

## 2 *The Evolution of Landscape Effect and Beautiful Golf Courses*

Every culture since recorded history has sought to create beauty by application of ornament to its artifacts, and its applied arts of building architecture, landscaping architecture, and even golf courses. Chapter 2 provides insight into the evolution of landscape effect, (the design of a course landscape component contrived to achieve an aesthetic “look”) and how and why it came about in pursuit of beauty in modern-day golf courses. The beginning was innocent enough. The depiction of nature in classical landscape paintings by the old masters’ profoundly influenced the development of the world-leading art of British landscape gardening, which in turn became the foundation of the scenic movement to improve dismal-looking British golf courses. Advancements in course design were shaped by the National Arts Movement to improve the nation’s tastes plus developments in the philosophies of the arts and aesthetics in the latter part of the Victorian Era (1837-1901). By the beginning of the 20th century the development of the craft of links gardening would soon be known as golf course architecture. And before you knew it, leading British golf course architects would be advertising their expertise in landscape design applied to their golf course architectural design services.

Many new inland courses were poorly built during the last decades of the 1800s. They were the result of trial and error methods and were not spared criticism for their lack of creativity. Afterwards, for decades, critics called the inland courses inferior. Even the golf played on inland courses was seen as an inferior type. As criticism grew of dismal courses, the mindset of the taste makers was to improve them with tasteful landscape gardening effects in the British style of aesthetically pleasing, landscape gardening.

Ugliness was not the manner of the English. The so called “Dark Ages” of course design took place from the 1880s into the early years of the 1900s, coincidently with the latter phase of the Victorian Period a period of great activity in the arts in England. Three aesthetic interests that were ingrained in British life at the time influenced the thinking that would improve dull and dismal scenery of inland courses. These were: 1) The English style of landscape gardening, the world leader in the art of landscape; 2) The British National Arts Movement to advance the nation’s aesthetic tastes; and 3) The emerging idea of linkscape (sic) gardening to develop aesthetic tastes and skills of links gardeners. Chapter 2 elaborates upon the events and ideas that would influence the movement to improve golf course scenery and also explores in detail the genesis of landscape effect, an idea that would lead to adornment of courses with innocent but dangerous beauty. Chapters 3 and 4 offer insight into how landscape effect would eventually affect the game of golf and become the major cause of decline of the game.

### *English Landscape Gardening*

British landscape gardening with its scientific and aesthetic advancements that it achieved in the 18th and 19th centuries was a readymade resource for golf course improvements. A useful and outstanding book of landscape gardening of its time was; ***The Art of Landscape Gardening*** (1797) by Humphry Repton(1752-1818). It was a profound oversize 338-page book with dissertations on aesthetics and the contemporary science of landscape gardening. The book discussed the visual pleasures that could be experienced or denied by the positioning of land

scape components. This included water bodies, building or removing hills and land forms, or groups of trees that either hid or opened a line of view of a contained (on-site) scene or a borrowed (off-site) scene. Repton’s book and its contributions to the philosophy of course design was praised and used by the American course designer C. B. Macdonald (1856-1939) in building his famous National Golf Links of America.

Repton’s book also addressed immediate and future effects of trees and plant growth upon landscape aesthetics. More scientific subjects ranged from mechanics of hydraulics and drainage to optical principals, light angles, different effects of reflections on water, and control of light on different garden objects that would influence aesthetic appreciation. Side comments regarding visual aesthetic effects included such informative phrases as, “*light and shade blended too smoothly lacks force; ... too violently contrasted it is hard.*”

A favored, sought-after look and feel of English royal estate gardens, parks, and their landscaping had their beginning in early classic landscapes paintings. These early paintings began with the Florentines, who gave life to a new type of landscape painting in which beauty in nature had its resurrection. As nature was elevated to a high status in Great Britain, paintings that represented moods of nature became favored. The wonders of nature in landscape paintings became the core of British landscape gardening..

