

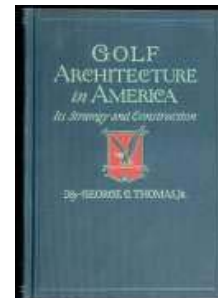
Valuable Book Group, LLC
Specialists in Rare and Antiquarian Golf Books
Newsletter and Book Review for the Serious Collector

George Thomas Jr.

George Thomas Jr. was born to a wealthy banking family in Philadelphia in 1873 and died in Beverly Hills in 1932. Thomas served as a pilot in the First World War and was a heroic fighter, surviving three crashes. Thomas is best known for the three world-class courses he designed in Los Angeles: Bel-Air, Los Angeles Country Club and Riviera.

Golf Architecture

Thomas was the author of the first book dedicated to golf architecture, published in 1927 titled *Golf Architecture in America: Its Strategy and Construction* (Donovan & Jerris T7730). The book is a cornerstone collectible for anyone who loves golf course architecture. The book is profusely illustrated and contains many early pictures of his courses and Pine Valley. The back of the book has a fold-out map of an “ideal” par three course that Thomas imagined. The original first edition is generally available and sells in the \$500 range. Copies with the rare original dust-jacket (seen below left) are worth multiples of this price.

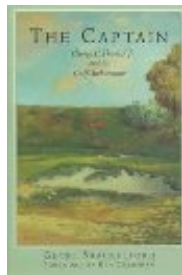


Thomas designed courses as a recreational pursuit and rarely took money for his work, thus we are blessed with some of the best examples of golf architecture out of his love of the game. Ben Crenshaw has said that his own copy of *Golf Architecture* is “way past dog-eared,” and that he and Bill Coore are very much influenced by Thomas, a testament to this pioneering course designer.

The Captain

Geoff Shackelford wrote the definitive and only biography of Thomas: *The Captain: George C. Thomas Jr. and His Golf Architecture*, published in 1997 by Sleeping Bear Press (Donovan & Jerris S14500). It is about a \$150 book. The book includes extensive analysis of Thomas's design philosophy and his interesting life. The book is full of nice early black and white pictures and illustrations of his courses.

The book was also published in a special limited edition with a green leather slipcase with decorative endpapers and gilt edges (Donovan & Jerris S14440). Only 50 copies of this limited edition were produced. The workmanship of the book is stunning, the materials are top quality, and much care went into its creation. The craftsman who did the bindings was trained at her Majesty's bookbindery in London. There were three other limited editions published in editions of 15, 500 and 1,200, all in 1996, published by Captain Fantastic Publishing.



The title of the book takes its name from the Thomas's rank in the Army. The book is thoroughly researched and provides a lot of insight into the man and his life. It is an interesting parallel that Alister MacKenzie also served in the military and then went into golf course design. Many thanks to Geoff Shackelford for providing such rich background on one of the lesser known architects of the golden age of design.

The Renaissance Man

Thomas was a real renaissance man. In addition to being a war hero and world-class architect, he was very interested in roses. He created over forty new commercial roses species through hybridization. He was also a competitive dog trainer, fisherman and yachtsman. In addition to his golf book, he published multiple books about roses and fishing. Thomas is seen below in his sharp golf attire and his military uniform:

