



**THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY**  
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION  
**NEWSBOY**



*Horatio Alger, Jr.*

1832 - 1899

A magazine devoted to the study of Horatio Alger, Jr., his life, works, and influence on the culture of America.

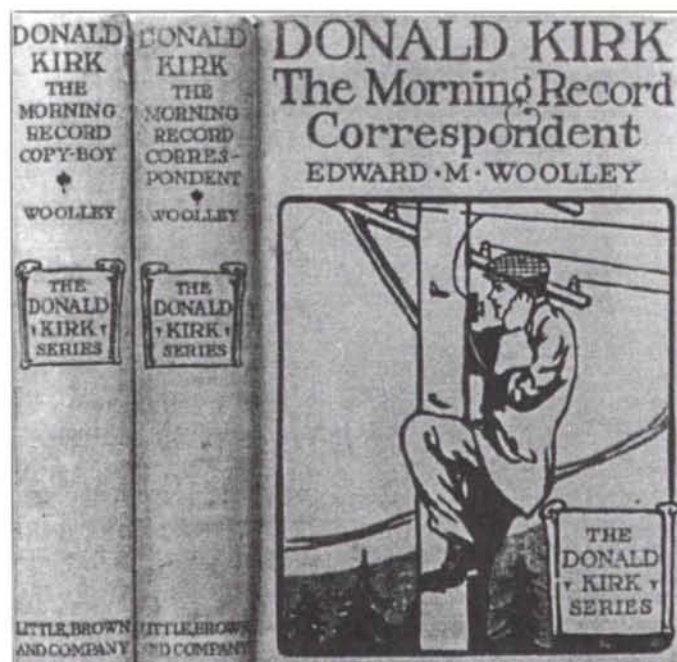
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NUMBER 4

Mild-mannered  
reporters ... or  
boys' book heroes?

-- See Page 11



Confessions  
of an Alger addict

-- See Page 3

Centennial of Alger's death: selected obituaries -- See Page 8

## President's column

The summer season, normally a period for slowing down a bit and taking vacations, has been punctuated with some unwanted events and news. Many parts of the country have suffered through extremely high temperatures and equally record-setting droughts. DeKalb, Illinois, soared to a heat index of 114! Senseless murder and mayhem have once again spilled over into the workplace.

We certainly live in complex times, but some reflection on the attributes of the Horatio Alger hero might well be useful. The young protagonist of so many of Alger's stories, in the end, successfully acclimates to his environment and maintains a centered outlook on life and its opportunities. We are surely in need of a more balanced approach to human relations and respect for oneself and others.

My wife and I made an enjoyable car trip from Chicago to Cape Cod. There was some time for booking, and about seven or eight book stores were visited along the way. I did not encounter any Alger items worthy of purchase, but did locate four or five books for my Harry Castlemon and World War I juvenile collections. One store in particular stands out, Frogtown Books in Toledo, Ohio — certainly a highlight. The store was very well laid out and the stock was of very high quality. It was a slow Saturday afternoon and I had the chance to share thoughts about collecting, book shows, and the Internet with the knowledgeable proprietor. Internet auctions and book selling were seen as rapidly growing, to the point of dominating the mom-and-pop bookstores and the antique outlets in the coming years. Sad, but probably true. This phenomenon parallels the development of libraries, my profession, over the past three decades. Libraries have moved from a paradigm of self-sufficiency (never really attainable) to a paradigm of access which emphasizes interlibrary loan and the exploitation of electronic text sources.

I hope that any member who has a suggestion for improving the Society will contact me. I can assure you that all suggestions will be taken seriously and will be passed along to the Board of Directors. Become involved — indicate an interest in serving on the Board, a committee, or writing an article for *Newsboy*. In my next column, I will comment on some of the newer Alger reprints. Enjoy the remainder of the summer, and stay cool.

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## HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. and to encourage the spirit of *Strive and Succeed* that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes — lads whose struggles epitomized the great American dream and flamed hero ideals in countless millions of young Americans.

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Membership applications, renewals, changes of address and other correspondence should be sent to **Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255**.

*Newsboy* is indexed in the Modern Language Association's International Bibliography.

### BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY H.A.S.

- Horatio Alger, Jr., A Comprehensive Bibliography*, by Bob Bennett (PF-265); republished by MAD Book Co., 1999
- Horatio Alger or, The American Hero Era*, by Ralph D. Gardner (PF-053).
- The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*, by Carol Nackenoff (PF-921).
- Publication Formats of the 59 Stories by Horatio Alger, Jr. as Reprinted by the John C. Winston Co.*, by Bob Sawyer (PF-455) and Jim Thorp (PF-574).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by M.A. Donohue & Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by Whitman Publishing Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by The New York Book Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.*, by Gary Scharnhorst with Jack Bales (PF-258).

*Newsboy* ad rates: Full page, \$32.00; one-half page, \$17.00; one-quarter page, \$9.00; per column inch (1 inch deep by approx. 3 1/2 inches wide), \$2.00. Send ads, with check payable to Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255.

The above rates apply to all want ads, along with ads offering non-Alger books for sale. However, it is the policy of the Horatio Alger Society to promote the exchange of Alger books and related Alger materials by providing space **free of charge** to our members for the **sale only** of such material. Send ads or "Letters to the Editor" to *Newsboy* editor William R. Gowen (PF-706) at 23726 N. Overhill Dr., Lake Zurich, IL 60047.

# Confessions of an Alger addict

By Alvin K. Funderburg PF-1025)

In 1926 I was a 10-year-old Ohio farm boy and like many of Alger's heroes, my net worth was less than a dollar. My only income was the penny my father (who was not a squire) would give me when I was lucky enough to overpower a mouse. If I overpowered a rat, I collected a nickel. Once I tried to pass off a large mouse as a rat, but that failed. I confess, though, I often sold the same mouse several times. I must have been the "Young Outlaw" of my time.

You've heard, of course, of the Woolworth millions. Well, part of that money came from me.

One 1926 Saturday, in a moment of weakness, I paid a dime for one of Woolworth's Alger books, *The Cash Boy*. I hated to admit to my mother that I had spent my money so foolishly, but when she saw the book, her face lit up and she said, "Why, I read that book when I was a little girl." That made me feel good.

I read the book several times and pitied Frank Fowler so much that if it hadn't been for Mr. Wharton, I would have gone to New York and helped him out myself.

That first book hooked me on Alger, and I found I had to have a fix every Saturday. So in rapid succession I bought every Alger book Woolworth had. That included *Strong and Steady*, *Do and Dare*, *Risen From the Ranks* and *Struggling Upward*. My father rose up and complained that I was reading too much and was neglecting my milking. After that, I took my books to the cow stable with me.

Eventually, I cleaned Woolworth out, and — horrors! — it was time for another fix. Then I found I could get a few Alger's by scrounging around old book stores, and that's mainly what I've been doing for the 72 years since then. In that stretch of time I've been able to get 117 of Horatio Alger's 122 books. The missing five might take another 72 years.

Maybe not, though. Any day now I might run across a *Timothy Crump's Ward* at a flea market. If that happens, come and see me. I'll be in a very generous mood. Many times in those 72 years I used poor judgment. In Denver, in 1958, I was offered a mint copy of *Nothing to Do* for 10 dollars. I thought was a little too stiff for such a little book with no stated author. Dollars out the window. But every coin has two sides. Once I picked up a genuine first of *Ragged Dick* for 25 cents. Dollars back in the window.

I have thought long and hard as to why Horatio Alger's books are better than other boys' books of the



DEAN SPRANG INTO THE BOAT AND PUSHED OFF FROM THE SHORE.  
Dean Dunham

same period. I've decided the charm must come from Alger's unique writing style. But that is a hard thing to pin down. Sometimes his style was good, and sometimes it was pathetic. Perhaps there were times when he had to meet a deadline and had to hurry.

I'll have a few words to say about his style, just to stir up the mud. At best, it'll be a worm's-eye view.

Alger, at his best, could hook his parenthetical thoughts together in long strings much like a lawyer would in writing a brief. He did not economize in words, but painstakingly laid out his thoughts in a way that revealed considerable depth of thought. Here's a random sample from *Tattered Tom*, page 92:

She was a rather a stout woman, but there was an expression of care on her face, which was not surprising, for it is no light thing to keep a New York boarding house.

Now, if you're a careful reader, that kind of writing  
(Continued on Page 5)

## Editor's notebook

Last issue, we discussed buying books on the Internet, and how convenient it can be. Also, how boring, since many of us prefer the romance of "the hunt," in which we'd rather navigate some obscure back road in search of an out-of-the-way book barn than navigate around our computer screen.

Yet, the growing field of electronic book-hunting has its pluses. One of the big advantages is that the Internet is truly international, which means many foreign book dealers are posting their wares on the book-search and auction sites. How often do we get a chance to travel to Europe or Australia? Not often, if at all. Now, we can go there at the click of a computer mouse.

This ever-widening world also leads to new discoveries, such as foreign editions of books which we did not know existed.

