

Golf Architects: They Build the Stuff That Greens are Made Of



Grand Haven Golf Club, the home course of W. Bruce Matthews, begins to take shape.

The openings of new Michigan golf courses is now down to a trickle from the deluge we had just five years earlier. This year, College Field, Hawk's Eye, Hawk's Ridge and Angels Crossing are scheduled to open along with some others, like Port Huron CC that have gone through renovation or preservation. But that's about it.

The building boom of the 80's and 90's that added hundreds of golf courses to our state's inventory and gave rise to our national ranking as a golf destination has quieted. Those were the salad days of golf course architects, much like the 1920's and 1950's were before.

The huge firms of Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Art Hills and Robert Trent Jones and later, his sons, Rees and Robert Trent Jones Jr.; expanded their firms during this period to accommodate this frantic building boom. Michigan architects; Jerry Matthews, W. Bruce Matthews III, Harley Hodge, Ray Hearn, Ron Otto and Mike Husby to name but a few, split off of established firms or started their own.

During this respite, we thought it might be prudent to take a look at our golf inventory in Michigan and benchmark it, but take that look through the eyes of the architects.

We have chosen W. Bruce Matthews and Robert Trent Jones for the first of our series, on "Michigan's Golf Course Architects". Both were born at the turn of one century and died as a new one was to begin. We hope you enjoy our words, and just as importantly, the online video we direct you to as well. While it is always interesting to study and write about the accomplishments of architects, it is quite another thing to offer readers the opportunity to become viewers by clicking on a link.

Part 1 - W. Bruce Matthews and Robert Trent Jones

W. Bruce Matthews

By L'anse Bannon
with Paul Fullmer

W. Bruce Matthews lived a full and robust life, wringing every drop of pleasure and purpose out of it. He was born in 1904 and died in the year 2000.

Paul Fullmer, Executive Secretary, American Society of Golf Course Architects, penned an article in their association publication that commemorated Mr. Matthews's life. "Bruce represented the almost gone, but certainly not forgotten, era of golf that endured the harsh years of the Depression. That's when an aspiring golf course architect had to make due during the lean years, as Bruce did by working as the general manager and superintendent of Green Ridge Country Club in Grand Rapids. Golf course architecture had to be done in his spare time.

When Bruce entered the Society, members were somewhat puzzled by his background. Who is Bruce Matthews? Architect? Owner? Club Manager? Superintendent? Well, he was all of those... and proudly so.

As much as anyone, Bruce Matthews was "Mr. Golf in Michigan." Surely, golf and Michigan could not have had a better ambassador."

We list here but a portion of the offices held and awards given to Mr. Matthews during his professional career.



Grand Haven Golf Club

1956

Club Managers Association of America (Member: 25-Year Club)

1956-1960

Michigan Turfgrass Foundation — President

1961-62, 1962-63 & 1963-64

Club Managers Association of America President — 25-Year Club

1970

Michigan Club Managers Association Life Membership

1970

American Society of Golf Course Architects Regular Member (1970)
Fellow (1981)

1978

Western Michigan GCSA

1981

Michigan Turfgrass Foundation

1991

GCSAA Distinguished Service

Award

1993

Michigan Golf Hall of Fame Inductee

1996

Michigan Golf Course Owners Association Lifetime Achievement Award

W. Bruce Matthews will also be noted for the Michigan architectural dynasty that he created. His son, Jerry Matthews and grandson W. Bruce Matthews have successfully followed in his footsteps. The total contribution of the three architects is marked by the Matthews name on hundreds of Michigan golf courses. Later on in our series, we will address the careers of both Jerry and W. Bruce Matthews III.

This list of courses that W. Bruce Matthews, did or worked on by himself or with his son Jerry is as follows:



Jerry Matthews

Courses Designed or Worked on by W. Bruce Matthews

Blossom Trail Golf Club
Brookshire Country Club
Dun Rovin
Essex Golf & Country Club
Forest Akers Golf Course
Green Ridge Country Club
Hidden Oaks Golf Courses
L. E. Kaufman Golf Course
Manistee Golf & Country Club
McGuires Evergreen Golf Course
Salem Hills Golf Course
Sandy Ridge Golf Course
Scott Lake Country Club
Sunnybrook Country Club
Tyrone Hills Golf & Country Club
West Ottawa Golf Course
White Birch Hills Golf Course
Winding Creek Golf Course

Indian Hills Golf Course
Indian Lake Country Club
Indian Run Golf Course
Kalamazoo Elks Country Club
Knollwood Country Club
Lake O' The Hills Golf Course
Lakepointe Country Club
Lakes of the North Golf Course
Lakewood Shores Golf & Country
Lincoln Hills Golf Course
Midland Country Club
Mitchell Creek Golf Course
Mt. Pleasant Country Club
Pine River Country Club
Plum Hollow Golf Club
Shenandoah Golf & Country Club
Southmoor Golf Course
Spring Lake Country Club
St. Clair Shores Country Club
Stoneycroft Hills Country
Sugar Springs Golf Course
The Pines at Lake Isabella
Traverse City Golf & Country Club
University Park Golf Club
Walnut Hills Country Club
Washtenaw Country Club
White Lake Country Club
Wolverine Golf Club

