

superintendent Peter Smith, a Shinnecock Indian and a second-generation superintendent at the course. The Smiths' forefathers built the course in the late 19th century.

Michaud says he didn't feel pressure to replace Smith, who had been the superintendent since 1980 and grew up working on the course under his father Elmer, Shinnecock's superintendent for 34 years.

The relationship between Smith and members had soured, and it was time for Smith to move on. He took a job as superintendent at Foxwoods Resort, but Smith died suddenly from a heart attack in 2002.

The news of Smith's death shocked Michaud. He respected Smith and notes that Smith oversaw two successful U.S. Opens at Shinnecock in 1986 and 1995.

"He was such a lovely guy," Michaud says. "He lit up the room when he walked in it. We were sad to see him go."

Michaud and his wife divorced more than a year ago. His ex-wife and two sons — 13-year-old Mark and 10-year-old Jordan — live in Rochester. Michaud tries to visit his boys often. His face beams when he talks about them.

Michaud admits he's been fortunate to be in the right place at the right time in his career path. But he also says tenacity has played a big part in his success.

"I've aggressively pursued everything I've obtained," he says. "I don't sit around and wait for something to happen."

Throughout his career, Michaud sought to learn from his peers. He says Alex taught him the basics of golf course maintenance at Grand Cypress as well as how to get projects done efficiently.

"He always had a sense of urgency," Michaud says of his first boss. "Everything we did on the course every day was important, and it was urgent that we get things done the best we could."

Michaud says his Grand Cypress experience prepared him well. "After working there and seeing the massive amount of work that had to be done in such a short time, I've never been intimidated by anything."

Michaud says Tim Moraghan, director of championship agronomy for the USGA, influenced his career greatly. He met Moraghan in 1989 at Oak Hill during the U.S. Open. Michaud then spent ample time with Moraghan while volunteering at several other U.S. Opens. He says he learned a lot just by listening to and watching Moraghan.

Moraghan says Michaud is well-respected in the industry.

"He's the only guy I know who has worked on both coasts at two of the best golf courses in the world and turned them into wonderful products," Moraghan says. "He's low-key and takes his job seriously."

Continued on page 42

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What's better — tending turf at Pebble Beach or Shinnecock? "I like Shinnecock much better," Michaud answers without hesitation. "You look at the topography of this land and the contour changes and how natural everything is. It's a great place for a golf course."

Michaud's first order of business when he came to Shinnecock was to build a new maintenance facility to improve the operation's efficiency. The previous facility, at 6,000 square feet, was outdated.

The new maintenance facility is bright and clean and three times the size of the old one. Michaud says the new maintenance facility, as well as a new line of John Deere equipment, has improved maintenance immensely. "It has made all the difference in the world."

Michaud and his crew have been busy the past four years with a few major projects.

Shinnecock Hills Golf Club can compare with any American design. See Geoff Shackelford's story on page 46.

Pros Will Have to Deal With Gusty Wind at U.S. Open

Who will win the 104th U.S. Open Championship? Mark Michaud, superintendent of Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, where the event is set from June 14 to June 20, says he wouldn't mind if a cat named Tiger wins it.

Michaud, who readied Pebble Beach Golf Links for the U.S. Open in 2000 but left the course for Shinnecock six months before the event took place, is still blown away by Tiger Woods' performance in winning that tournament. Woods was 13-under par for the tournament. His closest competitor was 2-over par.

"Pebble Beach was as tough as you can imagine a golf course playing," says Michaud, who spent seven years at the course from 1992 to 1999. "It was hard and firm."

And then Tiger tore it up.

"When something like that happens, you don't give up, but you wonder how much control you really have [as superintendent]," Michaud says.

Whoever wins this year's U.S. Open will have to deal with the infamous Shinnecock wind, which gusts up to 20 miles per hour in the late morning.

"If I was playing, I would hope to tee

off as early as possible," Michaud says.

"The guys who get out the earliest will have the advantage."

Shinnecock will play 6,997 yards at par 70. It's not a big-hitter's course.