A good example took place earlier this summer, when Bart J. Nyberg (PF-879) turned up what he thought was a new Ralph Henry Barbour title, *The Cruise of the Endeavor*, another in a series of adult novels written by Barbour in collaboration with Henry P. Holt. Nyberg bought the book, which was offered by a dealer in Auckland, New Zealand, and immediately found out it was really the Barbour-Holt collaboration *Fortunes of War* with a different title. The original *Fortunes of War*

## Adopt-a-Newsboy

The Horatio Alger Society gratefully acknowledges the receipt of a donation of \$200 from Lee T. Allen (PF-977) for "adopting" the mailing costs of the May-June 1999 issue of **Newsboy**.

The Horatio Alger Society also wishes to again acknowledge previous **Adopt-a-Newsboy** donors: Murray Levin (PF-851), Tom Davis (PF-976), Bob Huber (PF-841), John Cadick (PF-858), Bill Gowen (PF-706), John T. Dizer (PF-511), Carol Nackenoff (PF-921), Milton F. Ehler (PF-702), Chris DeHaan (PF-773) and Janice (PF-975) and Michael (PF-934) Morley.

Anyone interested in participating in this ongoing program, which is tax-deductible, please write to:

Horatio Alger Society  
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Richmond, VA 23255

was published by The Century Co. of New York, in 1919, while *The Cruise of the Endeavor* was published by John F. Shaw & Co., Ltd., of London in 1928.

Alger enthusiasts will readily recognize Shaw as publisher of the well-known Alger reprint title, *The Nugget Finders* (originally *In a New World*, published by Porter & Coates in 1893).

While we haven't done a word-for-word comparison at this point, the two Barbour-Holt books appear identical in text, even though the cover designs are completely

different. They also have the same glossy frontispiece by Charles M. Relyea.

All this means is that we will probably never stop learning new things about our hobby. In the July-August 1998 **Newsboy**, Robert E. Kasper did a comprehensive article on the foreign editions of Horatio Alger's works. Are there any more out there still to be discovered? Now, with the Internet at our disposal, we may find out.

In the September-October **Newsboy**, we hope to bring you more photos from the 1999 H.A.S. Convention, which we could not fit into this issue.

In the meantime, I hope your summer has gone well.

### FORTUNES OF WAR

BY  
RALPH HENRY BARBOUR  
AND  
H. P. HOLT  
Authors of "Lost Islands," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY  
C. M. RELYEA



NEW YORK  
THE CENTURY CO.  
1919

### THE CRUISE OF THE ENDEAVOUR

OR  
FORTUNES OF WAR

BY  
RALPH HENRY BARBOUR  
AND  
H. P. HOLT  
Authors of "Lost Islands," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY  
C. M. RELYEA



John F. Shaw (1928) & Co., Ltd.,  
Publishers,  
3 Pilgrim Street, London. E.C.

## Confessions of an Alger addict

(Continued from Page 3)

slows down your mind a little. It mesmerizes your brain, tickles your fancy and makes you feel better.

In *Tom Tracy*, at the end of the story, Alger wrote:

Prosperity has not hardened Tom's heart, and he is always ready to help those of his old friends who stand in need.

Critics call this bad writing and would change it to:

Prosperity has not changed Tom and he still helps his needy friends.

Well, the naked thought is there, all right, but Alger's idea was to dress it up a bit, and make it interesting for the reader.

It boiled down to this: There's a certain winsome quality in Alger's writing other writers of his period could not match.

Of course, every once in a while, Alger got carried away with his tendency to express himself so precisely. For instance, here is a quote from *Paul Prescott's Charge*:

(Speaking of Mr. Mudge) "... he had a coarse hard face, while his head was surmounted by a shock of red hair, which to all appearance had suffered little interference from the comb for a time which the observer would scarcely venture to compute."

When Alger inserted conversation into his text, his characters used language true to life. On page 32 of *Tattered Tom*, granny said, "Well, what if you was?" On page 102, *Tattered Tom* said, as she stood in front of a mirror, "It didn't look like me a bit." On page 106, she said, "I wonder what granny would say if she saw me in these fixin's." And if the character is an Irish washerwoman, her brogue is a bit 'a the ould sod. The result is that Alger makes his characters come alive.

Every once in a while, Alger tossed in a word far beyond the working vocabulary of his young readers. Perhaps he was just showing off, but I don't think so. On page 285 of *Walter Sherwood's Probation*, we read, "... for human nature is so constituted that evil reports are believed with avidity by the majority of persons." Now it's hard for anyone to believe with "avidity." You either believe or you don't.

On page 125 of the same book we read, "At this he swore in a manner that terrified his unwilling hostess, and anathematized her for a temperance crank." Now I don't know if you've ever been anathematized or not, but as for me, I don't think I've ever had the pleasure.

In *Brave and Bold*, page 13, we read. "This speech was vociferously applauded." I suppose that meant there was more than just a clap or two.

On page 69 of *Tom Tracy*, Alger wrote, "I can't remem-



LEON PLUNGED HIS HAND INTO THE POCKET OF NED'S COAT AND PULLED OUT THE STOLEN TIES. *Ned Newton, frontispiece*

ber the last name," said Gerald, mendaciously. I can just see Gerald twisting up his face here, trying to remember. But Alger missed a golden opportunity to be funny here. He could have written: "I can't remember the last name," said Gerald, *forgetfully*.

In *The Young Bank Messenger*, John Fox, a bank robber, "... felt hopeless and execrated his folly in not making good his escape." I'm tempted to, but I won't comment here.

In the same story, a tramp, Tom Burns, "... got up and started away with celerity." Now that's an awfully lot to ask from a tramp. I've seen lots of them and they walk slowly or not at all.

Some of the expressions Alger used are now archaic. On page 6 of *Hector's Inheritance*, Alger quotes Mr. Roscoe as saying, "Why, when I went to school, twenty-five years since, less than half this sum was charged." In *Hector's Inheritance*, Alger wrote, "No, sir," answered Hector, wondering whither all these questions tended. In *Walter Sherwood's Probation*, Alger wrote, "Dr. Mack adjusted his spectacles, for he was rising sixty." By the way, I'm rising 90. What are you rising?

Instead of saying "pocket-book" or "wallet," Alger usually used the word "portemonnaie."

On the other hand, some of his expressions anticipated the future. Here and there you'll find modern clichés such as "looking out for number one," "Put up or shut up," "I can twist him around my finger," "I'll break every bone in your body," "tighten up the screws" and "go jump in the river."

As for plots, often Alger never used one. He just recorded the day-to-day activities of his heroes, with gimmicks to keep the reader awake. In a flash he could bring in evil tramps, confidence men and pickpockets to separate the hero from his hard-earned cash. On the other hand, if the hero was broke, hungry or out of a job, he could easily find a diamond ring or a pocketbook on

(Continued on Page 6)

## Confessions of an Alger addict

(Continued from Page 5)

the street, and when he returned it to its owner (always a rich merchant) he would receive the reward he most needed.

Anytime an Alger hero gets aboard a train you can expect someone to rob him. The same thing goes if the hero finds himself driving through a dense woods or sleeping in a stranger's room.

Alger had up his sleeve a host of ways of getting a hero out of a tough situation. If he was falsely accused of stealing, usually a neutral observer would step up and say he saw it all. It might be a rich man, a detective, a policeman, a fellow worker or a servant. But he'd be there. However, there is one thing you can count on — Alger's heroes were never in any kind of trouble at the end of the story.

One trick Alger frequently resorted to was to take a simple situation and stretch it out like a rubber band. In *Paul the Peddler*, Paul

visits a pawnbroker to pawn a valuable ring. Paul asks \$20 for it and the pawnbroker offers him four. They haggle. And they haggle. Finally, 16 pages later, the pawnbroker offers him \$24 for the ring and Paul turns him down!

When Alger did use a plot it often involved a hero who had been abducted as a child by an evil uncle bent on getting the child's inheritance for himself. Eventually, of course, the evil uncle gets done in and the hero inherits money. Lots of it. Alger was not skimping with other people's money. Some of his heroes got as much as \$150,000. Considering that a plate of beef, a piece of bread and a cup of tea cost as much as 15 cents in those days, that much money was a staggering sum.

If a hero works in an office, you can be certain that the clerk over him is annoyed that his nephew didn't get the job. Alger takes as many as four pages to tell how the hero is framed, four more to get him fired and finally, another four to prove his innocence. However, to the delight of all of Alger's young readers, the evil clerk eventually gets the axe.

In many of Alger's stories, when the hero is unable to get work in a rural village, a rich young stranger comes into town and hires him as a tutor or as a companion. Always the pay is \$5 a week.

In every small town in Algerland, there lurked a squire. He was always rich, mean and stingy. Usually he had an aquiline nose. He always owned the mortgage on the widow's home and was inclined to foreclose. Also, he had a son the same age as the hero and this son backed the hero unmercifully. For these reasons I would never want to be a squire. You can be one if you want to.

