as well as possessing [the] grand talent of reliability, Davis will always add a certain golfing tone to whatever club he may be acquainted with.

As a player, his ability has always been recognized, but he has not descended to that advertised method of backing himself for matches to redound to his own honor.

Davis has been connected with the Newport club almost from the day of its organization, and the present excellence of its eighteen-hole course is largely due to his efforts....

Davis will probably take charge of his new club within a few days.

(New York Times, 12 November 1899, p. 10).

In acknowledging Davis's "grand talent of reliability," the golf writer for the *New York Times* seems to have sided with Davis in his dispute with the Newport Greens Committee about whether he had left a proper person in charge while he was at the US Open in Baltimore.

During his week in New York, Davis presumably consulted with "effective" Golf Committee chairman Maturin Ballou about the need to change and improve the layout to bring it up to the MGA's championship standards. And the two of them may well have discussed the question of course drainage. Ballou will probably have known that Davis had worked through significant problems arising from poor drainage of the Newport Golf Club property throughout his tenure there.

In 1895, for instance, despite strikes throughout 1894 by two sets of labourers charged with building his new design, Davis was celebrated for having brought forth a masterpiece from a swamp:

The links of the Newport Golf Club are among the best in America, and when the fact is taken into account that they have been made only since the spring of 1895, it reflects great credit upon the hard-working chairman of the green committee ... and Greenkeeper W.F. Davis.

Neither time nor expense has been spared, and what was last year an unexplored swamp is now one of the finest golf links in the country.

(Golf [London], vol 7 no 278 [8 November 1895], p. 182).

But work to address drainage problems was not over at Newport, as was made clear at the end of the 1897 golf season:

Until the recent wet weather set in, the grounds were in splendid shape.

Now a perfect system of drainage has been inaugurated, added to a system of sewerage, which together will remove the rain from the polo grounds quickly as well as from the links of the Golf Club.

(Evening Telegram [Providence, Rhode Island], 9 November 1897, p. 10)

Davis used ditches and ponds as hazards within his 1897 design of nine new holes at Newport: Ballou may well have thought that such a designer would be helpful at Apawamis.

As we know, when Davis was offered the Apawamis position, improved drainage and an improved layout were top of mind for Ballou's Golf Committee, and now we also know that Davis was famous both for designing first-rate layouts and for doing so on grounds beset by drainage problems. Indeed, it is possible that Davis spent his week in New York at the beginning of

November 1899 studying the Apawamis grounds and putting on paper plans for course improvements and a new drainage system. It is even possible that his hiring at the end of that week had been contingent upon the Golf Committee's approval of such plans.

As I have implied above, I suspect that Apawamis may have decided to try to hire Davis away from Newport as soon as news broke in mid-September of his problem with the Newport Green Committee.

Mind you, Ballou may have set his mind on trying to hire Davis away from Newport even before Davis's contretemps with Victor Sorchan, for it is clear that in the summer of 1899, Apawamis was ambitious not just to have one of the best golf courses in the country, but also to have the best golf professional in the country – and the Club would do that by hiring the best golf professional in the world.



Figure 18 Harry Vardon, 1899.

Early in September of 1899, a representative of Apawamis indicated that the club had been trying to hire none other than the most famous golfer in the world, Harry Vardon:

Harry Vardon, the Open Champion of Great Britain, and considered by many to be the strongest and most finished player in the world, may be seen in the role of professional instructor to the Apawamis Golf Club at Rye in the near future.

Negotiations are pending between him and the club to have him come to this country. He is particularly busy at present playing in open tournaments and matches in Great Britain, but he has said that he will consider the matter later.

The club's representative says that he seemed favorably impressed with the offer and believes he will finally accept.

(Kansas City Star [Missouri], 10 September 1899, p. 3)

Failing to acquire Vardon, Apawamis seems immediately to have turned its attention to Davis, deciding to settle for one of the most highly-regard golf professionals in North America.

Davis's Success

Davis was said to have been the key to unlocking the spending that made the new golf course such a great success: "Since securing Willie Davis from Newport, the organization has bent every effort toward equipping its links, and the present eighteen-hole circuit has become so favorably known to golfers at large that its selection for one of the season's championships would cause no surprise" (*New York Tribune*, 19 January 1901, p. 5).

Davis had produced grounds capable of hosting championship play early in the spring season (making the hosting of the MGA championship a possibility), and many thought he had produced such a sufficiently sophisticated and challenging golf course that it was capable of hosting a USGA championship:

The Apawamis course is near Rye, Westchester County, and the excellence of its turf permits of good playing early in the season.

It is a long, eighteen-hole course, and the club is fortunate in the possession of one of the best professionals in the country, Willie F. Davis, who for several years was engaged at Newport, until he resigned a little more than a year ago to accept a more congenial position at Apawamis....

A large amount of money has been spent on its course. Vardon was so pleased with the links that he ranked it among the best three he had seen in America.

In the minds of many golfers, the holding of the Metropolitan championship there is but the forerunner of the National championship at the same place in the near future.

(*New York Times*, 27 January 1901, p. 9)

More than Ballou or Bendelow, Davis was celebrated as the worker of the wonder that the Apawamis golf course had become, as, for instance, in an anonymous article for the *New York Tribune* in September of 1901:

The work of bringing the ground to its present delightful perfection is a monument to the energy and patience of its builders.

Anyone familiar with the abrupt contour of Westchester County, its swamps and woody ridges, its stone walls and pebbly ditches, will realize what it has been to transform the unclaimed waste of 1898 to the present upholstered stretches.

It was in June 1899 [actually, October 1899] that the club first assumed the dignity of an eighteen-hole circuit.

"WILLIE" DAVIS'S WORK

“Willie” Davis, who had enjoyed remarkable success in laying out the Newport course, was secured at that time as resident professional, and today he is able to point with some pride to the changes wrought under his watchful eye.

When Vardon, the English ex-champion, visited the country a year ago, he made a tour of the grounds, and pronounced them the best he had seen.

That they contained sharper tests than even he was able to master is shown by the fact that 79 and 80 were the best records he could make.

In fact, no one has been able to cope with Davis himself in this respect, for the Apawamis professional enjoys the distinction of holding the record at 78.... [Davis lowered the course record to 76 a month after this newspaper item appeared.]

The course ... was originally laid out by “Tom” Bendelow.

(New York Tribune, 15 September 1901, p. 16)

So, just how much of the new golf course that opened in May of 1900, and that was further remodelled in 1901, should be attributed to Willie Davis?

The Work of Davis and Ballou

As we know, shortly before he died in 1938, Ballou wrote a letter recording his recollections of the redesigning of the eighteen-hole course while he was Chairman of the Golf Committee, effectively from the fall of 1899 to January of 1902 (a period overlapping exactly with Davis's term as resident golf professional at the Club).

Conroy does not mention Bendelow or Davis, writing as though Ballou alone was responsible for the course *ab ovo*:

The original layout of the course was a far more difficult problem than it would appear in these days of modern golf engineering. There were 120 acres of farm land, studded here and there with woodlands and thousands of yards of old-fashioned stone fences.

Maturin Ballou, who was then Chairman of the Golf Committee [1899-1902], a proficient player and a man of vision, undertook the difficult task of developing from this large area the course over which we now play.

How unusually sound was his judgement is evidenced by the fact that there have been comparatively few changes in the original design.

(Conroy, p. 36)

And Ballou does not mention Bendelow. The latter appears only implicitly in Ballou's reference to what he calls "our original layout" (cited in Conroy, p. 36).

Conroy cites Ballou extensively, "quoting from a letter he wrote several years ago":

In our original layout, the first green was considerably short of the present one and to the left, near the present spring. The fairway was then very narrow but was afterward widened by cutting out a large section of woods on the slope at the right.

The second hole was at the foot of the hill on which our present green is now located. Changing this green to the top brought the third tee to its present elevation from the foot of the hill.

The fourth green was in the hollow, short of the present green, the present plateau green being built around 1901.

The original fifth hole was in the hollow to the left of the present green, guarded by a collection of mounds, known as "chocolate drops." Overhanging the green was a great oak, which saved many a pulled shot.

The gorge at the seventh hole was very narrow, with the woods closing in tightly from both sides. This was subsequently widened and the tee moved to the east to increase the angle for entering it.

The eighth hole was played to the west, directly downhill to the fairway of the present ninth. Back of it was the brook and surrounding it were menacing traps.

There was a great deal of argument about the old ninth, the tee of which was moved back and then ahead and finally back again, so that there was a hole 610 yards in length and a most difficult par 5. There was always a great deal of doubt as to the righteousness of this hole.

The tee on the tenth hole was in front of the rock above the pump, so that it was a comparatively easy par 4.

Originally, the tee of the eleventh hole was on the flat. This made for a very indifferent hole, but by moving it back to the top of the hill, it became, as it is today, an extremely fine test. Harold Hilton described it as the best two-shot hole in America.



Figure 19 Photograph taken from the new 11th tee on "top of the hill." Golf, vol 7 no 4 (October 1900), p. 246.

The old thirteenth green was on the near side of the brook under a huge beech tree. This was a one-shotter and of no particular merit.



Figure 20 T.T. Sherman, Green Committee Chair, in front of 14th hole blasted rock. American Golfer, vol 6 no 1 (May 1911), p. 32.

There were varied changes on the fourteenth hole made at great expense, as several ledges of rock had to be blasted [in 1911] and the green, which was on the flat just across the brook, was moved back beyond the present green, where the present grass nursery is located.

The fifteenth was an easy two-shotter, the green being located in the hollow opposite the present sixteenth tee.

The original seventeenth hole was a despair. The tee was at the foot of the hill and stretched across the entire fairway was a wide, deep trap. It took some years to correct this impossible hole, there having been four or five important changes made, including the building up of the green and the traps as we find them today.

The eighteenth green was this side of the present green, but in the first year it was moved back, but not built up as it is at present.

(cited in Conroy, pp. 36-38)



Figure 21 Maturin Ballou. New York Tribune, 24 January 1902, p. 5.

In this letter, although he mentions blasting of rock on the 14th hole that occurred in 1911, Ballou focuses almost exclusively on the changes made to the Bendelow course between the time he became “effective chairman” of the Golf Committee late in 1899 and the death of Davis in January of 1902 (in which month Ballou became Secretary of the USGA and relinquished his chairmanship of the Apawamis Golf Committee. The most important redesign work seems to have occurred during this period.

It no doubt began with the work on the new drainage system late in 1899. But we know that Davis continued to work on the course well after he and Ballou played their valiant but unsuccessful best-ball match at Apawamis against Harry Vardon on 10 November 1900, for, six months later, a newspaper noted: “Vardon praised the Apawamis course highly and it has been improved since the great English professional played over it” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 17 May 1901, p. 13). Similarly, in his mid-1930s letter, Ballou refers to work on the 4th hole in 1901, recalling its “present plateau green being built around 1901.”

We can see from the letter quoted above that the work undertaken by Ballou and Davis was substantial.

Certain holes were lengthened: 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18.

Greens were built in new locations on 1, 2, 4, 5, 13, 14, 15, 18. And the 17th green was elevated (there was a “building up of the green”).

Tees were built in new locations on 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 17 (this work often changed both the length of a hole and the line of play on it).

Fairways were widened on the 1st and 7th holes.

The 8th hole was laid out in a new direction.

The tee, fairway, and green on the 17th hole were regularly redesigned.

And so, Davis clearly made a big number and variety of changes: at least nine greens were relocated and/or rebuilt; at least nine holes were lengthened; at least six tee boxes were relocated; at least two fairways were widened; and at least one hole was laid out in a new direction.

When Ballou resigned as chairman of the Golf Committee in January of 1902 to become secretary of the USGA, perhaps the most accurate description of the golf course at that time would be that it was a Bendelow-Davis design.

Seeding and Sodding

Recall that the lengthening of the opening holes was underway in April of 1900:

Professional Willie Davis is still at work on the greens, and until May 1 temporary ones will be in use.

Some changes in distances of the first few holes is being made, so as to prevent an overcrowded condition on the links on big days.

The first hole is being lengthened to 375 yards, from 240 yards, and this will ensure more speed in getting players off.

(New York Times, 22 April 1900, p. 9)

The proposed lengthening of the first hole to 375 yards approximates closely the later official length of 377 yards, but the distances proposed in April of 1900 for the next four holes are different from what they actually became: “The next four holes will be, respectively, 300 [the 2nd hole became 355], 325 [the 3rd became 310], 250 [the 4th became 322], and 170 yards [the 5th became 160]” (*New York Times*, 22 April 1900, p. 9).

We can see, then, that some of the redesign work that Ballou recounts in his letter was just beginning in April of 1900, with many final decisions still to be made.

Yet we also know that before April of 1900, a great deal of new turf had been seeded – presumably as a consequence of work on the new drainage system late in 1899 and early in 1900. It was reported at the beginning of April 1900, for instance, that turfing the course was well underway: “Golfers up at Rye ... have been upholstering the dales and commons into a brand new course for the Apawamis Golf Club” (*New York Tribune*, 9 April 1900, p. 6). We know that a good deal of earth was moved during the construction of the new drainage system and the redesign of certain golf holes, and this work no doubt entailed seeding vast areas: “The large grounds, which a few years ago were used as farm land, have been graded and remodeled until today they are like a vast lawn extending far from the clubhouse over the green hills to the valley beyond” (*Port Chester Journal* [New York], 23 May 1901, p. 4).

The “upholstering” metaphor, introduced above by the *New York Tribune* writer to characterize Apawamis’s grass-covered “dales and commons,” became a popular one: “Davis, it will be remembered, was formerly the professional at Newport. Then he came down to Rye and since

his arrival he has worked wonders in upholstering the dales and commons of the Apawamis links” (*Buffalo Commercial*, 27 July 1900, p. 6)

This remarkable “upholstering” eventuated from a relatively recent seeding and sodding of substantial portions of the course as of the spring of 1900. Consequently, the proposed opening of the new Davis course in May of that year struck the Golf Committee as risky: “The dry spring weather has retarded the progress of the committee in its effort to get the course in first class condition, and some fear is expressed that the recently seeded and sodded portions may be injured by early play” (*New York Tribune*, 18 May 1900, p. 8).

One infers that the seeded and sodded area was so substantial that it was impossible to play the course without playing over newly seeded and sodded areas. That is, it was impossible simply to instruct golfers to keep off areas marked as recently seeded and sodded.

The Golf Committee exercised caution regarding these areas on the golf course, but it was quite confident of its golf professional’s greenkeeping acumen: “‘Willie’ Davis, who was brought from Newport a year ago to superintend the work, has succeeded admirably, and with time and judicious care, the turf will rival that of any links in the metropolitan district” (*New York Tribune*, 18 May 1900, p. 8).

Davis had availed himself in the spring of 1900 of the services of J.M. Thorburn & Company, wholesale seed growers and merchants of New York City. This century-old company subsequently advertised that the grass on the Apawamis course – one of “the finest links in the country” – was “produced from seed and fertilizer furnished by us” (*Golf* [New York], vol 10 no 2 [February 1902], p. 143).

Later in 1900, Thorburn’s Seeds won the gold medal at the Paris Exposition.

Proper Lengthening

A newspaper reported in mid-April of 1900: “recent changes and improvements under [Davis’s] direction will make the total playing distance 6,200 yards” (*Inter Ocean*, 15 April 1900, p. 30).

Despite its fears about the delicate condition of the newly seeded and sodded portions of the new course, the Golf Committee finally opened it for play at the end of May:

After a year or more of preliminary work, the Apawamis Club had a formal opening of its completed links yesterday....

The course, as lengthened under Willie Davis’s direction, is now the longest in the east, and, with the exception of St. Andrews, longer than any of the five championship links of Great Britain.

(*Sun [New York]*, 31 May 1900, p. 5)

Bendelow’s eight months of work on the original course and Davis’s seven months of work redesigning it are all lumped together as “a year or more of **preliminary** work”: implicitly, according to the golf writer of the *New York Sun*, the course was not “completed” until lengthened by Davis (emphasis added).

Davis’s lengthening work was widely celebrated, if for no other reason than that size mattered:

Davis came down to Rye and since his arrival he has worked wonders

Just to show what his improvements have accomplished, he went around last week in 78, which smashes all previous records and beats bogie by four strokes.

The course has a playing distance of 6,205 yards, making the longest eighteen-hole circuit in the country.

(*Buffalo Commercial [New York]*, 27 July 1900, p. 6)

Note the reference above to Davis’s having beaten the “bogie” score by four strokes.

A “bogie” score was an indirect indication of the length and difficulty of a golf course – a “bogie” score being preferred at most golf clubs in the 1890s and early 1900s to a “par” score. Although the concept of par had been invented in 1870, it had languished virtually unknown and unused from 1870 to the mid-1890s, mentioned only occasionally in a newspaper or golf journal by a small minority of golf’s *cognoscenti* in Scotland and England. Par came out of the shadows only some years after the invention of the figure named Colonel Bogey in 1891.

Defined by Horace G. Hutchinson as “A phantom who is credited with a certain score for each hole, against which score each player is competing,” Colonel Bogey was a device allowing match-play competition simultaneously by a large field of contestants over a single round of golf: the winner was the person who won the most holes from, or (more usually) lost the fewest holes to, “the Colonel,” whose score was based on what each club’s golf committee calculated that its best players were able to score when playing their best game on the club’s course (*Golfing* [London: George Routledge & Sons, 1893], p. 114). Since very few club players anywhere in the world in the 1890s could shoot par scores calculated by reference to the length of proper drives and proper approach shots (plus two putts per green), the Bogey score of a golf course was generally set between four and ten strokes above par. (I discuss these historical developments in detail in *Ottawa Golf and the Bogey Man: How the Ottawa Golf Club Became the First to Bring Colonel Bogey to North America*, which is on my website at donaldjchilds.ca)

In August of 1899, on the anticipated 6,280-yard Bendelow course, the Bogey score was going to be 87, as shown below (*New York Times*, 20 August 1899, p. 20).

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Yards	240	350	120	330	520	350	420	200	580	460	390	300	275	565	240	160	380	400	6,280
Bogey	4	4	3	5	6	5	5	4	7	6	5	5	4	7	4	3	5	5	87

In December of 1899, on the 6,040-yard Bendelow course, the Bogey score was 82, as shown below (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle* [New York], 10 December 1899, p. 10).

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Yards	240	342	162	200	333	330	391	240	600	345	347	245	280	528	305	217	512	323	6,040
Bogey	4	5	3	4	4	5	5	4	6	5	5	4	4	6	4	4	6	4	82

On the Davis-lengthened course, despite adding 165 yards to the December 1899 course, the Bogey score was also 82, as shown below (*New York Tribune*, 18 February 1901, p. 3).

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Yards	377	355	310	322	160	330	391	220	600	345	350	250	265	528	350	217	512	323	6,205
Bogey	5	5	4	5	3	4	5	4	6	4	5	4	4	6	5	4	5	4	82

The bogey score of the Apawamis course was one indication of its length, and its bogey score was certainly respectable.

The Apawamis course was longer than many other American championship courses in 1901, but it was not the longest in the country. As we know, however, it was certainly recognized as constituting a proper test of championship golf: to host the MGA championship of 1901, we recall, the Apawamis course not only had to be playable in the spring, but also had to be of championship length.

But we know that the length of a championship golf course had to be articulated properly. Regarding the length of the Apawamis course, it was said: “its playing length of 6,205 yards is up to the most approved standard. The distances, too, are capitally disposed” (*Brooklyn Life* [New York], 23 February 1901, p. 30).

The golf writer of *Brooklyn Life* here compliments Davis by indicating that his disposition of distance as it was articulated hole-by-hole was architecturally correct, rational, or scientific. According to the thinking of the late 1890s and early 1900s, there were distances to be avoided on a proper championship golf course: architects would say that golf holes are architecturally incorrect if they have “distances which bring the par score within reach of anyone, and thus discount strong play through the green” (*Brooklyn Life*, 23 February 1901, p. 32).

It was in this respect that Davis had done “capitally” (*Brooklyn Life*, 23 February 1901, p. 32).

Recall that since championship tournaments at golf clubs were almost exclusively decided by match play in the 1890s and early 1900s, it was regarded as unfair that on a two-shot hole, for instance, players who topped a drive should still be able to reach the green with a long second shot and thereby still have a chance to be “level” in the playing of the hole with the player who had reached the green with two properly played shots.

As J.H. Taylor (at the time a three-time Open Champion) explained to American golfers in 1901 (after which he would win two more Open Championships):

The length of the holes should be of such a distance that it will require either one, two, or three good strokes to reach the green.

The hole [that is, the putting green] should not be so placed [at a distance from the tee] that it is immaterial whether a good shot is played from the tee or not.

Take the case of a hole 250 yards long.