"There's not a hole where you can rear back and hit it as far as you can, and then try to hit a wedge into the green," Michaud adds. "You really have to think about what's the big shot."

"It looks British and plays British," is how some describe Shinnecock. Indeed, Michaud hopes for windy, cool and misty conditions, not unlike the weather often seen at British Opens.

Michaud doesn't want the course to look too green on television. "I'm really looking for more of an off color, similar to the Scottish courses," he says. "I want it to play firm and fast."

Shinnecock's greens are 75 percent *Poa annua* and 25 percent bentgrass. Michaud keeps the greens, which average about 5,700 square feet, running between 11 feet and 11.5 feet on the Stimpmeter. Anything faster, combined with the greens' tricky contours and the stiff wind, will limit pin placements, Michaud says.

— Larry Aylward, Editor

Michaud and his crew finished one project begun by Smith and his crew.

Between holes on the course, masses of vines, trees and brush had grown so thick and high that they acted like walls and cut off air circulation throughout the course, not to mention hole-to-hole views.

"Holes were becoming isolated from one another," Michaud says. "So we just started getting in the woods and cleaning them out."

Michaud also oversaw a massive renovation of the course's 164 bunkers. The goal was to get the bunkers back to the way they looked in the 1930s when Flynn designed them.

The grass faces on several bunkers grew down over the years so golfers couldn't see them in the distance. Michaud says Flynn's original intention was for the bunkers to intimidate golfers. But if the golfers couldn't see them, they wouldn't fear them.

"We have a club historian who preserved a lot of course pictures," Michaud says. "We were able to [restore] the bunkers with their natural jagged look. We've re-established the intimidation factor."

The thrill of preparing a golf course for a Major can be addicting. But when the event is over — and the camera crews leave town and the corporate tents disappear — there are often voids in the hearts of the superintendent and his crew members, who spent several years readying the course for the tournament.

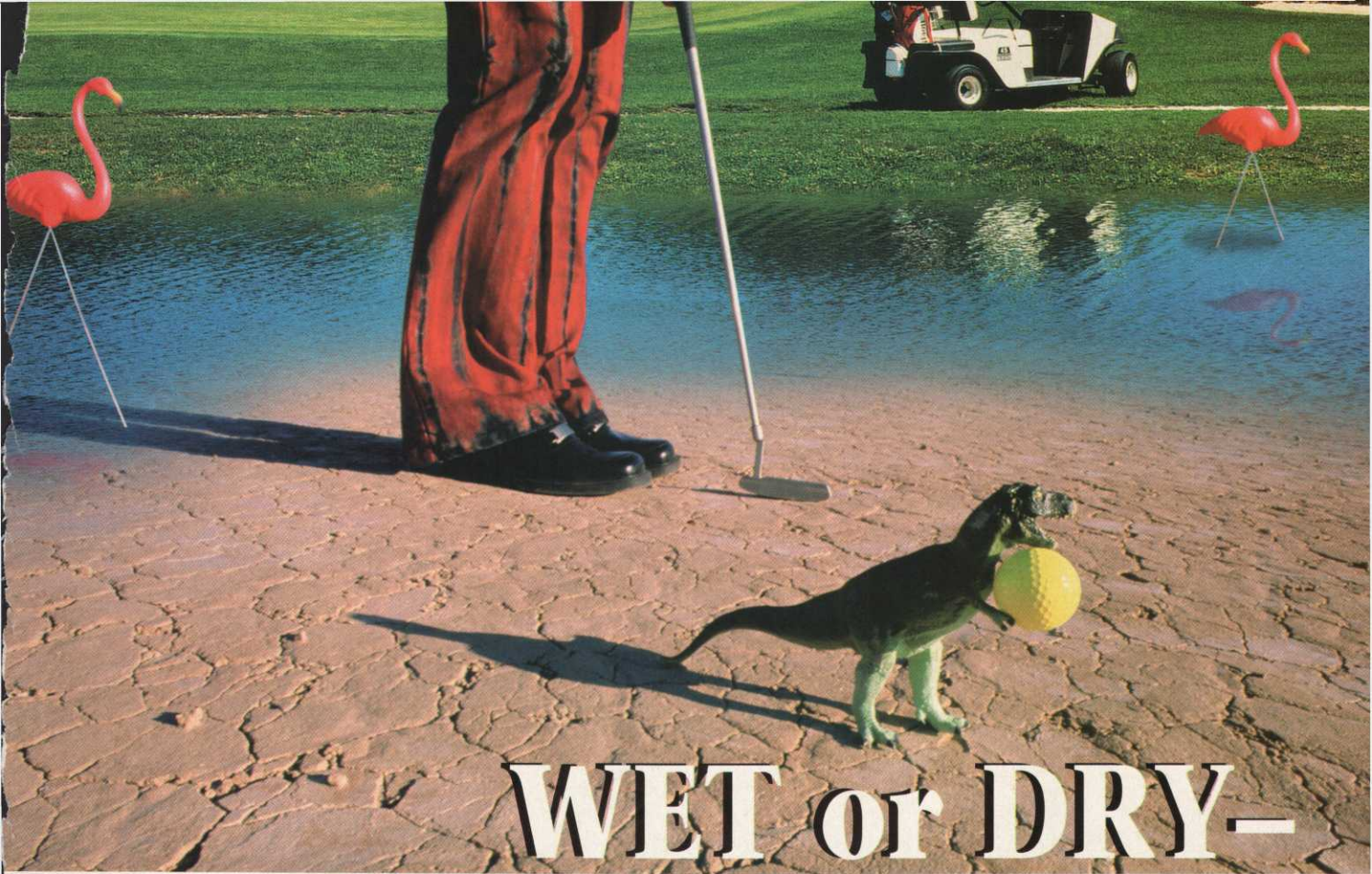
But Michaud believes his life will be fine when the U.S. Open ends. "I look forward to the challenge of getting the course back into shape as fast as we can for our membership after the Open," he says in upbeat tone.