Some of the ways Alger used to free his imprisoned heroes stretch the imagination of the reader. For instance, in one story, the hero is locked in a room in which Alger clearly said contained nothing but a table and two chairs. Then, minutes later, the hero picks up a rope and lets himself down four stories and escapes. That's a bit of magic, folks.

In another story, a hero is being chased by a band of Indians

after his scalp, and just as the Indians catch up with him, a stampeding herd of buffaloes wipes out the entire band of Indians. How these buffaloes managed to dodge the hero is a miracle of highest order. I think it's the reader who gets buffaloed.

In *Adrift in the City*, Oliver's mother escapes from a Southern madhouse and finds employment in a wealthy Chicago family (no mean feat in itself). But then, Oliver goes to Chicago and simply runs into her (now that's a real mean feat).

Now we come to a real blockbuster. In *Tom Brace*, Tom is in Boston and he takes a ride in a balloon. The balloon is first blown out to sea (Horrors!). Then the wind changes and the balloon is blown back over land (Oh, thank goodness). But then it crashes (Horrors again!). However, Tom is not hurt (Thank goodness again). But, believe it or not, the balloon crashes very near the front yard of old, rich Sidney Greyson, who has long been searching for his grandson, abducted years earlier. And Tom is that grandson!

Did Alger ever show a sense of humor in his writings? Yes, but not very often.



"DON'T YOU BE IMPUDENT, YOU YOUNG RASCAL."

*Rough and Ready, frontispiece*

In Chapter VII of *Only an Irish Boy*, one of Alger's rare puns appears. Andy is asked if he wants his meat well-done or rare. Andy replies: "Well done, ma'am. I have it rare enough anyhow."

In *Bound to Rise*, a humorous scene was recorded. Harry was walking in a woods when a storm came up. He sought shelter in a cabin that was occupied by an old man. The man said he was General Jackson, who had won the Battle of New Orleans. He said he was hiding from Henry Clay, who wanted to take over the presidency. Harry, not wanting to go back into the storm, humored the old man and stayed overnight with him.

The next morning, the old man told Harry he would likely make him a Minister to England or France.

Of course, every Alger reader knows about the joke in *Ragged Dick*. Dick is in an office, waiting with Fosdick as the latter applied for a job. A snobbish young gentleman says to Dick:

"I've seen you before."

"Oh have you?"

said Dick, whirling round: "then p'r'aps

you'd like to see me behind."

Moral preachments occur in most of Alger's books. Having been trained for the ministry, Alger seldom missed a chance to speak against drinking, smoking, gambling, playing pool and playing the lottery. On one occasion, Alger brought down both liquor and pool with a single shot. This quote is from *Hector's Inheritance*. Hector is being questioned by Titus Newman, a wealthy merchant:

"Have you any taste for any kind of liquor?"

"No, sir," answered Hector, promptly.

"Even if you had, do you think you would have self-control enough to avoid entering saloons and gratifying your tastes?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is well. Do you play pool?"

"No, sir," answered Hector, wondering whither all these questions tended.

"I ask because playing pool in public rooms paves the way for intemperance, as bars are generally connected with such establishments."

Ah, Horatio, it is still true 120 years later.

Not every Alger insertion dealt with morality. Sometimes it just happened to be what was running through his mind at the time. For instance, in Chapter VI of *Ned Newton*, Alger wrote:

"There are some who find the smell of cooking offensive, and I don't myself admire the odor of cabbage."

Hey, Horatio, cabbage farmers would be after you these days for that remark. Probably they'd sue you. The least you could have done was say something nice about slaw.

In *Number 91*, Alger wrote:

In any of my readers think they are badly treated by their employers and are poorly provided with friends, let them consider whether they have taken pains to deserve them.

He could have written:

If your employers mistreat you and you have few friends, it's probably your own fault.

But that wasn't his style.



"SMASH YER BAGGAGE, MUM?"

Ben, the Luggage Boy, frontispiece

In *Only an Irish Boy*, Alger described an evil Mr. Fairfax in disguise, with a red wing and a red beard, then he added this:

If any of my readers would like to know how effectual this disguise is, let them try it, and I will guarantee you that they won't know themselves when they come to look in the mirror.

Mr. Alger, I am one of your readers, and I would like to try this experiment. But can I trust your guarantee? You are no longer around.

Alger even gives advice to older readers. In *The World Before Him*, he wrote:

Though this is a story written for boys, it may be read by some business men, who will allow me to suggest that a refusal kindly and considerately expressed loses half its bitterness, and often inspires hope, instead of discouragement.

And it doesn't cost a cent more, he might have added.

I could write more here, but my wife, Ruth, has just asked me to take out the trash. You don't think she meant this article, do you?

# Centennial of Alger's death: selected obituaries

## **Boston Daily Globe**

(evening edition)

July 18, 1899, Page 10, Col. 6

### HORATIO ALGER DEAD.

#### Life Work of Famous Writer of Boys' Stories Ended.

Final Summons comes at Residence of His Sister in Natick.

Lingering Illness of Twelve Months at Last Proves Fatal.

NATICK, July 18 — Horatio Alger, the well-known writer of boys' stories, died at the residence of his sister, Mrs. A. P. Cheney, on Florence St., early this morning of heart trouble. He has been under the care of a physician for over a year, but it is four years since he has done any work excepting a few sketches for magazines. He has been unable to leave the house for three months.

Horatio Alger was a native of Revere, Mass., where his father officiated as Unitarian minister at the time of his birth. He was prepared at Gates academy, Marlboro, for Harvard college, where he graduated some years later.

He went to Europe, and while there the civil war broke out in this country, and he returned home at once. He was filled with the war spirit, and wrote poems for the magazines. At the request of a friend, he wrote a sketch for "The Student and Schoolmate," which attracted so much attention that he concluded that juvenile literature was his field, and thenceforth devoted himself almost entirely to it.

In 1866 he established himself in New York and interested himself in studying the peculiarities of the street arabs. His first story which brought him prominently before the public was "Ragged Dick," written in 1867. A. K. Loring, a Boston publisher, saw he had made a strike and engaged

him to write six volumes of the subject. He followed these with eight more under the title of "The Tattered Tom" series.

A half-million copies of this series was sold and his fame as a story writer was established. He wrote in all over 50 volumes, and there are some which have not yet been published. In 1873 he made a second trip to Europe in company with his relatives. He was never married. For a few years he was an editor of the Advertiser and one other Boston paper.

His practice was to spend three-fourths of the year in New York writing stories, and during the summer months he resided with his sister in Natick.

Mrs. Cheney says of him that he was very peculiar in some respects. He could always write best when there was stir and bustle about. Nothing delighted him more than to get a lot of boys between the ages of 12 and 16 years in the room with him, and while they were cutting up and playing about he would sit down and write letters or a paragraph of a story as the case might be. He usually wrote a paragraph of a story in a day, and while writing he seemed to be oblivious to all else. He said he liked noise and bustle, quiet confused him.

When on the streets he was always surrounded by a crowd of boys, for whom he would buy sweetmeats and various things which he knew they liked. He was noted for his deeds of charity, always in assisting boys. He adopted two and started others in business. One of his peculiarities was that he would never tell his age, nor did he wish his sister, Mrs. Cheney, to do so. His age will not appear on his casket, nor has the undertaker a record of it. Mrs. Cheney says he looked much older than he was. The best opinion of those who have long known him is that he was about 65 years old.

The funeral will be held in the Unitarian church, South Natick, at which his father was pastor 15 years ago, Thursday at 2:30. Rev. G. F. Pratt will officiate at the funeral services, and interment will be in Glenwood Cemetery.

## **Boston Daily Advertiser**

July 19, 1899, Page 5

### HORATIO ALGER IS DEAD.

Writer of Stories for Boys Expires at Natick After an Illness of About a Year.

Horatio Alger, the writer of so many popular stories for boys, died early yesterday morning in Natick, at the home of his sister, Mrs. Amos P. Cheney. Mr. Alger had been ill for about a year, and for the past few weeks had been confined to the house.

Horatio Alger was born in North Chelsea, now Revere, Jan. 13, 1834. He attended the public schools in his native town and entered Harvard College, where he was graduated at the age of 18. For the next few years he devoted himself to teaching, writing and doing newspaper work.

For a year he travelled abroad, acting as a correspondent for American newspapers. Returning to America, he studied at the divinity school in Cambridge, and in 1884 was ordained to the Unitarian ministry at Brewster, Mass.

In 1866 he settled in New York city, where he studied the condition of the street boys, and found in them an abundance of interesting material for popular stories.

He published more than 50 books for the young generation to read, and young men of the present day recall with delight the thrilling and pathetic stories of bootblacks, newsboys and other waifs of the great metropolis from the pen of Horatio Alger which they read in their boyhood days.