Now any two shots will land you on the green, and it is impossible, except in the case of a drive of phenomenal length, to get there in one.

Consequently, 250 yards is a bad length for a hole, because it puts a bad player and a good player on an equality.

(J.H. Taylor, "The Playing of the Game ... V. – How to Lay Out a Golf Course," Golf [New York], vol 9 no 5 [November 1901], p. 339)

We recall that Sutphen also approved of Davis's disposition of distance on the Apawamis holes: "Analyzing the distances as given on the official scorecard, it will be seen that ... no fewer than thirteen [holes] ... run over the three hundred mark. In other words, the 'leveller' is virtually eliminated" (*Golf* [New York], vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 2).

Comparing below the yardages of the holes on the 6,040-yard fall 1899 course to the yardages of the holes on the 6,205-yard spring 1900 course, we can see that although Davis did not eliminate all such leveller holes as Bendelow had bequeathed to him, he removed two leveller holes on the front nine.

November 1899 Yardages (top), May 1900 Yardages (bottom)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total
240	342	162	200	333	330	391	240	600	345	347	245	280	528	305	217	512	323	6,040
377	355	310	322	160	330	391	220	600	345	350	250	265	528	350	217	512	323	6,205

Comparison of the distance figures shown above reveals that the yardage of just one hole was changed significantly on the back nine (the 15th hole was made 45 yards longer), but the yardages of four holes on the front nine were changed significantly:

the 1st hole was lengthened by 137 yards;

the 3rd hole was lengthened by 148 yards;

the 4th hole was lengthened by 122 yards;

and the 5th hole was shortened by 173 yards.

The lengths of five other holes were changed to a much lesser extent:



Figure 22 Findlay S. Douglas (left) and Charles Blair Macdonald on Apawamis 8th tee in their MGA semifinal match 24 May 1901. *Harper's Weekly*, vol 45 no 2319 (1 June 1901), p. 566.

the 8th hole and the 13th hole were reduced by 20 yards and 15 yards, respectively, representing a one- or two-club difference for the approach shot to the green;

the length of the 2nd hole was increased by 13 yards, representing a one or two-club difference for the approach shot to the green;

the 11th and 12th holes were made 5 yards and 3 yards longer, respectively.



Figure 23 Charles Blair Macdonald (1895 USGA Amateur Champion), left, and Findlay S. Douglas (1898 USGA Amateur Champion) on the tee of the Davis-redesigned 350-yard 15th hole at Apawamis during the MGA Amateur Championship semi-final match 24 May 1901 (*New York Tribune*, 15 September 1901, p. 16).

It is clear that tee boxes and greens – and not the routing of fairways – were the main focus of the redesign by Davis and Ballou.

That is, they seem to have used Bendelow's fairway routings except for the 8th hole. Apparently first laid out on an east-to-west axis, the fairway was changed to a south-to-north axis.

Note, however, that wherever a hole was lengthened dramatically, or widened (the latter was the case on the 1st and 7th holes), a substantial portion of new fairway would also have had to have been constructed.

And so, we can understand why the Golf Committee hesitated to open

the course for play in May of 1900: because of changes to the length of many holes, substantial portions of the golf course – tee boxes, greens, and fairways, alike – were in a delicate state because they had been only “recently seeded and sodded.”

New Greens

The sodding at Apawamis is likely to have involved the greens rather than the tee boxes or fairways.

When the natural turf of a golf club's property was not adequate to use as fairways, the land tended to be plowed up and then seeded.



Figure 24 Exhibition match between local pro David Lambie Black (on the tee box) and Walter Hagen (standing hatless to Black's right). Point Grey Golf and Country Club, British Columbia, Canada, 1929. Photograph courtesy of BC Sports Hall of Fame.

When the property's natural turf was not adequate for use as a teeing ground, tee boxes were often made of rectangular wooden frames, which were elevated a foot or two above the surrounding ground and then filled with packed sand or clay (see the photograph to the left).

When the natural turf of the golf course was not adequate for development as putting greens, however, the architect and course builder would often have recourse to sodding.

In the late 1890s and early 1900s, mind you, golf course architects generally preferred to work not only with turf that was native to the property but also with turf that was native to each green site. Bringing sod from somewhere else was a last resort.

In 1897, for instance, the Wright & Ditson *Guide to American Golf* recommended developing a putting green by flattening a turfed area of the golf property and then cultivating a finer grass upon it: "Wetting and pounding under heavy boards will work wonders, and grass treated in this way takes far less time to become playable than when the whole is re-sodded. Nevertheless, if the quality of the grass is poor and full of weeds and stones, it is better to re-sod than to attempt

any doubtful experiment” (*Guide to American Golf* [2nd ed.; Boston: Wright & Ditson Publishing, 1897], n.p.). In the same year, USGA amateur Champion Henry James Whigham advised: “If possible, [putting greens] should be made out of the original sod In many cases, however, it is necessary to relay them with fresh turf” (H.J. Whigham, *How to Play Golf* [New York: Herbert S. Stone & Co., 1897], p. 209). Similarly, in 1901, Walter J. Travis observed: “Where the natural conditions are favorable, it is advisable to build up a green from old turf. But if course grass exists to any extent, then it is better in the long-run to resort to sodding” (Walter J. Travis, “Practical Golf: XI – Putting Greens,” *Golf*, vol 4 no 4 [April 1901], p. 258)

How many greens might Davis have been responsible for rebuilding and subsequently seeding or sodding?

Ballou mentions the relocation of at least eight greens during the 1899-1901 redesign. Did Ballou and Davis incorporate any of the original Bendelow greens into the course that they opened in the spring of 1900, or did they rebuild all eighteen greens?

We recall that six of Bendelow’s original greens had been built by the beginning of May 1899. When the redesigned course opened at the end of May 1900, if there were a difference of almost a year between the age of the oldest Bendelow greens and the youngest Davis greens, then when *Golf* editor Sutphen played the course sometime before October of 1900, there would have been a noticeable difference between the playing conditions on greens sodded or seeded as many as seventeen months before his visit, on the one hand, and the playing conditions on greens seeded or sodded as few as six months before his visit, on the other hand.

Yet in his October 1900 review of the Apawamis course, Sutphen notes no difference in the age of the greens. In fact, he speaks of them as though they were all of the same vintage and were all in the same condition: “The ... putting greens are surprisingly good for so young a course.... When he finally arrives at the green, [the golfer] can do his putting on an undulating green of generous size, whose smoothness and trueness are already in evidence and improving every day” (*Golf*, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 243).

Sutphen implies that the greens are all relatively new, and he clearly finds it surprising how quickly they are becoming smooth and true.

I suspect that in addition to the eight new greens done by Davis, the other ten greens had been redone by him.

Note also that in February of 1901, Ballou told the Metropolitan Golf Association that he was afraid that if Apawamis hosted the MGA championship tournament in the spring of 1901, then the club's "practically new" greens might be damaged:

We ... are in an awkward situation, due chiefly to the fact that our putting greens are practically new and cannot possibly be put to championship standard.

Furthermore, considering the early date of the tournament, the trampling to which they would be subjected would probably ruin them for the rest of the season and all our efforts for their preservation be thrown away.

(Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 3 February 1901, p. 22)

Ballou speaks as though the greens are all the same age and all relatively new.

It is unlikely that as many as six of these greens had been laid out by Bendelow at the beginning of May 1899: Ballou would not have referred to such greens – which would have been two years old in May of 1901 – as "practically new."

Note, by the way, that despite his desire to protect the still delicate greens, Ballou did not decline to host the 1901 MGA Championship:

We ... are ambitious to have the championship, but not until we feel we can run matters without the possibility of a flaw.

But if the executive committee honors us with its choice, why, of course, we shall leave no stone unturned to make the tournament a success.

(Democrat and Chronicle [Rochester], 3 February 1901, p. 22).

Ballou's reservations notwithstanding, the Club changed its mind within a few weeks:

In metropolitan circles, the most interesting feature of the week was the informal statement that the Apawamis Golf Club of Rye had reconsidered its former refusal to hold the Metropolitan championship this year.

The Executive Committee of the Metropolitan [Golf] Association will meet early in March and Apawamis will be chosen for the event

(New York Times, 24 February 1901, p. 8)

The MGA championship tournament was scheduled for the last week of May 1901. The putting greens would be over a year old by then.

Undulating Greens

Sutphen described the Apawamis greens as generally “undulating”: “When he finally arrives at the green, [the golfer] can do his putting on an undulating green of generous size” (*Golf*, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 243).

Were the greens built where Davis had found natural undulations on the land, or had he artificially designed the undulations?



Figure 25 George Strath (1843-1919).

This was a question regularly raised in the new world of American golf course design and construction in the 1890s and early 1900s, for the British golf professionals laying out golf courses in the United States in those days had been trained to find green sites formed by nature. For instance, when recently arrived Scottish golf professional George Strath (an older brother of Davie Strath) laid out a course for the Dyker Meadow Golf Club in 1895, he pointedly celebrated the superiority of his green locations to those of other nearby New York golf courses on which greens had been artificially

improved by levelling work:

Mr. Strath spoke in the highest terms of the natural location of the grounds and of their excellent facilities for the game.

“Why,” he said, “the putting greens are the only natural ones in the area.”

“In all the other places, it has been necessary to level off the green – and that is not living up to the strict rules of this field sport.”

(Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 15 December 1895, p. 21)

According to Strath’s conception of golf as a field sport, one played the ball as one found it, one played the course as one found it, and one laid out the course on the land as one found it.

From this point of view, levelling green sites was cheating.

In 1896, Willie Park, Jnr, who had spent four and a half months in the United States during the previous year laying out golf courses (among other things), published *The Game of Golf* (the first guide to golf written by a golf professional) and he, too, argued that a natural green site was preferable to an artificial one:



Figure 26 Willie Park, Jr
(1864-1925), 1895.

If natural putting-greens cannot be made on the course as it stands, then they must be dug up and laid with suitable turf; but this should only be done as a last resource.

It is a very bad piece of ground that will not improve sufficiently to make a fairly good putting-green, under proper care, and with due cutting and rolling and top-dressing.

A strong attempt should always be made to bring the natural turf into condition before resorting to the lifting and turfing of a putting green.

(Willie Park, Jr., *The Game of Golf* [New York: Longman, Green, and Co., 1896], p. 202)

When the new 18-hole layout for the St. Andrew's Golf Club in Yonkers opened in 1897, Sutphen drew attention to the fact that the putting greens were decidedly artificial:

Quite a few of the greens have been artificially levelled and terraced up.

The old Scottish-bred player may be inclined to criticize this concession to New World ideas, but in nearly every case this method of construction was made imperative on account of the lay of the land.

(Harper's Weekly, vol 41 no 2131 [October 1897], p. 1066)

In 1900, just two months before his review of the Apawamis course, Sutphen also drew attention to greens at Shinnecock Hills that had been levelled, rather than laid out on the land as it was found: "The greens are not remarkable for their size, and some of the older ones show traces of artificial levelling. But they are all smooth and true" (*Golf*, vol 7 no 2 [August 1900], p. 111).

In these comments, it is not clear whether, like Strath and Park, Sutphen disapproved of artificially levelling a green or merely regretted that signs of such levelling remained visible, but the information he provides about the oldest Shinnecock greens allows us to infer that Davis was not against artificially levelling greens. Having been artificially levelled, the oldest greens at Shinnecock were distinct from those subsequently developed by Dunn: "The putting greens are perfectly flat on the original twelve holes, but on the new holes, while smooth, the greens have not been artificially levelled" (*New York Sun*, 14 July 1896, p. 5). The oldest of the "flat" and "artificially levelled" greens were presumably the ones laid out by Davis in the summer of 1891.

Davis's 1894 greens at Newport may have been just as flat and level as his Shinnecock greens. Observe the putting surface in the 1894 photograph below, which shows Willie Davis, three caddies, and members of the Havemeyer family on what seems to have been a flat and level 3rd green at the Newport Golf Club.



Figure 27 Willie Davis (extreme right), three caddies (extreme left), and five members of the Havemeyer family (paterfamilias Theodore Havemeyer third from right). *The Illustrated American*, 25 August 1894, p. 22.

On the 1895 extended version of the 1894 Newport course seen above, the greens were compared to billiard tables: “The putting-greens are large and as true as a billiard-table, and are above criticism, with the exception that they are a little too keen, which is rather a handicap to a player who is used to the average putting-greens in America” (*Golf* [London], vol 11 no 278 [8 November 1895], p. 182).

For greens to be “as true as a billiard table” was a universal desideratum; whether greens should be as flat and level as a billiard table was another question.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, many American golfers regarded the flat and level billiard-table green as the *sine qua non* of a proper golf course. As the *New York Times* observed in 1896:

If there is one place on the golf course which needs to be as level as a billiard table, it is the putting green. Some of our golf clubs have spent hundreds of dollars in perfecting the greens alone.

An almost imperceptible rise of the ground will be detected at once by the golfers. Even a blade of grass unnecessarily high is an aggravation, and such a thing as a dry leaf is picked up at once and thrown out on the course.

(*New York Times*, 21 April 1896, p. 3)

Looking back in 1909 at this earlier attitude, Travis railed against greens “artificially levelled as flat as a floor,” calling the early American desire for them a “determined effort to get away as far as possible from the true, natural type of seaside links which have stood for generations as the

highest and best examples of golf course architecture” (*American Golfer*, vol no 5 [March 1909], p. 235).

Still waiting to be invented, according to Travis, was the idea of a green artificially “unlevelled” (so to speak) – that is, a green with artificial undulations:

The year 1906 marked a new era in golf course construction in the United States.

Up to that time, the natural contour of the ground was followed in the construction of putting greens, little or no attempt at embellishment being made in artificially introducing undulations.

In the fashioning of sites, Dame Nature had not been so kind to us as to the golfers of Great Britain, where, especially on seaside links, greater diversity of putting surfaces obtained.

To remedy this defect, I conceived and carried out the idea of reconstructing a number of greens at Garden City.

That was the first start.

(Walter J. Travis, “Twenty Years of Golf,” American Golfer [9 October 1920], p. 4)

Five years before he claims that he inaugurated this architectural revolution, Travis was recommending a more modest ambition for putting greens in his 1901 book *Practical Golf*: “aim to give diversity to the greens in respect to the character of the surface, avoiding as far as possible dead levels. Rather, let the contour be a gently undulating nature here and there” (p. 161).

Five years before this, Willie Park, Jnr, had said the same thing: “while the ground should be comparatively level, it is not desirable that it should be perfectly flat like a billiard-table but should be of a slightly undulating character” (*The Game of Golf*, p. 202).

Park and Travis agree: find a slightly and gently undulating natural green site.

Early in 1898, Willie Dunn had done so at Elmira, New York, as the editor of *The Golfer* observed approvingly: “The putting greens have been carefully constructed to conform to the natural undulations of the ground and are smooth, though not level like a billiard table. Each green is slightly different from every other, so that putting requires judgement and skill” (*The Golfer*, vol 6 no 5 [March 1898], p. 195).

And, *pace* Travis, who claimed that before 1906 there had “little or no attempt at embellishment being made in artificially introducing undulations,” in a 1900 essay in *Golf* (New York) called

“Making and Repairing Putting Greens,” James MacDonald suggested that if one cannot find a naturally undulating site, undulations should be artificially introduced:

No good player cares much for a green of the billiard table type.

An irregularly undulating surface is the object to be aimed at, and this is not so easily accomplished as at first sight appears....

The mounds and hollows should rise and fall gently – sudden dips or pinnacles ought to be avoided.

Their height or depth must be proportionate to the size of the green, but the work when completed should be as far as possible of such a character that the general harmony of the course is not disturbed.

(Golf [New York], vol 6 no 2 [February 1900], p. 87).

One can see that at the turn of the century, there was a tension between those who wanted flat greens and those who wanted gently undulating greens – most of the latter preferring to find a naturally undulating site for green construction, but some being willing to introduce artificial undulations so long as they were gentle and proportionate to the size of the putting surface.

So, what was the story at Apawamis?

Had Davis found on the club’s property undulations galore, all provided by nature wherever he was inclined to build a green?

Or was Davis ahead of the architectural curve, disavowing his initial predilection (shown at Shinnecock Hills) for flat and artificially levelled greens in favour of relatively avant-garde green “embellishment” by “artificially introducing undulations”?

Four Undulating Greens

As evident in the May 1891 photograph below of the 18th green at Apawamis, signs of the relatively recent clearing work required to make this green were still evident at the beginning of the MGA tournament late in May that year.



Figure 28 Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 17 May 1901, p. 13.

Residue from construction of this green can be seen along the right side of the photograph above, where earth, tree limbs, and other debris cleared from the green site seem to have been pushed into a ridge at the back the green.



Figure 29 Unidentified Royal Ottawa Golf Club green circa 1903. William James Topley photograph, undated. Library and Archives Canada, Box no. 00596A.

Square or rectangular greens like the 18th green at Apawamis were a normal feature of North American golf course designs in the 1890s and early 1900s.

Seen to the left, for instance, is one of Tom Bendelow's square greens at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club, where he laid out an eighteen-hole championship course in the spring of 1903 – precisely four years after his work at Apawamis.



Figure 30 In this enlarged detail from a 1900 photograph, I have used white lines to parallel three sides of what seems to have been a square 3rd green at Apawamis. *Golf (New York)*, vol 7 no 4 (October 1900), p. 244.

It is not clear how many of the Apawamis greens were square or rectangular.

In the fall of 1900, however, it seems that the 3rd green (seen in the photograph to the left) was square.

Similarly, at the time of the U.S. amateur championship held at Apawamis in September of 1911, the 8th green was still square or rectangular, as can be seen in the photograph below.



Figure 31 Photograph of play on the Apawamis 8th green during play in the U.S. Amateur Championship, September 1911. Michael McCormick, "The Evolution of a Golf Course," *Apawamis Now* (Winter 2021-2022).

But the square and rectangular greens at Apawamis were not as flat and level as a billiard-table.

Despite its square shape, for instance, the 3rd green seems to have been laid out in a bowl-shaped section of the property. And the 8th green clearly slopes significantly downward from the left side of the above photograph to the right side, and one can see especially on the right side of the green several undulations.

And although the photograph of the 18th green seen at the beginning of this chapter seems to show a relatively flat and level putting surface, we can see in the photograph below that the green had at least two distinct levels or tiers.



Figure 32 Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 23 May 1901, p. 2.

This green seems to rise significantly where the person wearing the white dress stands along the far side of it, and the green continues to rise more gently behind her. The 18th green thus seems to resemble the 8th green seen above.

Depending on where the flag was placed on the 18th green, such an elevation change will have produced a significant effect on many a putt.

Given the signs of recent construction work required to clear the area where this green was built, one presumes that this green site was not simply a “found” green: that is, a natural area found in an open meadow, with its elevation change existing already. Rather, this elevation change seems to have been intentionally constructed to produce an effect on both the rolling of a putted golf ball and the landing of an approach shot.

The photograph below (dating from 1900) shows the 1st green in the foreground and the 3rd green in the background. Like the 3rd green, the 1st green seems to have been built in an even more dramatically bowl-shaped part of the property than the 3rd green.



Figure 33 The undulating 1st green (foreground) and 3rd green (middle ground) of the Apawamis Golf Club. Golf, vol 7 no 4 (October 1900), p.244.

Golfers on greens as flat and level as a billiard table could simply aim at the flag and fire a ball straight at it, but there would have been few straight putts on the four undulating greens pictured above.

Davis Does Without Cop Bunkers

In his October 1900 review of the Apawamis course, Sutphen celebrated another particularly *avant-garde* aspect of the new course's architecture:

It must be acknowledged that Apawamis possesses some claim to distinction in the world of golf.

And certainly no time nor trouble nor expense has been spared to make that claim good....

A distinguishing characteristic of Apawamis is the non-existence of the conventional cop-bunker....

(Golf, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 242).

A year later, an anonymous writer of a *New York Tribune* article about the Apawamis course made the same observation: "Nature has dealt out her blessings lavishly in this part of Westchester, and, with the graceful stream that runs picturesquely across a part of the grounds, no recourse has been made to cop-bunkers – a virtue not often seen on the best Metropolitan links" (*New York Tribune*, 15 September 1901, p. 16).

I suspect that the anonymous 1901 *Tribune* writer was Sutphen himself, for many of the latter's sentences and phrases from his October 1900 *Golf* article reappear almost verbatim in the newspaper article.

For instance, we read in the 1900 *Golf* review that "Pot and trap bunkers are sparingly employed as a protection for the greens, and for the rest there are long grass and the omnipresent stone-walled watercourse," and we read pretty much the same thing in the 1901 *Tribune* article: "Ditch- and trap-bunkers have been sparingly employed, and for the rest, there are long grass and the ever present streams" (*Golf*, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 242; (*New York Tribune*, 15 September 1901, p. 16).