Michaud says he won't suffer big-tournament withdrawal. He'll still volunteer at other Majors as he has done in the past.

"I'll get my tournament fix somewhere else," he says, adding that he expects the U.S. Open to return to Shinnecock in about seven years.

First and foremost, Michaud wants the course to be in great condition for the members. Also high on the list is his staff — he wants his crew members to be content and stimulated in their jobs. "I want to return the favor of their hard work and dedication by educating and prepar-

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Michaud Has Made His Mark



Michaud oversaw renovation of the 164 bunkers on the golf course. The goal was to get the bunkers back to the way they looked in the 1930s.

Continued from page 42

ing them to be superintendents someday,” Michaud says.

Chris Dalhamer, who worked for Michaud at Pebble Beach, says Michaud prepared him well. Dalhamer, superintendent of Spyglass Hill Golf Course at Pebble Beach, says Michaud taught him the value of a strong work ethic, among other things.

“He knows what it takes to maintain a top-notch golf course, and he’s not afraid to get out there and get dirty to make it happen,” Dalhamer says. “I learned many, many valuable things from him, and I still look to him for advice frequently.”

Michaud admits he’s a hands-on superintendent, but he knows he would not be successful without his 21-person crew. He likes to keep a loose atmosphere around the maintenance facility. Workers laugh and joke. However, Michaud is not afraid to keep them on the straight and narrow. “He can be very direct when he wants to be,” says Frank Hancock, Michaud’s assistant.

It’s top of mind for Michaud to let members of his crew know how much he appreciates their

work. He does that through simple actions — by throwing barbecues or purchasing workers new hats from the pro shop.

Hancock has worked with Michaud for seven years, including 2.5 years at Pebble Beach. Michaud asked Hancock to join him when he joined Shinnecock, and the Indiana native jumped at the chance. Hancock says Michaud is one of the top superintendents in the world. “I’ve learned a lot just by watching him interact with people,” says Hancock, noting that Michaud has excellent people skills.

