

Valuable Book Group, LLC
Specialists in Rare and Antiquarian Golf Books
Newsletter and Book Review for the Serious Collector

A Golfer's Gallery by Old Masters

If you collect golf books long enough I'm sure you've had the experience of being just a wee bit disappointed when seeing a sought after and collectible golf book in person for the first time. I remember this occurred when I first saw *Golf in America* by James Lee, the first golf book published in the United States. It is such a tiny book and I was expecting more. There is no such feeling when you first set your eyes on *A Golfer's Gallery of Old Masters*, with an introduction by Bernard Darwin. Like seeing the Sydney Opera House in person for the first time or like playing Cypress Point, it does not disappoint.

As an example of the book's quality and as a measure of how seriously it is taken as an art book, it is one of only a handful of golf books to be found in the library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The book was published in two versions. The first edition has 18 mounted plates (D & J D4030) and 19 pages of text. A limited edition of 500 published at the same time has the same text and one more plate (D & J D4060) and was issued with a slipcase that is rarely seen. The limited edition books are signed by Bernard Darwin.

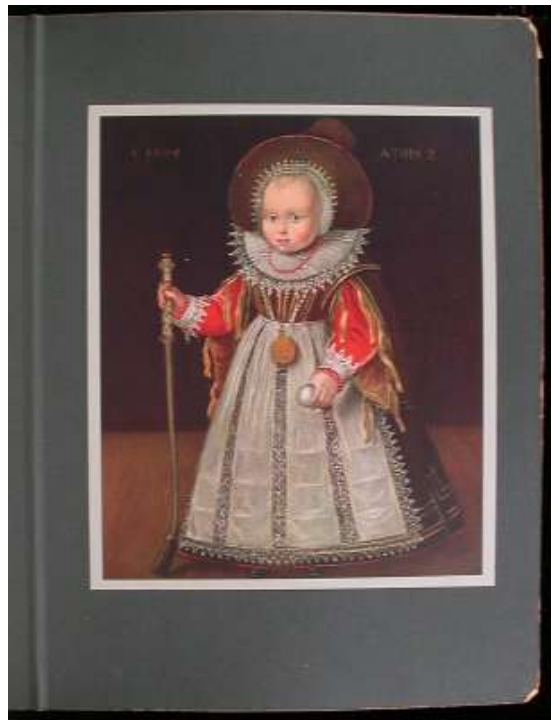
The book is a collection of frameable illustrations of famous scenes throughout the history of golf including the game's early evolution from the Dutch 'Kolf', Kolven and Jeu de Mail. Eight of the illustrations aren't really related to golfing as we know it today and are winter scenes or Dutch art, with people holding golf clubs or balls. Instead of detracting from the book's value, this little quirk actually makes the book sought after by those interested in Dutch art as well as those of us obsessed with golf. Darwin's introduction runs through page nineteen and has its usual charm.

What makes the book such a rarity is that it was published to be taken apart. Each of the plates has an illustration mounted on heavy cardboard which is meant to be framed. The last page of the book is a tipped-in sheet of paper with instructions from the publisher (Country Life Ltd.) on how to frame the plates. The book is large in size at 16 inches tall by 13 ¼ inches wide.

The illustrations are vibrant in color and quite remarkable. As such, securing a copy of the book with the illustrations all in tact requires some work. Many of the works of art in the book are famous in their own right and as such the book indicates where the original paintings were as of 1920, in parenthesis below. The illustrations are:

1. St. Nicholas's Day by Jan Steen (At the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

2. A Girl with a Golf Club by an Unknown Netherlands Artist. Painted in 1595 (At Holdenby)



3. Mr. William Innes, Captain, The Royal Blackheath Golf Club, 1778 by Lemuel Francis Abbott, R.A.



4. Mr. Francis Bennoch, Captain, The Royal Bkackheath Golf Club, 1860-1861.
From an oil painting at Blackheath (At the Club)



5. Pleasure on Ice by Esaias Van de Velde (At the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)
6. A Frost Scene by Adriaen Van de Velde. Painted 1668 (At the National Gallery, London)
7. Winter Landscape by Aert Van Der Neer (At the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)
8. Mr. John Taylor, Captain, The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers by Sir John Watson Gordon, P.R.S.A. (At the Club House, Muirfield, Gullane)



