

History of the Modern Point Count System

In large part from Frank Hacker's article from Table Talk in January 2013

Contract bridge (as opposed to auction bridge) was invented in the late 1920s. During the first 40 years of contract bridge: Ely Culbertson (1891 – 1955) and Charles Goren (1901 -1991) were the major contributors to hand evaluation. It's of interest to note that Culbertson died in Brattleboro, Vermont.

Ely Culbertson did not use points to evaluate hands. Instead he used honor tricks. Goren and Culbertson overlapped somewhat. **Charles Goren** popularized the point count with his 1949 book "Point Count Bidding in Contract Bridge." This book sold 3 million copies and went through 12 reprintings in its first 5 years. Charles Goren does not deserve the credit for introducing or developing the point count.

Bryant McCampbell introduced the 4-3-2-1 point count in 1915, not for auction bridge, but for auction pitch. Bryant McCampbell was also an expert on auction bridge and he published a book on auction bridge in 1916. This book is still in print and available from Amazon.

Bryant Mc Campbell was only 50 years old when he died at 103 East Eighty-fourth Street in NY City on May 6 1927 after an illness of more than two years. He was born on January 2, 1877 in St Louis? to Amos Goodwin Mc Campbell and Sarah Leavelle Bryant. He leaves a wife, Irene Johnson Gibson of Little Rock, Ark. They were married on October 16, 1915. Bryant was a retired Textile Goods Merchant and was in business with his younger brother, Leavelle who was born on May 28, 1879.

Bryant was a noted whist player and bridge player. He authored a number of books on bridge. His point count evaluation method of 4 for an Ace, 3 for a King, 2 for a Queen, and 1 for a Jack was adapted for the card game [Auction Pitch](#) in 1915. This point count, originated by Mc Campbell, became known as the "Work Point Count" and is part of the Charles Goren Point Count system of hand evaluation.

Milton Work (1864 -1934), who was an expert on whist, bridge whist, auction bridge and contract bridge, gets credit for popularizing the point count for bridge with a 1923 publication.

In its early days the 4-3-2-1 point count was used for hand evaluation primarily for no trump contracts. Most players still used the Culbertson honor trick method of hand evaluation for suit contracts.

The credit for distributional point count goes to Canadian bridge expert **William Anderson** (1905 -1969). Anderson was one of Canada's leading actuaries who rose to be president and later chairman of the North American Life Assurance Company. He was also president of both the Canadian Institute of Actuaries and the US based Society of Actuaries.

In the 1940's William Anderson spent 2 years to verify the accuracy of the 4-3-2-1 point count method. He determined that a small mathematical improvement was possible, but that the simplicity of the 4-3-2-1 method made the results about as good as one could get. Anderson then developed the 3-2-1 distribution evaluation.m Goren acknowledged Anderson's contribution in his point count bidding book and in 1981 in one of his columns. Bill Anderson was recently inducted into the Canadian Bridge Federation Hall of Fame.