



Horatio Alger, Jr.

1832 — 1899

THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NEWSBOY



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 5



Alger at the comics

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'THE WILL TO WIN'*

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Remembering Ruth Miller (PF-894)

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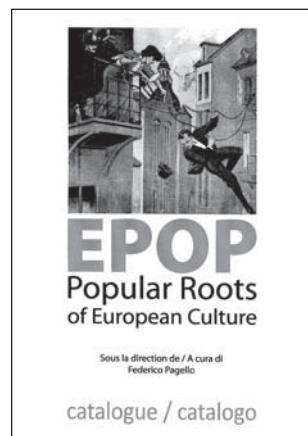


President's column

I hope your summer has been as enjoyable as mine. Since taking up cycling again in July, I have ridden nearly 600 miles and lost more than 25 pounds. The weather has been great, and even though November is here, the temperature is still reasonable during the day. This past Sunday, when I left on my ride, the sun was shining. Within a few miles, I was soaked in a downpour. Since I was already wet, I elected to continue riding and was drying out in a few miles when I was soaked again! I was reminded of a song by Janet Paschel, *It Won't Rain Always*. I kept riding, and by the time I arrived back home, the sun was out again. This is analogous with life's journey and with book collecting. There are times when it seems that I will never find one of those scarce books for which I relentlessly search. The thought runs through my mind that maybe I should stop wasting my time at bookstores and on the Internet searching unsuccessfully for books that few people care about. But then I find something that brings the sun out again and I find myself continuing the hunt. Riding my bicycle this summer has challenged me and given me much benefit.

I recently received an interesting publication (below) from the Popular Roots of European Culture (EPOP) project. It is a catalogue of relevant and interesting popular fiction items published between 1830 and 1930. I periodically read the EPOP newsletters and through them became aware of the availability of the catalogue. It is filled with a wealth of bibliographic and historic information accompanied by superb artwork. It does not mention Horatio Alger, but does mention and dis-

(Continued on Page 4)



HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. and to encourage the spirit of *Strive & Succeed* that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes. Our members conduct research and provide scholarship on the life of Horatio Alger, Jr., his works and influence on the culture of America. The Horatio Alger Society embraces collectors and enthusiasts of all juvenile literature, including boys' and girls' series, pulps and dime novels.

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Newsboy, the official newsletter of the Horatio Alger Society, is published bi-monthly (six issues per year). Membership fee for any 12-month period is \$25 (\$20 for seniors), with single issues of **Newsboy** \$4.00. Please make remittance payable to the Horatio Alger Society.

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. You are invited to visit the Horatio Alger Society's official Internet site at www.thehoratioalgersociety.org

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. E-mail: hasnewsboy@aol.com

Alger at the comics

Part 4: *'The Will to Win'*

By Arthur P. Young (PF-941)

When I first began writing about the appearance of Horatio Alger, Jr. stories in the comic book format, I envisioned a two-part series, which began in 1998. Some 12 years later the series has grown to four parts, and other Horatio Alger Society members have made important additional contributions along the way. To date, 11 Alger comic book appearances have been noted in Street and Smith's *Shadow* comics and in Doc Savage comics. Previous research on this topic, including Bill Gowen's recent and informative summary, may be found in the notes at the end of this article¹

We can now report that another Alger comic adaptation has appeared in a Street and Smith comic book title, *Super Magician*. Volume 1, number 1 of *Super Magician* appeared in September, 1941 as a bimonthly. Alternating between bimonthly and monthly appearances, *Super Magician* closed its run with volume 5, number 8, 1947. Some 55 individual issues are recorded.²

The new Alger title, "The Will to Win," was issued in *Super Magician*, volume 1, number 4, March 1942. The story is 8 pages in length, the frequent, but not invariable, length of Alger comic adaptations. The comic strip is rendered in brilliant colors, especially blue, orange, and red (reproduced on Pages 5-12 in this issue). There are many action scenes, and numerous contemporary touches such as clothing, language, and automobiles.

