

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

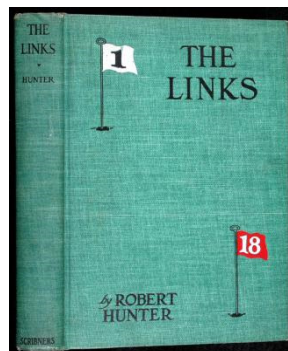
The Links by Robert Hunter

Robert Hunter's *The Links* was a groundbreaking golf book, in that it was the first to use illustrations (black and white pictures) to demonstrate the art of good golf course architecture. Hunter laments the dearth of good books on golf architecture in the opening chapter and notes that the aspiring architect has few places to turn to learn the trade. Hunter uses fifty-one full page illustrations of the leading courses of the day to show what constitutes good architecture.

He refers to the early days of golf architecture in bleak terms, "Any one knowing better things must have thought it the work of some maniac with an extremely malicious spirit, determined to deface, with every kind of misshapen erection and eruption known to a depraved mind, those lovely fields and meadows which first caught the eye of our golfers." He seems to be holding back here; I'd like to know what he really thinks.

Writing in the opening chapter, "one recalls that less than thirty years ago the game was looked upon as something effeminate --- an unmanly sport suited only to the pink-coated fops and dandies who played it. And what moral courage was required in those days to walk the town streets or board a train dressed in knickers and carrying a bag of clubs!"

The book was published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1926 (Donovan & Jerris H27280). Unlike some books, where it can take some investigation to determine whether it is a first edition, with *The Links* it is easy to do. The first edition, seen below, has a white flag with a '1' and a red flag with an '18' on the front cover. The second edition has a plain green cover without the flag.

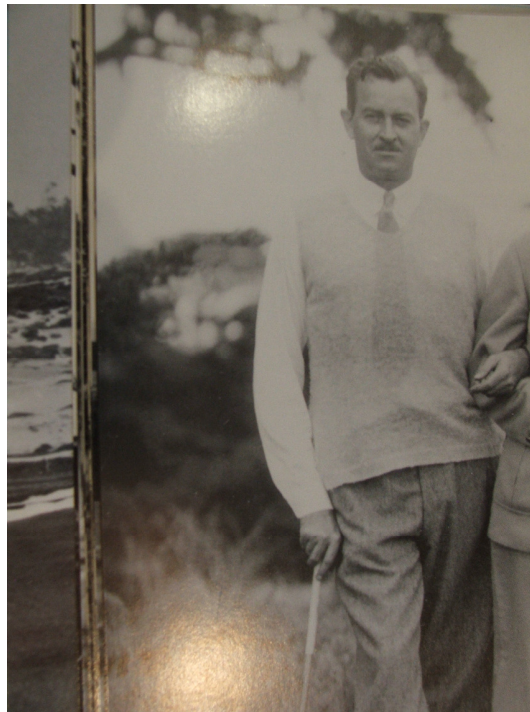


According to Donovan & Jerris, the second editions were produced in 1935 when "Golfdom Magazine purchased from Scribners' [1,230 copies] unbound copies and bound them in a plain green cloth." The contents are identical to the original first edition. The

USGA published a facsimile edition in 1994 (D & J H27310) which was limited to 1,500 copies. Two other facsimile editions were produced in 1998 and 1999.

Hunter was a big fan of Pine Valley and the book includes thirteen full page pictures of the course. He calls it, "...a thing of structural beauty," and "a playground of the gods."

So who is Robert Hunter and what were his qualifications to author a book on golf course architecture? Before becoming interested in architecture he had an interesting background. From Donovan & Jerris, "Hunter was a world-renowned sociologist and political radical. He authored a number of highly influential books, including "Poverty" in 1904, which addressed and attempted to solve significant social problems. He ran unsuccessfully for governor of Connecticut in 1917. After moving to California in 1917, where he taught for many years at the University of California at Berkeley, Hunter became deeply interested in golf course architecture." Daniel Wexler points out in *The Book of Golfers*, "Ironically Hunter, whose own roots were middle class, would marry an enormously wealthy woman and thus was living on her family's expensive farm when he ran for Connecticut's governorship on the Socialist ticket." This explains why Hunter takes such strong positions when writing. He's a Berkeley radical!



Hunter playing Cypress Point, from their club history

Hunter's course designs include the beautiful Valley Club of Montecito in Santa Barbara, California, which he co-designed with Alister MacKenzie. According to Donovan & Jerris he also assisted MacKenzie in the creation of Cypress Point and contributed to the redesign of Pebble Beach in preparation for the 1929 U.S. Amateur.

Copies of the book signed by Hunter are rare. An even rarer specimen of the book is one with the original dust jacket still present (seen below). Each of these rarities will fetch in the thousands of dollars. *The Links* is Hunter's only writings about golf and is considered a classic among golf books. It has been overshadowed to some degree by the masterwork produced a year following its publication in 1927 of George Thomas' *Golf Architecture in America*, but is still an important and relevant book today, rightly sought after by collectors. His 163 pages are opinionated, spirited and informed.

