

# DONALD J. ROSS SAYS PINEHURST WAS PIONEER IN AMERICAN GOLF—DORNOCH MAN'S INFLUENCE ON GAME IN U. S. A.

By Robert E. Harlow

"To Donald J. Ross, with tribute to a great golfer and an honored and outstanding figure in the golfing world. Sincerely," Warren G. Harding.

When the President of the United States presented his photograph to Mr. Ross, he wrote the above message.

One day last spring, as Mr. Ross was coming up the path from the number three course, a man on the Club House porch said to his friend:

"Here comes Mr. Golf himself."

But behind these brief and fullsome judgements of Pinehurst's Mr. Ross, spreads more than a half century of a man's life, which has been practically devoted to the development of Pinehurst and American golf.

## Lad In Scotland

When Mr. Ross was a lad in Dornoch, Scotland, on the North Sea, he was apprenticed to a joiner (building constructor) and he played amateur golf. He was a good player; he has always been a good player. So the members of the Dornoch Club induced Donald to go to St. Andrews and learn the club making trade, with a promise, to make him professional and club maker at Dornoch when he had learned the business.

Mr. Ross's parents thought little of golf as a profession, and were so put-out because their son

golf, and became a club maker in the shop of Forgan, a famous name in Scotland. Sons of the house of Forgan became great bankers in America. In St. Andrews, Donald met old Tom Morris, a patriarch of the game. Mr. Morris took a liking to Donald and invited him to attend his kirk, especially the Saturday night entertainment, where for a penny, he could enjoy a social time and a good dinner. As Donald's salary at that time was seven and six (about \$1.50) per week, the penny fee was attractive. Mr. Ross states that later he was able to contribute thrupence to the kirk, when he went to the Saturday night parties.

Mr. Ross remembers sound advice given him by Mr. Morris. The old time Scotch champion was against gambling in golf. He warned Donald against it, and during a lifetime of competition, Mr. Ross has never made a wager which involved anything higher than a few of the pennies he spent for entertainment when his salary was less than two dollars a week.

## Banker Had Faith

It was the year 1893, in November, when Donald, having learned the club making trade under Forgan, returned to his home to take over at The Royal Dornoch Golf club. In winter professionals made clubs to be sold in summer, but Mr. Ross lacked capital, completely, to



DONALD J. ROSS and his grandchildren, (left to right) Susan and Janet Pippitt, daughters of Dr. and Mrs. Richard B. Pippitt.

—Photo by John Hemmer.

In the summer of 1898, Professor Robert Wilson of Harvard, whose subject was astrology, advised the youthful professional Donald Ross, to hitch his wagon to a star—an American star. The Harvard Don predicted that Donald would find a great future and fortune in the United States. This professor properly appraised the power in the game of golf to win the American people in those early days: the American people who

had leisure and money.

## Off For America

Discussions followed in the Ross home. Once again the mother was hesitant for her son, now well established in Dornoch, to make a change. But Donald had listened earnestly to Professor Wilson, and his heart was set upon America. He won his mother over with a promise that he would save every penny he earned, and build her a (Continued on Page 20)

home in Dornoch. During his first year in America, Mr. Ross saved \$2,000, and the home in Dornoch became a reality. Mr. Ross's parents enjoyed it for the remainder of their lives. The house is still the property of Mr. Ross.

When Donald arrived in Boston, he telephoned Professor Wilson and was invited to Cambridge. His funds were so low he walked from Boston to the professor's home. The next day he inspected The Oakley club, his first job in America. Snow was on the fairways.

Success in every way came to Mr. Ross in America. He did well at Oakley, where he remained until he came to Pinehurst, where since 1901 he has made his headquarters.

## Pinehurst Influence

No one knows better than Mr. Ross of the tremendous influence Pinehurst has had on the game in America. In the early years of the century, men who were leaders in their communities came to Pinehurst. Many of these learned to play here and later became organizers of clubs at home. Here is what Mr. Ross said about the influence Pinehurst has exerted on American golf.

"Pinehurst was absolutely the pioneer in American golf. While the game had been played in a few places before Pinehurst was established, it was right here on these sandhills that the first great national movement in golf was started. Men came here, took a few golf lessons, bought a few clubs and went away determined to organize clubs."

When new clubs were formed Donald Ross was invariably engaged as course architect. He continues in that business to this day, and is at present building new courses and remodeling others. About his work as a golf course architect, Richards Vidmer, former sports columnist for The New York Herald-Tribune, in 1937, wrote:

## Without Competition

"From his beginning in Boston, Mr. Ross has been called everywhere to design, plan, construct and improve golf courses. At the start he was perhaps the only person in this country who knew anything about such matters. And after he started fever thought it worthwhile to learn the trade. The competition of Donald Ross was too great."

Over the span of years Mr. Ross has built more than 600 golf courses, including six in Canada and two in Cuba. At present he is building eighteen hole courses in Fayetteville, Hickory and Lenoir, in North Carolina; in Lewistown and Pottsville in Pennsylvania, and adding new holes or changing old ones at Rocky Mount and Wilmington, N.C., the Myers Park club, Charlotte, in Greenville, S.C. and at the Allegheny Country Club, Pittsburgh. Other clubs are seeking his services.

Edgar Guest, one of Mr. Ross's close friends, in 1925, wrote a verse concerning the Pinehurst man's prowess as a player and architect. In his Just Folks releases, he published the following, dedicated to DONALD ROSS.

(On receiving a picture of this famous golf architect studying a six-foot putt).

Brave Donald, in your suit of brown,  
I see you studying your putt  
And well I know you'll run it down;  
It is a splendid picture, but



HARRY VARDON, champion English course in 1900. He introduced sub-par Village by scoring a remarkable 33-37



Frank Maples (right) and workers on



THE BERKSHIRE HOTEL opened its doors to the public on December 15th, 1898, under the management of W.B. Peck. Some thing has been added in the way of foliage. Our photograph was taken after The Berkshire was completed.

caught,  
Your piblick tightly clutched  
in your hand,  
Standing where I so oft have  
fought  
To battle with the Stubborn  
sand;  
It would have pleased me more  
to see  
Your ball where mine so oft  
must be.

Yet, Donald, if perchance the  
day  
Shall come to me when I can  
bring  
That I, like you, have learned to  
play  
My second shots up to the  
flag;  
If I reach any green in two  
I'll have my picture made for  
you.

As his record in the early North and South championships indicate, Mr. Ross played championship golf in his younger days. In 1910 he visited England with George Crocker, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, manufacturer, and a fine amateur player. They made an agreement while in Pinehurst during the winter of 1909 to meet in The Bank of Scotland in Glasgow at one P.M. on a certain day in June. They met as they were walking to that institution, and never had

third round, played in a terrific wind and rain storm, Mr. Ross was leading the one-third of the field to complete one round. He had scored a brilliant 77, and passed James Braid, the leader at the end of the second round.

The committee of the Ross and Ancient Club decided conditions had become so bad that course was unplayable and the entire third round was cancelled out. Mr. Braid was the eventual winner, Mr. Ross finishing 5th. Mr. Ross's influence upon Pinehurst golf is beyond estimation. It may be said that the Tufts family provided the stage and that Mr. Ross was the in presario of Pinehurst golf. Through the years he has garnered the golfing reputation of Pinehurst with the utmost vigilance.

The North and South championships, upon the testimony of such critics as O.B. Keeler and Herb Graffia, are the greatest series of championship golf events aside from the national championships which are established in this country.

Our courses, built by Donald Ross and carefully tended through the year by Mr. Ross, Frank Maples and Henson Maples, have a well earned reputation for excellence of design and condition.