Michaud has done a lot and seen a lot in his golf course maintenance career — and he’s far from done.

“I feel like I’ve been through five superintendents’ careers,” he says, only half-joking. “Some guys in this industry would have to live 100 years to experience what I’ve experienced in 10 years.”

Tom Alex says he’s not surprised his former pupil ended up as superintendent at two of the greatest golf courses in the world. He also says success hasn’t gone to Michaud’s head.

“He’s the same old Mark Michaud who worked for me 20 years ago,” Alex says. “He’s as down to earth as anybody you know. It was fun to be a little part of his life. I’m really happy for him.”

Driving in his utility vehicle across the rolling terrain that comprises Shinnecock Hills, Michaud scans the course against the horizon. Shinnecock, with its clusters of tall, rustic rough, is hailed as one of America’s few authentic links-style courses. It’s hallowed ground in golf circles.

“I thought I was at my career peak when I was at Pebble Beach,” Michaud says softly. “But now I feel like I’m at my career peak again. I have no desire to ever leave this golf course. They’re going to have to kick me out of here.” ■

You can reach Aylward, the author of this story, at l aylward@advanstar.com.

“He’s the same old Mark Michaud who worked for me 20 years ago.” — Tom Alex

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The Best OF THE Best?

Many architecture aficionados insist that Shinnecock Hills could be the most complete design in the world

**STORY AND PHOTOS
BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD,
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR**

Shinnecock's par-3 seventh hole is arguably the most severe and unusual Redan derivative ever created.

Shinnecock Hills Golf Club can compare with any American design. Pair it up against any other course in hole-by-hole match play and Shinnecock, located in Southampton, N.Y., on Long Island, will close out the proceedings by the 15th tee.

Pine Valley could take the course to sudden death, as might Cypress Point (but we know who will win the argument about finishing holes between those two). Some counter that Shinnecock's design is *too* perfect. Is that even possible?

Such a claim implies the course is too polished and lacks the quirky breather holes that make repeat rounds fun for everyone. And even Shinnecock admirers concede that the course is relentless with encroaching fairways on a windy links-like site.

But most architecture aficionados insist that Shinnecock is the most complete design in the world, calling on every conceivable shot. And until recently, few people realized who engineered this American masterpiece.

A late bloomer

In 1891, golf professional Willie Davis laid out 12 holes that established Shinnecock Hills as one of the first American courses. The club's original pro, Willie Dunn, extended the course into the first full 18-holer around 1894 when Shinnecock was about to become one of the USGA's five founding member clubs.

With coffin-shaped bunkers and holes bisected by the nearby Long Island Railroad line, Shinnecock looked nothing like the great links of Scotland. And at just under 5,000 yards, it was short even by late-19th century standards.

Following the 1896 U.S. Open at Shinnecock, design features were updated based on competitor comments. But the reworked 5,800-yard course still did not take full advantage of the grassy, rolling Southampton terrain. It was land of such beauty that it would soon be made famous by American impressionist William Merritt Chase's idyllic paintings portraying socialites strolling through the grassy fields overlooking Peconic Bay.

Though the original design wove its way through the sandy scrublands with Stanford White's world-famous clubhouse looming over the course, the golf holes proved forgettable.

Matters were made worse by the odd relationship Shinnecock developed with its new neighbor, the National Golf Links of America. That ingenious design slowly emerged under C.B. Macdonald's guidance until its completion in late 1910.

