

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

Golf Books Published in the U.S. before 1900

Last month's newsletter on *The Golfer's Alphabet* got us thinking about golf books that were published in the United States prior to 1900. This month, we survey the field of golfing literature and focus on these rare books. To put the game in the U.S. in the proper historical context, it is important to remember that the U.S.G.A. was formed in 1894 and the game was only in its infancy here.

We began our survey by referring back to Donovan & Murdoch's *The Game of Golf and The Printed Word*, which organizes its listing of golf books into, let us say, quirky time periods. For our purposes this proved quite useful, since we focused our efforts on *The Gutta Percha Period*, which was from 1851-1900.

As it turns out, only a dozen golf books were published in the United States prior to 1900.

Year	Book	Author	D&M #
1893	Spalding's Athletic Library: Golf	Balfour, J. Stuart	580
1895	Golf in America Golf and Golfing (2 nd edition)	Lee, James P	3350 & 3360
c1895	Golf: A Handbook for Beginners	Dwight, James	1090
1897	How to Play Golf	Whigham, H.J.	4600
1898	The Golfer's Alphabet	Sutphen, William	4450
1898	The Golficide and other Tales of the Fair Green	Sutphen, William	4470
1898	An A.B.C. of Golf	Falls, D.W.C.	4560
1898	The Amateur Championship Golf Competition at the Morris County Golf Club	Kip, Charles A.	3250
1898	Through the Greens and Golfer's Year Book, Philadelphia Section; containing the field maps and official data of the prominent golf clubs and association for 1898, with supplementary map of the Morris County Links	Senat, Prosper	3840
1898	Keep Your Eye on the Ball and Your Right Knee Stiff...A Short and concise treatise on Golf	Sweny, H.R.	4500
1899	The Golf Girl	Peck, Samuel	3710
1899	Drives and Puts	Camp, Walter and Brooks, Lillian	780

Why is it that Lee's *Golf in America* is generally recognized as the first golf book published in America? Technically, it is; with two caveats. *Hutchinson's Golf: The Badminton Library* was first published in Great Britain by Longmans, Green. The U.S. Edition, issued by Little Brown in 1890, five years before *Golf in America*, arguably, is a reprint of a non-U.S. title and therefore not an American book.

The second caveat would be with regard to two earlier titles published in wrappers. *Spalding's Athletic Library*, which predates *Golf in America* by two years is 24. James Dwight's *Golf: A Handbook For Beginners*, was published without a date, but Donovan & Murdoch give a circa 1895 date. This publication is 82 pages. Since these two books were printed in wrappers and Lee's is a hardbound book, it is generally recognized as the first true American golf book published.

For the record, there were three editions of books published in the United Kingdom prior to 1900 that also printed editions for the U.S:

1890	Golf: The Badminton Library	Hutchinson, Horace	2990
1898	Golf	Smith, Garden	3930
1898	A Golfing Pilgrim on Many Links	Hutchinson, Horace	2920

Morris Country Golf Club

It's interesting that two of the pre-1900 books published reference the Morris Country Golf Club, located in Morristown, New Jersey, a stone's throw from the U.S.G.A. headquarters.

The Amateur Championship Golf Competition at the Morris County Golf Club is a rare bird indeed. Donovan and Murdoch indicate that it was printed in a limited edition of 100 copies and it is a hardcover, has 58 pages, with the preface written by Van Tassel Sutphen. We could find no auction records or record of a previous sale, nor could we find a copy in the U.S.G.A. Library.

The 1898 Philadelphia Section *Through the Greens*, contains a supplement (actually the supplement is the frontispiece) featuring Morris County, is also exceedingly rare. When Joseph Murdoch auctioned off his golf library in 1998, this book sold for \$4,600. The same copy of the book, put up for auction again ten years later, fetched \$16,100. Is it one of a kind?

Instructional Advice

How to Play Golf by H.J. Whigham was the first instructional book published in the U.S. It proved very popular, was printed in several editions and is the most ubiquitous of all the pre-1900 books published.

Next time you go out to play, try the advice given by H.R. Sweny in his 1898 book, which was privately printed in Albany, New York. *Keep Your Eye on the Ball and Your Right Knee Stiff* and let us know how you make out. Our bet is, his advice will be of little help, however, if you can get your hands on a copy of the book, it's also very rare. The last copy seen sold at auction, ten years ago, went for \$2,300.

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