The story involves a young lad born to wealth, Richard Ritewin, whose father, William Ritewin, dies in an accident. Richard and his mother are cheated out their inheritance by Richard's step-uncle, the shady Frank Ritewin. The will was forged and all of the inheritance went to the step-uncle. Richard, determined to right the matter happened on a stranger who admitted forging the will. With this revelation, the inheritance returned to the rightful heirs.

"The Will to Win," may be differentiated from other Alger comic book adaptations on several counts: the title is not one used by Alger and the storyline is not directly traceable, in full, to a known Alger title. This story, although attributable to Horatio Alger, Jr., may be prop-



Street and Smith's *Super Magician* comics appeared between 1941 and 1947. Image courtesy of Arthur P. Young

erly labeled a parody. Writing an Alger-esque story and then boldly signing it with the famous author's name may be a form of flattery, but at the same time probably exceeds the bounds of literary propriety. At the end of the story, there is an announcement that the next issue will contain another Alger story. Contact with an experienced comic book seller indicates that the next issue did not contain another Alger title.

A dozen comic book adaptations have now been identified. Doubtless more will be uncovered. Nostalgia for Alger's "strive and succeed" narrative was still present among young readers and those adult editors who embedded Alger stories within various comic book titles. Coming just after the Great Depression, when Alger's popularity reached a new low, the multiple appearances in comic books may be seen as an early indicator of Alger's reemergence, both as author and cultural icon.

NOTES

1. Jerry Friedland (PF-376), "Alger and the Comics." *Newsboy*, (January-February 1982): pp. 5-6; Arthur P. Young (PF-941), "Alger at the Comics, Part 1." *Newsboy*,

(Continued on Page 4)

Editor's notebook

This issue has been one of the more interesting I have edited in recent years, continuing our use of full color when it offers enhancement to *Newsboy's* contents. Once we learned earlier this year that Art Young had discovered a hitherto unknown Alger comic book story, its use here in full color was a logical decision. Just by glancing through Pages 5-12, it is easy to see why this issue comes close to the visual beauty of last year's article on Alger-themed board games (September-October 2009), that issue also containing my article (also using full-color illustrations) on Percy K. Fitzhugh's non-series Boy Scouts of America-themed books published by Grosset & Dunlap.

In this issue, I have also taken advantage of the availability of full-color printing by offering, on Pages 15-16, a brief article on the sports instructional books co-authored by Ralph Henry Barbour and La Mar Sarra.

We want to publish at least one full-color issue per year, with the proviso that the subject matter pictorially warranting its use. Past color-illustrated articles on the *Garfield Library*, Alger's *The Young Boatman* and the Alger board games are prime examples of utilizing color to its best advantage.

The November-December issue will offer host Bob Huber's first sneak preview of the H.A.S. convention in Canton, Ohio, on April 28-May 1, 2011. If you have not attended an Alger convention, here is your chance to meet many of the Partic'lar Friends you have read about over the years in the pages of *Newsboy*.

Alger at the comics

(Continued from Page 3)

(September-October, 1998): pp. 3-10; Arthur P. Young (PF-941), "Alger at the Comics, Part 2." *Newsboy*, (November-December, 1998): pp. 3, 5-12; Arthur P. Young (PF-941), "Alger at the Comics, Part 3." *Newsboy*, (March-April, 2002): 5-13; Scott B. Chase (PF-1106), "Additions to the Alger Bibliography." *Newsboy*, (November-December, 2009): p. 7; William R. Gowen (PF-706), "Street & Smith's Alger Comic Adaptations." *Newsboy*, (November-December, 2009): pp. 9-10.

2. Robert M. Overstreet, *Official Overstreet Comic Book Guide*. Twenty-Second Edition. (New York: Crown Publishing, 2002): p. 773.

