



The Golf Chronicles

The story of golf at Reading Country Club and in Berks County

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What does this cloud look like? An anteater? Ireland? A Klingon battle cruiser? The 12th green at Reading Country Club?

Perhaps the latter. Alex Findlay shaped the greens based on clouds he sketched while laying flat on his back.

‘Scuse Me While I Sketch the Sky

It’s a bird. It’s a plane. It’s the 12th green.

The golf course architect works on a vast outdoor sketch pad. His job – and I am using the pronoun his for convenience because the architect could just as easily be a her – is to create a golf course that is in harmony with the natural features: the hills and valleys, the mountains and the forest, the rocky outcrops, the dunes, the steams, lakes and oceans. The wily architect use the topography to elicit a sense of respect for the landscape he found before moving the first shovel-full of dirt. The architect also seeks to deceive the golfer: the putt doesn’t always break away from the mountains and toward the water.

One natural feature, however, seems to be absent. The sky.

Or is it?

Unique greens. In an article published in the *Reading Eagle* on October 22, 1922, Alexander Findlay, the architect who designed the golf course at Reading Country Club, commented: “An 18-hole golf course has been laid out and when completed will compare favorably with any in the state. The land is quite undulating and abounds in natural hazards, is surrounded by huge trees and a swift running stream adds beauty to the course and many of the putting greens are placed in the most unique and sporty way.”

What did he mean by “...a most unique and sporty way.”?

According to Rich Findlay, his grandfather Alex Findlay looked skyward for design inspiration. When Alex had plotted the routing for each hole, he laid flat on his back in the areas that would become the putting greens and he looked up. He did so on a day the sky was dominated by big, fluffy cumulous clouds floating effortlessly, changing shapes as they traversed the firmament and painted the land with their silent, shadowy silhouettes. He sketched the outline of the cloud directly overhead and used the artwork to design the shape of the green, bringing the fullness of the natural world to his creation.

So when you are contemplating a tricky putt at RCC, consider the outline of the green. You are looking at a cloud that drifted by in 1922. You are connected to the sky.

Southern exposure. Alex Findlay also situated the greens so they are tilted facing south. The reason? The people who commissioned him to design golf courses asked if he could do anything though design that would help extend playing time when daylight grows dear. A southern exposure catches more of the early morning sun, which helps greens thaw faster on chilly late fall, winter and early spring mornings. The architect can’t eliminate the frost delay, but he can help keep the golfers’ wait to a minimum.