The 17th and 18th century European and Italian landscape paintings by such artists as Claude, N. Poussin (1594-1665) and Salvatore Rosa (1615-1673) were enjoying notice in England. By the 18th and 19th centuries, aesthetic tastes of British nobility and landed gentry who had such paintings hanging upon their manor walls wanted the same pleasurable feelings that were engendered in the paintings for their landscape gardens. The landscape paintings by Claude and Poussin depicted a range of moods achieved by the artist’s expression which incorporated nature’s many pleasing forms and colors. Claude’s Apollo and Mercury, typical of these paintings, follows.

The paintings themselves were not copied, but the feelings and expressions of tranquility, harmony, pleasurable idyllic peacefulness, and awe with which they were imbued were prized. The romantic feelings expressed in these landscape paintings became known as the Beautiful style dedicated to ornamenting the land with manicured, soft landscape elements and colors. The elements consisted of peacefully resting hills, quiet water bodies of ponds, lakes, and streams; clumps of trees; terraces; and great expanses of lawns dotted with allegorical artifices. The ideas expressed in the paintings became a major part of the cultural movement in Britain that venerated nature. They were a source of inspiration to the arts and cultural leaders alike such as the writers Horace Walpole (1717-1797), who expressed that he not only wished to be buried in one of Claude’s scenes, but buried alive, and John Ruskin, both of whom depicted moods of the paintings in prose that appealed to mind and soul. Poets John Keats (1795-1821), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), and Johann von Goethe (1749-1832) wrapped emotional longing for such beauty as depicted in the paintings into poetry. Famed artists such as JMW Turner (1775-1851) and John Constable, both intense admirers of Claude, painted superb landscapes. The great British landscape garden designers

Capability Brown (1715-1783) and Humphry Repton followed with their own creative landscapes inspired by Claude and Poussin.

An opposing school would soon preach another ideal of landscape style. This was the Sublime style, which employed more rugged, craggy land forms, deep ravines, mountains, high raging waterfalls, and untamed landscape elements. This style was assimilated from Salvatore Rosa's and similar paintings, which depicted subjects that were of a more rugged and wild state as honestly occurs in nature.

The two styles morphed into a third aesthetic ideal of landscape styles. The Picturesque style arose as a mediator between the two opposing aesthetic ideals, offering possibilities in between them. Promotion of the picturesque style and nature's gifts was preached by a prominent English clergyman. The picturesque camp even furnished visitors to England's lake country with Claude Lorraine viewing frames with built in foreground shadows by which to enjoy scenes of the countryside.

Irrespective of whatever aesthetic ideal, all styles considered variations of the curve shaped line, whether smooth and symmetrical, or ragged, asymmetrical and random, as sacred. The naturalistic, curving lines of the evolving English landscape styles departed from the straight, axial lines that dominated the geometric French landscape style, changing the world of landscape gardening.

In addition to the curved line and scientific advancements in landscape gardening, possibly the greatest contribution to golf was the development of grasses, the most important landscape element of a golf course. Closely shorn grasses first emerged in 17th-century England. Seed from Northern Europe found ideal growing conditions in England and over time was



*Apollo and Mercury, 1645 by Claude Lorraine*

made available for different climates. Willie Park Jr.'s trend-setting course design at Sunningdale Old in 1900 used a hybridized grass seed adapted to heath soils originally developed for the landscape business. Doubters claimed that no turf would grow in this soil. Propitiously, the seed merchants had the research, the know-how, and most conveniently, a proven product, and Willie Park, Jr. had the foresight to use the seed products.

Decades before golf courses had abandoned sheep to maintain shorn grass fairways, the lawn mower was invented. The lawn mower was invented in 1830 to save labor costs for maintaining expansive lawns and grassed landscapes of parks and estates.

The social ambitions of English estate owners who sought beautiful landscapes were aided by the business ambitions of English seed merchants who supplied the estate owners. The desire for elegant lawns has been responsible for the development of the world's most interesting cultivated grass expanses: golf course fairways. Fairways present beautiful, fascinating patterns of lines and shapes, particularly landscape scenes that are viewed from elevated golf tee positions. As early as 1840, Sutton & Sons, Ltd., major English seed growers, established a research facility adjunct to their seed business. Carters Tested Seeds Ltd., United Kingdom, soon followed.