President's column

(Continued from Page 2)

play several American dime novels and pulps such as Nick Carter and Buffalo Bill that resulted in European reprints. I found the catalogue very interesting and would like to see something similar regarding the roots of popular fiction within American culture. The EPOP project website is www.epop-lab.eu. Newsletters are hosted at www.scribd.com/EPOP Project Newsletter.

Jacob Blanck, Library of Congress bibliographer and author of *Harry Castlemon Boys' Own Author*, enumerated a significant quartet of boys' book authors, namely Horatio Alger, Jr., Harry Castlemon, Edward S. Ellis and Oliver Optic. While I and many others agree that these four authors should be considered significant authors of the second half of the 19th century, which additional authors of the time period should be considered significant? For instance, why is James Otis [Kaler] not included in this group? His output was as voluminous as any of the four, much of his work was of a historic nature, his stories were read and enjoyed by thousands of boys, and he received much of the same negative criticism as the four "significant" authors.

Other examples include Frank Converse, Elijah Kellogg, C.A. Stephens and John Trowbridge. I am curious as to whom you consider to be the significant authors of stories for boys during the second half of the 19th century.

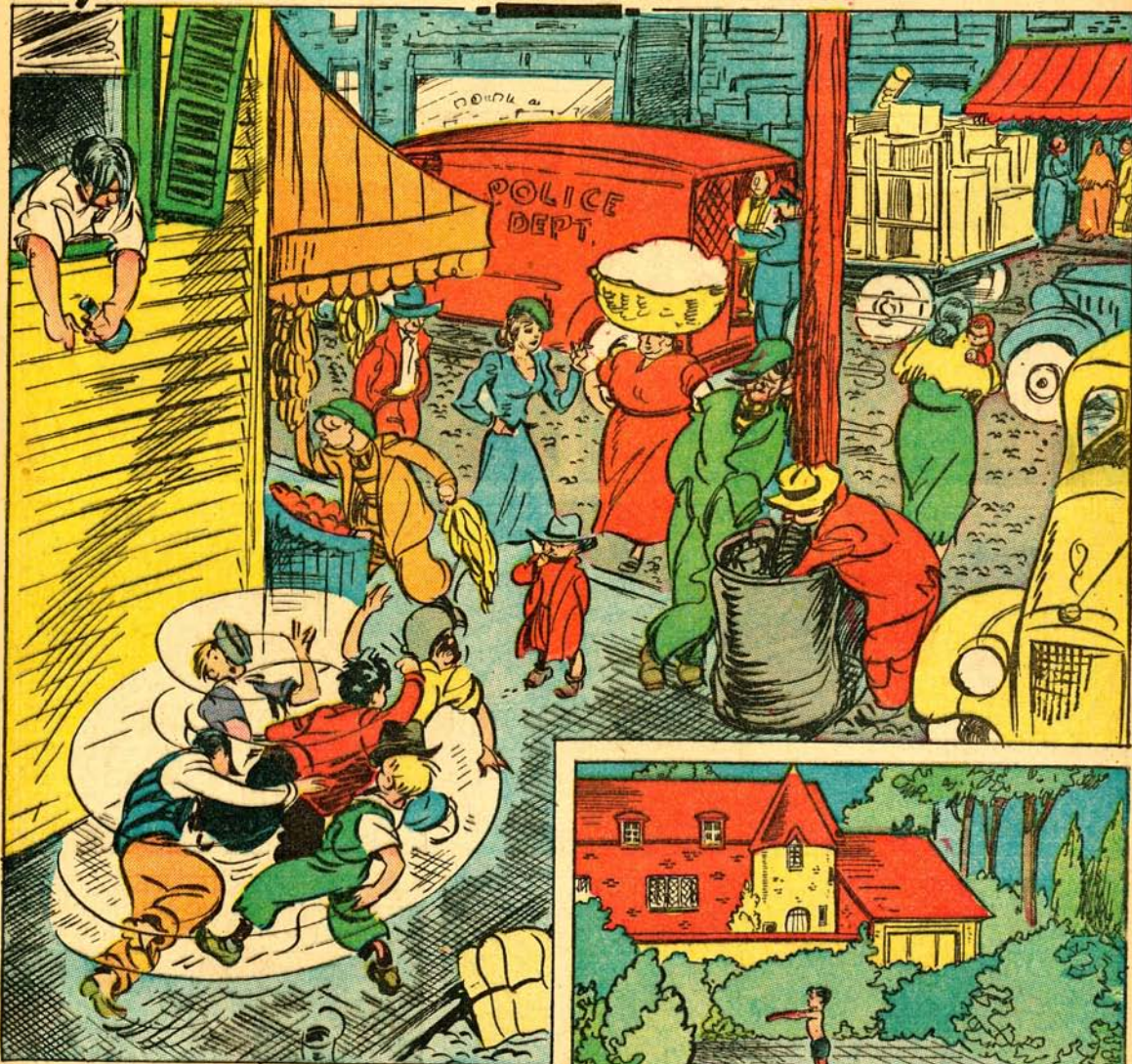
The Thanksgiving holiday will soon be upon us, and I want all of you to know that I am thankful for your friendship and camaraderie. I appreciate the e-mails, dialogue, information, pictures, scans, etc. I also appreciate those of you who take the time to write articles for *Newsboy*. Bill puts great effort into the publication of *Newsboy*, and I feel it is the premier publication of its kind, but he can only publish what you write. I also appreciate each of you and your family members who attend the annual conventions. They are fun and well worth the time and effort. Those of you who do not attend the conventions should make the effort this coming spring, when we are in Akron, Ohio. You will not be disappointed.

