

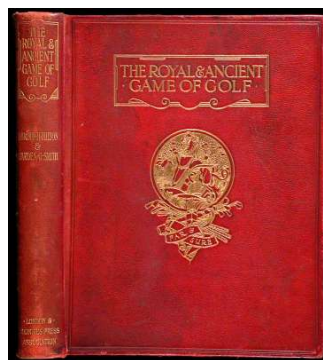
Valuable Book Group, LLC
Specialists in Rare and Antiquarian Golf Books
Newsletter and Book Review for the Serious Collector

Garden G. Smith

We all know how obsessive this game we love is. Like playing the game itself, collecting golf books can also be an obsessive passion. Rather than just lining up books on a shelf, we have always prided ourselves on actually reading the fantastic literature golf has inspired. A real sleeper among our collection of books belongs to Garden G. Smith. Smith wrote three golf books between 1897 and 1907 and he is worthy of some attention.

Smith writes in a pithy, easy to read manner with a very dry sense of humor. His best book, *Side Lights on Golf*, published in London in 1907 (D&J S23650) includes gems like this, "...the best we could find to say of golf around London was what the curate said of his bad egg, "Parts of it are excellent." Its amazing to remember how much the game (and course conditioning) has changed in the last century before tri-plex greens mowers. Imagine these hazards, also in his discussion of golf around London, "In the growing months grass grows on it so fast that constant mowing is necessary all over the course, and if the ground is at all soft the horse's feet and the turning of the machine create evils almost as great as the long grass itself."

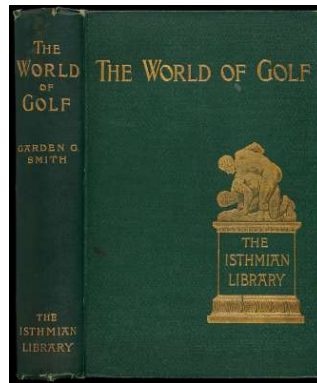
Smith was an early editor of Britain's *Golf Illustrated* and also wrote for *The Globe*, *The Tatler*, *Cassell's Magazine*, *The Badminton Magazine*, *The Golfers Magazine* and *Golf Magazine*. In addition to his solo books, Smith also co-authored one of the giants of golf literature, *The Royal & Ancient Game of Golf* with Harold Hilton (D&J H17890). The large paper edition of this title is one of the most impressive golf books ever published



Other gems from *Side Lights*, "There is a melancholy dirge that haunts the golfer's ear and affrights his soul, whenever he sees his ball speeding towards the undefeatable country of Hazard. The burden of that dirge is 'Lost Ball, Lost Hole,' and the phrase is pregnant with a presage of irrevocable and irremediable doom." And, "Hell, it is said, is

paved with good intentions, but it is to be feared that the hazards of golf are covered with a flooring of bad words.”

The World of Golf, published in 1898 by A.D. Innes & Company (D & J S23680) was produced as part of the Isthmian Library series, which covered a variety of sports. Publishing as part of a larger ‘series’ was in vogue during this period witnessed by the Badminton Library among others. The book has nice chapters on all the standard bearer golf courses of the time including Hoylake, Prestwick and Sandwich. As usual, Smith is to the point, as in the chapter on Golf in America, “The poor man has no place as yet among American golfers, and the sport remains as distinctly exclusive as is polo or yachting.”



The book is very interesting and chocked full of useful historical information for those interested in how golf clubs operated at the turn of the twentieth century, including the cost of fees and memberships. In addition, the book is filled with facts about the length of golf holes and course routings; the book is especially interesting in this regard since it describes the original course at Shinnecock Hills in detail. It is striking how much almost all of the courses mentioned have changed substantially since they were built.

Smith’s first book, *Golf*, published in 1898 is a book of instruction and learning targeted towards a reader who is just picking up the game explaining rules, etc. Smith and his brother were founders of the Aberdeen University Golf Course and he was also an amateur painter. Our research could undercover no clues on why he was given the unusual name of Garden.