He published, in addition, a novel titled "Helen Ford"; "Nothing to Do: a Tilt at Our Best Society" (1867); "Gran'ther Baldwin's Thanksgiving with Other Ballads and Poems" (1875); "From Canal Boy to President" (1881); "From Farm Boy to



Senator: The History of Daniel Webster" (1882); "Abraham Lincoln, the Backwoods Boy" (1883); "From Log Cabin to White House"; "Digging for Gold" (1892); "Victor Vane, the Young Secretary" (1894); "Only an Irish Boy" (1894); "Adrift in the City" (1895) and such favorites as the "Ragged Dick Series," "Luck and Pluck Series" and "Tattered Tom Series."

## The New York Times

July 19, 1899  
Page 7, Col. 5

### DEATH LIST OF A DAY.

#### Horatio Alger.

Horatio Alger, writer of boys' stories, died at the home of his sister, Mrs. Amos Cheney, at Natick, Mass., yesterday.

Mr. Alger was born in Revere, Mass., Jan. 13, 1834. He was graduated from Harvard in 1852, after which he spent three years in journalism and teaching, and another three years (1857-1860), at the Cambridge Theological School, paying his way by his contributions to the press. In 1861, he traveled to Europe, and on his return and until 1864 he acted as a private tutor. In 1864 he was ordained as pastor of the Unitarian Church in Brewster, Mass. There he remained for two years, when he came to this city to live. He soon became deeply interested in the condition of the street boys of the city, and this experience gave form to many of his writings.

He contributed largely to periodical literature, and published in book form "Bertha's Christmas Vision" in 1855; "Nothing to Do; A Tilt at Our Best Society," a poem, in 1857; "Frank's Campaign; or, What a Boy Can Do" in 1864; several series of books for the young, about forty volumes, including the lives of Webster, Lincoln and Garfield; "Paul Preston's (sic) Charge" (1865); "Helen Ford," a novel, 1866, and a volume of poems. "Ragged Dick," "Luck and Pluck" and "Tattered Tom" are the most popular of his series for boys.

## Last Will and Testament: Horatio Alger, Jr.

Be it remembered that I, Horatio Alger, Jr., of Natick in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, being of sound mind and memory, but knowing the uncertainty of this life, to make this my last will and testament.

After the payment of just debts and funeral charges, I bequeath and devise as follows:

To Harry A. Schickling of 277 West 36th St., New Lake [sic] City, in trust the sum of \$500—to be used at his discretion for the use of Thomas Keegan, a boy now in his employ — To the said Harry A. Schickling I bequeath \$125 be paid by him in the sum of twenty-five each to William Keegan, Isaac Morris, James Callahan, Joseph Cearney, Sherwin Jordan now of Hoboken, N. J. and his brother George.

To John J. Schickling now of 135 Clermont Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. the sum of \$250 [figure changed with heavy write-over] /Two Hundred & Fifty dollars.

To my niece Anita Hemceld of San Francisco, Cal. and her two children \$25 each.

To her son Stanley Hemceld I bequeath my calendar gold watch.

To my niece Anna A. Andrews, of Allston, Mass. I bequeath a lot which I own in North Chicago (Ill.) formerly South Waukegan.

To my brother in law Amos P. Cheney I bequeath all the books in my library which he may desire, the balance to my nephew by marriage, Harry N. Andrews, of Allston, Mass.

I bequeath my copyright books, now published by Henry T. Coates of Philadelphia with the royalties accruing therefrom to those four persons, viz. my sister Mrs. O. Augusta Cheney of Natick, Mass., my niece Mrs. Anna A. Andrews of Allston, Mass., and my two informally adopted boys, John M. Downie

of 1251 Park Avenue, New York City, and his brother Edward J. Downie, now residing with him.

Any manuscript of serial stories not yet published in bookform, I wish sold as a portion of my estate, and the sums received in payment thereof, to be appropriated to the payments of legacies.

Shall either of the four persons to whom I have bequeathed my copyright books and royalties [blank space] his or her share is to be divided between the survivors.

All the rest and residue of my estate I bequeath to my sister to be used at her discretion in the furtherance of my wishes, privately communicated to her.

I hereby appoint my sister Mrs. O. Augusts Cheney of Natick, Mass. to be executor of this, my last will and testament, without bonds, hereby revoking all previous wills.

In testimony whereof I hereunto set my hand in the presence of three witnesses do declare this to be my last will this fifteenth day of February in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety eight.

[signed] Horatio Alger, Jr.

On this fifteenth day of February, A.D. 1898 Horatio Alger, Jr. of Natick, Massachusetts, signed the foregoing instrument in our presence, declaring it to be his last will; and as witnesses thereof we three do now, at his request, in his presence, and in the presence of each other, hereto subscribe our names.

[signed] Judson E. Sweetland

[signed] Mary E. Sweetland

[signed] Carrie H. Garfield

Commonwealth of Massachusetts,  
Middlesex, ss. Registry of Probate. A true copy.  
Attest, **Warren J. Fitzgerald** [signed] asst. register.

## New York Herald

July 19, 1899, Page 14, Col. 1

### DEATH OF HORATIO ALGER.

Well Known Writer of Boys' Stories  
Dies after a Very Long Illness.

BOSTON, Mass., Tuesday — Horatio Alger, a writer of boys' stories, died at the residence of his sister, Mrs. Amos P. Cheney, in Natick, this morning. He had been ill for about a year, but not steadily confined to his home until the last few weeks.

Horatio Alger was born in Revere, Mass., in 1834, and was graduated at Harvard in 1852. He spent three years in journalism and teaching,

and for another three years attended the Cambridge Theological School, supporting himself meanwhile by writing for newspapers.

After spending nearly a year in European travel and three years as a private tutor, Mr. Alger was ordained in 1864 as pastor of the Unitarian Church, in Brewster, Mass.

Mr. Alger came to New York in 1866. He made the acquaintance of a bootblack, and put him into a story entitled "Ragged Dick." The bootblack made Mr. Alger's fortune. The book made a hit among juvenile readers and revealed to Mr. Alger in what direction his talents were strongest. He wrote more than fifty books for boys, and he aimed in every one of them to inculcate some wholesome moral lesson.

## MEMBERSHIP

### New members

Mary F. Schwindamann (PF-1033)  
132 SW Meadow Lane  
Topeka, KS 66606-2236

Mr. & Mrs. Earl Reed Silvers, Jr. (PF-1034)  
P.O. Box 175  
South Casco, ME 04077

Earl and his wife, Janet, were of great assistance in providing research materials to Lois Varney (PF-1004) for her article, "Earl Reed Silvers: An Appreciation," which appeared in the March-April 1999 *Newsboy*, and have decided to join the Society. "We have grandchildren who are avid readers," Janet says.

Frank W. Quillen (PF-1035)  
846 Lamont St.  
Kingsport, TN 37664-3009 (423) 247-5301

Frank, a retired teacher, has four Alger titles in his growing juvenile series book collection. He presented a paper at the 1999 Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association conference in San Diego, and was encouraged to join the Horatio Alger Society by fellow PCA/ACA presenters Alan Pickrell (PF-965) and Bill Gowen (PF-706).

### Change of Address

Milton F. Ehlert (PF-702)  
2768 Mulford Drive, SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546-5640

Daniel M. Petersen (PF-200)  
11700 Wallstreet, #4103  
San Antonio, TX 78230-1877 (210) 558-7519

*Visit the official Horatio Alger  
Society Internet site at:*

[www.ihot.com/~has/](http://www.ihot.com/~has/)

## Official Horatio Alger Society Golf Shirt

Limited Time Offer



All shirts are white cotton pique  
with black embroidered Loring "Ragged Dick"  
shoeshine boy logo on front

*All proceeds donated to the Horatio Alger Society*

\$30 per shirt, plus \$7.50 shipping and handling  
All orders must be received by Nov. 30, 1999

*For more information on this special offer  
see flyer (including order form) in this issue!*

## WANTED

A copy of Alger's *Tattered Tom*  
Any edition, any condition  
Ready to pay up to \$100

Ed Evans (PF-1000)  
979 Hamlin Center Road  
Hamlin, NY 14464 (716) 964-3689  
E-mail: [readyeddy@earthlink.net](mailto:readyeddy@earthlink.net)

# Mild-mannered reporters ... or boys' book heroes?

By William R. Gowen (PF-706)

"...and who, disguised as Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter for a great metropolitan newspaper, fights a never-ending battle for truth, justice and the American Way."

Anyone familiar with "Superman" in both comic books and television, will note that Clark Kent does little, if any reporting. The Daily Planet could get along fine without him, the famous hallway storage (and costume-changing) room notwithstanding. For that matter, there isn't much reporting being done by Lois Lane or Jimmy Olsen either, much to the dismay of editor-in-chief Perry White.

Yes, the "Superman" stories take the term "investigative journalism" to a ridiculous extreme.

*Other authors...  
...other books*

Which brings us to the heroes of boys' dime novels, story papers and series books, dating back to the 1860s and continuing, for all intents and purposes, until the late 1960s. If you are a young reader, what do you want? You want thrills, adventure and non-stop excitement. The dime novel and its offspring provided that in abundance.