I hope each of you experiences a wonderful Thanksgiving spent with family, friends, and food.

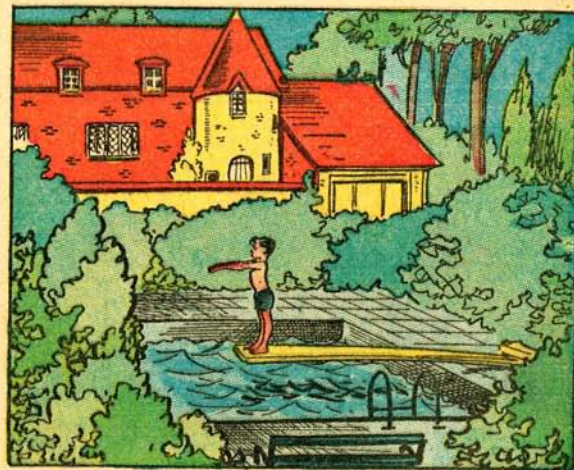
Your Partic'lar Friend,
Bob Sipes (PF-1067)
1004 School St.
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THE WILL TO WIN

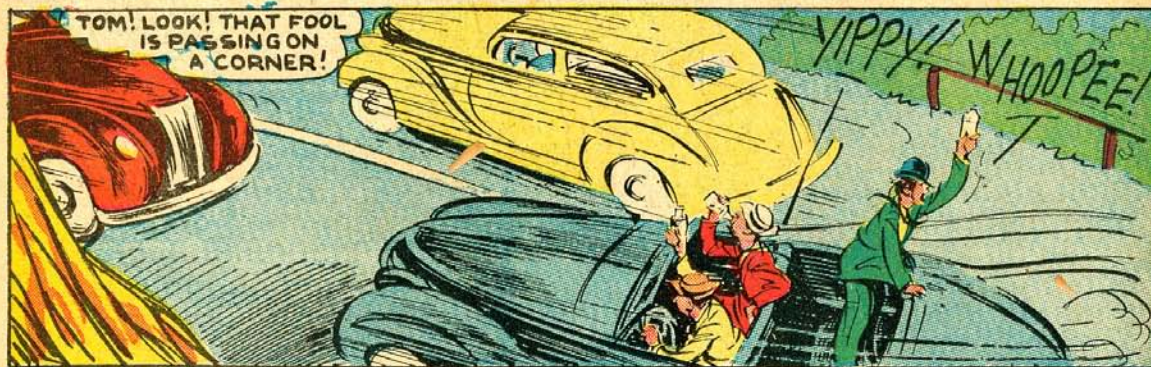
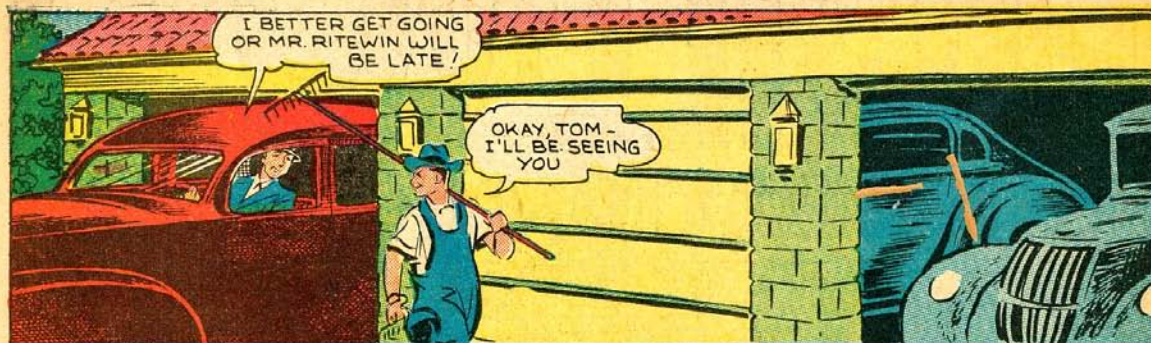
BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.



RICHARD RITEWIN, A BOY BORN TO RICHES AND COMFORTS, IS TORN AWAY FROM ALL THAT IS RIGHTLY HIS, AND PLUNGED INTO THE DEPTHS OF POVERTY. DOES THIS KAYO HIM? IS HE EVEN DOWNHEARTED? DOES HE JUST QUIT, OR DOES HE SET HIS JAW AND FIGHT TO WIN? WHAT DO YOU THINK? READ THIS STORY AND YOU'LL KNOW THE ANSWER.



RICHARD - ON THE PALATIAL RITEWIN ESTATE WHERE HAPPINESS REIGNS SUPREME



WILLIAM RITEWIN'S SUDDEN DEATH RECEIVES WIDE PUBLICITY WHICH IN DUE TIME REACHES FRANK RITEWIN, HIS SHADY HALF-BROTHER, IN ANOTHER CITY

SO! MY POOR HALF-BROTHER IS DEAD! HOW SAD! BUT IT'S TOO BAD HE DIDN'T GIVE ME MORE OF HIS DOUGH WHILE HE LIVED INSTEAD OF KEEPIN' IT ALL FOR HIS WIFE AND KID, BECAUSE **NOW THEY'RE GOIN' T'BE THE LOSERS!**



THROUGH A PAL, FRANK RITEWIN HAS SUCCEEDED IN FINDING A PENNILESS BUT VERY CLEVER ARTIST, CAPABLE OF **FORGERY** THAT DEFIES DETECTION

-AND HERE'S AN OLD ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO ME WITH MY DEAR HALF-BROTHER'S SIGNATURE ON IT! NOW JUST COPY THIS SIGNATURE, RIGHT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE "LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT" YOU'RE HOLDIN', AND YOU'LL GET YOUR DOUGH!