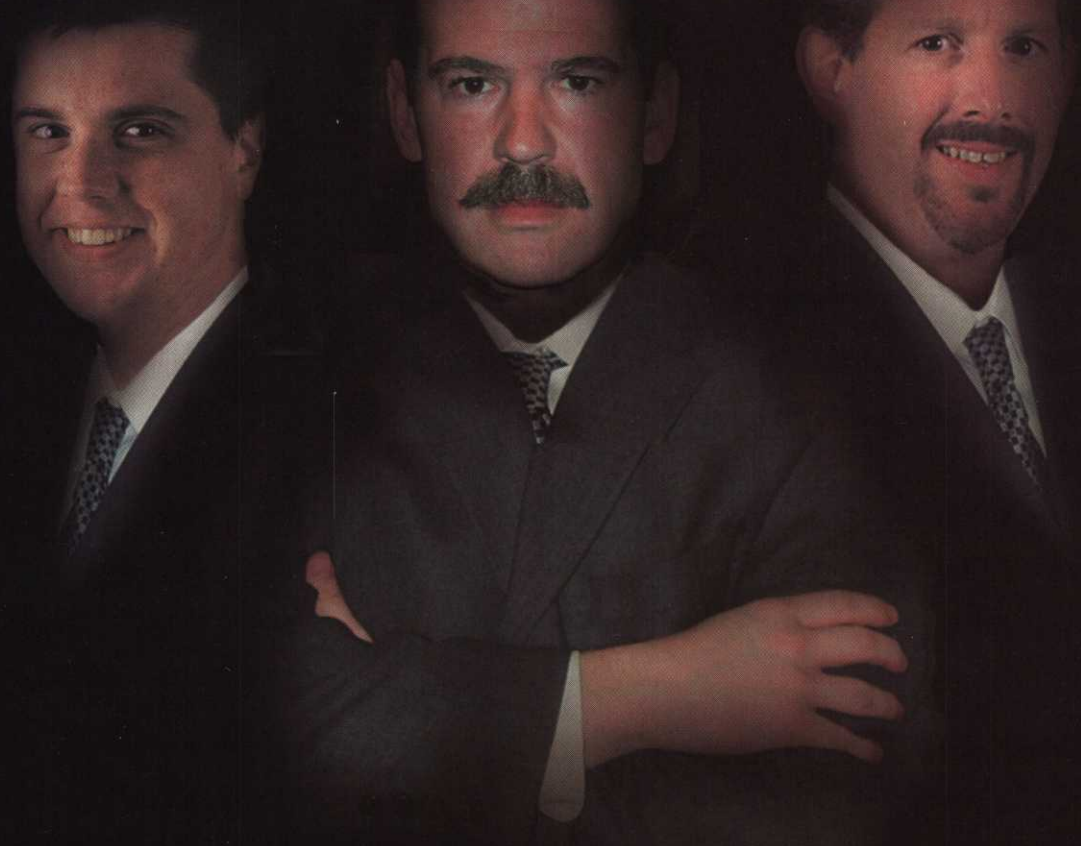
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FRANK ANDORKA

PAT JONES

LARRY AYLWARD



"As far back as I can remember, I've always wanted to write about greenkeeping."

Frank Andorka, Cleveland, OH, 2004

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Continued from page 46

Macdonald tried to buy Shinnecock Hills to create his dream course (the membership obviously rejected him). Since National Golf Links was an architectural marvel, it siphoned many of Shinnecock's members and, most egregiously of all, hired away its renowned chef.

Motivated by the National's emergence and the obvious design issues fostered when fairways played through the Long Island Railroad line (not to mention the annoying grass fires ignited by locomotives), Shinnecock Hills enlisted Macdonald and his engineering associate Seth Raynor to build 13 new holes while keeping five of Dunn's originals.

The new-look Shinnecock opened in 1917 and lasted about 10 years, until word of a soon-to-be-built highway required the members to consider yet another redesign. The club had grown weary of fellow member Macdonald's strong-willed and authoritative personality. And since Raynor died in 1926, the redesign job went to the design firm of Toomey and Flynn.

In like Flynn

Emboldened by an endorsement from renowned architect C.H. Alison after the Englishmen thoroughly examined William Flynn's plans for Shinnecock

From 1928 to 1931, William Flynn created the back nine, including the 10th hole.

Hills, the club moved forward with construction of 12 new holes on 108 newly acquired acres. From 1928 to 1930, Flynn created the entire back nine along with today's fourth, fifth and sixth holes.