Of the many forms these stories took (historical novels, the wild west, science and invention, detective stories), one of the most fascinating remains the so-called "success," or career story. A young lad, often orphaned and living on the streets of a big city, somehow finds the means to rise above his problems and enter a career.

This is the type of story that made Horatio Alger, Jr. famous, starting with the publication of *Ragged Dick* in 1868. The titles of Alger's "rags to riches" stories are indicative: *Risen From the Ranks*, *Rupert's Ambition*, *Sam's Chance*, *Fame and Fortune*, *The Erie Train Boy*, *The Store Boy*, *Struggling Upward*, etc., etc.

Alger also wrote biographies of famous Americans also rose from modest means to great heights: *Abraham Lincoln*, *The Backwoods Boy*, or, *How a Young Railsplitter Became President*; or *From Canal Boy to President*, or *The Boyhood and Manhood of James A. Garfield*. These showed Alger's young readers that not all heroes were fictional, that hard work, dedication, and yes, a little luck, could be rewarded.

One of Alger's recurring themes is the newsboy, the



young orphan making pennies selling (usually New York) newspapers on the street corner.

But what about the newspaper profession itself as a career? The world of boys' fiction is filled with examples. But are these really career stories in the Alger mold?

Yes and no.

There has always been something romantic about the newspaper business, both as a purveyor and maker of news. The Spanish-American War was said to be a "newspaper war," exemplified by publisher William Randolph Hearst's apocryphal quote: "You report the news — I'll provide the war!"

And what better example than Orson Welles' film "Citizen Kane," a brilliant *roman a clef* of the Hearst mystique, recently voted in the American film Institute's poll as the No. 1 movie of the 20th century?

The newspaper profession, right down to the smell of printer's ink on one's hands, has a certain romanticism about it. Thankfully, there are a number of boys' books that deal with the newspaper business in its full spectrum: reporting and writing stories, editing, selling ad-

(Continued on Page 12)

*Editor's note: This article was first presented at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association meeting in Orlando, Fla., on April 10, 1998, and at the Horatio Society Convention in Scottsdale, Ariz., on May 2, 1998.*



FROM BENEATH HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF A WELL-KNOWN BROWN JACKET.  
Shorthand T. p. 95.

## SHORTHAND TOM;

OR,

THE EXPLOITS OF A YOUNG  
REPORTER.

BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

Author of "Camera Bob," "The Tin Box Mystery,"  
Etc.



NEW YORK  
W. L. ALLISON CO.,  
PUBLISHERS.

## Mild-mannered reporters ... or boys' book heroes?

(Continued from Page 11)

vertising, and the actual production of the newspaper. These are career stories in the Alger mold.

Then, there are the Clark Kents out there, who use the newspaper as a *means* to a story, as we said earlier, the ultimate form of investigative journalism. But these "heroes" are Frank and Joe Hardy with press cards.

Let's survey a few examples of how the newspaper profession is portrayed in boys' books, series and non-series, dating back to the late 1880s:

\* \* \*

*The Young Editor*, by Matthew White Jr. (1857-1940), published in Frank Munsey's *Argosy* between June 1 and Aug. 24, 1888. Reprinted in paperback Oct. 6, 1900 by Street & Smith as part of the Medal Library (No. 82) and also published in hard-cover by Street & Smith as part of the Boys' Own Library, and reissued in that series in 1906 by David McKay.

This is a classic Alger-style success story with one major exception. The book's hero, Donald Kingsford, is described by White as the "son and only child of Arthur Kingsford, owner and editor of the *Press*, the oldest established weekly newspaper in Stansbury." His best chum (another staple of early boys' fiction) is George Hurd, whose father "is the leading doctor in town."

So in this case, you have obviously well-to-do boys, not Alger street waifs. Yet, young Don has plenty of adventures while learning the newspaper trade, the most traumatic of which is the disappearance of his father, who winds up in a Brooklyn hotel with a month-long case of amnesia, but after just by chance seeing a letter



with his son's name on it, regains his memory and returns to his anxious family.

"How I came to be where I was I had not the slightest idea," he said. "Until I had walked a block or two in the streets I did not even know that I was in Brooklyn. My only aim was to get back here to Stansbury as quickly as possible to relieve your anxiety, I found money in my pocket, and at the end of the news stand I passed I bought a morning paper. I glanced at the date and then realized how long I had been away."

With Don running the *Press* in fine fashion during his father's absence, as a reward he is made permanent editor.

It's a good story, but not one that makes your blood boil with excitement.

\* \* \*

*Shorthand Tom; or, the Exploits of a Young Reporter*, by Edward Stratemeyer (1862-1930), published in *Good News*, Feb. 3 through April 21, 1894. First published in hard-cover by William L. Allison Co. in 1897 in the Bound to Win Series, and reissued by Allison as part of the Working Upward Series. Later reprint publishers were Lee & Shepard, Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, Grosset & Dunlap and finally, by Street & Smith as No. 106 in its Alger Series paperbacks.

Stratemeyer took Alger's success story formula and built upon it, writing numerous serials and books in this genre up until around 1910, when management responsibilities of the then five-year-old Stratemeyer Syndicate limited his personal writing activity to volumes in the Rover Boys and Dave Porter series. Like "Shorthand Tom," the majority of Stratemeyer's early success stories (e.g., "Richard Dare's Venture," "Bound to Be an Electrician," "Oliver Bright's Search") were originally written as story-paper serials.

*Shorthand Tom*, in its later hard-cover printings, was given the longer title *Shorthand Tom, the Reporter*, which better describes the protagonist's career as an up-and-coming newspaper man.

When the story opens, Tom Swift, the "Shorthand Tom" of the title, is employed as a stenographer and typist with Newton & Cameron, a New York silk importing firm.

He is soon fired for unexplained reasons, and seemingly moments later, out on the street, he observes a pickpocket at work, chases after him, trips him up and helps the police apprehend him. The man happens to be "Handsome Dick" Hanson, a well-known "lifter," for whom the New York police have been on the lookout a long time.

Tom's good fortune is that his act of courage has been witnessed by Ralph Biswell, editor "of the paper over there," which happens to be one of New York's most prosperous dailies.

Tom becomes a reporter, covering all sorts of natural

and man-made catastrophes. In true Stratemeyer fashion, the cliff-hangers come fast and furiously, including, about halfway through the book, a runaway horse-and-buggy on the Brooklyn Bridge:

For the moment it looked as if the horse would go over the side of the bridge, and drag the buggy, and the old man in it, after him.

A number of people who saw the thrilling situation shouted to the old man to jump out and save himself.

But the old gentleman seemed to be too terrorized to move. His lips opened and shut, but no sound save a low moan came from them.

The horse struggled violently, and one of the front wheels of the buggy began to mount the railing.

But now Shorthand Tom sprang to the rescue. a single leap took him from the wagon to the buggy.

He picked up the old man in his arms as if he were a child.

"Here, Andy, help him!" he called out to his friend, and passed the old man over.

Andy Gibbs was a strong boy, and Tom's cool and collected manner nerved him up for the effort. He caught hold of the old man, and the next moment the latter was safe on the seat of the spring wagon.

By this time half a dozen men had rushed forward, accompanied by a policeman. They caught hold of the horse on the railing, and by main strength forced him back upon the driveway, and held him until he had calmed down.

Tom at once turned his attention to the old man, who was gradually getting over his fright.

"It's all right," he said soothingly. "You are safe."

"Yes, yes!" cried the old fellow, in a low, weak voice. "But I thought I would surely be killed."

"It was a close shave," put in Andy Gibbs.

"I realize that, my boy. A very close shave, indeed. I must thank you for your prompt action."

The old man turned to Tom and wrung his hand with deep emotion,

"Had I gone over into the river I would have been killed," he said, shuddering. "I do not know how to thank you enough."

"Don't say any more," said the young shorthand reporter. "I didn't do much."

The trademark Stratemeyer dialogue and rhythm, so prevalent in the hundreds of books produced by his syndicate (even after his death), is already in place in *Shorthand Tom*.

Is this a newspaper story? Not really. We do not see the day-to-day newsroom operations. But, the newspaper proves a great vehicle for getting our hero out into the street and community and stumbling across

(Continued on Page 14)

## Mild-mannered reporters ... or boys' book heroes?

(Continued from Page 13)

stories and adventures in nearly every chapter.

\* \* \*

*The Young Newspaper Scout*, by Forrest Crissey, published by W.B. Conkey Co. of Chicago, in 1897.

This story harkens back to the genre of dime novels set in the western frontier, in which a newspaper correspondent is "along for the ride," and is the conduit for the telling of great adventures.

Set in 1885, our young "newspaper scout," Rodney Merton, ventures into the Riel Rebellion as an assistant to the correspondent for the *London Illustrated News*. More than once, his life is on the line.

Later in the story, he pays a visit to Newspaper Row in Chicago, and the lure of printer's ink quickly becomes an addiction:

It was a strange and interesting sight to Rodney to watch the ragged array of newsboys in front of each of the evening paper offices, their arms piled with the damp papers fresh from the great perfecting presses which were thundering away in the basement below.