At the beginning of the 19th century, there was little knowledge of grass seeds. The ability to develop seeds suited for various soils was yet to be realized. Sutton and Sons, Ltd. was the first in England to supply grass prescriptions, initially for agriculture, to suit various soils. Sutton and Sons was so highly regarded that in 1855, by Royal Command, Sutton's furnished grasses for gardens at Osborne House. The prescriptions were the forerunner of desirable seed mixtures for parks and sports lawns. (1)

Robert H. K. Browning (1884-1957) in his book *A History of Golf, The Royal and Ancient Game* (1955), has given an account of the use of grass seeds in advancement of golf course construction at two famous English clubs: "A tremendous step forward was the discovery that the roughest of heathland could be converted into turf within the space of a few months. Sunningdale, sown with seed in September 1900, took exactly twelve months to be fit for play. Four years later Walton Heath was got ready in eight months. The heath at Sunningdale was exceptionally poor and when it was sown there was no lack of knowing people who jeered at the folly of imagining that grass could be got to grow there."

The Sutton and Carter companies, supplying demand for grass seed, employed course design consultants who designed, laid out, and assisted in building courses for U.K. and U.S. golf clubs well into the first several decades of the 20th century. Not only were their grass seeds sought, but also their expertise on all subjects related to grass. The subjects of their expertise consisted of soil, drainage, grass slopes, preparatory work, weed seeds in soil, enriching the soil, surface preparation, selection of seeds, sowing, bird scares, worm casts, watering, mow



ing, rolling, destruction of weeds, top dressing, moss, fungoid diseases, and even construction plans for putting greens.

Martin H. F. Sutton's *Book of the Links, A Symposium on Golf* (1912) covered subjects noted above as well as work that would be associated with organic topics today. The fact that famous U.K. course designers were on the payrolls of Sutton and Carter facilitated sales and transfer of proven grass know-how from landscape gardening to golf courses. Seed and grass was a large expense of course construction. By the early 1900s, the cost for seed would run from \$5,000 to \$7,500 per course. By 1920, the USGA would establish its own turf grass research entity. There are now thousands and thousands of species and cultivars of bluegrass and bent grass that been selected and hybridized in the United States. Rutgers University, typical of other research entities, has perfected 7,000 kinds of bluegrass. (2)

The development of grasses and other plants by British botanists made great contributions to the science of botany that was unexcelled by any other country in the world. English botanists went to the ends of the earth to collect plant species and in collaboration with Swedish botanists, using their classification methods, catalogued thousands and thousands of plant specimens. Out of this collection there are thousands of trees, shrubs, grasses, and plants that have become available to golf courses for their practical and aesthetic qualities. Further scientific research, cataloguing, and propagation of these specimens by landscape nursery people have provided golf courses worldwide with access to successful landscape products with related scientific information. Plant information addressed subjects of height, spreading, soil, climate, care, spacing, leafing, color, exposure, moisture, and thinning; all vital to maintenance, economics and enjoyment of golf course scenery.

### ***The National Arts Movement to Improve the Nation's Taste***

Great Britain was one of the major leaders of the Industrial Revolution. Advanced as the country was in the manufacturing arts, many critical observers were concerned about the British people's lagging sense of taste when it came to design of their industrial products. An exception, of course, was England's predominance in the art of landscape gardening. Prince Albert (1819-1861), Queen Victoria's (1819-1901) consort, was the benefactor of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Although the Great Exhibition was a success, much of the English displays of goods were criticized for their inferior taste in design compared to those of other countries. One English critic stated, "*Although the objective was to advance our national taste. . . Nothing was comparable to British hardware or gratings. . . There was, however a 'decided inferiority' in national taste when it came to ornamental design; the way in which these useful, well-crafted objects were made 'beautiful' through decoration.*" (3) The superior, more graceful and elegant products of competing nations that were on display concerned the country's leaders. Ironically, The Great Exhibition of 1851 would aid advancement of the country's sense of art appreciation. Soon thereafter, Parliament established laws for the Provincial Schools of Art. By 1864, there were 70,000 poor (children of the working class) being educated in the "*principles of art to improve the nation's sense of taste and to better compete in international markets for sale of products*". (4) It was logical that within the next several decades this burgeoning culture of art scholars would become pliant supporters for the improvement of the looks of inartistic inland courses, at least not oppose the ideas as sug



*The Great Exhibition, 1851, The Crystal Palace*

gested by influential golf commentators, aesthetes, and writers. These aesthetes were the likes of Hutchinson, Simpson, Colt, MacKenzie, and Wethered and others who drilled down into the subject convincing readers that their golf courses need not be dismal, dull, or ugly.