When he completed the holes, members played six remaining Macdonald-Raynor holes south of the clubhouse. (These holes would later be taken out of the rotation after Flynn redesigned today's one to three and seven to nine sets.) The final remodeling phase took place over the winter of 1930-31, and Flynn charged the club a total of \$32,250 for his services.

William Gordon, who went on to create several renowned courses, supervised the Shinnecock Hills reconstruction. Future architect Dick Wilson worked under Gordon and later consulted for the club, but Wilson took credit for designing the course when he consulted for the club during the 1960s.

Flynn retained only one hole from the old Macdonald-Raynor course, today's devilish par-3 seventh. It's arguably the most severe and unusual Redan derivative created, leading some to wonder if Flynn didn't touch up even that hole.

Most Redans are crafted out of terrain

suiting for the sweeping right-to-left ground shot. Shinnecock's Redan literally pops up out of a field. Yet it works beautifully, calling on an aerial attack that still rewards the player using the severe right-side slope.

Flynn's 1931 version of the course measured 6,755 yards, played to a par 73 and featured virtually no trees. The nines as viewers will see them during this year's U.S. Open were originally reversed, but switched when golfers got a taste of the brutal opening holes that will surely lead to swollen back-nine scores again this year.

The nines were mysteriously reversed again in the early 1950s until some wise soul settled on today's sequence in 1953. Other minor changes occurred, and nearly 400 yards of length were added.

Flynn's original design featured more extensive bunkering along with sandy waste areas, since replaced by the tan native grasses seen today (look hard and you can see the outlines of some of the old hazards). Flynn's design also included much wider playing corridors than we'll see during the Open. But his brilliantly conceived greens, bunker placement and overall genius remain intact.

Who was William Flynn?

Born in Massachusetts where he played high school golf with amateur great Francis Ouimet, Flynn designed his first course at 19, then moved to the Philadelphia area and worked under Hugh Wilson at Merion Golf Club. After helping with the original Merion East Course's construction prior to World War I and staying on briefly as the superintendent, Flynn supervised a 1924 redesign that led to the version of the American classic we know today.

Flynn started his own practice prior to the war, joining with engineer Howard Toomey, who handled engineering and construction. They also worked on other

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Flynn's design style was fairly simple, but slightly outlandish at select times.

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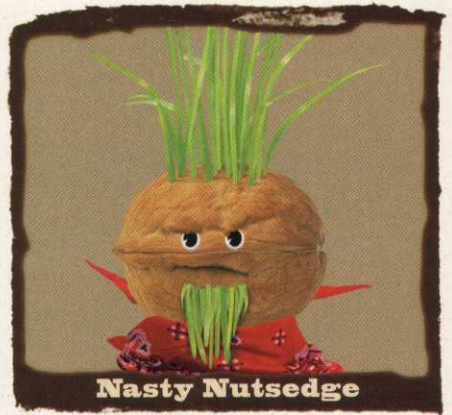
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The Best of the Best?

Continued from page 48

design projects under the Toomey and Flynn Construction Engineers banner.

Flynn's design portfolio is impressive: Besides Shinnecock Hills, he planned the underrated Kittansett in southern Massachusetts, Cherry Hills Country Club in Denver, Atlantic City Country Club in New Jersey, the Cascades Course at The Homestead Resort in Virginia and two courses named The Country Club (the first is a renowned original Flynn creation near Cleveland; the second is his rarely heralded redesign of The Country Club in Brookline, Mass.).

In Pennsylvania, Flynn's many classic designs are better appreciated thanks to several recent restorations: Lehigh Country Club in Allentown; Lancaster Country Club in central Pennsylvania; and Manufacturers, Huntington Valley and Philadelphia country clubs in the city of brotherly love.

Typically dressed in plus fours and sporting a strange clutter of vertical hair

à la Kramer from *Seinfeld*, Flynn's design style was fairly simple, but slightly outlandish at select times. It's hard to tell looking at his courses today that he was anything but a very conservative designer whose courses were solid and large in scale. His bunkers featured subtle and irregular boundaries, a stark contrast to the capes and bays seen in the work of his friends and fellow Philadelphian's A.W. Tillinghast and George C. Thomas.