He forced his way through the motley crowd of urchins, who were laughing, quarreling, singing and fighting, close up to one of the basement windows through which he could obtain a view of the presses. There was something tremendously thrilling and almost supernatural to Rodney in the great whirling cylinders, the seemingly endless roll of "white paper" which unwound itself into printed and folded sheets at the other end of the presses.

Rodney becomes a newspaper man, and yet as winter turns to spring, he receives an invitation to return to the wild country from his old friend Gilroy, as a newspaper scout on an expedition to the Hudson Bay country of Canada, at \$200 per month with all expenses paid. Rodney and his friend, Frank, get grudging approval from family members.

In this case, the lure of the North was at least equal to the lure of the pressroom.

\* \* \*

*Ritchie of the News*, by William Heyliger (1884-1955), an original magazine serial published in hardcover in 1933 by D. Appleton-Century Co.

Todd Ritchie is a teen-ager in Ramapo City, who can't stay away from the lure of the old *News* building as he walks home from school each day. Soon, he is hired by the *News*' editor, Dan Collins, to write notes

on doings at the high school:

The smell of ink filled him with a strange excitement, and the thump of the press kept time to the throb of his pulse. His hungry eyes missed nothing of this fascinating world of job press, folder, linotype, papercutter and flat-bed Babcock.

Heyliger takes us through Todd's rise at the paper, from part-timer to the young man who saves it from financial ruin following the incapacitation of his boss in an accident. In the penultimate chapter, Todd makes a plea to the bank in whose hands the life of the *News* rests, due to a \$5,000 note in arrears.

After he saves the day and the bank gives the paper an extension, Collins, back in full health, appoints Todd Assistant Editor, and then sends him away to college:

"They're teaching journalism in colleges now. Turning out men as well-trained as doctors and lawyers and architects. The day of the pick-things-up-as-you-go newspaperman are coming to an end. They're starting to turn out specialists. I'd like to see you go away next September and start the course. Talk it over with your dad."

Of course, Todd would remain at the *News* during the summers and Christmas breaks, and he agrees to do what Collins suggests:

"Lord, I was afraid you'd think four extra years was a lifetime and start yelling to take me off," the editor said. "About time you graduate, the *News* should be going like a scared dog making for home. An advertising man, a utility reporter, Mrs. Dan doing the woman's page, me out going after job work with a scalp-net, and a man running the paper. How would you like to run the paper, Todd?"

"If — if you thought I'd be able —"

"Who's been doing it for six months? About the time you graduate, I can see where I'm going to need a partner."

Assistant editor of the *News*. Some day editor. Some day a partner of Dan's. Unconsciously Todd slid back in his chair, and lifted his feet to the table, and tilted his hat until it shaded his eyes.

This is quite possibly the finest single-volume boys' story devoted to the newspaper profession, written with Heyliger's usual stylistic flair.

Here are a few other titles of interest, in brief:

\* \* \*

*The Newspaper Game*, by Hiram Wallace Hayes, published by Lothrop, Lee & Shepard of Boston in 1927.

This book tells the story of Joe Hunter, who takes over the family newspaper, *The Argus*, following the premature death of his father when Joe is only 19. His uncle Simon, miserly to the core and never willing to take a

financial risk, battles Don tooth-and-nail when he wants to start up an afternoon edition. Don wins this skirmish and *The Argus* flourishes.

\* \* \*

*The Adventures of a Boy Reporter*, by Harry Steele Morrison (1880-??), copyrighted and published by L. C. Page & Co. in 1900, and reissued in a publisher's series by World Syndicate Publishing Co.

Originally titled *The Adventures of a Boy Reporter in the Philippines*, reprint rights for this book were eventually acquired by World Syndicate, which combined it with six books once controlled by Edward Stratemeyer into the seven-volume **Outdoor Series** in the late 1920s.

\* \* \*

*Fred Spencer, Reporter*, by Henry M. Neely, published by Small, Maynard and Co. of Boston in 1912.

Fred, 17, a young telegraph operator who longs to become a reporter for the *Morning Call*, sees his dream fulfilled and goes on to solve mysteries while on the job and on vacation. A somewhat obscure title, this is a very well-written and an accurate look at the news business, with plenty of adventure thrown in for good measure.

### Series books

But what about boys' series books devoted to the newspaper profession?

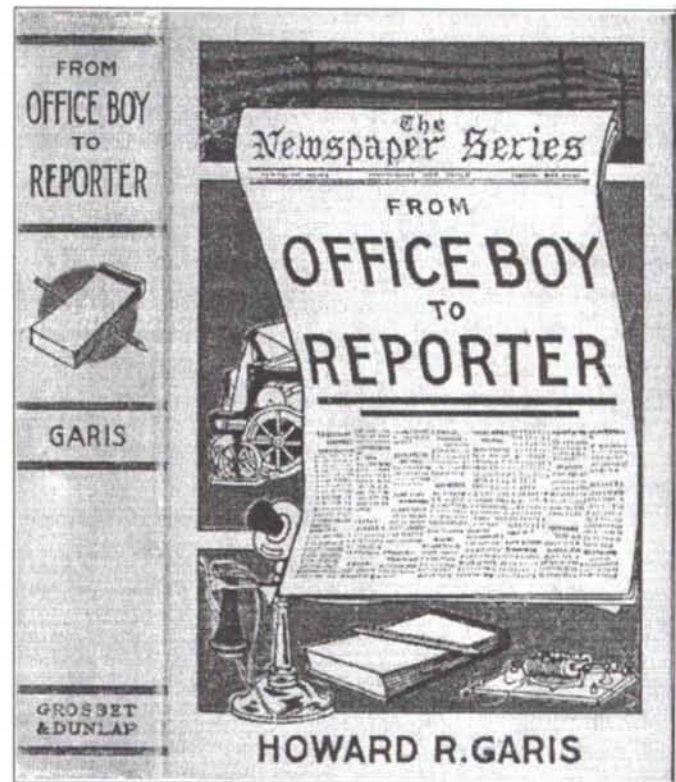
While not as common platform for series-book adventures as aviation, invention and school sports, there are a couple of prominent examples.

The most familiar is **The Great Newspaper Series**, better known as the **Young Reporter Series** or **Larry Dexter Series**, written by Howard R. Garis (1873-1962) and controlled by The Stratemeyer Syndicate.

The first title in this series, *From Office Boy to Reporter*, was published by Chatterton-Peck in 1907. That publisher added *Larry Dexter, Reporter* later that year, and when Grosset & Dunlap in 1908 acquired the rights to certain Stratemeyer and Stratemeyer Syndicate books from Chatterton-Peck, a third title was published immediately, *Larry Dexter's Great Search*, and three more were added by G&D between 1912 and 1915. When Stratemeyer took the series to Garden City in 1927 to be republished as paperbacks under the "Raymond Sperry, Jr." house name, two additional titles were produced (not written by Garis), bringing the total to eight.

The first six Larry Dexter books are among Garis' finest work, probably one of the reasons Stratemeyer, his close friend and colleague, allowed his name to remain on them despite Stratemeyer's overall business control.

The Larry Dexter books, as they are most commonly called, are very reminiscent of *Shorthand Tom*. Here you have a young newspaperman earning his spurs, covering floods, fires and bank robberies, and even the Great War as a "daring young war correspondent." He also gets involved with the solving of



kidnappings, jewel heists and the like. It's yet another case of the newspaper profession acting as a platform for the kind of seat-of-the-pants adventures that young boys wanted to read in the teens and early 20s, and Garis delivers on all counts. Yes, it's formula writing to a degree, but enjoyable on nearly every page.

A second boys' series devoted to the newspaper profession is much less well-known, the two-volume **Donald Kirk Series**, written by Edward Mott Woolley (1867-??). The books were published by Little, Brown. The first title, *Donald Kirk, The Morning Record Copy-Boy*, was published in 1912, and the second, *Donald Kirk, the Morning Record Correspondent*, came out in 1913.

These are true career-success stories, detailing how a young man's entry into the profession as a copy boy (these youngsters "ran" typewritten stories from the newsroom to the linotype room, usually on deadline), to a full-time reporter in the second volume.

The climax of the second volume occurs when there's a major train wreck out in the great wilderness and Don and his friend Ted Littlefield find the only available phone lines emitting nothing but a steady hum. "It's two forty-two," Don says in despair. "I — I'm afraid we don't stand any chance for the late edition."

Of course, a lineman comes to the rescue, allows Don to climb atop a pole and find a direct line to his newspaper, *The Record*. Battling winds and unsure footing, Ted helps Don get to the very top of the pole where he

(Continued on Page 16)

## Mild-mannered reporters ... or boys' book heroes?

(Continued from Page 15)

connects his portable transmitter and sends the story of the wreck to the newspaper office on time.

Another excellent example is the **Young Reporter Series** by Graham M. Dean. It consists of three books, in this case without common characters. It's a series because the stories cover a common profession, the news business.

