

pinehurst tradition

A revered North Carolina resort returns to its roots
BY J. ERIC ECKARD

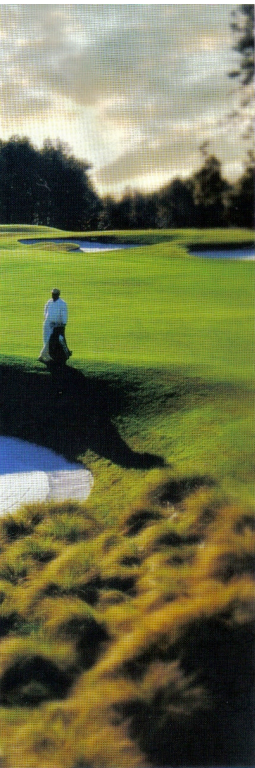
As a golfer, it's easy to get caught up in the history of the hallowed ground at Pinehurst Resort, where the legends of the game have come to play over the years — from Payne Stewart and Jack Nicklaus to Arnold Palmer and Tiger Woods.

But 115 years ago, James Tufts built Pinehurst Resort as a health retreat, a site for guests to get away from the “pollution” of the 19th century Industrial Revo-

lution in New England and rejuvenate in the undeveloped sandhills of North Carolina. Back then, there was no golf. No legendary No. 2. No Donald Ross. No turtleback greens. No U.S. Opens.

“Pinehurst wasn’t about golf at all then,” says Chad Campbell, director of golf and club operations at the resort. “It was a health retreat — a stopping point between New York and Florida. Golf was stumbled upon.”

A general store, 20 cottages, and the



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Holly Inn opened by the end of 1895, and guests enjoyed such popular activities as tennis, lawn bowling, archery, and polo. Although the site of the first golf course in the United States is still debated, there's no argument that the game was blossoming in the 1890s.

By 1898, the first nine holes were built, along with the resort's first clubhouse. A year later, the first golf pro was hired, and another nine holes were added. But in 1900, the stars aligned when James hired

a young Scotsman to run golf operations at the resort. Donald Ross remained at Pinehurst until his death in 1948. He redesigned No. 1, and then built his masterpiece — No. 2 — which has been the home to more U.S. Golf Association championships than any other course.

"Now, Pinehurst is synonymous with golf in America," Chad says.

And why not? With eight championship courses, picking from Pinehurst's golf offerings might be just as hard as keeping your ball on No. 2's infamous sloping "turtleback" greens.

In 2014, the greatest golfers in the world will be playing for the U.S. national championship. And, for the first time, the men's and women's U.S. Open will be played at the same venue one week apart.

But anyone who has played No. 2 in the past few decades might not recognize some of the holes today. Earlier this year, Pinehurst started a restoration project to bring back some of the original Donald Ross characteristics.

"There's been natural growth over the years," Chad explains. "Things become slightly changed through time. Grass moves over and over. Donald Ross didn't build it like that."

So in March, a design team started No. 2's restoration project. Most of the work has been done by hand, and the course has remained open so golfers can see the evolution.

"We're going to great lengths to bring back the characteristics of Donald Ross," Chad adds. "No. 2 has a personality, and we're bringing that personality back."

In fact, each of the courses has a unique personality. Nos. 1 and 3, Ross designs, and 5, which was built by Ellis Maples, are more classic courses. After the Dedman family of ClubCorp. fame bought Pinehurst in 1984, two modern courses were added — No. 7 (Rees Jones 1986) and No. 8 (Tom Fazio 1996). And Fazio redesigned Nos. 4 and 6, which reopened in 2000 and 2005, respectively.

"We offer a lot of different looks, and each course offers a different challenge for the golfers," Chad says. "That's what makes Pinehurst a great destination."

The Dedman family's philosophy of returning Pinehurst to its traditional roots was no more apparent than when the resort added a 31,000-square-foot spa in 2002. What started as a health retreat

now offers the Spa at Pinehurst, with 50 treatment options ranging from mud wraps to heated stone therapy to a golfer's massage. The Pinehurst Signature Massage treats the body from head to toe and is sure to relieve some of the tightest and tensest areas.

And it's all within a short walk through the pines surrounding the Carolina Inn, the resort's main hotel. The Spa at Pinehurst also features an indoor lap pool, whirlpool, sauna, steam room, and fitness center.

Throw in 24 tennis courts, two croquet lawns, and a lawn bowling area — all of which have hosted national or international tournaments — and Pinehurst's



reputation as a golf resort turns out to be more than that. Pinehurst offers plenty of all-inclusive packages for golf, spa, and other activities for guests, including the resort's annual Labor Day Food and Wine Festival, which features seminars, wine competitions, culinary demonstrations, and evening galas.

Over the years, Pinehurst's appeal has attracted a who's who in American history — from J.D. Rockefeller, an early golf enthusiast, to Annie Oakley, who gave shooting exhibitions and lessons, to Amelia Earhart, who landed her plane at the Pinehurst airstrip in 1931. More recent guests also have star status — Sean Connery, Michael Jordan, Oprah Winfrey, and Phil Donahue.

The names have changed, to be sure, but there's one thing that hasn't: "Many believe the Golden Age of Pinehurst was the '30s, '40s, and '50s, and it was those times that certainly put Pinehurst on the map," Chad says. "But in 50 or 60 years, we might be rewriting when the Golden Age of Pinehurst was."

"This is Pinehurst — the experience is still there."