Either Sutphen regarded his review as so nice he published it twice, or someone else plagiarized it.

Whatever the case may be, Sutphen (and perhaps a second writer) remarks on the absence of cop-bunkers at Apawamis because they were otherwise virtually ubiquitous on American golf courses up to 1900. As an American newspaper observed in 1900, whereas "at the seashore the

sand bunker is the natural and traditional hazard,” “its ordinary substitute on an inland course is the cop bunker” (*Sunday Morning Star* [Wilmington, Delaware], 6 March 1898, p. 4).

Cop-bunkers were the mainstay of the penal style of architecture popularized in England by Tom Dunn and then popularized in America by his younger brother and apprentice Willie. Davis himself built cop bunkers on several of his golf holes at Newport in 1895.

Cop- bunkers (also called earth-walls or turf dykes, or sometimes just ditches or trenches) were a distinctive type of cross bunker that Tom and Willie Dunn (as well Tom’s American-based sons John Duncan Dunn and Seymour Dunn, and also Tom and Willie’s American-based nephews Samuel and William Tucker) built on land that lacked natural hazards.



Figure 34 On what was called “the front land” of The Country Club at Brookline (the clubhouse is seen in the background of the underexposed right margin of the photograph above), a cop-bunker was under construction in 1894. (Notice the stones awaiting removal after their recent excavation from the sandpit.) Harper’s Weekly, vol 38 no 1977 (10 November 1894), p. 1077.

Seen to the left is an example of a cop-bunker under construction at The Country Club at Brookline.

This photograph from November of 1894 shows that a trench about a foot deep and several feet wide had recently been dug across the fairway, the soil from it being heaped up about three feet high on the green side of the trench.

Golfers who could not lift the ball into the air to get it over hazards such as these were to be trapped by the

hazard, which golfers with a ball tucked tight to the wall could escape only by means of a shot played sideways or backwards. The architect’s intention was to make sure that no one reached the green by means of shots topped or skulled along the ground.

Examples of cop-bunkers designed by Willie Dunn himself in 1895 are seen in the photograph below of the Westbrook Golf Club in Islip, Long Island, New York.



Figure 35 Two of the cop-bunkers on Willie Dunn's 1895 layout for the Westbrook Golf Club, Islip, Long Island, New York.

The cop bunkers in the photographs above are tame by comparison with the famous “Bastion Bunker” at Shinnecock Hills which appears in the 1894 photograph shown below.



Figure 36 “Bastion Bunker.” *The Illustrated American*, vol 16 no 277 (25 August 1894), p. 229.

The hole that hosted “Bastion Bunker” may have been laid out by Davis in 1891, but Davis’s own map of the course shows no such cop bunker. At that time, Davis’s main artificial bunkers were hedges, ditches, and what he called “sand ridges” – earth raised in a ridge on each side of a straight ditch (*New York Herald*, August 1891). “Bastion Bunker” was presumably designed by Willie Dunn after he became the keeper of the golf course in May of 1893.

The artificiality of the cop bunker invented by Tom Dunn in 1890 was obvious from the beginning. But more than a decade passed before the majority of golfers began to see cop bunkers as ugly, and it took golf course architects several more years to work out alternative methods of bunkering an inland golf course.

Davis Limits Other Kinds of Cross Bunkers

A cop bunker was a special type of the fairway-wide cross bunkers used in penal architecture, and Davis not only did without cop bunkers; he also limited – to the point of almost eliminating – most other forms of cross bunkers.

Note that in the late 1890s and early 1900s, the word “bunker” was used in two ways by golfers and golf course designers. It had both a strict and a less strict meaning. Here is its 1895 definition 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). The word “bunker” referred to a “sand pit” only in the strict sense; the terms “bunker” and “hazard” were used interchangeably in the less strict sense, as we can see from the definition of “hazard”:

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*)

And so, the word “cross bunker” often was used to refer to any hazard that crossed the width of a fairway: a cop bunker, earth dyke, sandpit, ditch, creek, gully, ravine, etc.

There was a sandpit cross bunker on the 3rd hole precisely where penal architecture required one to catch a topped drive: “No 3, the Dipper, lies parallel with the second [hole] A bunker traps a topped ball from the tee” (*Weekly Register*, 24 March 1901, p. 8). And there seem to have been two such bunkers on the 18th hole, one for the drive and one for the approach: “The last hole, 323 yards, should be made in four. A bunker eighty yards from the tee must be driven A bunker guards the green, which one should reach in two to run down in the bogey of four” (*Weekly Register*, 24 March 1901, p. 8). Between 1908 and 1911, many sand bunkers of various sorts would be added to the course, but in 1908 a newspaper reported that regarding “cross bunkers ... there are only a few” (*Brooklyn Eagle [New York]*, 3 July 1909, p. 23).

In fact, although to do so was heresy from the point of view of penal golf course architectural theory, Davis did without cross bunkers altogether on some holes at Apawamis. Take, for instance, the 11th hole: “The view from the tee is a fine one, and particularly so to the golfer, for it is just a fine free drive off into space, without any dreadful chance of coming to irremediable

grief” (p. 246). The potential for “irremediable grief” that was missing on this hole, of course, was that represented by the usual cross-bunker.

In his 1897 review of the new 18-hole course of the St. Andrew’s Golf Club, Sutphen was disappointed to find few holes that presented a cross bunker to be carried by the second shot and many holes that had no cross bunker in front of the green to force a lifted approach, rather than the easier run-up:

A topped or fozzled drive, in almost every instance, is severely punished, but the player who gets his ball squarely away, with a carry of say one hundred and sixty yards, is pretty sure to find himself with a good lie and on a comparatively smooth road to the desired haven of the green.

Traps and “pot” and “cop” bunkers are conspicuous by their absence, but the Green Committee will probably be obliged to put in some artificial hazards to punish a fozzled second shot and to encourage the player whose strong point is pitching on to the green with the iron.

As it stands, the course is sound golf, but hardly difficult enough for first-class all-around play.

(Harper’s Weekly, vol 41 no 2131 [October 1897], p. 1066)

Three years later, with his challenging Apawamis redesign, Davis won Sutphen over to the idea that golf holes without the usual cross bunkers could nonetheless stimulate “first-class all-around play.”

Mind you, regarding the 11th hole, one cannot be certain whether Bendelow or Davis was the one responsible for the cross-bunker-free drive.

All that we know of the development of this hole is the way its yardage changed. Bendelow had laid out a 391-yard 11th hole in May of 1899; by the end of the year, the 11th hole was 347 yards; by the spring of 1900, Davis’s 11th hole – the one that was reviewed by Sutphen – was virtually the same length: 350 yards.

Similarly, whether or not Bendelow built any cop bunkers on the original Apawamis layout in the spring of 1899 is not clear.

Although he was writing about the course after it had been redesigned by Davis, Sutphen implied that the natural features of the land would have made cop-bunkers (and perhaps cross artificial bunkers in general) unnecessary for any architect: “a distinguishing characteristic of Apawamis is the non-existence of the conventional cop-bunker. Certainly it is not needed in this

country of kopjes [mounds or hillocks] and sluits [a gully or dry ditch], where the punishment is made to fit the crime with unfailing regularity” (p. 242).

The “conventional cop-bunker” may have been absent from Apawamis, but that did not mean that there were no cop-bunkers: it was observed in the spring of 1901 that on the 15th hole, “a natural cop bunker guards the green” (*Weekly Register*, 24 March 1901, p. 8). If this land formation was other than a natural ridge of earth, I have no idea what Sutphen means. And we have noted fairway-wide sandpit cross bunkers on the 3rd and 18th holes. Crossing perpendicularly across several fairways at “scientifically” appropriate distances were roads, which were treated as hazards (there was no relief from them and the club could not be grounded in them). And there was a stone wall to be crossed on the 8th hole.

Sutphen played the Apawamis course at least once (and perhaps several times) between 1899 and the fall of 1900 (when he wrote his review of the course), as we know from the fact that he was able to point out changes made by Davis as he improved and lengthened it. Sutphen notes, for instance, that at some point after a previous visit he had made, play had been made fairer on the 7th hole:

No. 7 (The Gorge, 391 yards).

This hole is aptly named, for the way for the second shot lies through a narrow pass bordered by woods and rocky ground not over thirty yards wide

There is every chance for the losing of balls and general demoralization in consequence.

The gorge proper has been widened of late, giving a little more chance for error.

(Golf, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], pp. 244-45)

With regard to changes in Bendelow’s cross bunkering, more interesting is Sutphen’s observation about how play had been made fairer on the 1st hole: on “No. 1, the walled ditch that used to unfairly trap a well-hit ball has been covered over” (*Golf*, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 243).

This “walled ditch” served on other holes as Davis’s main cross bunker. The 18th fairway had a “walled ditch” to be carried on the second shot: this seems to have served the role of a conventional Dunn-style cross-bunker. There was also a “walled ditch” behind the 8th green: Sutphen characterized it as a punishment for a too-long approach shot, but it probably also served as a catch-all device to keep balls from running out of bounds just beyond it.



Figure 37 A view of the 12th hole at Apawamis. *Golf (New York)*, (October 1900), p.

And there was a “walled ditch” on the 12th hole that was more historically interesting than any other on the course.

Rather than being presented as the perpendicular cross-bunker that penal architecture required at a prescribed distance from the

tee, “the walled ditch ... hazard confronting us ... runs diagonally across the course” (p. 246).

Such an arrangement of this hazard allowed golfers to approach it strategically. According to Sutphen, “In the straight line, it requires a carry of about 110 yards to find safety and a good lie” (Sutphen p. 246). Another reviewer in the spring of 1901 saw the drive differently: “The line of play is diagonally across the water ditch, and a carry of 130 yards from the tee is necessary” (*Weekly Register*, 24 March 1901, p. 8). At a time when C.B. Macdonald won the long drive competition at the 1895 international golf tournament at Niagara Falls with a drive of 175 yards that included considerable run-out, golfers were required to make a strategic decision here as to where they would try to cross this diagonal hazard. Short-driving golfers could aim over a nearer part of the ditch, although they would thereby be aiming slightly away from the straight line to the hole and find themselves, like the golfer in the photograph above, with a longer approach shot to the green than a golfer who took the straight line to the hole or risked playing even further right, which would require a longer carry but would yield a shorter approach.

For the golfer who could appreciate it, here was an example of the style of architecture to come later in the twentieth century: strategic design.

And the person who was among the first, and probably the most important, of the golfers to appreciate the strategic dimensions of such a form of cross bunkering was Walter J. Travis – a

frequent player of the Apawamis course both in its original Bendelow form in the fall of 1899 and afterwards in its redesigned Davis form in 1900 and 1901.

Walter J. Travis and Strategic Design



Figure 38 Walter J. Travis, circa 1920.

In reaction to penal design philosophy, developing amongst North American and European golf course architects in the early twentieth century was what would come to be called “strategic” design philosophy.

The latter not only replaced the Dunn family’s design philosophy; it completely rejected it.

But this reaction against penal design began to emerge long before the ideas associated with strategic design coalesced as theory and practice in the 1920s.

It began, perhaps, with disavowal of the idea that a golf course should be designed for scratch players only and that the high handicappers were of no account in golf – and should be penalized for virtually every mistake they made.

Their topped and “foozled” drives should always end up in a hazard, and so should their topped and “foozled” approach shots. A golfer who played two perfect shots onto a green should not suffer the indignity of finding an opponent in the same position after two topped shots. The “duffer” had to be stopped by hazards.

Walter J. Travis, perhaps the earliest American golf course architect to advocate for a strategic design philosophy, looked back in 1920 to the work of Dunn in the 1890s as the spur to his own reaction against penal design’s bias against high handicappers.

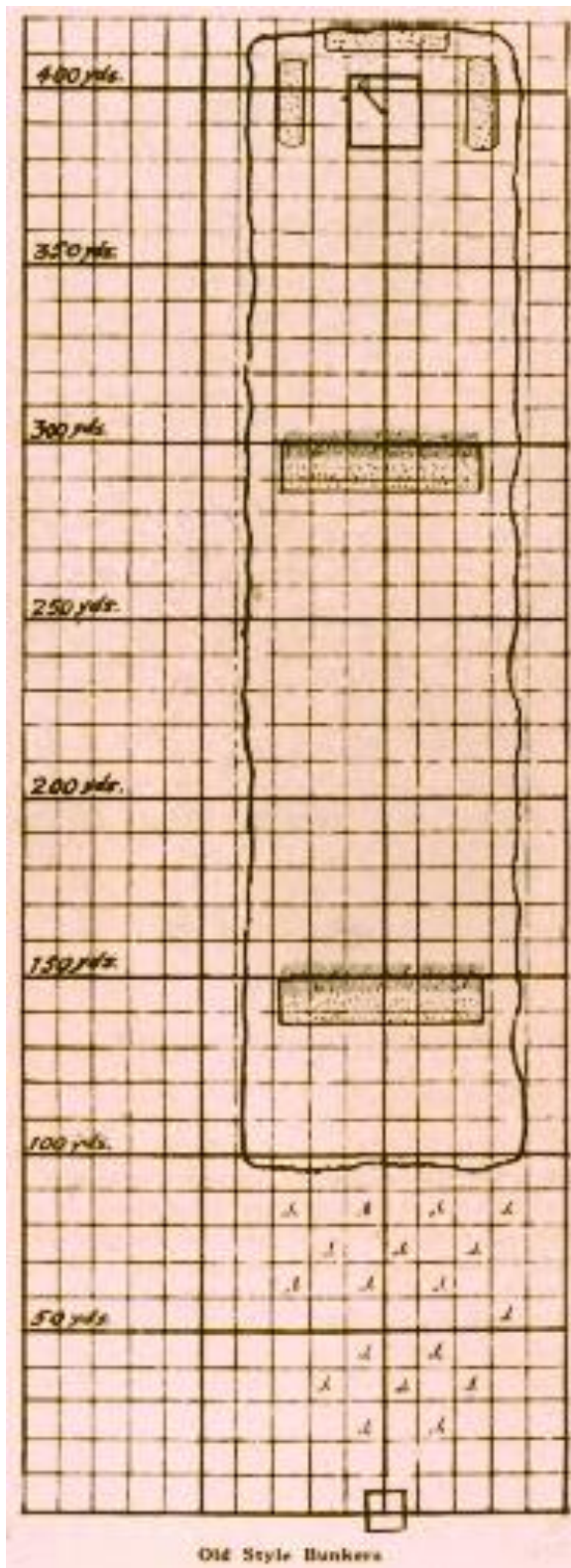


Figure 39 American Golfer, vol 23 no 33 (9 October 1920), p. 4.

Seen to the left is Travis's 1920 illustration of Willie Dunn's usual 1890s bunkering practice on a typical 400-yard par-4 hole (this was the system used by all members of the Dunn family at that time):

Whereas the Willie Dunn system called for compulsory carries for both tee and second shots, I was an advocate of optional carries....

That is to say, I believe in the principle of giving the player a choice of carrying a bunker or playing safe.

(Twenty Years of Golf, An Autobiography – Continued: The Advent of a New Era in Golf Construction," American Golfer, vol 23 no 33 [9 October 1920], p. 4)

Offering choices to golfers about how to play a golf hole became the key to twentieth-century strategic design.

Since weaker golfers penalized themselves by their own poor strokes, there was no need to penalize them further by setting up barriers that were generally irrelevant to the play of good players. Weaker golfers who played within their abilities were to be allowed to find a route to the green devoid of hazards – that is, so long as they played their shots accurately.

According to the principles of strategic design, the golfer can choose to risk the loss of a stroke – a stroke lost not necessarily by failing at a long carry over a hazard (a hazard that would be difficult for a weaker golfer to escape once in it),

but rather by choosing to avoid such a hazard by taking a route that might require an extra shot to complete the hole. For instance, on the long par-4 hole illustrated above, a strategic architect would use only the left third of the first bunker and the right third of the second bunker and thereby allow a route to the green avoiding a carry over the bunkers by means of shots placed right and left of the bunkers, but such a route might take three strokes to reach the green, rather than two.

Travis himself explained this idea in 1908:

My idea of bunkering a course would be to make it easy for the short player ... easy with regard to limitations of distance, but usually at the expense or sacrifice of a stroke on the majority of the holes.

Leave him a fairly open avenue provided his shots keep the line mapped out for him, but the route so laid out for him would not necessarily be in a direct line to the hole.

The comparative freedom from trouble would have to be paid for by the negotiation of accurately placed shots along a narrow line of greater aggregate length than that offered the good player.

Such alternative line should not permit a short player to reach a green in the same number of strokes as the long player, except by masterful play

(Walter J. Travis, "The Constituents of a Good Golf Course," American Golfer, vol 1 no 7 [May 1909], p. 377)

One presumes that while playing golf at Apawamis between the fall of 1899 and spring of 1901, Travis would have noticed that the architectural strategy implicit in Davis's redesign of the 2nd hole effectively expressed the idea described above.

We know that sometime after April of 1900, the green of the original Bendelow 2nd hole was abandoned and rebuilt on top of the hill where it presently resides. It had taken Davis and Ballou a while to make this decision: as late as April of 1900, they were still considering the possibility of shortening the 2nd hole to 300 yards. In the end, however, they decided instead to lengthen it, and so they moved the green, thereby producing a hole of 355 yards.

Architecturally, the new design now required the golfer to make a strategic choice: be satisfied with a safe route to the green generally requiring three shots; or try to reach the green in two shots by taking a route that involved risk.

The diagram of this hole shown below illustrates the situation (note that this diagram dates from 1911 – nine years after Davis's death – but the hole had remained essentially unchanged from 1901 to 1911).

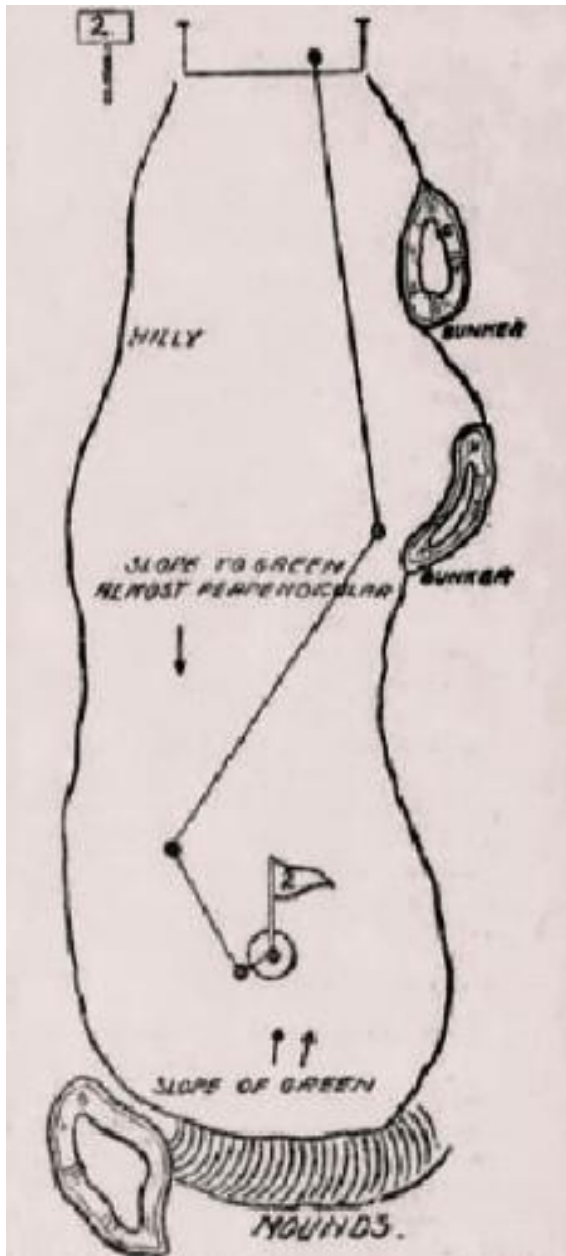


Figure 40 Diagram of Apawamis 2nd hole 1911. Brooklyn Eagle [New York], 29 July 1911, p. 17.

As can be seen in the diagram to the left, Davis placed two bunkers along the right side of the fairway.

The right side of the hole was “HILLY” with rough grass on it.

In 1911, the *Brooklyn Eagle* golf writer who produced the diagram seen to the left recommended the drive be kept left of the hilly ground along the right side of the fairway, but such a line off the tee brought the second bunker into play.

Wherever the drive landed, the approach to the green was difficult. As indicated on the diagram, the “SLOPE TO [the] GREEN [was] ALMOST PERPENDICULAR.”

A description of this hole in the spring of 1901 reveals dangers confronting the drive: “Hanging lies are not uncommon [on the right], and sand traps are so arranged as to punish careless play [to the left]. The green is well guarded by rough ground, and five is bogey and good golfing” (*Weekly Register*, 24 March 1901, p. 8).