The first book is titled *Front Page Mystery*, published by D. Appleton & Co. in 1931. It was subsequently republished by Doubleday & Co.

Volumes 2 and 3, *Jim of the Press* and *Bob Gordon, Cub Reporter*, were published by Doubleday Doran, & Co. in 1933 and 1935, respectively, with these two titles reissued by Sun Dial Press in its Young Moderns Book Shelf series.

In *Jim of the Press*, the reporter of the title breaks away from his local newspaper, the **Kingsley Herald**, and goes to work for the Associated Press in the state capital. Once again, it offers a fascinating look at the news business, in particular the national and international wire services.

*Bob Gordon, Cub Reporter* tells the story of the title character and his high school rival, Hal Gregg, each trying to "out-scoop" the other as reporters for competing local papers, Bob with the **Newton Times** and Hal with the **Newton Gazette**.

Because these books were written in the 1930s, new technology is introduced, including the transmission of newspaper photographs over telephone lines.

It also helps the credibility of these stories that Graham M. Dean was himself a professional journalist, serving as business manager of the Iowa City **Press-Citizen** at the time he wrote the books. He previously was managing editor of the paper at age 19.

An interesting situation related to this series involves the book "*Extra*," written by George Morse, copyrighted in 1932 and listed as part of the **Every Boy's Mystery Series**, published by Goldsmith.

This story is nearly a chapter-by-chapter rewrite of *Front Page Mystery*, with a few minor plot differences and names also changed.

In the version of this story as written in "*Extra*," managing editor Don Durian of the **Porter Press** tracks down his newspaper's missing publisher, who disappears during a flight and crash-lands.

Whether George Morse is really Graham Dean writing under a pseudonym, or "*Extra*" is a rip-off of the original story, further research needs to be done.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the baton was passed to the **Ken Holt Series**, a popular 18-volume series of mysteries written by Sam and Beryl Epstein under the "Bruce

Campbell" pseudonym. Kent and his buddy, Sandy Allen, are reporters for the **Brentwood Weekly Advance** (owned by Sandy's family), while Ken's father Richard is a correspondent for **Global News** wire service.

But let's not pretend here. This is not Todd Ritchie having the smell of ink filling him with strange excitement. Ken and Sandy are out to solve mysteries. They're reporters in name only. But that's not to put them down. The Epsteins have created some of the best stories ever written for teen-agers (and adults alike), dealing with kidnapping, archaeological digs, smuggling, embezzlement and international intrigue.

This is all wonderful stuff, very highly recommended, but it wanders away from the newspaper-as-profession genre, maybe a look back to "Shorthand Tom" Swift and his daring exploits on the Brooklyn Bridge.

In brief, here are a few more newspaper-oriented titles found as part of more general series. Note that this is a selected list of titles, not all-inclusive:

- *The Mystery of the Missing Eyebrows*, by Stephen Rudd, published by the R.H. Gore Book Co. of Terre Haute, Ind., in 1921. This was the first volume in **The Newspaper Boys' Series**, projected at 12 volumes, but apparently only this first title ever saw print. This is not a newspaper profession story, rather a mystery solved by a newspaper delivery boy named Renfro Horn.

- *Mark Tidd, Editor*, by Clarence Budington Kelland, published by Harpers in 1917. Part of the **Mark Tidd Series**, our corpulent hero tries his hand at the helm of the **Wicksville Trumpet**, with hilarious results.

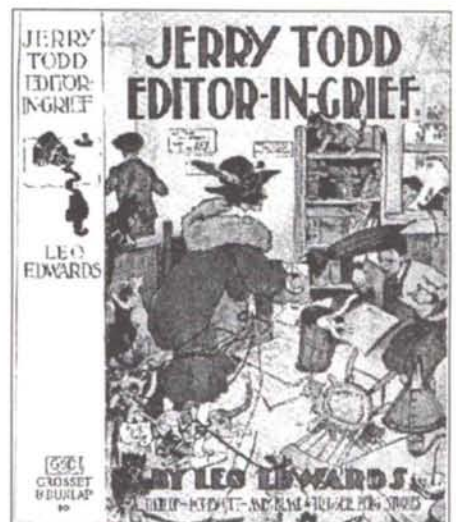
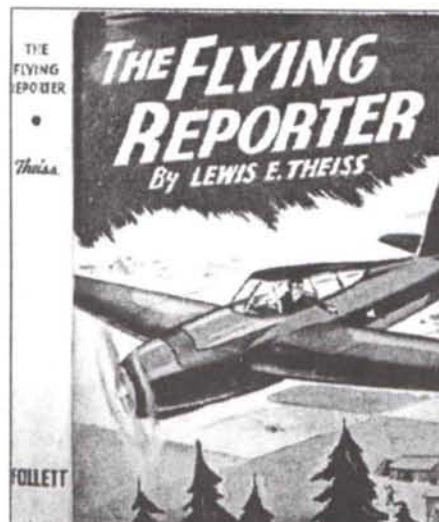
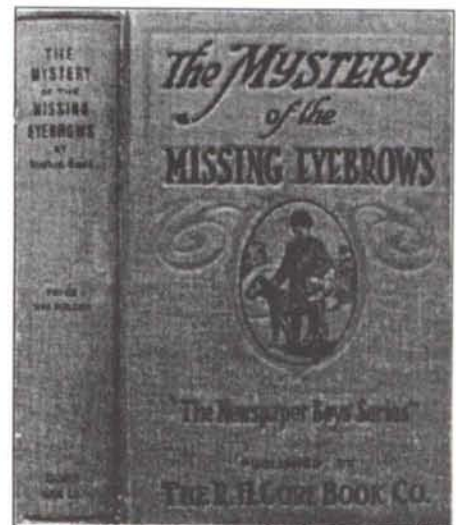
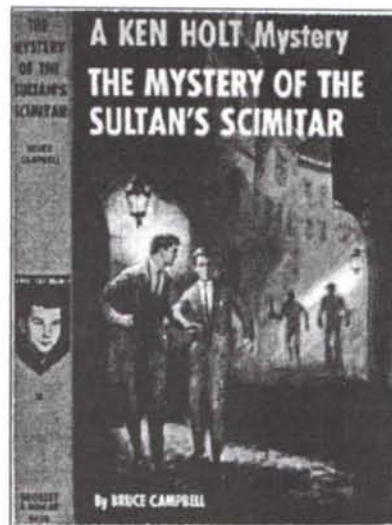
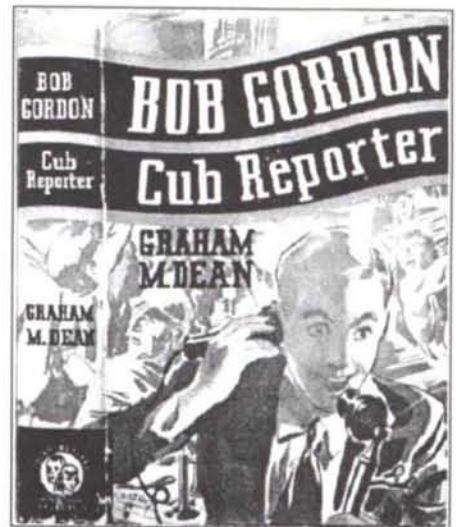
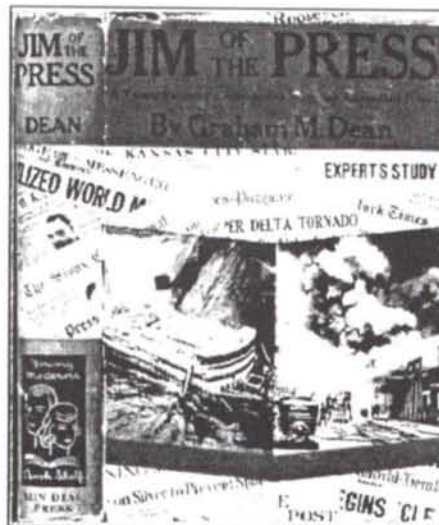
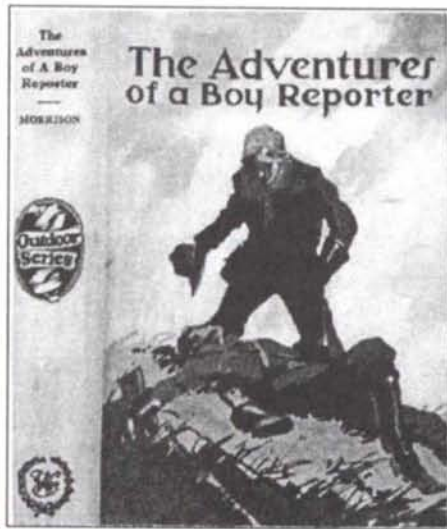
- *Jerry Todd, Editor-in-Grief*, by Leo Edwards (Edward Edson Lee), published as part of the **Jerry Todd Series** by Grosset & Dunlap in 1930. Jerry and his gang give **The Tutter Bugle** its first toot, with laughs and adventure in every chapter. Well worth a read.

