

## Book Review Essays

MACKENZIE, ALISTAIR. *The Spirit of St. Andrew's*. Chelsea, Michigan: Sleeping Bear Press, 1995. Pp. 268. Illustrations, photos, index, \$24.95 cb.

CHRISTIAN, FRANK with Cal Brown. *Augusta National and the Masters: A Photographer's Scrapbook*. Chelsea, Michigan: Sleeping Bear Press, 1996. Pp. 268. Photos, records. \$45.00 cb.

These books have a direct connection to each other. The first contains the reminiscences of Dr. MacKenzie on a range of golf subjects, but mainly on the place of the Old Course at St. Andrews in golf course design. The second book is a photographic and anecdotal history of the Augusta National Golf Club (and the Masters Golf Tournament played there) which MacKenzie designed with Bobby Jones. In fact, Bobby Jones wrote the forward to MacKenzie's book. The first book gives the background to the second through the insight of MacKenzie.

The publisher, Sleeping Bear Press, has a niche market on books pertaining to the sport of golf and to historical writers and writings focused on golf. One can ask the question, therefore, what do these books provide for the historian on one hand and the interested reader, golfer enthusiast or otherwise, on the other? More importantly, are these books worthy of research interest?

First, dealing with the academic question, one would have to say that there is little of deep or sound sport history import. The MacKenzie book is based on his notes from over sixty years ago. They are anecdotal and of a genre. The Christian and Brown book is worthy of visual social historiography; the written elements are journalistic and diaristic. While this does not discount their use as history or sport history sources, there are severe limitations.

Anyone studying the sport of golf will be intrigued but not enlightened by MacKenzie's first chapter on the "evolution of golf." It is not history in the scholarly sense. Rather, it is more storytelling. MacKenzie looks back in time but mainly focuses on his relationship to the development of golf in his time. It is necessary but not sufficient historical recollection: Necessary because MacKenzie is a central figure in the game from the perspective of course design and construction. Anyone studying the game or course architecture should spend some time with MacKenzie's ideas. They are timeless. This material is, however, not sufficient as it pertains to his work and his ideas, which are a *part* of a larger pantheon of course designers.

The second chapter is simply the republication of his short book *Golf Architecture*. Here again if one's interest focuses on golf course architecture, the general principles of the game, or the general maxims of the game, then one

might spend time with this material. Again, MacKenzie has lobbed in another of his older works without coherence to the whole purpose of this book. In other words, how exactly the Old Course at St. Andrews colors and influences the design, construction, and play of other golf courses is often unclear.

After a now dated chapter on “the economy” of course design and construction, MacKenzie does give us the “spirit of St. Andrew’s” in his long discussion of ideal golf holes and courses. MacKenzie mainly discusses holes and courses he designed. Nonetheless it is good material for the specialist in the above mentioned aspects of the game.

MacKenzie then covers the remaining aspects of golf course operation in his somewhat incongruous discussion of greenkeeping (topics such as drainage, seed, soil, sand, and manures—heady stuff, so to speak). The last two chapters are virtually diaristic. MacKenzie talks of golf for people of his age and gives his general philosophical ideas on a variety of aspects of the game. Here again one must question the coherence and logic of the total work. While the gist of the book offers historical import for study of the game and the golf facility, much of the book reads like a bedtime autobiography.

One is tempted to leave the Christian and Brown book in the coffee table genre. Certainly it is that. What is there in this work for the scholar, and more importantly, what is not available in other works? In the first case one must argue that there are data useful to the historian and sociocultural researcher. Aside from the lists and popular biographies of past winners, one is given a visual record of a facility and a competition that attracts, holds, and generates veneration. For this reason the book is useful in providing a sense of place, of a sport place. One can read similar books, with or without as many visual representations, of sport facilities that capture community and other forms of human identity (even though reconstruction has changed these other sites to a greater degree than that found at Augusta, for example, Twickenham, Lords, Melbourne Cricket Ground, or less changed, Wrigley Field, Maple Leaf Gardens, Soldier Field). The reader is certainly given a wealth of visual evidence of the facility’s development and change (of import to those studying sport facilities and their temporal change and development). This goes beyond the somewhat “made up” look the course takes as seen on television each year during the Masters.

Many historians are photophiliacs. Pictures and other memorabilia are central to their archival research. In this work one can find much to enjoy. The photos are obvious, but the photos of memorabilia add to the value of the book. While some of this might seem trite, this is a part of historiography. On the downside, one views androcentric, class, and race representations (other than photos of female and African American caddies) that give another historical aspect to the place. It would have been interesting if this work had been published one year later. The juxtaposition of Eldrick “Tiger” Woods would have made this aspect of the place rather shocking and more emphatic.

The authors refer to many other works on the course and the tournament. Other than the chapter on “The Course,” which correlates to the MacKenzie book reviewed here and holding much parallel material, this is not a book to look

for sound history. The written portions are at best popular, folksy prose found in coffee table books. One should seek other sources for written history of the course and the tournament. In other words, as a source of visual social geographic history, this work has much to offer. In this regard, the serious researcher will find much here for their work. On the other hand, however, little useful nonvisual data exists here for sound research purposes.

If one is a golfophiliac, the Christian and Brown book would hold pride of place on the table or other visible location; the MacKenzie work might be seen as pretentious. For the general reader and golf enthusiast, these would be useful works to understand the places they play and the ideas behind the design and construction of the golf places.

For the academic both works would be useful reference books to scan in library research, mostly for their minutiae. These books are useful for different reasons and would likely be more sought by specialists. Having said this and due to my dilettantish career, these and other books published by Sleeping Bear Press adorn my shelves and have assisted my work. The adage of “horses for courses” comes to mind, but I would suggest a glance at both for many of the scholarly reasons mentioned above.

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