### ***Linkscape Gardening and the Evolution of Landscape Effect***

Where do artistic ideas come from? They come from nature and the works of others. The works of others may be objects of art or philosophical dissertations. The 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), considered by some to be the greatest philosopher since the Greeks, has dominated philosophy for the last several centuries, including philosophy of aesthetics. Kant's theories were embraced by artists, aestheticians and philosophers of the Victorian Era and exerted a consistent influence over much of the thinking within the various movements and styles of the Victorian Era. These included the Pre Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Arts and Crafts movements. Kant's theory of aesthetics in general is, ". . . a work of fine art must be unique (unique meaning different, like no other), representative of no law, rules of proportions, scale, light, color differentiations, formula or precedent, only the artists' genius and his individuality." (5)

This concept of genius, put forth by Kant's Critique of Judgment (1790), would have a profound influence upon ornament. The widely accepted Kantian theory would eventually require creative individuality from builders who desired to work in the course construction trade. Use of the word "*genius*" by Kant and other theorists meant "*natural endowment*," not today's common usage connoting special or superior skills. A contemporary example of Kant's affirmation of genius and its meaning for landscape effect is to be found in the bunker banks at Calusa Pines, Florida. The bunkers have sand flashes up to 20 feet high because the designer was compelled to be different. The designer in an interview said of his bunker design, "*Sometimes, to create something special you must take a chance and be different.*" (6) "*To be different*" aptly characterizes the concept of landscape effect, a contrived aesthetic creation, a concept of which its validation lies in its genesis.

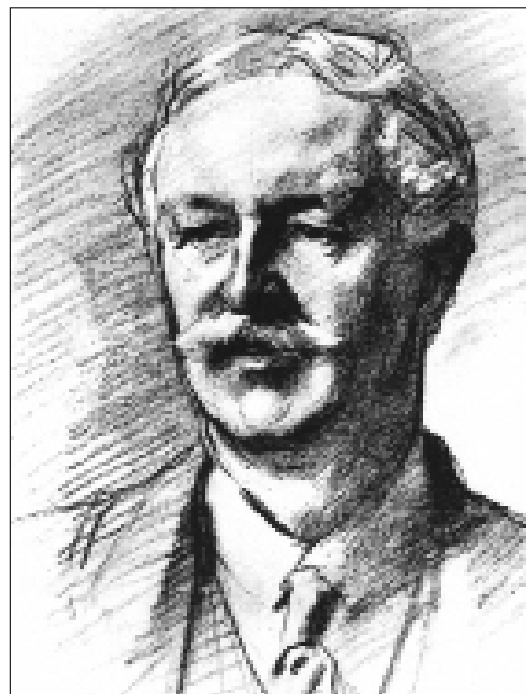
The most convincing material that gives validity to the idea of “*landscape effect*” is the genesis of its idea, the original thinking and the concept behind the idea- that an artist’s achievements would evolve from the artist’s individually endowed spirit—their genius. For the first time in the history of Western art, genius had become the quintessential characteristic of the artist, and originality was its most important characteristic. The artist’s genius “. . . propelled their freedom of artistic self-expression from worldly constraints of conformance to religious and state clients’ dictates into a realm of intellect from which they were to instruct—rather than pander to conventional taste.” (7) As golf course design evolved from a craft to a profession, ornamental landscape effects consisting of pleasing forms and variety of compositions of landscape components would soon be manifest in golf course landscapes. And the race was on by course designers to express their genius, establish their reputations and meet the imperatives of society for ornament. The imperatives were to make courses beautiful, driven by critics, reformers, proselytizers of pleasurable scenic beauty and ultimately by non-players’ and their organizations’ interests and motivations.

