

DONALD JAMES ROSS

(1872 - 1948)

BACKGROUND

Born in Dornoch, Scotland. Worked as an apprentice carpenter before journeying to St. Andrews to learn club making from David Forgan and Old Tom Morris. In 1893, returned to Dornoch and became a pro-greenskeeper. Five years later, he emigrated to Boston, MA, became pro-greenskeeper at Oakley Country Club, for which he designed and built a new course.

Soon met members of the wealthy Tufts family, who persuaded him to become winter golf professional at their resort in Pinehurst, NC. There he planned and refined several courses and achieved national fame. Served as golf manager at Pinehurst the remainder of his life, but from 1912 until his death was best-known as America's most active course designer. Helped form the American Society of Golf Course Architects, was elected its Honorary President in 1947 and 1948.

Died in Pinehurst at age 75. Subsequently, the ASGCA declared him its patron saint by adopting the Ross plaid as its official jacket and establishing the Donald Ross Award, given annually for contributions in furthering public understanding of golf architecture.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

The Ross style, derived from his Dornoch background, incorporated a linksland naturalness. Driving areas are usually generous, fairway contours flow with the land. Second shots are much more testing, although shots can be bounced over or beside bunkers and onto many greens. When working in sandy soils, he molded green contours to slope into surrounding terrain of mounds and swales, to put a premium on recovery shots around greens. Elsewhere, his green targets were often small and elevated.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Routings that work with the land with minimum of earth movement. Bunkers often 30 or 40 yards short of a green. Green contours around the perimeters that feed balls off into surrounding terrain. A variety of bunker styles, all of which featured a raised face over which a ball must be blasted.