

# HOW DONALD ROSS DESIGNED A CLASSIC

BY RICHARD S. TUFTS

The world is indebted to Scotland for giving us the game of golf and America's debt to the Scots was further increased in the early days by the arrival of many of the Scottish professionals. These men not only knew how to play the game but were also steeped in the traditions of golf and knew how a golf course should be laid out and maintained.

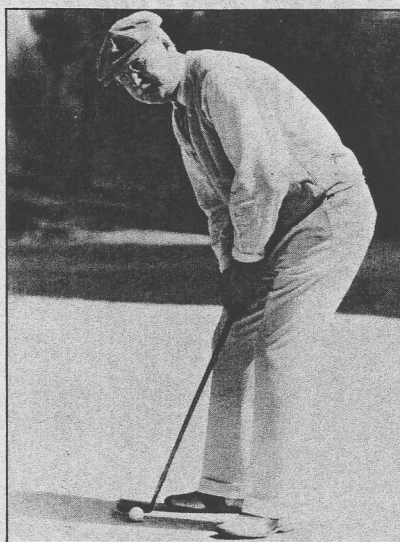
Shortly after golf had made its first start in America a young Scotsman named Donald Ross, wishing to become an expert in his chosen profession, left his home town of Dornoch in Sutherland and journeyed south to St. Andrews to take a position as apprentice under Old Tom Morris, the dean of Scottish professionals.

Upon the completion of his apprenticeship in 1893, Donald returned to take the position of professional and greenskeeper at his home club, Royal Dornoch.

At Harvard University a professor named Robert Wilson had become infected with the germ of the new game and, as any good student would do, sought to learn more about golf by going to the source. He spent several summers at Dornoch, and naturally became acquainted with Donald. Recognizing Ross' abilities, the professor urged him to seek his fortune in America. In 1899 Donald reached the new country, having spent practically his entire fortune for the trip. Wilson did not fail the immigrant and quickly located him as the professional at the Oakley Country Club in Watertown, Mass.

In the summer of 1900 James W. Tufts, seeking a professional for his new golf course in Pinehurst, asked Donald to come to his home in Medford, Mass., for an interview. At this meeting a verbal understanding was reached on the terms of employment. This agreement, covering Donald's arrangements at the club, was to be carried on for 48 years under the management of Pinehurst by three generations of the Tufts family.

At first Donald served only as professional at Pinehurst during the winter, and at Watertown and later Essex during the summers. As the demand for golf in Pinehurst grew,



Donald Ross

new holes were built by Donald and Frank Maples, the Pinehurst superintendent of courses. The architectural features developed by these two men proved to be popular, and as a result Donald was asked to build courses being developed by those who had visited Pinehurst and who had there developed their love for the game. Gradually Donald Ross' fame as an architect spread with the result that by 1910 he had terminated all his professional connections, except for Pinehurst, and was devoting a large part of his time to golf course architecture. Donald Ross not only designed golf courses, he also built them and often had as many as six or eight construction projects in progress at the same time. During his lifetime he worked on over 500 courses.

One of Donald's greatest services was the establishment of early golf at Pinehurst on the very highest standards. He never forgot his early training under Tom Morris and in all his work lived up to the traditions learned under the old master.

Ross developed his plans by designing each hole around the green, selecting a natural site for the green first, by building the hole itself to be natural and beautiful in appearance, and by making the play of the hole a pleasure and not a penance to the golfer.

Within a year after his arrival at Pinehurst, Ross had completed the first nine holes of what would become the famed No. 2 course. When those nine were finished in 1901 they measured 2,275 yards. He finished the second nine in 1907 and the full 18 then measured 5,860 yards.

Ross modified the design of holes and changed the course many times. The present No. 2 course assumed its basic form in 1925. Since then, minor improvements have been made, adding length and re-doing bunkers to meet standards of modern play.

---

*This year is the 100th anniversary of the birth of Donald Ross, the famed golf course architect who designed Pinehurst No. 2 and many other classic American courses, including Oakland Hills and Seminole which also are ranked in our top 10. Altogether, he designed 17 of the 100 Greatest Tests of Golf. This article about Ross, who died in 1948, was excerpted from Richard S. Tufts' book The Scottish Invasion. Tufts has served as chairman of more USGA committees than any other person.*