I HATE TO DO THIS-

LOOK! YOU NEED HEAVY DOUGH FOR YOUR WIFE'S OPERATION RIGHT AWAY-OR SHE'LL DIE! I NEED REVENGE ON MY HALF-BROTHER! WE'RE ONLY HELPING EACH OTHER! COME ON, DO YOUR STUFF-AND EVERYTHING'LL TURN OUT ALL RIGHT!



OKAY!

TWO DAYS LATER -WITH THE **FORGED** "LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT" IN HIS POCKET, THE UNSCRUPULOUS HALF-BROTHER TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE UNGUARDED ESTATE WHILE ALL ITS OCCUPANTS ARE ATTENDING WILLIAM'S FUNERAL

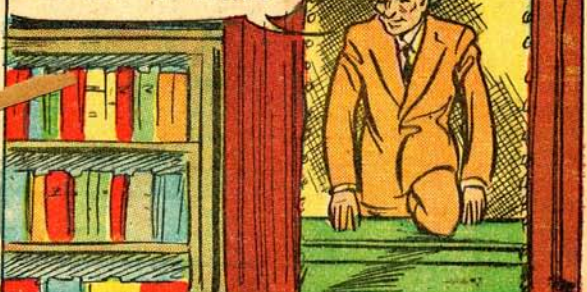
JUST AS I THOUGHT! HE'S LEFT EVERYTHIN' TO HIS WIFE AND KID, AND NOTHIN' TO ME! HE'LL **PAY** FOR THIS! NOW- OF COURSE, THIS WILL MUST BE **DESTROYED** -



-AND **THIS** 'LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT' MUST TAKE ITS PLACE!



HA! THE NEXT TIME I LEAVE HERE WON'T BE THROUGH A WINDOW! THIS PLACE WILL SOON BE **MINE**!



A WEEK LATER—THE
LAST WILL AND
TESTAMENT HAS
BEEN READ—AND—

EVERYTHING TO HIS HALF-
BROTHER! THEY WERE ENEMIES!
IT'S ALL SO INCREDIBLE!

I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE THAT
YOUR DEAR FATHER MADE
SUCH A WILL,
LEAVING

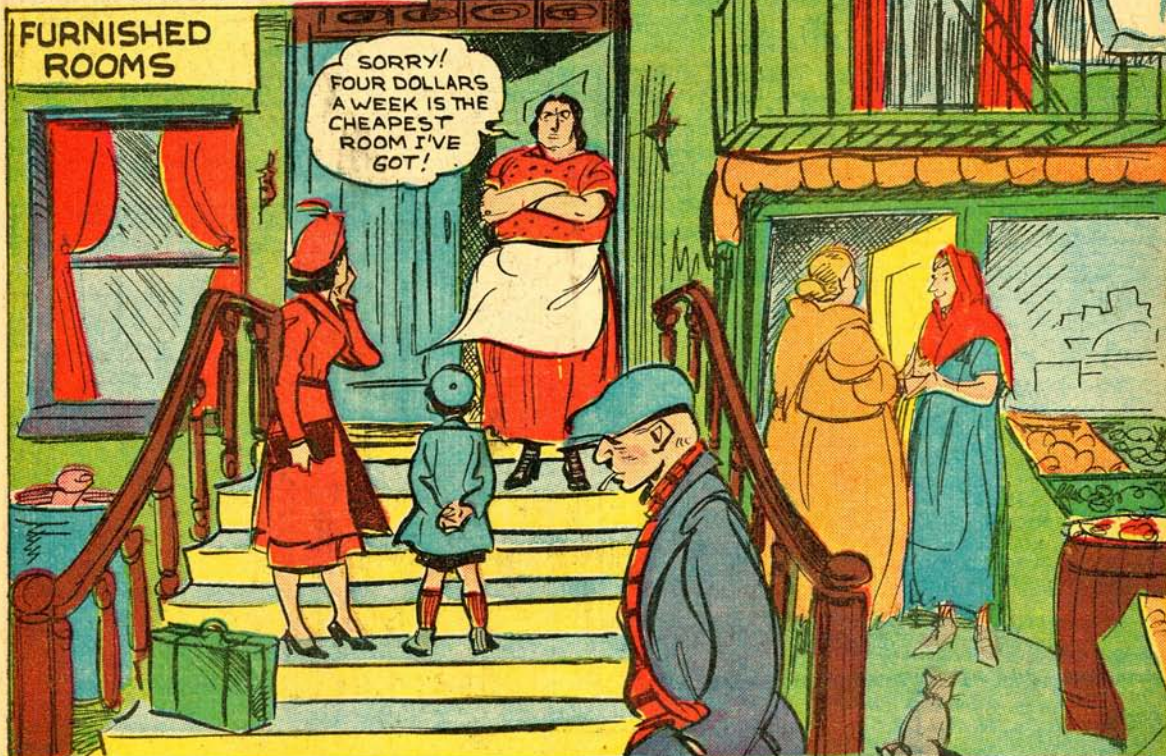
MAYBE UNCLE
FRANK HAS
DONE SOME MORE
OF HIS DIRTY WORK,
MOTHER!