Horace Hutchinson, more than any other person, was responsible for introducing landscape architectural aesthetics into the movement that would add pleasing “links gardening” to golf courses. In the year 1890, Hutchinson would write, “*Scenery is not of course, golf; but golf is a pleasanter recreation when played in the midst of pleasant scenery,*” (8) an idea that would revolutionize golf. Soon thereafter Hutchinson was writing, convincing his readers of the virtues of pleasant scenery while lamenting shortcomings of “*linkscape gardeners who lacked an artistic eye in pursuing their new craft of links gardening.*”(9)

The pursuit to improve the scenery of the course gained remarkable support in the beginning decades of the 1900s. The most notable English magazines and newspapers that covered the subject of course design were *Country Life*, *The London Times*, and *Golf Illustrated*. They were leaders in their fields and employed the best writers, who in turn invited leading designers to contribute articles on new design ideas. Hutchinson and *Country Life* provided forums within which they would commend the new work, courses and ideas of the contributors, supplying praise from time to time.

Hutchinson’s ideas of pleasant scenery, stated in his 1906 golf book, were also similarly expressed in contributions by his followers. Two famous course designers, Herbert Fowler (1856-1941) and James Braid (1870-1950), related their experiences with the aesthetics of bunkers at Walton Heath. Fowler said of the symmetrically placed greenside bunkers: “. . .it does not “look” so formal if one bunker is some little distance in front of the green, and another starts. . .” Braid said: “. . .raise bunker banks to make them ‘look’ as natural as possible.” Historian F.W. Hawtree observed and concluded “Landscape effect has crept into the (designer’s) vocabulary for the first time.” (10) Hawtree’s phrase “*landscape effect*” is used throughout this book to describe a golf landscape component that has been contrived for the purpose of achieving a certain aesthetic “look.”

Hutchinson trained for the bar and later studied in London to be an artist. While in pursuit of his interests he became influenced by the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, (PRB),



*Horace Hutchinson Portrait by  
John Singer Sargent*

founded 1848, and its second-generation principals.

The PRB was dedicated to a style of detailed representational art and vivid colors of beautification of nature. Hutchinson wrote that the PRB objective was “. . . to present on canvas what they saw in nature.”

The most famous art critic, author, and lecturer of the Victorian era, John Ruskin, (1819-1900), actively supported the second-generation PRB artists with his influential writings and lectures. In his book, *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), Ruskin declared that the aesthetic was the overriding significance: “*A building is not truly a work of architecture unless it is in some way adorned.*” Hutchinson’s ideas of scenic enjoyment of the golf course by artistic adornment neatly conformed to his early PRB art instruction and Ruskin’s architectural adornment principals.

Truly a Renaissance man, Hutchinson was there to lead the way in bringing golf courses out of the dark ages. Hutchinson addressed the bigger picture of art enhancing life, of which he said, “. . . a bigger gift. . .the appreciation that there is actually beauty which can make a difference in our lives.” An honorable position, but unfortunately misunderstood by the following legions of course designers who have created beautiful landscape effects only to bring them into the line of play and create obstacles to enjoyment of the game for the over whelming majority of players.

Hutchinson easily grasped the natural association of landscape gardening with an emerging art that he named and spelled “*linkscape*,” and invented similar phrases to help describe the concept. He elevated a concept of links gardening that eventually became known as golf course architecture. Ideas that he wrote about had their foundation in English landscape gardening, an art that had benefited from centuries of scientific and aesthetic development. He encouraged the use of advanced technology in course design but seemed to be more mindful of aesthetics, suggesting their importance. He wrote: “. . .as we become more scientific we may fall into a worse pit of becoming altogether undramatic . . .but unless that dramatic interest is kept before the eye of the linkscape gardener he may turn out a good, but deadly dull job.” (11)

Hutchinson gave up the bar due to poor health, where upon his interests returned to golf. He authored 50 books, he wrote a weekly column for two decades as golf editor for the popular magazine *Country Life*, established in 1897. He was an esthete and would become the world’s preeminent golf architecture theorist. Although Hutchinson’s writings would encourage the new course builders to adapt ideas of landscape gardening to improve the scenic aspects of the course, Hutchinson would lament some links gardeners’ lack of artistry, stating, “*how few links gardeners had the gift of an artistic eye.*” (12) Eventually the great body of