Sutphen’s review of “No. 2 (Fairview, 355 yards)” makes clear the strategic decision that Davis required golfers to make:

Another good long hole, with the green perched high up on the opposing hill....

The distance is but a trifle over the par figures for two full shots, but in practice it is virtually impossible to reach the hole in less than 3, unless we play far over to the right and happen to secure a good lie.

(Sutphen, pp. 243-44)



Figure 41 A golfer plays the Apawamis 2nd hole in 1900. The putting green is on the top of the hill, where two or three golfers seem to be putting on it. The golfer in the foreground seems to be standing in the rough on the left side of the hole, perhaps just beyond the first bunker, and perhaps 20 or 30 yards short of the second bunker, which might be detectable in the distance as the depression appearing between his shoulders and the top of his cap. (Golf [New York], vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 245.

Travis first played the Apawamis golf course in the fall of 1899, thereby experiencing the Bendelow layout, and he played the course many times afterward, witnessing first-hand the differences made by the redesign work of Davis.

I suspect that Travis's reflection on the differences between several of the Bendelow holes of 1899 and Davis's redesigned versions of these holes in 1901 led him to appreciate the interesting choices Davis offered golfers and helped Travis to identify and articulate certain principles of strategic golf course design that he began to articulate in *Practical Criticism*.

Travis at Apawamis



Figure 42 Walter J. Travis prepares to play on an unidentified hole at Apawamis Golf Club. *Golf*, vol 10 no 5 (May 1902), p. 352.

In May of 1901, Travis celebrated the Apawamis design as one of the ten best in the United States:

[Although some North American courses are laid out on poorly chosen land,] more are spoiled through being improperly laid out in respect to the distances of the holes or the disposition of the hazards....

Probably the best courses in the country are Garden City, Wheaton, Atlantic City, Morris County, Newport, Nassau, Apawamis, Midlothian, and Myopia

All of the courses lend themselves favorably to be regarded as being pre-eminent by reason of the contour of the ground, the distances of the holes, and the matter of hazards, natural and artificial.

(Golf, vol 8 no 5 [May 1901], p. 354)

Willie Davis was a central figure in the design of three of the nine courses

Travis names above: he had designed and redesigned Newport, and he had

redesigned Morris County and Apawamis.

As mentioned above, Travis played the Apawamis course frequently between the opening of the Bendelow layout in the fall of 1899 and the playing of the MGA Championship on the Davis redesign in May of 1901. He first came to Apawamis in November of 1899 when he played as a member of the Garden City Golf Club in a 36-hole match against the Apawamis Golf Club: best player was pitted against best player, with Travis facing Maturin Ballou on the 6,040-yard Bendelow version of the course.

As a golfer, Ballou was not in the same class as Travis: in an eighteen-hole tournament match earlier the same year, "Travis only permitted the Apawamis man to half three holes, which gave the match to Travis (who negotiated the first nine holes in thirty-eight) by eight up and

seven to play” (*Times Union* [New York], 27 May 1899, p. 13). Travis won the November match by 12 holes (note that in inter-club team match play competitions in those days, even when a player was up on an opponent by more holes than the number of holes remaining, they played all 36 holes), and in doing so, Travis set a course record during the morning round, and then improved on that record by two strokes in the afternoon round.

We know that by this point, Ballou was planning to redesign the Apawamis course. And so, one wonders if Ballou discussed the layout with Travis while they were playing, or perhaps invited Travis to discuss the layout with him after the match. Since Ballou and Davis were planning to get to work within weeks on a new drainage system and a lengthening of the course, this would have been a perfect opportunity to get input not just from one of the top players in the MGA area, but also from an increasingly important architect.

Eighteen months later, in advance of the MGA Championship in May of 1901, Travis, the defending champion, prepared for this competition by playing the Apawamis course frequently. Early in May, the Club made the course freely available to competitors: “With the Metropolitan Championship scarce more than a week off, the courtesy of the championship course at Apawamis has been extended to the competitors, and Travis, Douglas, Hamilton, Macdonald, Robbins, Reid and others among whom the real struggle rests will make their golfing headquarters at Rye” (*New York Tribune*, 13 May 1901, p. 8). Travis, along with rivals Findlay S. Douglas and Charles H. Seeley, put up the best scores in practice rounds: “During the week [12 May to 19 May 1901], Douglas has made 82 twice, Travis an 82 and 83, and Seeley an 84 and 86. These are the best practice scores so far” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle* [New York], 19 May 1901, p. 11).

The thoroughness of the defending champion’s preparation was noted: “Travis has left no stone unturned and fully expects to meet Douglas when the final round is played, barring accidents. Both men have been practising on the Apawamis links during the past two weeks and have made some scores that would make the average golfer gasp for breath” (*Times Union* [New York], 20 May 1901, p. 8).

Travis was both a golfer and an architect, of course, and so, his leaving no stone unturned as a player working out his strategy for playing the course will also have stimulated his critical awareness as an architect of the principles implicit in the design.

Travis Plays and Thinks Apawamis

Almost twenty years before Travis wrote the passage above about giving golfers strategic choices when confronted by hazards, he had described in his 1901 book *Practical Golf* a theoretical course of eighteen holes, and on most of the holes, he imagined placing cross bunkers that golfers would be able to pass only by playing a shot over them in the air:

At the first hole (340 yards), we find confronting us a bunker 125 yards from the tee with hazards beyond on either side to catch a sliced or pulled ball.... Some 80 yards from the green is a sand ditch. A cleek shot will carry this

On the second hole (310 yards) some sixty yards from the green is another wide sand ditch

Third hole (490 yards). Some 250 yards from the tee a road has to be carried on the second shot

Sixth hole (360 yards). Another road crosses the line of play 280 yards from the tee

Eighth hole (510 yards). Fifty yards from the green is a wide sand ditch, which easily may be carried with an iron or cleek

Ninth hole (300 yards). A road 145 yards off, with broken ground intervening, abounding in poor lies, makes a good drive necessary....

Thirteenth hole (500 yards). One hundred and forty yards from the tee a bunker has to be carried....

Sixteenth hole (370 yards). A brook has to be crossed on the second shot....

Seventeenth hole (470 yards). Two hundred and forty yards from the tee is a wide sand ditch....

Eighteenth hole (315 yards). One hundred and ten yards away is a ravine about 30 yards across

Such is a brief sketch of a course that ought to bring out all the good golf there is in a man to do it in a decent score.

An endeavor has been made to arrange the distances and likewise the hazards so that it is practically impossible to get off a poor shot and make a recovery on the next, save by some phenomenal stroke.

(Walter J. Travis, Practical Golf [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1901], pp. 149-53)

On the ten holes described above, there was no secondary route to the green for the weaker golfer: a cross bunker had to be carried. And so, most of the holes on Travis's ideal 1901 course are perfectly in accord with the precepts of penal philosophy!

The chapters in the first edition of *Practical Golf* had originally been written as essays over the course of many months during 1900 and 1901, with these essays appearing as separate articles in Sutphen's journal *Golf*. The first edition of the book was published in May of 1901. But within a year, Travis published a second edition, which had a new chapter – called “Hazards” – and in this new chapter, he significantly revised his attitude toward cross bunkers.

He had indicated in the 1901 first edition of the book that (like Sutphen) he hated the particular form of cross bunker known as the cop-bunker:

No bunkers on a first-class course should be made with perpendicular and precipitous faces so as to make it almost impossible to get out in one stroke.

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.

(*Practical Golf* 157).

In the 1902 second edition, he expressed this loathing of cop-bunkers more fully:

On none of the sea-side links [of the British Isles] has Nature made it necessary to arrange the hazards of an artificial character on the same general lines as those in this country, and which, from Maine to Oregon, may be said to all bear the same family resemblance as to suggest a common origin.

This is due partly to ... an imperfect appreciation of the real needs of hazards and their refinements and artistic application in other than the regular stereotyped patterns which 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*, 2nd ed., pp. 184-85)

We know that Travis refers to the work of the Dunns. He points to them by a play on words in his reference to the existence of earthwork hazards coast to coast that so much “bear the same family resemblance as to suggest a common origin”: the common family origin, of course, was the Dunn family! He had used the same play on words in the 1901 first edition: “Endeavor to construct the hazards as to furnish some diversity, rather than have them all of the same family type” (157).

The Apawamis design presumably helped to confirm for Travis (as it had for Sutphen) that on a well-designed golf course, cop-bunkers were unnecessary as a test of golf. And it is probably

also the case that Travis could see that adding cop-bunkers to Apawamis would “disfigure” the beauty of the course: cop-bunkers at Apawamis would undoubtedly be an instance of what he called “hideous excrescences on the fair face of Nature.”

In the 1902 second edition of *Practical Golf*, he certainly demonstrated a great respect for the “fair face of Nature,” recommending alternatives to cop-bunkers that would prioritize aesthetic considerations: “vary these artificial creations at each hole”; “make them more picturesque and in keeping with their surroundings” (2nd ed., p. 185). These suggestions would become fundamental and enduring principles of modern design practice.

The Apawamis 11th hole, where “it is just a fine free drive off into space, without any dreadful chance of coming to irremediable grief,” also confirmed for Travis that a hole could be designed to play as a proper par 4 without any cross bunkers at all (Sutphen p. 246). As he argued in May of 1901,

It is quite possible to have a very good course so laid out in respect to distance as to be entirely free of hazards of any kind where each shot, perfectly played, would carry its own reward.

In a single-shot hole, the good player would be on the green in one, while on holes calling for two or three strokes, properly executed, to reach the green, ... no opportunity would be afforded a player flubbing a stroke to make it up on the next.

(Golf, vol 8 no 5 [May 1901], p. 355)

In 1902, we find Travis turning against fairway-wide cross-bunkers in general – the very cross bunkers he had placed on the majority of holes on his 1901 ideal golf course:

Too much importance is attached to the putting in of bunkers across the entire width of the course, too often at just that distance to catch a moderately played shot.

This is not exactly right, in that it puts too great a premium on the game of the long – but often erratic – player and unduly punishes the shorter but more accurate player....

Most hazards should be arranged so as to compel a man to drive both far and sure, and yet to give the weaker player a chance to avoid being bunkered provided he can play his ball wisely....

Take, for instance, the regulation bunker for the tee shot. This almost invariably stretches across the entire width of the [fair] green [i.e. fairway].

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

(Practical Golf, 2nd ed., pp. 187-89).

As we have seen, the 2nd hole at Apawamis had shown a way of leaving shorter-hitting and more timorous golfers a route to the hole, and so did the 12th hole.

Recall the diagonal design of the wall-ditch hazard on this hole. To clear it on “the straight line, it requires a carry of about 110 yards to find safety and a good lie” (p. 246). To clear it on the left side of the fairway was considerably shorter than 110 yards, but one landed further from the hole. Hitting over the wall to the right side of the fairway placed the ball closer to the hole, but the carry over the walled ditch on such a line was considerably longer than 130 yards. Travis must have noticed that this hazard was designed “so as to compel a man to drive far and sure,” yet also gave “the weaker player a chance to avoid being bunkered provided he can play his ball wisely” over the left side of the walled ditch.

Travis undoubtedly noticed that the diagonal walled ditch on the 12th hole at Apawamis not only showed that fairway-wide cross-bunkers need not be perpendicular to the line of play but also showed that a hole was made more strategically interesting by such an arrangement of a cross bunker.

We know that Travis was thinking about angles at this time.

In 1902, he recommended the design of dog-leg fairways. Note that the idea of dog-leg fairways was so new that they had not yet received the name “dog-leg,” so Travis called them holes “laid out on obtuse angles, boomerang fashion” – a reminder that he had been born in Australia (*Practical Golf*, 2nd ed, p. 186). In illustration of his meaning, he drew the image below.

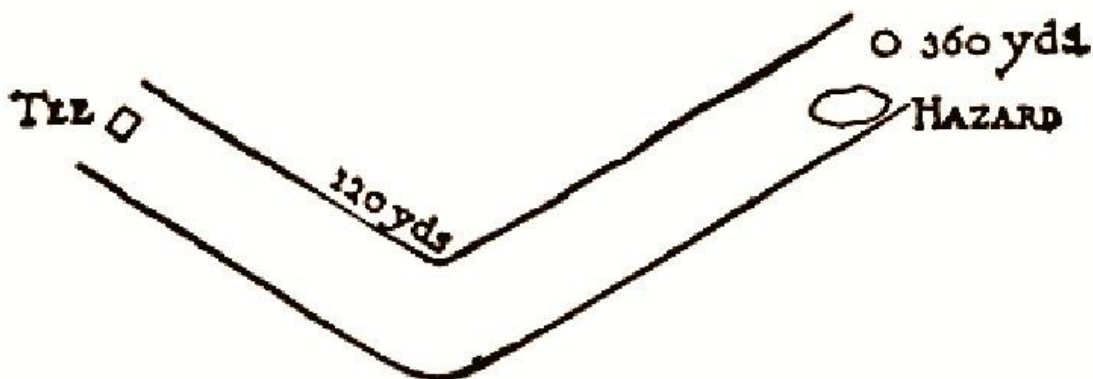


Figure 43 Walter J. Travis, *Practical Golf* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1902), 2nd ed. p. 186.

He explained the strategic implication of such a design: although the drive will be “fraught with more or less danger,” a long hitter “will perhaps essay to cut the corner ... slightly, so as to make

the second shot easier”; the person who plays straight along each part of the dog-leg fairway faces a longer route to the green but faces no such danger as the other player takes on (2nd ed., p. 186).

Travis had encountered this element of strategic design on the 2nd hole at Apawamis, which, although it appeared from the tee to be a straight hole, had nonetheless been set up by Davis to play as a dog-leg: we recall that it was arranged so that golfers who wanted to reach the green in two strokes had to play so far to the right side of the fairway that they risked ending up off the fairway (in a hilly area of rough grass presenting bad lies that could prevent reaching the green in two strokes): “The distance is a trifle over the par figures for two full shots, but in practice it is virtually impossible to reach the hole in less than 3, unless we play far over to the right and happen to obtain a good lie” (243-44).

Travis had the opportunity to take other lessons from Davis’s work at Apawamis. Recall that in recommending sophisticated alternatives to cross bunkering, Travis called for “the regulation bunker for the tee shot” that “almost invariably stretches across the entire width of the [fair] green [i.e. fairway]” to be replaced with “one [bunker], irregularly outlined, of about one-third the width across, leaving clear spaces on either side for the shorter player who cannot comfortably carry it” (2nd ed., pp. 187-89). Travis will presumably have noticed that the Apawamis 6th hole allowed precisely this kind of alternative line of play for what Sutphen called “the prudent man”:

No 6 (Sunnyside, 330 yards).

Straight ahead and in the very middle of the fair green [i.e. fairway] is a high outcrop of rock that looks and is dangerous. It begins about sixty yards in front of the tee and extends for some seventy yards further on.

A ball striking [it] is apt to glance off at an unexpected angle, or else drop into an unplayable hole, and the prudent man will probably prefer to play to the right of the direct line.

(Sutphen, p. 244).

The shorter player who cannot comfortably carry the high outcrop of rock is allowed to play to the right of the hazard.

Travis was not able to play any golf course without thinking about the architectural principles that animated it, and so the many times that he played the Apawamis course between 1899 and 1901 will always and inevitably have provided him with food for thought.

He was no doubt still thinking about the salient features of the Apawamis design when he won the last of his MGA titles on what remained essentially the Davis course in 1915.

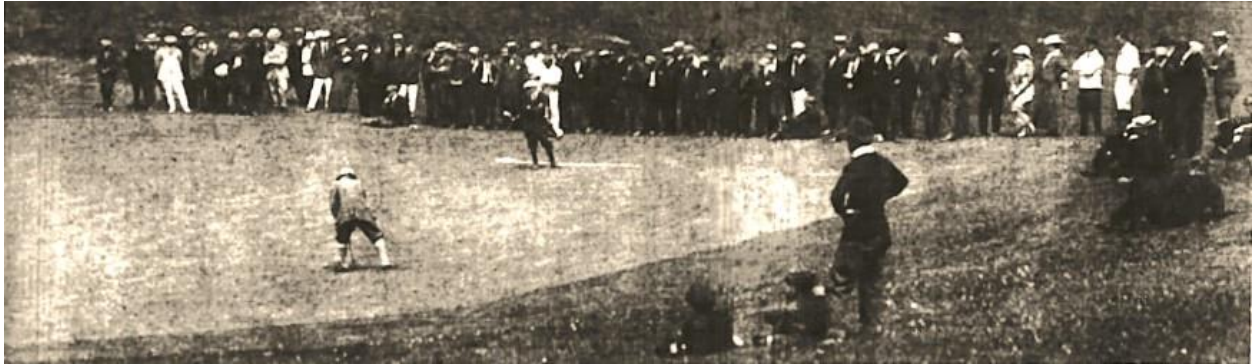


Figure 44 Competing against much-decorated younger player (and golf writer) John G. Anderson in the 1915 Metropolitan Golf Association championship match at the Apawamis Golf Club, Walter J. Travis prepares to make the 40-foot putt on the 18th green that won "The Old Man" his final MGA championship. New York Times, 13 June 1915, p. 26.

The Question of Long Grass

With no cop-bunkers on the Apawamis course (recall that “the omnipresent stone-walled watercourse” served as the primary fairway-wide hazard), and with “pot and trap-bunkers ... sparingly employed as a protection for the greens,” Sutphen observes that “for the rest” of the course, so far as hazards were concerned, there was “long grass” (p. 242).

Travis concurred with this ubiquitous use of long grass as a punishment for wayward shots. In 1901, he set up his imaginary golf course in *Practical Golf* in the same way: “omnipresent long grass on either side of the fair green [i.e. fairway] ... is a feature of nearly every hole on the course” (*Practical Golf*, p. 150).

This agreement between Davis and Travis belies the fact that the role of North America’s native long grasses in golf course design and set-up was a controversial subject in the 1890s and early 1900s.

Today, long grass is ubiquitous on American golf courses. It is aesthetically pleasing: at certain times of the growing season, brown wispy seedheads of non-mowed grasses impart a natural look to a course, reminiscent of the classic links courses in coastal areas of the British Isles. But golfers in the United States who were familiar with the grasses on the links courses of the British Isles were not fooled by the look of North American grasses. In 1894, in fact, a correspondent wrote from the United States to the editor of *Golf* in London to suggest that native grasses would prevent the game from taking hold in America:

There is one difficulty which will probably effectually prevent American golf from rivalling the game in England and Scotland, and this is a natural condition which there is no surmounting.

One never sees the crisp, short grass common to English downs, and grass kept short by artificial means can never be the same in character as when it is in its natural state.

(cited in the Lothian Courier [Bathgate, Scotland], 22 September 1894, p. 8)

In the 1890s and early 1900s, golfers in the United States who were familiar with the crisper, wispier grasses on the links courses of the British Isles generally objected to virtually any incorporation of the North American continent’s longer, denser grasses into American golf course design and presentation.

For instance, George Hunter – a British golfer who served in 1895-96 as the Captain of the golf club of the Richmond County Club of Staten Island, New York (Hunter was characterized as “an expert player” who had “won prizes at Troon and Liverpool, as well as the St. Andrew’s [Yonkers] and Shinnecock clubs”) – observed differences between the conditions in which the game was played in England and the conditions in which it was played in the United States: the American golf course is generally shorter, the hours of daylight are fewer, and “there is the long American grass, in which balls are easily lost and which makes playing harder than in the short, crisp English grass” (*Buffalo Times*, 4 July 1897, p. 10).

Hunter’s observation about the “the long American grass” was rather matter of fact. The opinion of the golf writer for *Brooklyn Life* was stridently negative:

Some golf players of recent development seem to have an idea that hazards of thick long grass, or other rank vegetation, are essential features of a golf course, whereas the only fair plea for them [long grass and rank vegetation] is the inability of a club to undertake the expense of cutting them down.

Looking for lost balls is no part of the game of golf, and the annoyance involved thereby militates not only against the enjoyment of the game and the play of the loser [of the golf ball], but against that of his partner.

The prevalence of such hazards in this country is merely an unfortunate natural condition, and I fancy that the origin of the rule that a lost ball involves the loss of a hole [in match play competition] had its basis in the fact that to lose a ball on Scotch links is equivalent to making such an egregiously bad stroke that no penalty is too severe for it.

Sand bunkers, whins [gorse] and thin grass are legitimate hazards, but no course can be considered a thoroughly good one on which anything but a very bad deflection from the true course involves the necessity of wasting valuable time in searching for a ball.

(*Brooklyn Life*, 4 September 1897, p. 17)

We can see that not an inconsiderable element in the complaint about long grass was that in playing a ball into long grass, the player lost not just valuable time searching for it, but often a valuable golf ball.