Courses Designed or Worked on by W. Bruce Matthews & Jerry Matthews

Antrim Dells Golf Club
Birmingham Country Club
Blythefield Country Club
Bonnie View Golf Course
Cadillac Country Club
Candlestone Inn Golf & Resort
Cascade Hills Country Club
Country Club of Detroit
Crockery Hills Golf Course
Crystal Lake Golf Course
Falcon Head Golf Club
Fellows Creek Golf Club
Flint Elks Country Club
Godwin Glen Golf Course
Grand Blanc Golf Club
Grand Haven Golf Club
Hidden Oaks Golf Course
Highland Hills Golf Club
Independence Green Golf Club

In the winter of 2001, W. Bruce Matthews III had the opportunity to reflect upon the life of his grandfather during a visit to our studio. In our story, you will find out that he was fondest of his own Grand Haven GC and his work at Forest Akers for his beloved MSU. You will also hear him talk about the day he spent in his youth helping his grandfather by picking up sticks in the fairways. The imprinting of W. Bruce Matthews III had begun. Well, enough of this writing see for yourself and enjoy.

<http://michigangolfer.tv>



W. Bruce Matthews III

Robert Trent Jones

By Art McCafferty

As a youth, Oakland University tuition payments, an insatiable hunger for fast women, fast cars and adult beverages, took most of my money and left little to support my golf addiction. The courses I selected were based on their affordability. I remember how wonderful it was when I discovered that a new nine hole course, Bogey Lake GC, had opened up their original nine and offered mid-week play of \$1 a day. Now that was my kind of course.

Somehow during this scholarly and hedonistic life style, all the stars in the heavens lined up one week and I found myself and a group of buddies playing The Heather course at Boyne Highlands. It was an absolutely overwhelming, mind blowing experience for all of us. We had never seen a course like The Heather ever.

The architect of the course was Robert Trent Jones. Everett Kircher had the vision to hire him to design it and northern Michigan golf was changed forever. Jones, one of the most prolific golf designers in the world, had, as his final tally, designed over 350 golf courses in 45 states and 35 countries.

Jones was born in 1906 in Ince, England, a town on the Trent River. Bobby Jones at the time inserted the Trent and Robert to distinguish himself from his friend and colleague Bobby Jones, early in his career. He purportedly said to Bobby Jones, "There is only room for one Bobby Jones."

He was to work with Bobby Jones on Peachtree CC in as well as Augusta National, when he did some work on the 11th and 16th holes. He changed them from indifferent to bold and memorable.



Robert Trent Jones

His breakout work occurred when he reworked the Oakland Hills CC for the US. Open in 1951. He retained the original routing of Donald Ross, but filled in all of his original bunkers. He then created new ones and put them out from 230-270 yards from the tee and also added his signature water haz-

ards here and there.

Jones impact on Michigan has been substantial. He left us three courses that continually rank in the top 100 course in the U.S; The Heather, Point O' Woods in Benton Harbor and, finally, Treetops in Gaylord. And besides turning a very playable Donald Ross course



On hand for the grand opening of the Robert Trent Jones course at Treetops in July 1987 were (l to r) architect Robert Trent Jones, owner Harry Melling, and head pro Rick Smith.

into The Monster at Oakland Hills, he also did some work on the Country Club of Detroit. He became “The Open Doctor” because of his work and punched up a number of courses that had fallen behind the times in their appearance and competitiveness.

At Baltusrol, Jones did a redesign for the 1954 U.S. Open. Some of the members indicated that he had made the 4th hole too hard for them. He took up the challenge by going to the 4th hole and aching the new 185-yard, par-3. “See gentlemen; it’s not that difficult,” said Jones.

When he died on June 14, 2000, he left behind a legacy of more than 350 courses in 45 states and 35 countries. We list here the four Michigan courses he built or redesigned along with a few others for which he was famous.

The Dunes Golf & Beach Club,

Myrtle Beach, S.C. 1948
 Oakland Hills CC, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 1951
 Golden Horseshoe Golf Club (Gold Course), Williamsburg, Va. 1963.
 Mauna Kea Beach Golf Course, Kamuela, Hawaii. 1965.
 Spyglass Hill Golf Course, Pebble Beach, Calif. 1966.
 Club de Golf Valderrama, Sotogrande, Spain. 1975
 Ballyunion (Cashen Course), County Kerry, Ireland. 1984
 The Heather, Harbor Springs, Michigan
 Pointe O’ Woods, Benton Harbor, Michigan
 Treetops, Gaylord, Michigan 1987

We now would like to take you on another journey. You can experience Mr. Jones by visiting each of the following three links. In our three part video series, Jones will tell you about his philosophy of golf,

his early days in the business, the growth of golf throughout the world, his building of the Heather and his battles with Everett Kircher over the design, his building of Treetops, his hole in one shot on Baltusrol, the impact of modern golf equipment and his contribution to golf: water hazards.

He will also share with you, conversations he had with his friends Alister MacKenzie, Bobby Jones and his admiration for his boyhood hero, Walter Hagen. Enjoy.

Part I

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001show/s/show19/show19qt.html>

Part II

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001show/s/show20/index.html>

Part III

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001show/s/show21/index.html> *MG*