

ROBERT BRUCE HARRIS

(1896 - 1976)

BACKGROUND

Served in the U.S. Navy during World War I, then obtained a Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Illinois. In 1919, opened a landscape design business in Chicago and planned a number of school grounds and parks.

Laid out his first course in 1926, Old Channel Trail in Michigan. Continued to specialize in landscape design in the 1930s, but designed several more courses. During the Depression, he successfully renovated several abandoned courses and operated them as daily-fee facilities.

Devoted virtually all his time to golf design after World War II and became a leader in the profession. Was the first to propose a professional society for golf architects patterned after the American Society of Landscape Architects. Together with Stanley Thompson, organized the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Served as its first president in 1947 and 1948. Co-authored with Robert Trent Jones an influential chapter on course design for the original edition (1950) of H. Burton Musser's TURF MANAGEMENT.

Was responsible for training a number of men who became successful course architects. Graduates of this "Chicago School of Golf Design" included Edward Lawrence Packard, David Gill, Dick Nugent, Ken Killian and William James Spear.

Died in Chicago at age 80. Was posthumously inducted into the Illinois PGA's Golf Hall of Fame in 1993.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Robert Bruce Harris' first-hand experiences as a Depression-era course operator coping with labor and material shortages were responsible for his subsequent emphasis on economical maintenance requirements in his designs. He also decided to encourage a rapid pace of play by rarely creating a par-3 before the fourth hole. Most of his designs adhered to a pattern of par changing on every hole, with only the occasional ninth and 10th being back-to-back par-4s.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Large oval tees and large oval greens, both intended to spread out play and accommodate riding mowers. Large oval greens set well back from the edges of hazards in order to allow gang mowers to mow completely around them.