Long grass, in fact, was a major contributor to the fact that American players lost more golf balls *per capita* than players in any other country:

Americans lose golf balls so fast that the number sold here proves that most of our links are constructed on wrong principles

The presence of long grass through the fair green [i.e. fairway], or on each side of a narrow course, and the presence of trees in similar places, are the most common causes of lost balls.

Most of our links adjoin a rough field or stretch of woods into which a wild drive is sure to lose the ball. In Great Britain, the links are so well cleared that, except in running water, a ball is seldom lost.

W.G. [William Girdwood] Stewart, the English [he was Scottish] amateur now in this country, says that he will go a month at home without losing a ball but that here he averages about one lost ball a day.

(Buffalo Courier, 26 July 1897, p. 10)

Similarly, a golfer convinced that American golf course designers had lost their way on this question wrote to the editor of the *New York Sun* about his disdain for the role of long grass on American golf courses:

In the absence here of natural sand bunkers, whins, bent, etc., almost the entire dependency is on long, uncut grass to the left and right of courses to punish pulled and sliced balls....

I may remark, to show the different conditions under which we golf in this country, that you would hunt for a long time in Scotland before you found any hay fields or hazard stakes on a golf course.

(Sun [New York], 11 July 1897, p. 28)

The borders of the areas of long grass (the letter writer disdainfully calls these areas “hay fields”!) were marked with “hazard stakes” because long grass was treated as a hazard. And so, a stroke played in such long grass was subject to rules governing hazards in the official Rules of Golf.

Consequently, one could neither ground the golf club nor take a practice swing in the long grass hazard, a fact that considerably increased the level of difficulty of playing a stroke out of this grass. With no ability to ground the club behind the ball, golfers lost the opportunity to find the ground (so to speak) above which the ball might be poised. Resting the club behind the ball can provide a sense of the distance from the hands to the ball and thereby act as a guide to the eye. And golfers could not assess the texture of the grass near the ball, nor judge the degree of resistance of the surrounding grass to the swing of the club. Moreover, golfers lost the enhancement to the aiming of the shot that comes from grounding a club behind a ball and adopting a stance relative to the face of this grounded club.

And so, as the game took hold in the United States in the 1890s, many golfers preferred that all grass on a golf course be kept low. The golf writer for the *Boston Evening Transcript* congratulated the new Dyker Meadow Golf Club for laying out a difficult course without resorting to the usual tricks: “There is not an artificial hazard ... nor any long grass” (*Boston Evening*

Transcript, 2 February 1897, p. 7). And the golf writer for *Brooklyn Life* congratulated the Crescent Athletic Club that on its new course “none of that exasperating long grass remains to delay the game” (*Brooklyn Life*, 29 May 1897, p. 18).

Yet the architectural question of how long-grass would be used as a hazard on a golf course could not be divorced from a more-or-less financial decision regarding how much grass could be regularly mowed: a Green Committee’s budget would extend only so far. How many labourers could be afforded for course maintenance? What would be the mowing technology – sheep, men with scythes, push-mowers, horse-drawn mowers?

At every turn-of-the century golf club in the American Northeast, it was a nice question just how much of the golf course grass would be mowed and how much of it would be left to grow long.

The Assertion of Long Grass

In 1897, U.S. Amateur Champion H.J. Whigham argued that in the design of a golf course, long grass is a thing to be “strenuously avoided” – “except to punish bad driving” (H.J. Whigham, *How to Play Golf* [New York: Herbert S. Stone & Co., 1897], p. p. 197). According to Whigham, the only legitimate use of long grass was as a fairway-wide cross bunker in front of a tee box: “it is always possible ... to let the grass grow for about a hundred yards in front of the tee so that a topped ball cannot run very far, and the second shot will in all likelihood be spoiled” (p. 197).

On his famous visit to the United States in 1900, Harry Vardon agreed: “Rough grass, etc., before a tee should always be left standing. A man who cannot get a ball from the tee should be punished” (*The Sun-Journal* [Lewiston, Maine], 9 May 1900, p. 10).



Figure 45 Robert Black (“Buff”) Wilson (1868-1947), circa early 1900s.

At Shinnecock Hills in 1896, Willie Dunn’s replacement, Robert Black Wilson (a golf professional from St Andrews who had arrived in the U.S. in May of 1896), systematically deployed long grass in front of tee boxes:

Within the past few weeks, the new professional, R.B. Wilson, has lengthened several of the holes and has increased the difficulty of the tee shots by leaving the grass long for fifty yards in front of each starting point.

This will serve as an effectual punishment for topped balls.

(*New York Tribune*, 12 July 1896, p. 30)

This practice became popular, but if long grass in front of tee boxes was not regularly cut down to a manageable length, club members would rebel, as at Atlantic City in 1901:

it is the general opinion of all good players that the long-grass hazard in front of the tees has been overdone in the past year, owing to the growth becoming in a number of instances matted and long, thereby causing the loss of balls, or a penalty of two or three niblick shots before the ball can be played to short grass.

(*Golf*, vol 9 no 3 [September 1901], p. 215).

Why the so-called “good players” mentioned above should have concerned themselves about long grass stretching 100 yards in front of a tee box is a bit of a mystery, but one can understand the concern of the weaker players.

To spoil the second shot of players who topped their drives, we recall, was the point of penal golf course design. And, of course, spoiling the shot of a player whose ball ended up in long grass was the intention of course designers wherever they used long grass as a hazard. Where else, in addition to the fairway in front of tee boxes, did they use long grass as a hazard on American golf courses in the late 1890s and early 1900s?

At Walter Travis's Garden City Golf Club in 1900, long grass was grown as a hazard behind four of the greens, the purpose being to punish an "overcarry" (see the *Boston Globe*, 1 July 1900, p. 26).

In front of greens?

At Shinnecock in 1896, Wilson seems to have developed a long-grass mania: "Before some greens, a strip of long grass has been left as a trap, a suggestion of the new greenkeeper, R.B. Wilson. It is a course where the luck of the lie, in playing through the greens, will make or mar a score" (*New York Sun*, 14 July 1896, p. 5).

And there were long-grass experiments.

At Morristown Golf Club in 1895, the list of "natural hazards" included "'islands' of briers and long grass" (*Harper's Weekly Magazine*, vol 39 no 2008 [15 June 1895], p. 571). It is not clear how large these islands of grass were.

At the Van Cortland municipal golf course in New York City, it was recognized that the border between fairway and long grass need not be straight and regular: on at least one hole, "long grass" was presented along one side of the fairway "at varying distances from the true line" (*Sun* [New York], 26 November 1896, p. 4).

De-Hazarding Grass

In mid-June of 1897, a USGA committee constituted eleven months before (it comprised Laurence Curtis and Charles Blair Macdonald) recommended a change to Rule 15 of the Official Rules of Golf: “Long grass and casual water on the fair green [i.e. fairway] are not hazards. The fair green shall be considered any part of a course except the hazards and the putting green” (*Sun* [New York], 30 June 1897, p. 6).

Their proposal was immediately adopted.

The *New York Times* thought this change made sense: “The question of long grass, which has been bothering some golfers, has finally been settled. The committee has made the ruling that long grass is not a hazard, as getting into long grass is practically as bad as the loss of a stroke” (*New York Times*, 11 July 1897, p. 13).

Harper’s Weekly concurred:

Since long grass is a prevailing characteristic of our American courses, it may properly be accepted as an integral part of the fair green and consequently not subject to a specific penalty.

It may be noted in support of this view that the grass is often left unmown for some thirty yards or so in front of a teeing-ground and in the direct line of play. The practice is in evidence on the Shinnecock course, and the object is unquestionably the punishment of a topped drive. But should the ball come to rest in this same long grass, there has never been any question of the player’s right to sole his club preparatory to getting it out.

The [USGA] committee have simply extended this principle to a similar condition on the right or left of the line of play, and they seem to be justified in their position.

(Harper’s Weekly, 11 September 1897, cited in The Tribune [Scranton, Pennsylvania], 11 September 1897, p. 4)

Harper’s Weekly further recognized long grass as a thoroughly proper means of preserving the par value of a golf hole – and of a golf course as a whole:

As a matter of general fact, a ball in long grass is penalized quite sufficiently for all practical purposes, and the green committees [of all golf clubs] are unquestionably entitled to reduce their lines of play [by growing long grass on the sides of a hole] to the limit of a rifle-gallery should they find that the average scores returned are too low for the golfing reputation of their courses.

(Harper’s Weekly, 11 September 1897, cited in The Tribune [Scranton, Pennsylvania], 11 September 1897, p. 4)

This rule change – “de-hazarding grass” – helped to legitimize a designer’s recourse to long grass as an inexpensive but effective architectural means of testing golfers’ ability to keep the ball on the short grass as well as their strategic decision-making about when to risk playing a ball over long grass and when to risk playing a ball to land as close to long grass as they dare try.

Davis's Grass

As we know from Sutphen's review, a distinguishing feature of Davis's Apawamis set-up was the use of long grass as a punishment for bad shots. It was not a question of long grass found along the side of this fairway or that, or a question of long grass found around this green or that: long grass was virtually everywhere.

We can see from some of the hole-by-hole accounts of matches played in the May 1901 MGA championship tournament, for instance, that long grass was omnipresent on the first nine holes.



Figure 46 Charles Seely. *The Golfer*, vol 15 no 3 (July 1902), p. 195.

On the extra playing of the **1st hole** required to settle the semi-final match between C.H. Seeley and Walter J. Travis, we find that "Seeley sliced his brassey into long grass on a hillside" (*Buffalo Courier*, 26 May 1901, p. 29). In the championship match between Seeley and 1898 U.S. Amateur Champion Findlay S. Douglas, the latter got into the longer

grass on his tee shot [on the **3rd hole**] (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 May 1901, p. 10). In a report about an earlier match involving Douglas, we read that "The ex-champion pulled his **fourth [hole]** drive into the long grass and ... he failed to get out with an iron" (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 24 May 1901, p. 6, emphasis added). In his match against Seeley, on the par-3 **5th hole**, "Douglas drove into the long grass to the right of the hole" (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 May 1901, p. 10). With his drive on the **6th hole**, "Douglas ... hooked into the long grass [and then with his second shot on the **6th hole,**] Seeley sliced ... into the long grass" (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 May 1901, p. 10). On the **7th hole**, "Douglas gave a poor exhibition, driving his ball into long grass and then getting only 20 feet on his effort to get out" (*New York Times*, 26 May 1901, p. 6). An anonymous review of the course in September of 1901 mentioned long grass featuring

as a punishment on the **9th hole**: a “brook and rough grass on either side stand as a menace to the luckless player who slices or pulls” (*New York Tribune*, 15 September 1901, p. 16).

We can see that by 1901, long grass was a punishing feature on at least seven of the first nine holes.

And long grass also seems to have been ubiquitous on the second nine.

Although the fact was not mentioned in the account of the MGA matches in the spring of 1901, we know from Sutphen’s review of the course in October of 1900 that the **10th green** (“perched on the side of a hill”) was “surrounded on three sides by long grass and rough ground” (p. 246). The anonymous *New York Tribune* review of the course in September of 1901 reported that the **11th hole** “is full of difficulty,” for “at the top of a rough hill is the tee, and on either side rough grass” (*New York Tribune*, 15 September 1901, p. 16). In the MGA championship match, on the **14th hole**, “Douglas played a crashing brassey from the long grass” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 May 1901, p. 10). On the **17th hole**, “Douglas pulled his drive on his second [shot] and on the third [shot] he landed in the long grass” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 May 1901, p. 10). Similarly, in a semifinal match against Walter J. Travis, Seeley “pulled his drive into long grass” on the **17th hole** (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 24 May 1901, p 4).

And so, long grass is mentioned as a punishing feature of the course set-up on at least eleven holes. And there will no doubt have been long grass on other holes not mentioned in the newspaper items cited above. Recall that Sutphen implies that long grass was an omnipresent feature of the course.

Travis certainly endorsed this aspect of golf-course design and set-up. We recall that in May of 1901, when Travis published a detailed hole-by-hole description of what he imagined to be an ideal golf course, he made long grass a characteristic feature: “On the second hole (310 yards), all is plain sailing except for the omnipresent long grass on either side of the fair green [that is, fairway], and ... the same rough going the far side of the green that will be found on nearly every hole” (*Practical Golf*, p. 150). It is hard to imagine that Davis’s strategic use of long grass at Apawamis was not a factor in Travis’s planning of his imaginary layout.

Still, notwithstanding the apparent approval of Davis’s use of long grass by influential figures such as Travis and Sutphen, Apawamis changed its attitude toward long grass by December of 1905:

It was determined that during the winter, a good deal should be done in increasing the difficulties of the hazards penalizing direction, but there will be no changes in those punishing distance.

Numerous pot holes, sand heaps, etc., will be introduced along the side lines of the holes in lieu of the rough grass there at present.

(New York Tribune, 22 December 1905, p. 10)

It seems that Apawamis had come to regard long grass along the sides of holes as an insufficient penalty for golfers who could not keep the ball on the fairway.

Tending Apawamis Grass

Grass grew quickly at Apawamis, especially in May and June, and Davis initially managed the grass by deploying both sheep and mechanical mowers.

He had probably inherited the sheep.

As William H. Conroy observes, “The flock of sheep which had been rented to us originally when we were located at Jib Farm was permanently acquired, together with the shepherd boy and his dog at \$8 per month” (*Fifty Years of Apawamis*, p. 42).

By the fall of 1899, however, the shepherd boy had come a cropper:

QUARREL OVER A JACKPOT

Tongue Shot Off as a Result

Rye, N.Y., Oct 9 – Raphael Ruberto, a shepherd employed to care for the sheep of the Apawamis Club, had the tip of his tongue shot off this evening. He and Louis Louisa, a fellow countryman, were playing draw poker in a saloon here, and Louisa won three jackpots in succession.

Ruberto accused him of cheating, and claimed he had a card up his sleeve. There was a violent quarrel, and Louisa drew his revolver.

Ruberto has a habit when angry of protruding his tongue between his teeth, and when excessively angry it lolls out of his mouth like the tongue of an overheated dog.

Louisa fired at him. The bullet struck him in the mouth, carrying away the front upper and lower teeth, nipping off the tip of the protruding tongue, and searing the lips.

When the shot was fired and the blood flowed, Louisa leaped out a window and escaped. A dozen men chased him for a mile or more, but he eluded them.

Ruberto will probably recover, as the flow of blood was staunched and he is resting easily.

Louisa is thought to have gone to New York.

(New York Times, 10 October 1899, p. 2)

Whether Ruberto still had a job at Apawamis after recovering from his gunshot wound is not clear. Before Davis arrived at Apawamis, he had become increasingly enamored of mechanical mowers. And so it is not surprising to find that, according to Conroy, the sheep soon disappeared from the golf course: “rapidly improved methods of upkeep soon did away” with the “picturesque and pastoral scene” created by the sheep (p. 42).

Davis had deployed sheep at Newport in 1896: “The Newport Golf Club has given an order for 150 sheep to be pastured on the golf course for improvement of the grounds” (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 6 June 1896, p. 7). But before he left Newport, Davis had invested in the latest mowing technologies, as can be seen below in the late 1890s photograph of Davis alongside his Newport greenkeeping crew.



Figure 47 Willie Davis, second from left, and his greenkeeping crew, featuring three push mowers and a horse-drawn fairway mover. Frederick Waterman, *The History of the Newport Country Club* [Newport, Rhode Island: Newport Country Club Preservation Foundation, 2013], p. 112.

Sutphen had apparently visited Apawamis several times during the summer of 1900, for when he wrote his review of the golf course that fall, he recalled the inescapable evidence of non-stop mowing on his previous visits: “As is the case with every inland course, the keeping down of the grass on the fair green [i.e. fairway] is the most difficult problem confronting the Green Committee, and the click of the mowing-machine is never silent throughout the summer solstice” (*Golf*, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 243).

And the sound of mowing machines could not afford to be silent in the spring, either.

On the eve of the MGA championship in the rainy month of May 1901, for instance, a reporter observed: “The course is in good shape, but somewhat soggy and rank in verdure [i.e.

excessively vigorous in growth of lush green vegetation], for the links are on heavily fertilized ground, where in such [wet] weather as this the grass grows faster than it can be cut” (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 21 May 1901, p. 7).

Leveller Holes

In his review of the new Apawamis course in the fall of 1900, Sutphen celebrated the absence of “leveller” holes: “Analyzing the distances as given on the official scorecard, it will be seen that ... no fewer than thirteen ... run over the three hundred mark. In other words, the ‘leveller’ is virtually eliminated” (*Golf*, vol 7 no 4 [October 1900], p. 2).

Six months after Sutphen’s celebration of Davis’s elimination of “the ‘leveller’” hole at Apawamis, we also find Travis criticizing “levelling holes” (in an essay in *Golf* in May of 1901 that was also published that month as a chapter in *Practical Golf*):

The large majority of courses have too many levelling holes, of from two hundred and twenty to two hundred and sixty yards, and with the hazards so arranged that the player may top a drive and yet get the green on the next shot by simply taking a full stroke with some club, in the same number of strokes as the man who has played the hole perfectly.

(*Practical Golf*, p. 153)

As we know, the problem with holes of this length arose from the predominant form of golf competition at the beginning of the twentieth century: match play. It was thought unfair that players who topped their drive would still be able to reach the green with their next shot and thus find themselves “level” in the playing of the hole with players who had hit a perfect drive and a perfect approach. As the 1895 U.S. Amateur Champion C.B. Macdonald observed when asked where future championship tournaments should be held: “It is desirable that links be chosen where the distance between holes will bring out and reward long and accurate driving, brassy, and cleek play. Holes 250 to 300 yards can as well be played with an iron as a bag of clubs. Such distances benefit only men who ‘foozle’ drives” (*The Golfer*, vol 2 no 1 [November 1895], p. 9).

As the *New York Tribune* observed in 1898 on the opening of the new eighteen-hole course of the Englewood Golf Club: “There is practically not an unfair hole on the course, by which is meant that a man cannot top his drive and then recover by a perfect second shot” (14 May 1899, p. 8).

In the early 1900s, Bendelow himself eventually came to agree that the elimination of leveller holes was a necessary strategy for any up-to-date architect. Indeed, he found that a good part of his golf course design business at this time involved eliminating such holes on pre-existing

courses. “On some courses,” he explained in 1905, “if a man fozzles his drive, he can recover with a good iron to the green and hole out in the same number of strokes as his opponent who played an errorless game” (*Gazette* [Montreal], 14 November 1905, p. 2). He later claimed that he had always “striven to overcome” “what might be called ‘levelers’ holes’ – that is, holes when a shot could be missed and the advantage almost regained by a lucky second” (*Montreal Star*, 18 May 1909, p. 2).

But despite the work of Davis, Travis, and Bendelow (as well as many other architects), such holes remained legion on golf courses throughout North America for the first two decades of the twentieth century.

In 1903, for instance, an account of New Year’s Day matches at the Lakewood Golf Club in New Jersey matter-of-factly observes that on the 18-hole golf course, “the homeward journey begins with three levelling holes” (*Sun* [New York], 3 January 1903, p. 12). There were leveller holes at Pinehurst scheduled for redesign in 1904:

Changes will be made on the present course, the most important being the lengthening of the present first and second holes.

As it is now, any two bad shots will reach the [first] green.... In ordinary play, the hole is generally halved in 4, owing to its “levelling up” features.

It will now be made a two-shot hole, and the second hole will be similarly improved.

(Golf, vol 14 no 3 [March 1904], p. 210)

And as late as 1918, Travis was still complaining that match play was corrupted by the fact that there were

on the majority of courses ... so many “levelling” holes, holes of such distance, minus proper hazards, that a half-hit tee shot is “just as good as a better,” the green being within reach on the second shot, the only difference being that the perpetrator of the half-hit shot has a longer second than the player who has dispatched a fine drive.

(American Golfer, vol 20 no 2 [June 1918], p. 752)

Interestingly, then, regarding the architectural battle against levelling holes – which would soon become part of the mission of all modernizing architects – Sutphen sees Davis’s lengthening and remodelling of levelling holes at the Apawamis course by the fall of 1900 as on the cutting edge of golf course design theory and practice.

Stone Fences and Chocolate Drops

When Bendelow planned his layout in February of 1899, an option for cross bunkers existed in the form of omnipresent stone fences crisscrossing the newly acquired property. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* observed: “The new property is well adapted for golfing purposes The stone fences which mark the line of the fields will serve most admirably for bunkers” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 2 March 1899, p. 12).

The *New York Tribune* said something similar:

The land is in one of the prettiest sections of Rye and abounds in stone fences built in Revolutionary times, covered with moss and evergreen, which can be readily utilized for bunkers, relieving the landscape scenery of the conventional appearance which so often characterizes new links.