THAT IS **MY** SUSPICION TOO, DEAR, BUT WE
HAVE NO WAY OF **PROVING** IT! FATHER
DID NOT CONSULT ANYONE IN MAKING THE
WILL!

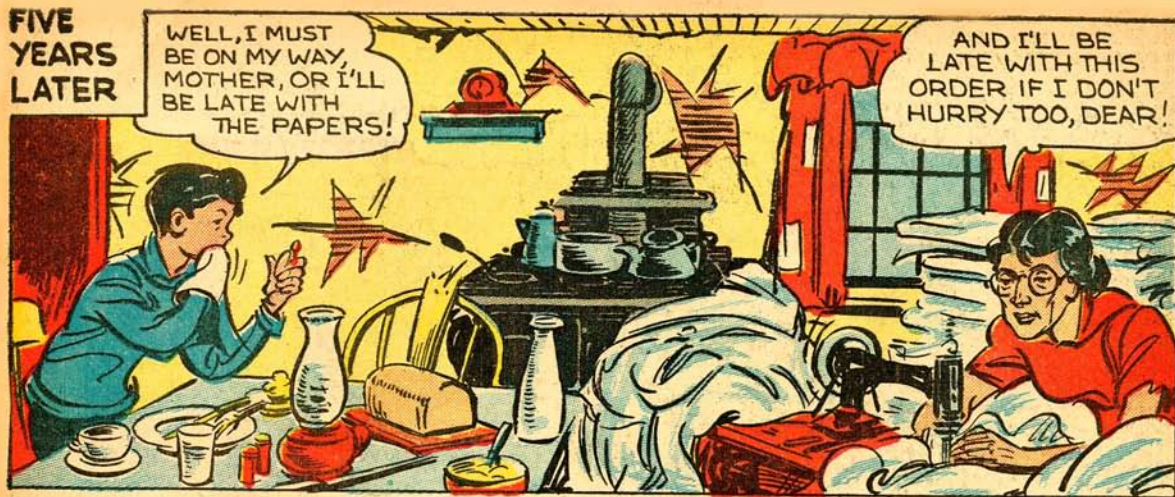


AFTER A LENGTHY LITIGATION, ALL THE
PROPERTY WENT TO THE SWINDLING
HALF-BROTHER, LEAVING RICHARD AND
HIS MOTHER PENNILESS AND FORCED
FROM THEIR PALATIAL HOME TO SEEK
A NEW START OUT OF TOWN IN A
WORLD HERETOFORE UNKNOWN
TO THEM



SORRY!
FOUR DOLLARS
A WEEK IS THE
CHEAPEST
ROOM I'VE
GOT!

FIVE YEARS LATER



WELL, I MUST BE ON MY WAY, MOTHER, OR I'LL BE LATE WITH THE PAPERS!

