



# SCHWARTZ *Report*

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## BUSHWOOD GREENS

I was leafing through a recent copy of *Golf Digest* magazine with thoughts of the last month's Masters Tournament still dancing in my head. That glorious invitational "tune-a-ment", as they call it around Augusta, Georgia is the beginning of spring time for most serious golfers or at least those of us who are confined to cold weather climes. Our TV shows the azaleas in bloom and the manicured greenness of the place which is always a promise of hoped for things to come. Masters admission badges are reputed to be the toughest tickets in sports so most of us will never get to visit the place in person. It's hard to escape the impression when watching the television coverage that this Sistine Chapel of golf emerged as we see it in its present form and did not evolve over time from the Fruitlands Nursery property that Bob Jones and Clifford Roberts purchased in 1931. Truth is that it has always been a work in progress.

The natural progression for a golf course seems to me to be from farm land to vacant land to golf course. The natural regression of a golf course is back to vacant land then on to development. As Derek Duncan characterized Augusta National in his *Golf Digest* article; "the impossibly static order of such a large swath of nature" boggles the mind. That is why I was intrigued to read in the same magazine an alternate tale of "Georgia National" by David Owen\*. His premise is that the Augusta National property was subject to not only the urge toward development but the near actuality of it!

In David's telling, early club plans prepared by Olmstead Brothers, a distinguished landscape planning firm from Brookline Mass., allocated two dozen residential building lots bordering the course. Land on the south edge of the property was designated as "area for future development". That developers would

have had access to Augusta National's property is blasphemy, right? He notes that a home site behind the green of the par 5, 13th hole, part of the famous Amen Corner section of the course, would have "the most compelling back yard view in all of sports..." I can picture Al Czervik, Rodney Dangerfield's hilarious character from *Caddy Shack*, saying that this would be a great place for some condos or maybe a shopping mall. Discovery of such a plan seems to me like finding a long lost Michelangelo sketch for the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel depicting McDonalds' Golden Arches or an entry to Disneyland's Magic Kingdom. Does the Cockney expression "dead common" come to mind?



Early 1930's aerial view of Augusta National Clubhouse and course routings for first & ninth holes, courtesy of 2021 *Masters Journal*

One of my golf trivia sources says that the Masters did not begin selling out until after 1966 with many unsold tickets throughout its early years. We can thank the Great Depression, tight money, and World War II for the fact that in twenty years of marketing, Roberts found only a single buyer for one of those lots. He ended up buying the home back in the 1970's and having it demolished to preserve the vistas.

Two time Masters champion Ben Crenshaw, he of the silky putting stroke, and a man of deep appreciation for the history of the game and its architecture, says that Bob Jones and course architect Dr. Alister MacKenzie wanted to let the land speak for itself. Both MacKenzie and Jones revered the Old Course at St. Andrews, Scotland which is said to have sprung ready-made from nature.

One has only to go out past the famed Magnolia Lane entrance to Augusta National Golf Club, which by the way was not the planned entry in the original Olmstead drawings, to experience Washington Road and wonder how near Augusta National might have been to becoming the Bushwood of *Caddy Shack* fame.

As long time Masters observer, and noted golf writer, Bill Fields put it: "If the spirit of Jones lingers at Augusta National in some ineffable ways, the ground that he and MacKenzie sculpted to their liking is enduring evidence of just what a good job they did." You might say that there are thousands of Bushwood Greens but only one Augusta National Golf Club. Every spring we can thank our lucky stars that Augusta National never became Georgia National.

\*"Welcome to Georgia National, an Alternate History of the Home of the Masters" by David Owen, *Golf Digest* March/April 2022



Noted golf architect Dr. Alister MacKenzie (left), courtesy of 2021 *Masters Journal*



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