(cited in the Port Chester Journal, 2 March 1899, p. 4)

The photograph below, showing stone fences dating from “Revolutionary times” in Connecticut, not far from Rye, suggests the nature of the fences that abounded on the Apawamis property.



Figure 48 Stone fences near Baltic, Connecticut. Photograph by Jack Delano, 1940.

Most golf clubs in the American Northeast had to deal with the question that faced Apawamis: should the stone fences be removed or integrated into the golf course?

As we know, the newspaper’s 1899 reference above to the “conventional appearance which so often characterize[d] new links” alludes to the appearance created by constructing geometrically identical cop-bunkers and unvaryingly placing them on each hole in the same relation to tee boxes and greens. Old stone fences were much more aesthetically pleasing than cop-bunkers,

but they were not necessarily any less menacing to a golfer, for the fences were often fronted by a sand-filled trench to make them function like cop bunkers

When the St Andrews Golf Club laid out its new links in the mid-1890s, it decided to use stone fences that seem to have dated from the days of New Amsterdam as cross bunkers:

There are few links more difficult than those of the St Andrews Club on the Odell farm in the outskirts of Yonkers.

The farm has been in existence for 250 years and is the oldest in Westchester County.

The stone fences, built in the sturdy Dutch style, serve as splendid hazards

(Sun [New York], 16 June 1895, p. 16)

Similarly, when the Westchester Golf Club laid out its golf course in the spring of 1896, the local stone fences were used as hazards by Bendelow himself, the same architect who would lay out the Apawamis links three years later:

An informal opening of the new Westchester Golf Club will take place tomorrow afternoon. The course will be thrown open for the season.... This was laid out by Thomas Bendelow and consists of nine holes on the Watson estate.

All the hazards are natural – stone fences, roads, rocks, and trees forming the chief obstacles.

(New York Tribune, 18 April 1896, p. 5)

With regard to the *New York Tribune's* March 1899 report mentioning that the “stone fences built in Revolutionary times ... can be readily utilized for bunkers” at Apawamis, note that this information was probably conveyed to the newspaper by members of the golf club, and the latter are likely to have simply told the newspaper what they had been told by Bendelow when he reported earlier that year on the prospects of the Club's new property for development as a golf course.

In this regard, it is interesting to note that just weeks after he laid out the Apawamis course in February of 1899, Bendelow added nine holes in New York's Van Cortland Park to a pre-existing nine-hole circuit and remodelled many of the original nine holes, on several of which he used stone fences as cross bunkers:

The old second hole will become the new sixth The stone fence is to be turfed and made into a bunker....

The old third hole will be lengthened about one hundred yards and will become the seventh. A bunker will be built about 120 yards from the tee and a new green will be

made on the other side of the stone fence which will be turfed and will protect the green.

(Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 19 March 1899, p. 9)

When routing a fairway perpendicularly across a stone fence, Bendelow turfed the side of the fence facing the golfer and then placed a sand-filled trench on the turfed side of the fence to create a cop bunker.

In doing so, Bendelow followed a practice that Davis had used since 1893, when he laid out a nine-hole course at Staatsburg, New York. Below, an undated painting depicts this layout and shows bluish-purple stone fences running from the bottom of the painting to the top. Alongside ten distinct sections of these fences are sand-filled trenches dug parallel to the fence.



Figure 49 An undated painting affecting a bird's-eye view of the 9-hole Willie Davis layout 1893-94 for the Staatsburg Golf Club (Staatsburg, New York). The course is today called the Dinsmore Golf Course. See Staatsburg State Historic Site blogspot <https://staatsburghstatehistoricsite.blogspot.com/2016/05/a-history-of-dinsmore-golf-course.html>.

It is important to note that this stylized painting distorts the topography of the Staatsburg property to compress the golf course within its square frame.

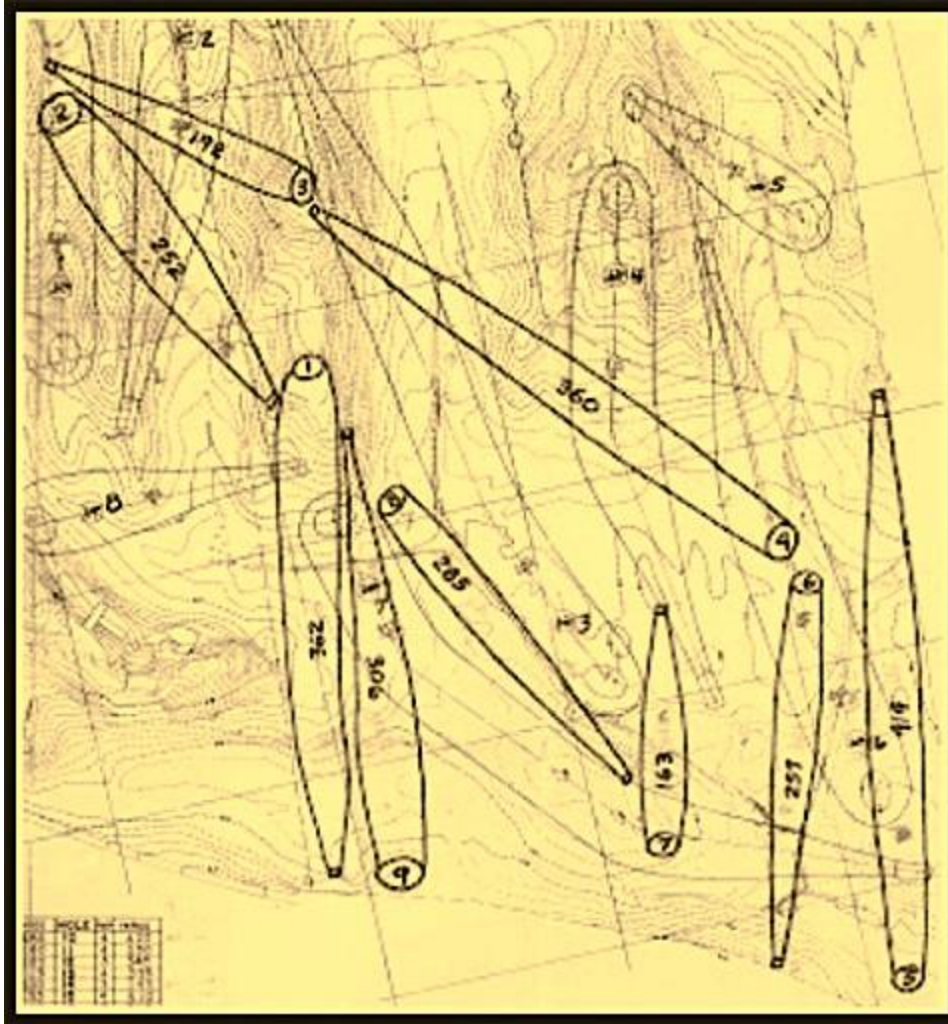


Figure 50 Davis's nine-hole Staatsburg layout is superimposed in dark lines over the South Nine of the present Dinsmore Golf Course. Staatsburg state Historic Site Blogspot op. cit.

The painting's monocular aerial perspective belies how the 2,591-yard layout (which attracted the best golfers of the day to competitions held on it) ranged in various directions across a number of architecturally significant hills and valleys.

Thomas Buggy observes that "the original course had dramatic cross-valley holes, notably 2, 3, and 4. Hole #3 [was] especially

dramatic – a 'peak to peak' 192-yard Par 3 to a very small green with severe fall-offs on all sides" (<https://staatsburghstatehistoricsite.blogspot.com/2016/05/a-history-of-dinsmore-golf-course.html>).

Yet for all its inadequacies, the painting of Davis's Staatsburg golf course illustrates how the stone wall hazards were made to function like cop bunkers: their sand-filled trenches faced the golfer.

And a "Key" to the painting explaining various things depicted by the artist explains that the stones on the side of the wall facing the golfer were turfed over. Davis's intention was presumably to prevent a golf ball from ricocheting away violently and unpredictably from

collision with the bare stone; instead, contact with the turf would generally cause the ball to drop back into the sand-filled trench.

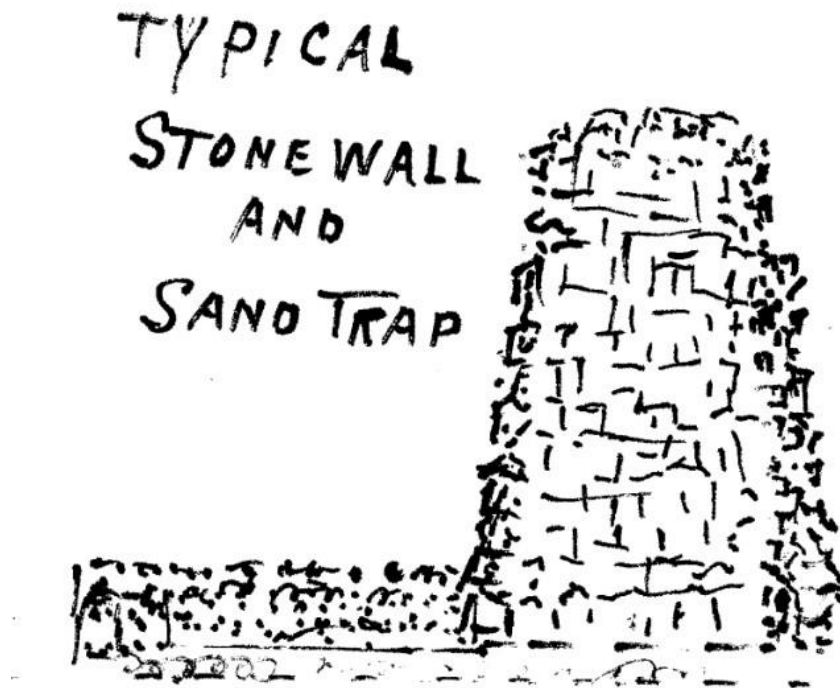


Figure 51 Image in the "Key" to the painting shown above.

The "Key" in question includes an illustration of these turfed stone wall cross bunkers and their accompanying sand trenches.

Davis seems to have used precisely this kind of cross bunker on the fifth hole of his 1895 nine-hole layout at Newport, where he required of the second shot on the 5th hole that golfers carry "an old stone wall which has been

heavily banked up with earth" (*The Evening Telegram* [Providence, Rhode Island], 22 July 1895, p. 3).

At Apawamis, however, one hears of no such turf-walled stone fences serving as cross bunkers, although, as we know, other courses laid out by Bendelow and Davis featured them.

At Apawamis, in fact, one hears little about stone fences of any sort in Sutphen's description of the golf course in the fall of 1900. Sutphen begins, mind you, with a general reference to stone fences on the farmland surrounding Rye: "The course is situated upon typical Westchester country, with its abrupt changes of contour, its stone walls and ditches ..." (p. 242). But he mentions stone fences as a golf course hazard just once, when he notes that a junction of two stone fences forms a hazard on the 4th hole, where there was "a bad corner between stone walls on the left" (p. 244).

Yet although stone walls were not initially used as cross bunkers at Apawamis, there were still many stone walls remaining on the property after Bendelow and Davis had completed their work, but these fences generally lined fairways rather than crossing them.

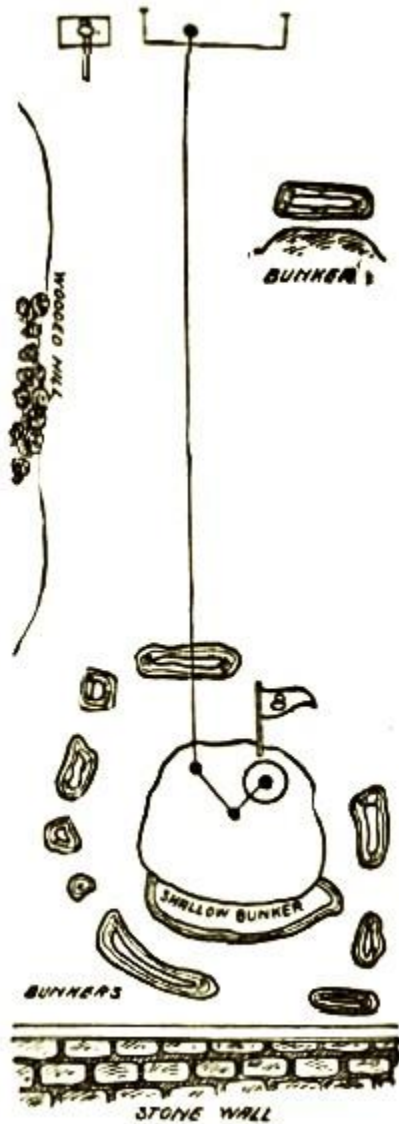


Figure 52 Brooklyn Eagle [New York], 11 August 1911, p. 6.

One of these stone walls that once lined a fairway became a cross bunker in the spring of 1901 when the 8th hole was changed from its Bendelow orientation to play in a new direction such that a pre-existing stone wall now had to be carried by the drive: “No. 8, 229 yards, may cause trouble to the unwary. A stone wall must be driven from the tee, and a brook back of the green makes careful approach play necessary” (*Weekly Register*, 24 March 1901, p. 8).

Then, sometime before 1911, the 8th hole was redesigned again, such that rather than “a brook back of the green,” there was now “back of the green” another of the property’s old stone walls (as shown on the diagram to the left).

A fairway-lining stone wall figured in the semifinal match between Travis and Seeley at the MGA Championship in May of 1901: “Facing the ninth, Seeley sliced his drive under the stone wall and lost” the hole (*New York Tribune*, 25 May 1901, p. 4). This “stone wall [ran] the length of the hole on the right” as late as the 1911 U.S. Amateur Championship held at the club (*Brooklyn Eagle* [New York], 14 August 1911, p. 17).

And the 10th hole had a stone wall along the right side of the fairway (*Brooklyn Eagle* [New York], 15 August 1911, p. 6).

That stone fences lined the fairways did not mean they were not relevant to play. At an Apawamis invitational tournament in 1910, one of the MGA’s top amateurs “had the pleasure of seeing his ball, after being topped from the fourteenth tee, ricochet from the surface of the pond over a four-foot stone wall into the long grass beyond” (*New York Times*, 24 June 1910, p. 10).

In 1911, there was still a stone wall running the full length of the right side of the 17th hole (*Brooklyn Eagle* [New York], 23 August 1911, p. 6).

It was expensive and time consuming to remove stone walls from the property, so the inclination was to let standing stone walls stay. In December of 1905, however, the stone wall bordering

the 18th fairway was targeted for removal: “The eighteenth hole is to be bettered by taking away the stone wall on the right and widening the fair green [that is, “the fairway”]” (*New York Tribune*, 22 December 1905, p. 10).

The appropriateness of using stone walls as a golf course hazard had been a subject of controversy in the United States since C.B. Macdonald complained about Davis’s use of them at Newport in 1894.

Developing a championship-calibre nine-hole course for the Newport Golf Club between 1894 and 1895, Davis used stone fences as cross bunkers on several holes, and several of them assumed a form with which we are familiar, such as on the 8th hole: “the drive [was] obstructed with a stone wall and an open bunker” (*The Evening Telegram* [Providence, Rhode Island], 22 July 1895, p. 3).

When Macdonald played at Newport during the 1894 contest for the amateur championship of the United States, he twice played into the stone fence cross bunker on what was at that time the 3rd hole. On his first round of the nine-hole course, after he hit into the fence, he tried to hit over it with his next shot but hit the fence again. On his second round, after he hit into the fence again, he had to move the ball away from it at the cost of a penalty stroke. Since he lost the championship by a single stroke, newspapers reported that these wasted strokes at the stone wall cross bunker had caused his loss. But Macdonald, as Frederick Waterman explains, blamed the golf course architect: “Having lost the tournament, Macdonald raged that the stonewall should not have been part of the course” (Frederick Waterman, *The History of the Newport Country Club* [Newport, Rhode Island: Newport Country Club Preservation Foundation, 2013], p. 125).

Others, however, thought Davis’s Newport design represented the state of the art. When golf professional Robert Foulis (brother of 1896 US Open Champion James Foulis) returned to Scotland from Chicago at the end of the 1895 golf season, we read: “Robert Foulis, speaking at a dinner given by Messrs. Forgan of St. Andrews, to the workers in their club making business, declared the links at Newport, in the United States, to be equal to any in the world” (*Pall Mall Gazette* [London, England], 14 January 1896, p. 9).

Still, whether or not Macdonald’s 1894 complaint about stone wall cross bunkers had anything to do with it, the tide began to turn against using stone fences as cross bunkers by the late 1890s. In 1900, for instance, at Van Cortland Park, apart from the two stone fences that he turned into turf-walled cop-bunkers, Bendelow himself “embraced the removal of stone fences of

various kinds” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 June 1900, p. 18). Also in 1900, closer to Rye, stone fences serving as cross bunkers at the Westchester Golf Club were removed:

The links of the Westchester Golf Club have been improved greatly since last season.

All the stone fences have been replaced with fine sand bunkers

All the improvements have been of a character to demand a high quality of golf and to abolish unplayable hazards.

(*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 8 May 1900, p. 16)

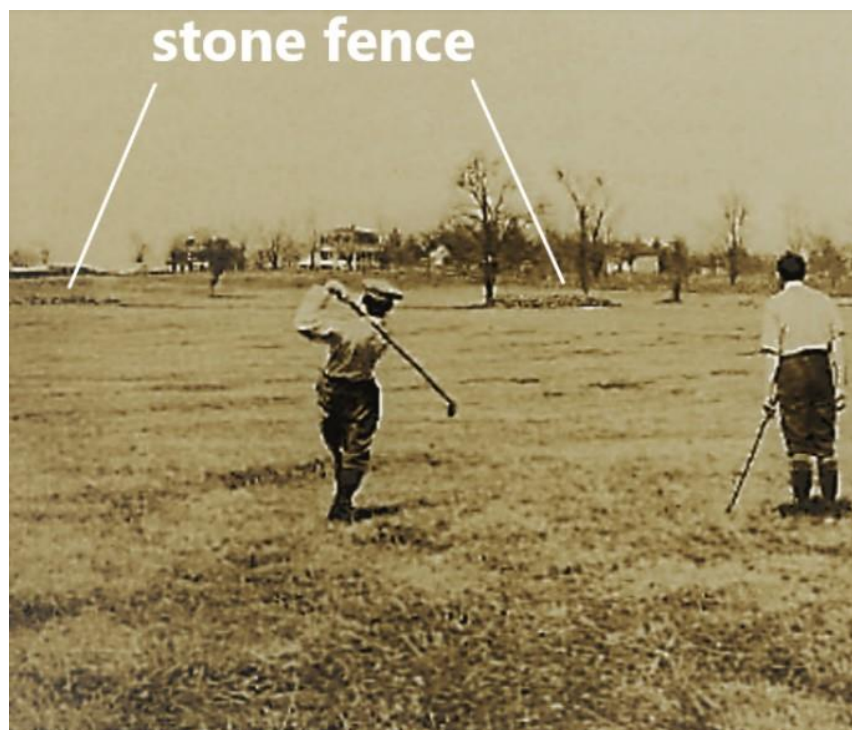


Figure 53 *Golf (New York)*, vol 9 no 1 (July 1902), p. 9.

And when Walter J. Travis and John Duncan Dunn (a nephew of Willie Dunn, Jnr) collaborated on a redesign of the nine-hole course of the Flushing Country Club in the fall of 1901 (the original course had been laid out by Bendelow in 1896), they used stone fences as cross bunkers on some holes but dismantled them on other holes to allow fairways to run through them, as shown in the photograph to the left. Note that many of the old

stones seem to have been piled to the right side of the line of play (between two trees).

Several years before this turn-of-the-century dismantling of stone fences by Bendelow, John Duncan Dunn, and Travis, Davis decided not to use stone-wall hazards on any of the new nine holes that he laid out at Newport during the spring of 1897. Again, he seems to have been ahead of the architectural curve. It should be no surprise, then, that he had little use for them three years later at Apawamis.

And Bendelow’s own thinking on this question may have developed significantly in the course of several months in 1899. As mentioned above, he is likely to have been the ultimate source of reports from Apawamis in February of 1899 that “the stone fences which mark the line of the fields will serve most admirably for bunkers” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 2 March 1899, p. 12). By the

end of the summer, however, he seems to have decided that fences at Apawamis should be cleared away for fairways to run through them, not over them. We can infer as much from Ballou's remarks about the original location of the 5th green: "The original fifth hole was in the hollow to the left of the present green, guarded by a collection of mounds, known as 'chocolate drops'" (Conroy, *Fifty Years of Apawamis*, pp. 36-38).