The quirky side of Flynn went unnoticed because many sandy features have been grassed over or trees have suffocated Flynn's courses to the point that they are unrecognizable. However, he was never shy in his use of vast sandy areas or envisioning dramatic alternate route designs.

His dynamic plans were meticulously drawn, yet Flynn insisted "the ultimate character of the course must be developed as the construction progresses." Flynn was also notoriously precise with budgets.

Flynn preached strategic design with an emphasis on the incorporation of nat-

ural features. He never embraced the all-out quirkiness that his counterparts Tillinghast and Thomas enjoyed, but Flynn did base his strategy on the same principles that fed his mentor's success — place greens at peninsula-like angles with room for a run-up approach, and let players decide how much risk they want to take with approach shots.

"The best way to whet the appetite and improve the game of any golfer is to offer an incentive and provide a reward for high-class play," Flynn wrote in the late 1920s.

Shinnecock: America's masterpiece?

Many of golf's movers and shakers say Shinnecock Hills hails as one of America's greatest designs.

"It's about as good as we have," says retired USGA Executive Director Frank Hannigan, who was largely responsible for convincing the executive committee to bring the 1986 U.S. Open to the course.

Architect Tom Doak wrote in his *Confidential Guide to Golf Courses* that Flynn's design "is one of the game's great examinations in using the wind, as the two prevailing winds (which are 90 degrees opposed), combined with the frequent changes of direction in the routing, ensure that you'll have your fill of the wind from all quarters." Doak also noted that Shinnecock Hills is "a great course to play every day, as well as a proven championship venue. Not many courses can claim both."

USGA Championship agronomist Tim Moraghan says he "would be hard pressed to find a combined package of better playing conditions, layout and challenge" than Shinnecock Hills.

Yet Flynn was too modest to tout his own work. He said, "The principal consideration of the architect is to design his course in such a way as to hold the interest of the player from the first tee to the last green and to present the problems of the various holes in such a way that they register in the player's mind as he stands on the tee or on the fairway for the shot to the green."

No course in America reflects such a lofty goal better than Shinnecock Hills. ■

U.S. Open Shines Light on Shinnecock

Oak Hill Country Club and Inverness Club were redesigned for the U.S. Open, with generally negative reviews for the work undertaken. Other clubs such as Olympia Fields Country Club (low winning score) and the Olympic Club (dreadful USGA setup) will be remembered by events that had little to do with the quality of the courses themselves.

But Shinnecock Hills stands out as the one design "discovered" and revered thanks to its decision to host the U.S. Open.

Flying well under the radar as many of today's most revered courses did during the mid-20th century, Shinnecock Hills accepted the 1977 Walker Cup. Then-USGA executive director Harry Easterly also wondered if the course could host the Open and assigned part-time staffer Frank Hannigan to look into the possibility.

When Hannigan became executive director in 1983, he appointed Long Island native Tony Zirpoli to figure out how to make the Shinnecock project work. Zirpoli solved key logistical issues while also realiz-

ing it was time for the USGA to run its own event instead of relying on the host club for help with outside-the-ropes issues.

The USGA paid the club \$450,000 to rent the course, and the 1986 Open was officially awarded to Shinnecock Hills. It was an enormous success and created a blueprint for future Open operations.

Then-Shinnecock Hills superintendent, the late Pete Smith, and former USGA agronomist Al Radko guided the club through that first Open despite limited resources.

"I almost died when on Labor Day weekend of 1985 we came within hours of losing all the greens," Hannigan says. "It got to 98 degrees or so, and there was nobody from the crew [at the course] on the weekend."

By contrast, Shinnecock Hills will get \$5 million to host the 2004 U.S. Open. In return, the USGA is getting a far more polished course from the notoriously frugal membership, thanks to the efforts of superintendent Mark Michaud and his crew.

— **Geoff Shackelford, Contributing Editor**