

Saucon Valley-Grace Course  
Bethlehem, PA

Architect: William and David Gordon (1958)

|       | Par | Rating | Slope | Yardage |
|-------|-----|--------|-------|---------|
| Blue  | 72  | 72.4   | 136   | 6684    |
| White | 72  | 70.8   | 133   | 6302    |

Overview:

This was the second course built at Saucon, just after World War II, when it was decided that eighteen holes were not enough for the growing membership. William Gordon worked for a number of eminent architects and had a hand in Seminole, Maidstone, and Garden City Golf Club. This was a family affair, he did the course with his son David. The course is named for Eugene Gifford Grace who found the club and was a very strong influence in the development of Saucon Valley for over four decades.

The course was laid out around the perimeter of the Old Course but it does not share much of the same topographical character. To me, it is a bit of Florida layout with trees. The basic topography is flat as a pancake but the Gordons did some real creative work with the green areas and it is anything but boring-a very nice walk indeed. Overall conditioning of the course is excellent, bent fairways and who knows what greens. As of 2010, the greens are worn out and in need of redoing, but a full renovation of this 18 is due when they finish the work on the Weyhill Course in the spring of 2011.

The course is plenty of challenge from the White tees at 6302 but it is probably playable from the Blues as well. The general nature of the course is that it is expansive to the eye but the real playing areas are much more confined. You have to be careful off the tee or you will end up with lots of fairways missed two steps off the cut with some difficult shots from there. Honestly this course is a pleasure, you get challenged without getting run over and good play is rewarded. Enjoy the walk.

Hole-by-hole:

#1 Par 5 558/518 Valley

Like the Old Course, the opening hole is a long serpentine par five that sets the tone for the rest of the day. Drive to center between a long bunker on the left and a pinching one on the right where the hole starts to turn to the left. Not hitting the fairway from the tee makes the layup much more difficult. Layup is to 120 just where the hole turns back to the right. From there it is a routine short club to a green set 20 yards behind the fronting bunker.

#2 Par 4 401/384 Saucon

This hole has real character. Drive it just over the edge of the bunker on the right with a little draw back to center. Now you should have something in the 150 range across a creek some sixty yards from the green to a slightly elevated green encircled by bunkers. This green is tightly hemmed in by trees on the sides and back. Very cool alcove look. Bet they have trouble growing grass on this green.

#3 Par 3 210/180 Island

Nice mid range three par for the next one. Green sits across a pond that is fifty yards from the green. Only threat of the water is if you hit a Chiquita ball right of the green side bunkers. Green is pretty deep and ramped toward you so it will hold the offering of a long club.

#4 Par 5 525/502 Old Pike

Technical five par that will bite you if you lose focus. Turns left around a water hazards up the length of the driving area. Drive it wide right to avoid the water and get a good look at the green back to the right. Layup center to about 100 and you leave a wedge to a raised shallow and narrow green set on a 5 to 11 angle to the hitting area.

#5 Par 3 153/138 Eden

Shortest par three of the day but it is awesome. Modeled after the 11<sup>th</sup> at St. Andrews of the same name, this is about 150 ish to a raised green slightly uphill with a nasty pot bunker pasted into the center of the green entrance. Green is almost a square- not too deep but banked steeply toward you. Pick an short club and be aggressive

#6 Par 4 363/337 Little Sahara

Very straight par four with a monstrous waste area bunker stretching across the last 50 yards of the hole. Drive to center and loft a short club to an anvil shaped green set on an angle. Should get a scoring chance here.

#7 Par 4 420/398 Peak

Hardest hole on this side. Angular dogear left around a massive bunker. Hit a strong draw to right center and turn it down the hole. If you are in the fairway it is probably 175 to a narrow green pinched by front bunkers. This green is tricky so pay attention to where you land it relative to the flag.

#8 Par 4 382/365 Spring House

Got to hit it about 210 off this tee at the left edge of the intruding pond that cuts across the landing area. Shortish iron to a green that is narrow and flanked by a deep bunker left of the green. Some bail room right but it is pretty moundy there. If you look to the right as you approach the green you will see a small stone spring house from which the hole gets it's name.

#9 Par 4 410/387 Villa Pat

Long hard par four that dogears left around some old growth trees. Drive right center and now you have to utility it up the hill to a deep and narrow putting surface angled back to the right. The Villa Pat Restaurant/Half Way Inn is right behind the green. Nice touch.

#10 Par 5 515/491 Crossing The Stream

Wow! Coolest hole of the day. You actually get to cross the stream twice as this double dog leg winnows it's way through the trees. Drive is off an elevated tee box to a tempest of a fairway that sits diagonal to you. You will swear there are white caps in this fairway. Have to be a little risky and aim at the right corner of the available area to get it heading down the hole. From there you are laying up into the second elbow of the dog leg just past a couple of bunkers that flank the left of the fairway. Now it is a short pitch to a narrow green that is tucked on a 4 to 10 angle back up to the left. All three shots have to be articulate on this hole or you can see you find yourself writing a bad number on your card.

#11 Par 3 175/165 Sitting Pretty

Redan style middle sized par three that definitely favors the right to left shaped shot. Green sits slightly up saddled across a rise set on a left angle with deep sand traps on the left. Long green that slopes away from you so your shot will feed toward the back of the green-plan accordingly.

#12 Par 4 323/283 Weyhill

Bit of a breather on the next two. Drive to center across the creek that tumbled down number ten. The hole turns gently to the right as it works up to a green setting that reminds me of eight on the old Chief at Indian Springs. Green is shallow and set from 8 to 2 so you have to be right on the distance control or a shot on the left will leave you a pitch back.

#13 Par 4 328/322 Valli Hi

Very cute short one here. Drive straight away left center of the tree lined driving area. Hole takes an abrupt turn up the hill to a green set behind a bevy of bunkers most of which are well off the putting surface. Again the distance control is important in that the green is not very large.

#14 Par 3 150 /144 Over There

Seemingly simple par three but the green arrangement makes par a task. Green is slightly above you perched on a hill across a little environmental valley. It is an L shaped green that wraps around a very deep bunker on the right. Green is ramped sharply up from the front to the back. Pins on the right preserve respect- hit it to center and putt across. Putting up this green is disarmingly slow so wack it.

#15 Par 5 531/521 Faraway

Another walk past the palatial halfway house facility. You drive it to center over the rise in front of you to a slightly blind landing area. This par five turns slightly left over the hill. The fairway is truncated by creative bunkering down the center. You want to sew a long club into the gap between the thighs of the bunkers and have it fall to the right fairway. Straight forward short iron up a long narrow green.

#16 Par 4 425/400 Mounds

Bowling alley straight this one. Drive straight up the center and you have a longish club into a very slender bunker less green. Green slopes off the back left so don't be surprised if your ball tries to roll through.

#17 Par 4 410/377 Corner

Difficult sharp dog ear right. Drive it just past the elbow of the turn. Now you have a long club up the slot between Oreo bunkers to a green with some tiering. Missing left of this green is jail.

#18 Par 4 405/390 Playground

Wonderful finishing hole requires a precise right to left curve. Between gaping bunk a on both sides. Green sits below you-cross bunker is fifty yards from the green. Green is narrow again and falls off precipitously at the back so you have to land it in the first third and feed it down.

August, 2010