These "chocolate drops" – which were defined as "conical mounds of earth constructed to make play more difficult and interesting, often erroneously called bunkers" – were probably not known by this name at Apawamis in 1899, for this phrase seems not to have become current until the early 1900s, although "conical mounds of earth constructed to make play more difficult and interesting" certainly existed on golf courses in the 1890s (*The K.C.G.A. Caddie Book* [Kansas City, Missouri: Kansas City Golf Association, 1922], p. 84).

It is not clear when, where, or by whom chocolate drops were invented, but their purpose was clear from the beginning: they were a way of removing stones from fairways without going to the trouble and expense of removing them from a golf club's property. Stones from fences were piled into pyramids, covered with soil, and then seeded with grass (often a fescue variety).

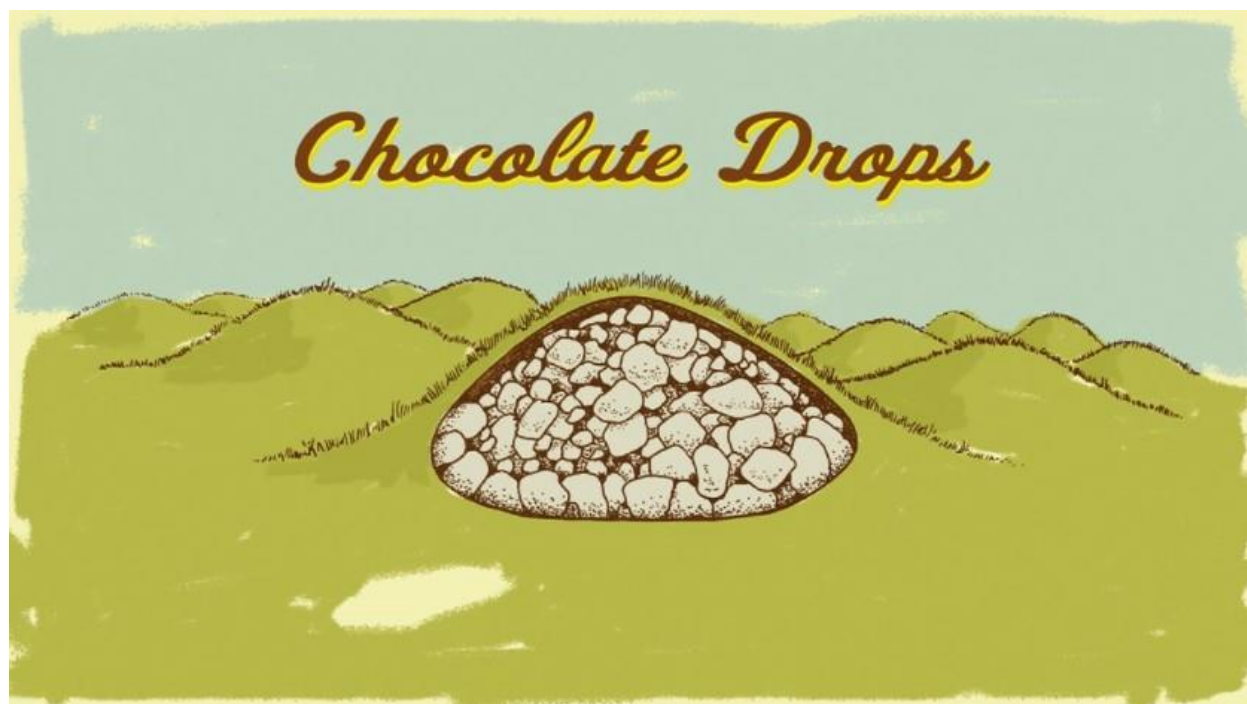


Figure 54 "Chocolate Drops." Illustration by Cameron Hurdus. Fried Egg Golf. <https://thefriedegg.com/gil-hanse-on-the-country-club-in-brookline/>

By the late 1890s, Herbert C. Leeds was using chocolate drops in his redesign work at the Myopia Country Club.

And at the famous Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina in the early 1900s, several of its golf courses were dotted with chocolate drops. As seen in the photographs below, golfers might have to steer clear of a cluster of a dozen or so chocolate drops, or they might be confronted by a whole field of them.



Figure 55 Left: undated photograph of chocolate drops on an unidentified golf hole at the Pinehurst Resort, North Carolina. Right: A golfer addresses her ball at the edge of an extensive formation of chocolate drops on an unidentified golf hole at Pinehurst Resort, North Carolina. *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio), 26 March 1905, p. 27.

Ballou indicates that at Apawamis, the original 5th green was guarded by chocolate drops. When Davis relocated the green to a hilltop away from these chocolate drops, what happened to them?

In 1902, the editor of *Golf Illustrated* (London) quoted with astonishment an item published in the *Chicago Post*: “Just think of moving over 7,000 yards of stone fence to widen a golf course! That’s what the directors of the Apawamis Golf Club have done” (*Golf Illustrated*, Vol 12, 1902, p. 64). As we know, at Apawamis, this moving of “stone fence to widen a golf course” refers to removing a sufficient portion of fence to allow a fairway to be routed through it; other fences were left in place along the sides of the fairways and at the beginning or end of fairways. The question is whether the stones that were moved were converted into chocolate drops (as they were on Bendelow’s 5th hole) or removed from the golf course altogether.

In his mid-1930s letter to the Club, Ballou recalled the struggle to deal with the old stone fences:

As I look back and recall the swamps, the open ditches, the numerous rocky ledges, the woody sections filled with noble trees, and the huge stone walls, it appeared to me then as an almost insurmountable task.

There was no available space for locating the thousands of feet of the great stone walls and so they were piled along the lines of play

(Conroy p. 38)

According to Conroy, this problem was indeed solved by the end of 1902 (as suggested by the *Chicago Post* item cited above), and it was solved by removing the stones from the golf course altogether:

[The] Committee was still struggling with the problem of removing thousands of yards of rocks which were piled about the course like miniature pyramids and at the same time clearing stretches of woodlands which crowded the fairways.

Slowly but diligently they proceeded forward and before 1903 had obtained their objective.

(Conroy, Fifty Years of Apawamis, p. 46)

Perhaps it was Davis who changed the policy from Bendelow's strategy of converting stone pyramids into chocolate drops to one of carting the stones away.

Although Davis died unexpectedly in January of 1902, the newspaper report above about the removing of 7,000 yards of stone fences by 1902, on the one hand, and Conroy's report of their removal before 1903, on the other, indicate that this project had been commenced during Davis's time in charge of the course.

The strategy of removing the stones was expensive, so Bendelow's strategy of converting stone pyramids into chocolate drops was certainly a cost-saving architectural strategy. But the Club had opened the purse strings when Davis arrived to ensure that the golf course would be first-class:

The outlay as the club appears today [February 1901] represents nearly \$100,000.

The course was laid out by Thomas Bendelow and has since been improved and enlarged by "Willie" Davis, the man whom the Apawamis players brought from Newport to aid them in securing a championship stretch of country.

No expense has been spared in attaining this object.

(New York Times, 18 February 1901, p. 3)

And so, if Davis had indicated that the golf course would be improved by the removal of existing chocolate drops and stone pyramids, one surmises Ballou's response: "Let it be so!"

Apawamis and the “Aviation” Route

As five-time Open Champion Tom Watson observed, in opposition to golf played on links courses, championship golf in North America came by the second half of the twentieth century to be associated with golf “played through the air, not on the ground” (quoted by Randy Harvey, “Unashamed of Open affection,” Los Angeles Times 21 July 2001).

Accomplished PGA Tour player Brad Faxon, observing that American golf courses were originally designed to be played along the ground, attributed the hegemony of the aerial game in North America to the fact that golf courses had become increasingly soft:

Golf in America is too green.... Green is pretty.... Green means lush. Green equals soft. And soft isn't good.

Over-watered courses have become standard in America. The word “roll” isn't even in an American player's vocabulary anymore....

America's obsession with “green” has changed golf. The way American courses are maintained has changed the way equipment is made, the way courses are designed and the way people swing....

We're playing courses where you've got to hit the ball up in the air and stop it. Architecture went from Tillinghast, Mackenzie and Ross to Nicklaus and Dye. The game went from horizontal to vertical....

Foreign players ... play firm courses in the wind and still play bump-and-run shots and have a lot of imagination. American players have had those shots taken away from them. The courses are too lush.

(Brad Faxon, “Our Watered Down Game,” Golf World, 2 September 1994)

It turns out that the Apawamis layout that Davis bequeathed to America after his sudden death in 1902 was an early instance of a design requiring golf to be played through the air, not on the ground.

In his 1896 book, *The Game of Golf*, Willie Park, Jnr, complained that cop-bunkers had precisely the impoverishing effect on golfers that Faxon attributed a century later to soft golf courses, for requiring golfers to play elevated approach shots over cop-bunkers onto the putting green deprived them of the opportunity to acquire the skill necessary to play bump-and-run shots:

There is a great cry nowadays that every hole should have a hazard in front requiring to be lofted over, but I think it is possible to carry a system of this kind too far.

It ties players down to pitching all their approaches instead of making them exercise their judgement as to whether the ball should be lofted or run up.

No golfer will deny that there should be hazards in front of some holes, but I think that at others there should be a clear road, with hazards judiciously placed on either side to punish wild shots.

To loft a ball with an iron is comparatively easy to any player except an absolute novice, but it is not easy to keep to the proper course.

(The Game of Golf, pp. 204-205)

As we know, at Apawamis, Davis deployed no cop-bunker as a “hazard ... to be lofted over,” and he used few fairway-wide cross bunkers even to trap poor drives, let alone poor approach shots to greens.

Mind you, Davis obviously agreed with Park that “there should be hazards in front of some holes”: several Apawamis greens – such as the 8th, 9th, and 11th – had a creek in front of them that required players “to loft a ball” over this form of “cross bunker” and land the ball on – or very near – the green.

Many greens, however, were located on natural elevations – plateaus or hills – onto which it was difficult to bump and run a golf ball. Several greens were located at the top of steep ascents or the bottom of steep descents. On the second hole, for instance, a newspaper warned players before the 1911 US Amateur Championship: the “slope to [the] green [is] almost perpendicular” (*Brooklyn Eagle* [New York], 29 July 1911, p. 17). The fate of a bump-and-run approach to such a greens was wildly uncertain. And in front of other greens were slopes that moved a rolling or bouncing ball in a pronounced way to the left or right of the green.

And so, the Davis design at Apawamis deprived golfers of the option of approaching most greens via the bump-and-run option. It was exceptional in doing so at the beginning of the twentieth century without recourse to formulaic (and ugly) cop-bunkers or other forms of cross bunkering that were virtually impassable along the ground – such as chocolate drops, deep sand pits, or even long grass.

In 1911, when Harold Hilton won the U.S. Amateur Championship at Apawamis on what was essentially the same course that Davis had designed between 1899 and 1901, he would remark on this aspect of the design. Davis had been one of Hilton’s most important mentors at Royal Liverpool in the late 1870s and early 1880s and had applied to his North American designs

principles learned from the Hoylake layout, but Hilton probably did not know of Davis's role in the design of the Apawamis course.

Before and after the big mid-September national tournament at Apawamis, Hilton played many of the best courses in the American Northeast, exciting great interest as one of the few Open Champions to have visited North America. Among the courses that he played were Essex County, Garden City, Shinnecock Hills, National Golf Links, and Myopia.



Figure 56 Harold Hilton at the Apawamis Golf Club in 1911. Photograph courtesy of The Ron Watts Collection.

Before he played the National Golf Links, he declared Myopia his favorite:

Three rounds of the Myopia Hunt Club course ... gave the British visitor every opportunity to judge of the course, which is at once the finest and most difficult in this country.

He paid tribute to its qualities and ranks it among the finest inland courses in the world.

(Boston Evening Transcript, 7 September 1911, p. 2)

On these other championship golf courses, Hilton found ample opportunity to display the full range of his skills, but he found things otherwise at Apawamis.

Of the latter course, Hilton complained that the design of the layout did not allow him to demonstrate the full range of shots that he had mastered since beginning to play golf at Royal Liverpool in the late 1870s, especially links-style run-up shots. He was among the best in the world at the approach shot played along the ground. But Davis's layout required an approach to greens through what Hilton called "the 'aviation' route":

Had I to select a course over which I was requested to meet the best of American amateurs, I do not think that I should pick the links of the Apawamis Club; not that they do not supply a good test of the game of golf, but simply for the reason that the majority of the holes do not call for a sufficient variety of shots where I should expect to score over opponents of lesser experience....

Apawamis is a course on which there is a great deal of straightforward pitching up to the hole to be done. You must get the ball into the air and keep it there until the green is reached.

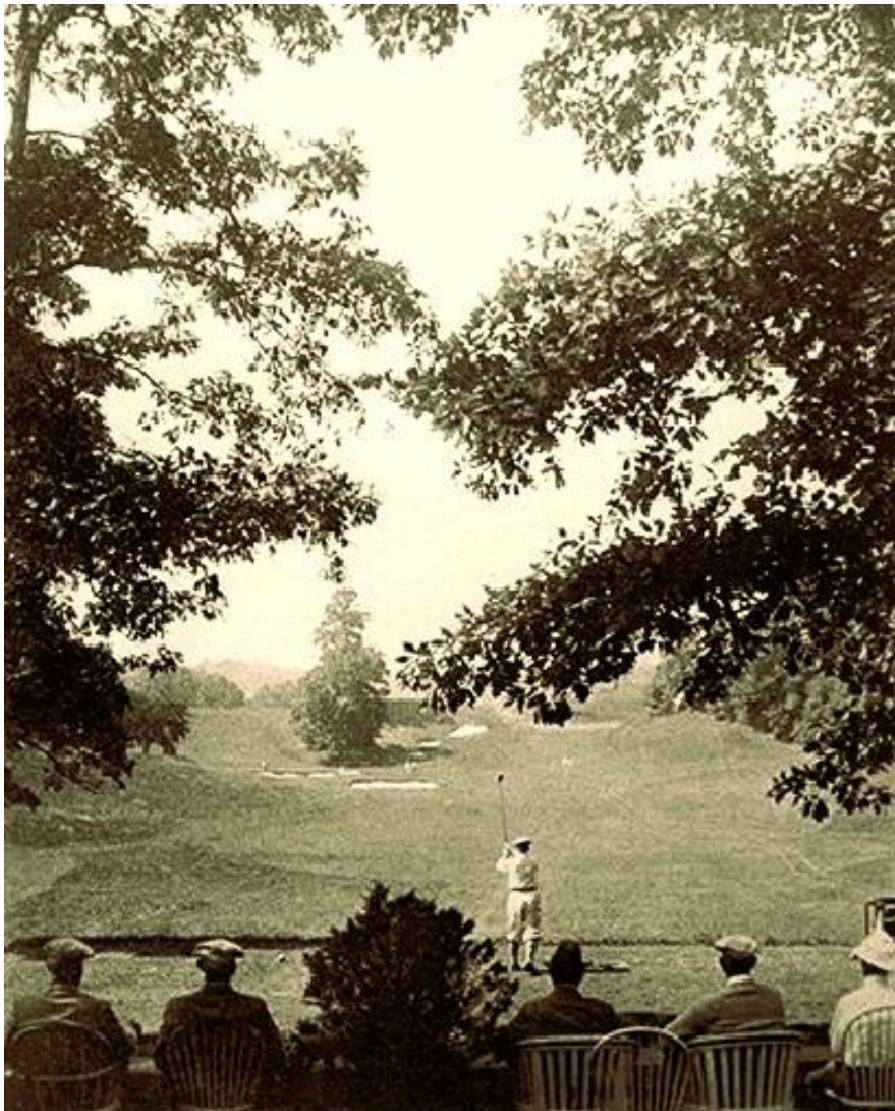
It is of no use pitching it well short of the green and trusting to the subsequent roll.

You must arrive there by the "aviation" route. It is the safest, and the man who is in any way a master of the high-pitching approach will have a happy time at Apawamis....

My short pitching is one of my strongest points, but, on the other hand, I am a better player when I have a low iron shot to play than when I am asked to pitch it right up to the hole I am rather fond of those holes at which it is necessary to play a longish cleek or wooden club shot up to the hole. I couldn't find many of that variety of hole at Apawamis.

(The Guardian Journal [Nottingham, England], 29 September 1911, p. 11)

As it happened, heavy rain falling for several days before the tournament began supported Davis's architectural insistence that the golf ball be played to greens through the air:



The course was suffering from the heavy rains, and it required a good, sturdy, strong player to get around in respectable figures.

It was more a test of clean, strong hitting than of any question of delicate finesse ...

It struck me that the heavy conditions were sufficient to rule such a past master as Walter Travis just a little out.

(The Guardian Journal [Nottingham, England], 29 September 1911, p. 11)

Figure 57 Harold Hilton on the 1st tee at Apawamis, September 1911.

And so, Harold Hilton was forced to play golf at Apawamis in 1911 the way Jack Niklaus and Pete Dye would seven decades later force all of North America's top golfers to play: by the "aviation" route.

An Apawamis Funeral



Figure 58 Willie Davis, shortly before his death. *Golf*, vol 10 no 2 (February 1902), p. 129.

During the first week of January 1902, “‘Willie’ Davis, the popular greenskeeper of the Apawamis Club, ... took cold while playing on the links” (*New York Tribune*, 2 February 1902, p. 11).

In Rye these days, playing golf in January would seem odd, but it was a regular feature of New Year’s celebrations in the New York area during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Davis’s apparent cold suddenly developed into pneumonia on Sunday, January 6th, and his health then deteriorated rapidly.

According to one of the local newspapers, Davis died at 3:30 a.m. on January 9th, but it is likely that he died before midnight, for the memorial card that was immediately produced for his funeral services indicates that he died on January 8th.

Over the next several days, dozens of newspapers in cities and towns across the United States reproduced the same account of the January 12th

funeral services in Rye:

Amateur and professional golfers attended the funeral of “Willie Davis,” the professional attached to the Apawamis Golf Club, yesterday afternoon.

The funeral took place from his residence near the clubhouse but the interment was only temporary as the body will be shipped to Montreal within a few weeks for final disposition.

Davis was the pioneer professional golfer in the invasion of the United States of what is now a very popular game.

(Buffalo News [New York], 13 January 1902, p. 6)

Variations in the widespread publication of this item were few.

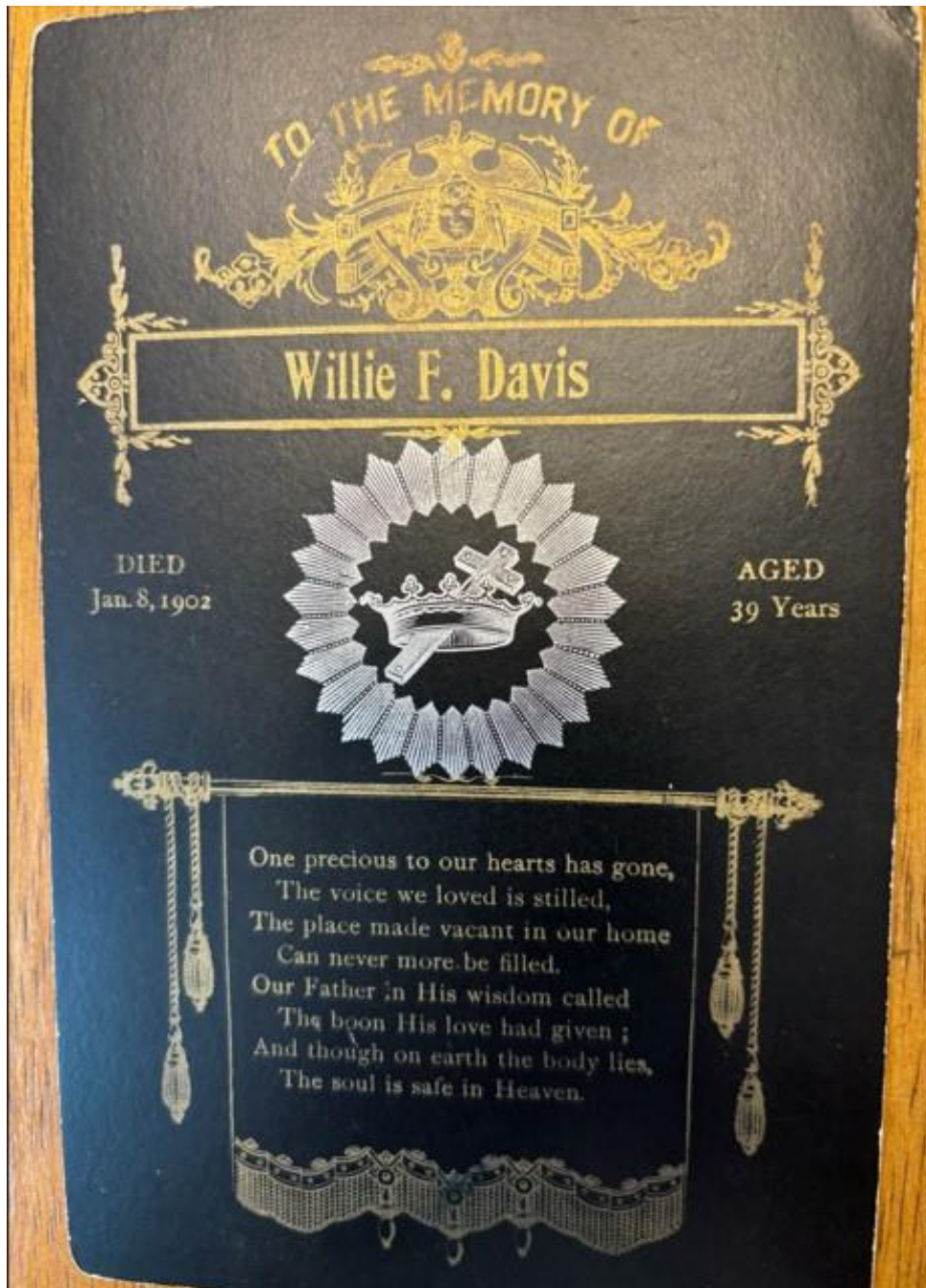


Figure 59 The memorial card produced for Willie Davis's funeral services. Photograph supplied by Susan A. Martensen, great-granddaughter of Willie Davis.