- *The Flying Reporter*, by Lewis E. Theiss, published by Wilcox & Follett Co., of Chicago, in 1930, takes reporting into the wild blue yonder. This is the fourth of six titles in the **Jimmy Donnelly Series** (1927-32), which is devoted to various aspects of aviation. In this volume, Jimmy has a full-time job with the New York **Morning Press** as a flying reporter to help cover forest fires, floods, shipwrecks and the like. He and his buddy, Johnnie Lee, solve a mystery and battle the elements along the way.

\* \* \*

In summary, the newspaper profession has held a prominent place in boys' books, dime novels and story papers. Edward Stratemeyer gave the newspaper reporter his spurs, Howard Garis took him to the next level and William Heyliger showed best why once printer's ink gets under your nails, you are hooked for life. When you read tomorrow's paper, think of Shorthand Tom, Larry Dexter and Todd Ritchie, who believed so passionately in this honorable profession.





Cover or dust-jacket designs of series and non-series books devoted to aspects of the newspaper profession.

# The Horatio Alger, Jr. Resources Web Site

By Bill Roach (PF-978)

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**H**oratio Alger, Jr. was a popular author of juvenile fiction between 1863 and 1899. His popularity peaked in the early 20th century when Edward Stratemeyer served as his literary executor. Alger was an unrelenting advocate of the American dream: hard work yields a certain reward. Alger's popularity fell precipitously after 1930. Once, Alger's books were in every community and church library. How, many are hard to find.

The Horatio Alger, Jr. Resources Web Site (<http://www.washburn.edu/sobu/broach/algerres.html>) provides access to a broad spectrum of information on Horatio Alger, Jr., electronic texts, course syllabi, scholarly discussions, library special collections, museum collections, historical references on the Alger era, collectors' resources, etc. A corresponding discussion list ([algerl@listserv.wuacc.edu](mailto:algerl@listserv.wuacc.edu)) also caters to the interests of Alger scholars.

The *first section* of the web site includes Alger electronic texts. For the most part, the site relies on established electronic text sites like the University of Virginia, Books On Line, and the Gutenberg Project. The University of Virginia site is especially good; it includes facsimiles of the illustrations and maintains the original pagination. Among the texts are Alger parodies by Mark Twain and a schoolboy essay by Alger on "Chivalry."

The *second section* of the web site is a selection of course outlines (other than philosophy courses) and academic commentary on Horatio Alger, Jr. and his place in American culture. The courses which include Alger are typically history and American culture courses.

The *fourth section* of the site lists museum and special library collections that include a substantial selection of Alger materials. The web site has been updated every time a special collections librarian has notified us of another Alger collection. The premier Alger collection seems to be at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois, which houses the official repository of the Horatio Alger Society. Northern Illinois has set up a web site for its Alger collection.

The *fifth through seventh sections* of the site include the following resources useful to collectors:

1. Usenet search through [dejanews](#).
2. Horatio Alger Society web site.
3. Compuserve book collector's web site.
4. American Book Exchange (ABE) site.
5. Powell's Books site.

6. Mincing Co. Book Collector's Resources.

7. The International Rare Book Dealers' Webring.

8. Library sites for documenting books.

9. Some juvenile series sites.

The *eighth section* of the site is a selection of resources on the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era. Alger was a progressive Republican (mugwump) sympathetic to the program of Theodore Roosevelt.

The *ninth section* of the site is Horatio Alger's New York. It includes text and pictures to allow the reader to get a better feel for Horatio Alger's New York. Alger appears to have sanitized the New York of his era to make it more palatable to his young readers and their parents.

The *10th section* of the site includes FAQ (frequently asked questions). One deals with Horatio Alger himself. Another deals with his literary executor, Stratemeyer.

The *11th section* of the site deals with the *alger-l* listserv. Currently, *alger-l* has about 60 subscribers. The commentary and discussion on that listserv fall into roughly the same categories listed for the web site. The listserv has been the source of much of the material in the Horatio Alger, Jr. Resources Web Site. The *alger-l* listserv consists mostly of cross-posted material from listservs, web sites and usenet groups that focus on the Gilded Age, popular culture, American culture, American cities in the 19th century, 19th century juvenile literature, etc. A small but growing percentage of the material comes from personal correspondence with individuals interested in Alger. The authors have attempted to publicize the *alger-l* listserv in all of the available lists of lists as well as directories of collectors.

The Horatio Alger Society publicizes the *alger-l* listserv on its web site ([www.ihot.com/~has/](http://www.ihot.com/~has/)) and provides a link to the Alger resources web site.

The authors included meta tags in the html (hypertext markup language) that describes the web site. Meta tags are lists of key words used by search engines to index web sites. The use of meta tags materially increases the accessibility of a web site. The authors also specifically submitted the Alger Resources Web Site to all major search engines for indexing.

The authors also promote the *alger-l* listserv and Horatio Alger, Jr. Resources Web Site on the usenet groups [rec.arts.books.childrens](#), [rec.collecting.books](#), and occasionally [alt.books.nancy-drew](#). Posting on usenet groups is short-lived; however, services like [dejanews](#) index these posts and allow searches.

The web site and the listserv can play an important role in maintaining the visibility of Horatio Alger, Jr. Some of his works are available in reprints. A quick search at [amazon.com](#) will produce about two dozen titles. The authors hope that the listserv and the web site can supplement the reprints and make Alger available to today's young people. In time, all of Alger's work will be available in electronic text format. When permissible, the web site will make the critical literature available, too.

*Editor's note: This report was given as a paper at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association meeting in San Diego on April 1, 1999.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I have tried several ways to develop some interest in Horatio Alger in my community. All of my efforts have failed but one.

The Seymour Library in Brockport, New York, had an empty display case and I decided to fill it with "Alger books and things" I had donated to Hamlin, N.Y.'s Town Historian (she is in the process of starting a town library for Hamlin). They accepted my offer and I have enclosed photos of the result (*Ed.: see example, below*).

The Seymour librarian reports that the display is getting "a lot of attention" and wants us to keep it there until the school kids start coming back to the library in September. Eventually, the items will become part of a much larger and permanent Horatio Alger display in Hamlin, N.Y.

Ed Evans (PF-1000)  
979 Hamlin Center Rd.  
Hamlin, N.Y. 14464



To the Editor:

In honor of the 100th anniversary of Horatio Alger's death, I contacted my local newspaper months ago (the **Rochester Democrat & Chronicle** — a Gannett publication) and sent all kinds of Alger information and a couple of books. July 20th rolled around and ... nothing!

Shortly thereafter, I went to the Strong Museum in Rochester, N.Y. They specialize in dolls, toys and interactive displays for children of all ages. I saw American curiosities from every decade since the Revolution, but not one mention of Horatio Alger!

So I wrote to them and sent some information on Horatio Alger and promptly got the enclosed letter back from them. It is a nice letter but no matter how you read it, it admits they have no Horatio Alger books on public display in their museum. And they don't seem to have any plans to correct the omission.

Just wanted to let you know I'm doing my part in trying to get an Alger revival going.

Ed Evans (PF-1000)  
979 Hamlin Center Road  
Hamlin, N.Y. 14464

Strong Museum  
One Manhattan Square  
Rochester, New York 14607  
[www.strongmuseum.org](http://www.strongmuseum.org)

Edward D. Evans, Jr.  
979 Hamlin Center Road  
Hamlin, N.Y. 14464

Dear Mr. Evans:

I have read with interest the information you sent on Horatio Alger, Jr., and thank you for bringing it to my attention. As you noted, Alger was a popular, influential and prolific writer of books for young boys during the second half of the 19th century. Even generations of Americans who have never read his books are familiar with the "Horatio Alger hero" and with Alger's message that an individual's inherent goodness will overcome life's obstacles when coupled with hard work, self-reliance, honesty and compassion. In his books, even luck favors those who deserve it. His books defined the American dream, a democratic ideal whereby class and wealth are countered by hard work, ambition, and, most importantly, character.

I would like to assure you that we are aware of Alger's place in American culture. The Strong Museum is now fortunate to have two components to the Grada Hopeman Gelsler Library — a circulating library with book nooks throughout the first- and second-floor exhibits and a noncirculating research library on the third floor. The research library supports the Strong Museum's mission as a museum of American cultural history to document and interpret everyday life in the United States after 1820. With our research library's books, periodicals and ephemera, we strive to provide a representative collection of research materials that are available to both the casual visitor and the serious researcher.

While our holdings of Alger books are not as extensive as yours, we are pleased to have a collection of 41 unique titles. These titles best suit our institutional mission and interpretive themes. Our library is open to museum visitors Monday-Friday from 10:00 to 5:00.

We appreciate and respect the role that American literature has played in influencing our culture. Certainly, Horatio Alger, Jr. has a place in our library.

Sincerely,  
Carol Sandler  
Library Director

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The pricing guide has been developed from information from reported private sales,  
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