

# NORCAL'S MACKENZIE INFLUENCE

Over the last 10 years I have had the pleasure of working at Meadow Club in Fairfax, CA. On my first visit to the course I had an interview with David Sexton for the Assistant Superintendent position. During the interview we discussed the restoration for the golf course that was in its first year. I mentioned to David that I had an interest in Alister MacKenzie and golf architecture and he opened up a drawer in his desk and showed me an original manuscript of the "Spirit of St. Andrews." I knew without a doubt that I had found the job that I thought only existed in my dreams. How many Superintendents have something like that just sitting in their desk?

Over the next couple of years as we continued to restore the course I started digging a little deeper into the early history of the course, the members, and Alister MacKenzie. I found some correspondence that covered the formation of the Meadow Club and the involvement of Robert Hunter in introducing the club to Alister MacKenzie. I then dug deep into the San Francisco Chronicle and found some other mentions of the club and came across information on other area clubs. As I continued my research I kept coming across new and interesting information on many Bay area clubs that I thought I was familiar with.

My focus on Meadow Club continues--along with an interest in the golf courses of the Bay area from 1890-1930. I have always been interested in the Golden Age of golf course design that was prominent from 1925-1930. California was rich with many golf courses designed by William Bell Sr., George C. Thomas, Alister MacKenzie, and Max Behr during this period. Yet, as I starting digging into the golf courses that came before these courses I became intrigued by their design and seemingly lost history of many golf courses for the period from the 1890s-1920s.

As I continued my research I was put in contact with Bob Beck a noted historian with an interest in MacKenzie and Marion Hollins of Pasatiempo fame. Beck had started the Alister MacKenzie Chronology with Nick Leefe of The Alwoodley Club in England and Alister MacKenzie Society. The Chronology is an attempt to figure out what courses MacKenzie was involved with, where he was, and what he was doing. It started when Beck was trying to figure out when MacKenzie was at Pasatiempo and it just grew from there with additional information provided by Leefe and The Alwoodley Golf Club. I took over for Beck in 2007 and have produced two revisions that have

added greatly to what we already know about MacKenzie. We are also compiling photos of MacKenzie, a list of all the courses that he worked on in one fashion or another, and his writings. The research on the Chronology is ongoing and a number of other researchers from Australia, England, and Scotland are taking part in retracing the life a work of Alister MacKenzie.

In the fall of this year, Claremont Country Club will be hosting the Alister MacKenzie Society. The Society is made up of 15 clubs from around the world that represents the work of MacKenzie and his many partners and celebrates that fact with an annual meeting at one of the participating clubs. Since last fall I have been working in conjunction with a group of undergraduate students from the University of California under the guidance of Professor Donald McQuade on a research project on Robert Hunter, Alister MacKenzie, and Claremont CC. We are hopeful that we can find some new and interesting information that will be part of a presentation given at the Alister MacKenzie Society Meeting.

Giving my introduction and an overview of my interest in research, I will be doing a column for the forthcoming issues of our chapter's newsletter. My focus will be on the history of golf in the Bay Area and beyond. I have a number of topics that I can choose from, but I am very interested in answering questions that you may have as well.

Please feel free to contact me at:

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## PHOTO QUIZ

I love photo quizzes and will feature one in each column that I do. Can anyone figure out the course in this picture? Hint: This course hosted an amateur event in 1932 and one of the competitor's preparation for the event was climbing Mt. Tamalpais in Marin County!

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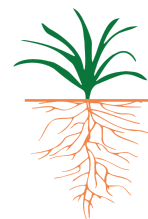


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