The *New York Times*, however, provided its own report about the funeral:

Funeral services for Willie Davis, the well-known professional golfer, who had been with the Apawamis Golf Club, near Rye, for two years, were held yesterday in Rye....

The sudden death of Davis came as a great shock to the local golfers, for he was ill less than a week of pneumonia.

(*New York Times*, 13 January 1902, p. 8)

Club members' "great shock" is understandable. But a greater insight into their attitude toward Davis is found in a report in the *Port*

Chester Journal (Port Chester being less than two miles from Rye):

William Davis

The well known golf expert and instructor of the Apawamis Club here who had been very sick with pneumonia died at his residence in Rye this morning at 3:30 o'clock.

Mr. Davis was very popular with the members of the club for his genial and gentlemanly disposition and had endeared himself to all.

He leaves a widow and three small children.

(Port Chester Journal [New York], 9 January 1902, p. 4)

Evidence that Davis had indeed endeared himself to all – high and low – at Apawamis is found in a unique report about the funeral published in Montreal, his adopted home, where he would be buried in the spring:

Mr. “Willie” Davis

“Willie” Davis, the first professional of the Royal Montreal Golf Club, who died recently at Rye, and was temporarily interred in the Episcopal Cemetery there, will be buried here.

Many professional and amateur players attended the funeral services, which were held at his residence at Rye, near the clubhouse, Rev. W.W. Kirkly [sic], officiating.

The pall bearers were Messrs. W.H. Brown, R.T. [sic] Mathew [sic], Matsurin [sic] Ballau [sic], F.H. Wiggins and H.W. Cooper, all members of the Apawamis golf club, and V.Z. [sic] Wells, superintendent of the club.

(Gazette [Montreal], 15 January 1902, p. 7)

This newspaper item contains an extraordinary number of spelling mistakes, but the information it contains – for instance, the fact that five of the pall bearers were club members – is further evidence of the high regard for Davis at Apawamis.



Figure 60 Willie Campbell with his daughter Mary at Franklin Park Golf course, Boston, Massachusetts, late 1890s.

Compare this aspect of Davis’s funeral to its contemporary parallel: the funeral of Willie Campbell just over a year before. Campbell was a fellow golf pioneer who, in the spring of 1894, had come from Scotland to the Country Club of Brookline, where he and Davis immediately played a match that was reported by newspapers as the professional championship of America. When Campbell died in Boston in the fall of 1900, although he had been a central figure in the development of golf at the Country Club of Brookline from 1894 to 1896, his pall bearers were all local golf professionals. Not one was a member of the Country Club at Brookline. In fact, that club’s only representative among the

pall bearers was the caddie master, an employee who had worked at Brookline under Campbell.

None of this is surprising.

When Davis and Campbell came to the United States in the 1890s, some American golfers did not understand that in the British Isles, golf professionals were treated as working-class tradesman: they were required to show proper deference to the gentleman and lady club members; they were not allowed in the clubhouse; those who resided in quarters on the club grounds were often recorded in the census as servants. American golfers who had mistakenly extended to their golf professionals a social recognition that was not their due (and perhaps thereby encouraged them to assume airs) were upbraided in 1897 by the editor of the outdoor magazine called *Outing*:

The sooner these patronizing instructors from abroad are made aware of the fact that they are to be kept on the same plane here that they occupy at home, the more likely we Americans shall be to get from them the behavior and the duties that are our due.

Our general ignorance of the game, and of the position that the professional occupies in Great Britain, have led to more than one mistake and embarrassment

(*Outing*, vol 30 no 1 [April 1897], p. 98)

Patricians of the world unite!

From this point of view, then, the list of pall bearers at Willie Campbell's funeral in the fall of 1900 is not unusual. Indeed, it was what the editor of *Outing* would have regarded as normal, natural, and – most importantly – proper. It is the list of pall bearers at Willie Davis's funeral that is unusual – even remarkable.

Who were these pall bearers?

The only one who was not a member of the Club was its superintendent. His name was not “V.Z. Wells,” as reported in the Montreal newspaper, however, but rather V.V. Wells: that is, Van Vorst Wells (1871-1915).

When still just a teenager, Wells volunteered as a private in the New York Infantry during the Spanish American War of 1898. He was soon promoted to an engineering corps at the rank of corporal and then was “raised to the sergeant's rank for the faithful performance of the duties assigned him” (*Port Chester Journal* [New York], 7 August 1902, p. 4). At war's end, he was hired in the spring of 1899 as superintendent of the Apawamis Golf Club, spending three and a

half years at the club, at which point it was said: “Mr. Wells has been in charge of the club since the spring of 1899 and it is partly due to his energies that the club is now as popular as it is” (*Port Chester Journal* [New York], 7 April 1902, p. 4).

Wells left the club in the fall of 1902, however, but not because he had worn out his welcome: “Mr. Wells will be greatly missed at the club, where he has faithfully applied himself for the past three years” (*Port Chester Journal* [New York], 9 October 1902, p. 3). Rather, he had become interested in politics, running in the fall of 1902 in the 7th Manhattan district for a seat in the New York State Assembly. He subsequently enjoyed a successful Assembly career, becoming the Assembly’s second assistant supervisor of bills in 1911.

Wells seems not to have been a golfer. Instead, he was a dedicated cyclist (called a “wheelman” in the late 1800s and early 1900s), riding long distances in a single day (for instance, from Hackensack, New Jersey, to Buffalo, New York, in a single day in 1894). And he was said to have been the best male tennis player in Rye in 1902.

Since Wells had worked at Apawamis from 1899 to 1902, just as Davis had, it is perhaps no surprise that he was one of the pall bearers: he and Davis must have come to know each other well as they regularly worked together to coordinate golf activities and clubhouse activities.

The other five pall bearers were all members of the club – a club whose “membership ... [was] composed of New York millionaires” (*Inter Ocean* [Chicago], 12 March 1899, p. 41). And these pall bearers were merely the tip of the millionaire iceberg at the funeral:

The funeral services over the remains of “Willie” Davis, late instructor of the Apawamis Golf Club, were held from his residence on Sunday afternoon, the rev. Dr. W.W. Kirkby officiating.

Many prominent and influential business men of New York and other cities were present to pay the last mark of respect to their ... friend.

The remains were placed in the receiving vault of Greenwood Union Cemetery, Rye, N.Y. [Remains were stored in the cemetery’s receiving vault until the ground thawed.]

(Port Chester Journal [New York], 16 January 1902, p. 4)

Broker Maturin Ballou, with whom we are familiar, was one of these prominent and influential businessmen who served as a pall bearer. Notwithstanding the difference in the social rank between club member and golf professional (a difference that the editor of *Outing* exhorted

golfers to police vigilantly), one can certainly understand Ballou's desire to express publicly his respect for the man with whom he had worked so closely in redesigning the course.

But who were the other millionaire pall bearers and how might they have been connected with Davis?

W.H. Brown was the only club member among the pall bearers who was not distinguished by having served as an officer of the Club.

I find no reference to his participation in Apawamis golf matches before October of 1901. At that time. Like many members of the Club, he seems to have been a resident of New York City who maintained a summer home in Rye. Several years after Davis's funeral, Brown would become a regular competitor in senior tournaments within the Metropolitan Golf Association area.

In 1901, he was accorded a handicap of 14. His handicap in various competitions between 1908 and 1913 was between 15 and 23. If Davis had provided golf lessons to Brown, the latter played his best golf under Davis's tuition. But Davis might not have held out Brown as an example of how his lessons could improve a club member's game.



*Figure 61 R.F. Matthews.
New York Tribune, 21 July
1901, p. 8.*

The case was much otherwise regarding Robert F. Matthews (1866-1936), who joined the Club in the 1890s.

The son of a wealthy dry goods merchant, Matthews was an active citizen of Rye, a member of the Board of Health, a trustee of the local Presbyterian church, a member of the Rye Improvement Association, a referee for high-school football games, and so on. He served regularly on the board of governors at Apawamis. In June of 1898, he was appointed to the Golf Committee that brought Bendelow to Apawamis in February of 1899. In June of 1899, he was elected club president and so was the one who presided over the board when Davis was hired in the fall of that year. He was a scratch golfer and competed in club competitions, inter-club competitions, and a number of high-level amateur competitions in the MGA area, including the 1901 MGA championship held at Apawamis (when he was put out of the competition by Walter J. Travis).

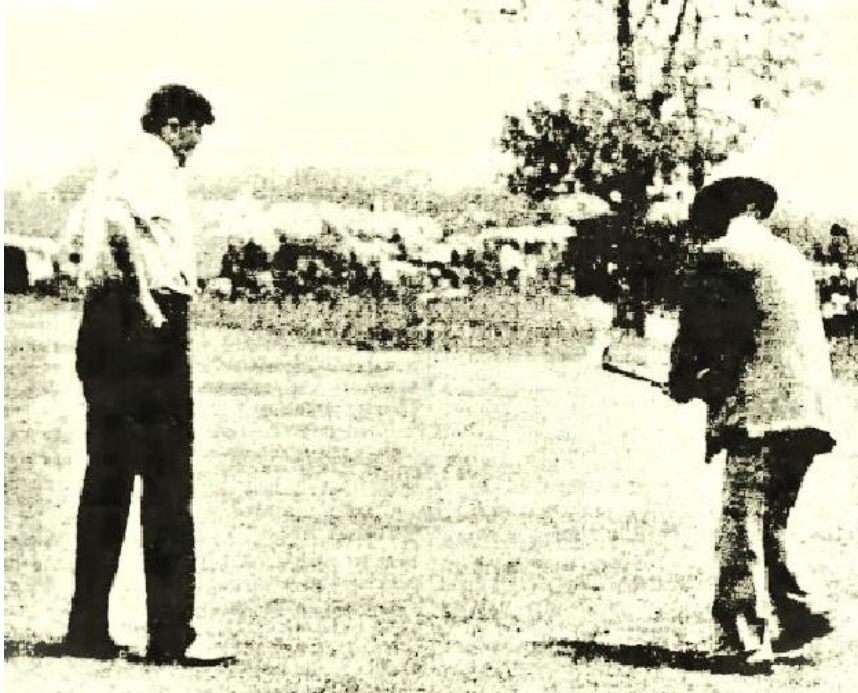


Figure 62 Walter J. Travis taps in a putt during his victory over R.F. Matthews in their early round match at the 1901 MGA Chamiponship at the Apawamis Golf Club. New York Tribune, 15 September 1901, p. 16.

Another pall bearer was Henry Woodward Cooper (1866-1912), familiarly known as “Harry.” He was a director of several New York companies, including the United States Cordage Company, serving as its assistant secretary and treasurer in the 1890s. Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that in the mid- and late-1890s, he served as secretary and/or treasurer of the Rye Tennis Club and the Apawamis Golf Club. He

was also active in the community as a member of the Rye Improvement Association, the Board of Education, the Rye Village Incorporation League, and so on. As the Apawamis Golf Club’s treasurer, he was responsible for arranging the mortgages that enabled the purchase of the Park estate at the beginning of 1899 and for the issuing of club bonds that would enable construction of the clubhouse. Cooper was a prime mover in the organization of this new enterprise and became the chief spokesman for the club in dealing with the press at this time. He presumably worked closely with Bendelow as the new 18-hole course was planned and constructed from February to September of 1899, and he no doubt worked closely with Davis and Ballou regarding the financing of their redesign work beginning in the fall of 1899.

Pall bearer Frank Holme Wiggin (1864-1935) was a scratch golfer who was the equal of Matthews as a competitor

Wiggin was born into an “old Rye family” and “spent the greater part of his life in the village” (*Daily Item* [Port Chester, New York], 16 March 1935, p. 2). He was a cotton broker and a member of the New York Cotton Exchange. Yachting was his abiding passion (he was an important member of the American Yacht Club), but he loved tennis and golf as well. From at least 1887, he served on the board of directors of the Rye Tennis Club, being elected president

in 1894 and 1895, and declining to accept nomination for a third term in 1896 only because he preferred to serve instead as secretary. He was a stalwart member of the Apawamis Golf Club's men's team in the late 1890s and early 1900s. In 1902, he won the fourth annual golf tournament of the New York Cotton Exchange (*Brooklyn Eagle*, 8 June 1902, p. 48).

Wiggin was elected the Apawamis Golf Club's vice-president in 1896 and again in 1897 (when its new nine-hole course on Jib Farm opened), and he was elected Club president in 1898 and so was instrumental in organizing the purchase of the Park estate and the laying out of the new 18-hole course by Bendelow.

Not only were most of these pall bearers important movers and shakers in the original development of golf at the Apawamis Club; most were also involved in the hiring of Davis in 1899. Their prominent role in the funeral services seems to have been intended to express for Davis – the man who had produced for them a championship golf course – not just their own appreciation and respect, but that of the Club as a whole.

Indeed, one might see their participation in the funeral services as designed to give this event the aura of a “state funeral,” so to speak.



Figure 63 William west Kirkby, undated sketch.

It was perhaps in furtherance of this goal that the person who conducted the funeral services at the Davis home was the Venerable Archdeacon the Reverend Dr. William West Kirkby (1827-1907), Rector of Christ's Church, the Episcopal church in Rye. He, too, was a member of the Apawamis Club – and a founding member, at that.

Willie and Mary Davis do not seem to have been Episcopalians. Mary was a McKinnon from Glengarry County in Eastern Ontario, a family that was Roman Catholic. But Willie and Mary apparently told the census taker in Canada in 1891 that their religious affiliation was Presbyterian.

If Willie and Mary were indeed Presbyterians, it is not clear why the Episcopal church handled the Davis funeral services, for in 1902, the long-established Rye Presbyterian Church was led vigorously by Dr. Douglas Putnam Birnie, who had arrived in Rye in 1899 (the same year as the

Davis family) and had quickly become “a beloved figure” (*Daily Item* [Port Chester, New York], 22 March 1937, p. 10). Reverend Birnie was certainly not out of town or otherwise indisposed at the time of the funeral: he performed a wedding in Rye the day after Davis died.

The Venerable Archdeacon’s having taken charge of the funeral services may be a sign that the Club itself had more or less taken charge of the funeral on behalf of Mary Davis.

Reverend Kirkby was a founding member of the Apawamis Club, of course, but note also that Wiggin family played an important role at the Episcopal church. F.H. Wiggin’s father (retired banker and merchant Augustus Wiggin) had long been a leading member of Christ’s Church – serving over more than forty years in roles such as warden, vestryman, and treasurer – and knew the Archdeacon well. Perhaps he asked Reverend Kirkby to step in on behalf of the Club.

And Mary Davis, no doubt shocked by her husband’s unexpected death, may have welcomed an offer from Apawamis members to organize the funeral services. When she published “A Card of Thanks” in the local newspaper a week after the funeral, she must have had many members of the Apawamis Golf Club in mind: “Mrs. W.F. Davis returns thanks to the many friends who so kindly extended their sympathy to her in her time of [trouble]” (*Port Chester Journal*, 16 January 1902, p. 16).

In 1902, the Venerable Archdeacon the Reverend Dr. Kirkby was an impressive figure of international renown.

Born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1827, he was educated at Oxford University and ordained a clergyman in the Church of England, which sent him in 1852 to the western districts of British North America (then known as Rupert’s Land) to convert indigenous peoples to Christianity. Over the next thirty years, accompanied by his wife Eleanor Wheatley (born in Berkshire, England), he worked as a missionary in the Hudson’s Bay area, the Red River region around Winnipeg (Manitoba) that was known in the mid-1900s as the Assiniboia District, the part of the Northwest Territories today known as Saskatchewan and Alberta, and, finally, Alaska.

In advance of his taking up residence in Alaska, Kirkby had set out from his church on the Mackenzie River in the Northwest Territories to travel four times on foot the hundreds of miles back and forth across the Rocky Mountains to preach to the indigenous peoples of Alaska before rival churches could reach these potential converts.



Figure 64 William West Kirkby, undated photograph. *Free Press Prairie Farmer* (Winnipeg, Manitoba), 6 October 1920, p. 28.

To advance his missionary work, Kirkby translated the Bible, the New Testament, hymns, manuals of devotion and prayer, and so on, into a wide variety of indigenous languages.

Perhaps having become too old to continue to travel by snowshoe across the inhospitable domains of his parishes, he was appointed Rector of St. Ann's Church in Brooklyn, New York, in the mid-1880s and then served as rector of Christ Church in Rye from 1887 to 1904, when he retired.

During Kirby's three decades in the New York area, he was a frequent and very popular speaker on the topic of his many extraordinary adventures: "The venerable Archdeacon W.W. Kirkby of Brooklyn, N.Y., ... [spoke] on foreign missionary work. He is a very genial and humorous speaker and in a graphic manner outlines his experiences in the missionary work.... His flow of humor kept the audience in constant smiles" (*Plain Dealer* [Cleveland, Ohio], 28 May 1886, p. 5).

As mentioned above, the Montreal newspaper item mentioning the role of Kirkby and the Apawamis Club pall bearers in Willie Davis's funeral services is full of mistakes regarding the spelling of the names. Oddly, this item appeared two or three days after the item about Davis's

funeral that had been carried by newspapers across North America. I suspect that this Montreal report was based on a telephone conversation with Mary Davis.

Perhaps the newspaper called her to get more information about the funeral than was available in the newspaper item copied by other newspapers, or perhaps she called the newspaper to have an item printed that would let the couple's friends and relatives back in Quebec know, first, that Willie had died, and, second, that he had been highly regarded at Apawamis.

According to this hypothesis, either she was mistaken in the spelling of the names that she mentioned to the Montreal reporter, or the latter had not asked about the spelling of the names and simply made his or her best guess as to how the names should be spelled.

Mary Davis certainly started thinking about Montreal soon after her husband died, for she had decided almost immediately that he would be buried not in Rye's Greenwood Union Cemetery (where Reverend Kirkby would be buried in 1907, where the Davis's eldest son John would be buried in 1908, and where Mary herself would be buried in 1912), but rather in in Montreal's Mount Royal Cemetery.

William Frederick Davis was buried in Montreal on 7 May 1902:

Funeral of Mr. W.F. Davis

The funeral of the late W.F. Davis will take place in Montreal on Wednesday, May 7, 1902, from the Grand Trunk Station to Mount Royal Cemetery.

Mr. Davis was at one time instructor to the Montreal Golf Club but removed to Newport, R.I., and later to Rye, N.Y., where he died on January 9, 1902.

(Montreal Star, 6 May 1902, p. 6)

His remains lie alongside those of several of the children of Willie and Mary Davis who were born and died in Montreal between 1883 and 1892.

Conclusion

Although hitherto unsung as a designer of the Apawamis course, Willie Davis was the golf professional who redesigned the original Bendelow layout and made it what it is today. What Conroy says of Ballou applies just as much to Davis: “How unusually sound was his judgement is evidenced by the fact that there have been comparatively few changes in the original design” (Conroy, p. 36).

Davis’s design decisions during his superintendence of the golf course at Apawamis from November of 1899 to January of 1902 suggest that by the time he died, he had developed a new sophistication as an architect – a sophistication appreciated, as we have seen, by architecturally sophisticated figures such as Sutphen and Travis. Davis’s extraordinary development from a golf course architect in thrall to the tenets of penal golf course architectural theory in the early 1890s to one exploring the possibilities of what would come to be known in the 1920s as strategic design theory helps to explain why the present Apawamis course remains essentially the Davis redesign of 1899-1901.

Although it comes late, recognition of Willie Davis’s design work at Apawamis is due.