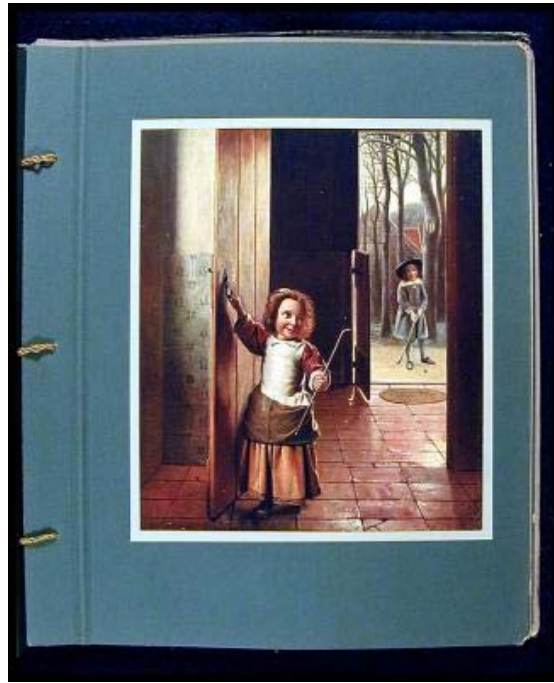
9. Mr. Henry Callender, Captain-General, The Royal Blackheath Golf Club 1807 by Lemuel Francis Abbott, R.A. (At the Club)



10. A Golfing Lady by Wybrand De Geest (At the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)
11. A Young Dutch Golfer of the Seventeenth Century by A. Cuyp, 1650 (At West Dean Park, Chichester)
12. William St. Clair of Roslin, Captain, The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, 1761 by Sir George Chalmers (At the Hall of the Royal Company of Archers, Edinburgh)



13. The Macdonalds painted about 1750 (At Armadale Castle, Skye)



14. The Golf Players by Pieter de Hooch (In the Collection of the Hon. Mrs. Ronald Greville)

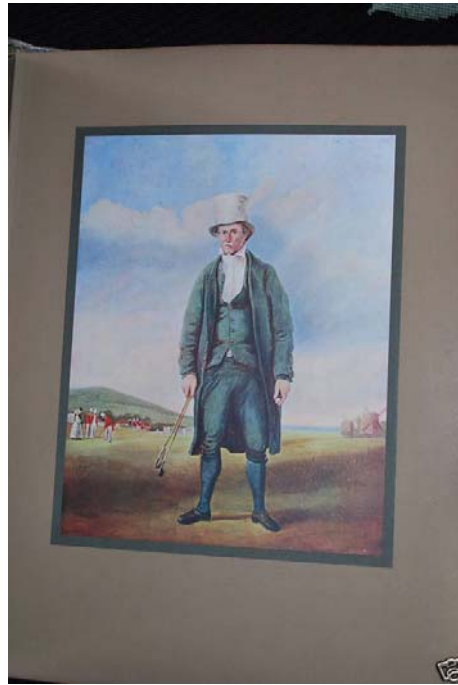
15. River Scene in Winter by Aert Van Der Neer (At the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)



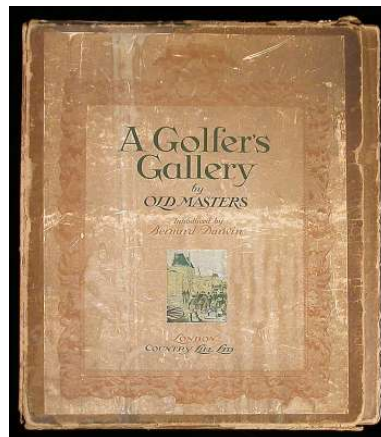
16. An Ice Scene by Antoine Van Straelen (In the collection of Mr. Frits Lugt Maartensdijk)

17. Winter Landscape by Esaias Van de Velde (At the Mauritshuis, The Hague)

18. "Old Alick," Hole Cutter at Blackheath by Mr. Gallen of Greenwich School (At the Club)



And who thought a bunch of old dead guys wearing red coats could be so exciting? The exceedingly rare slipcase from the limited edition of 500 is pictured below.



There is no publication date present in the book. Golf book bibliographies list the book as being published circa 1920. We have definitively dated the book as being published in 1927 based on its appearance in *Publisher's Weekly* that year as a newly issued book.

Mort and John Olman state in *The Encyclopedia of Golf Collectibles* that prints from the original publication are for sale individually and that these are 'overruns' from the original printing. We're not so sure about that, more likely they are prints from books that have been dismounted.