AND I'LL BE LATE WITH THIS ORDER IF I DON'T HURRY TOO, DEAR!

RICHARD'S MEAGER EARNINGS FROM SELLING PAPERS BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL - ADDED TO WHAT HIS MOTHER EARNS AT SEWING IS ALL THEY HAVE TO LIVE ON

PAPER, SIR, PAPER!



HIS PAPERS ALL SOLD, RICHARD HURRIES BACK HOME, AND -

I'M VERY LATE WITH THIS ORDER, DEAR! I'LL BE BACK SOON - I'LL DELIVER IT, MOTHER! YOU PUT THE COFFEE ON



HEY, YOU! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOIN'!

OH! EXCUSE ME! I'M SORRY!

"EXCUSE ME!" GET THEM WOIDS, PINKY? A SISSY, THAT'S WHAT!

YEAH! AN' I DON'T LIKE SISSIES!

WHAT'S IN HIS BUNDLE? MAYBE WE CAN GET DOUGH FER IT!



THE WILL TO WIN, ESPECIALLY IN THE PROTECTION OF HIS MOTHER'S LABORIOUS WORK, MAKES A HUMAN PANTHER OF RICHARD IN THIS ENCOUNTER, AND HE DECIDES TO DO A LITTLE MORE THAN JUST "TALK BACK" TO THE HOODLUMS



RICHARD SUCCESSFULLY DISPERSES THE HOODLUMS, DELIVERS HIS MOTHER'S WORK IN GOOD CONDITION AND IS STARTING FOR HOME





THE STRANGER'S ATTITUDE AROUSED RICHARD'S SYMPATHETIC CURIOSITY, AND, UPON INQUIRY -



A LITTLE FOOD REFRESHES THE STRANGER AND HE CONTINUES WITH HIS STORY

- AND I HAD A GOOD JOB AND A **WONDERFUL** WIFE AND WAS VERY HAPPY! SUDDENLY I LOST MY JOB - MY WIFE BECAME SERIOUSLY ILL AND NEEDED AN EXPENSIVE OPERATION -



- I COULDN'T GET ANY MONEY - NOT EVEN A JOB - AND BEING MADLY IN LOVE - I FINALLY TURNED TO **CRIME** FOR THE MONEY - A CRIME THAT HAS **HAUNTED** ME EVER SINCE!





RICHARD PROCEEDS TO TELL OF HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD OF WEALTH, COMFORT AND HAPPINESS, OF HIS FATHER'S SUDDEN DEATH, AND THE SUSPECTED **FORGERY** THAT HAS FORCED HIM AND HIS MOTHER INTO THEIR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES -SUDDENLY-



LATER - THE STRANGER-AUBREY SMITH-FORMER ARTIST-HAS KEPT HIS WORD- RICHARD'S HALF UNCLE HAS BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF FORGERY-RICHARD AND HIS MOTHER ARE NOW BACK IN CONTROL OF THE PALATIAL RITEWIN ESTATE -AND AUBREY SMITH HAS HIS SELF-RESPECT RETURNED TO HIM



ANOTHER ALGER STORY WILL BE IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THIS MAGAZINE - DON'T MISS IT

Remembering Ruth Miller

By Robert E. Kasper (PF-327)

Another bright light from the Horatio Alger Society roster has been extinguished. Ruth W. Miller (PF-894) of Vienna, Ohio, passed away on May 22, 2010, of natural causes. She was 90 years old.

Ruth was the spouse of Paul F. Miller (PF-351), who died on August 11, 2002 (see July-August 2002 *Newsboy*). Ruth and Paul were regular convention attendees for many years until declining health curtailed their travels. Ruth was the 1991 recipient of the Dick Seddon Award, given to the most genial and friendly member that year. Paul and Ruth attended their final convention in 1997 at North Conway, New Hampshire, and they came to approximately 20 conventions prior to that. Like many of their Partic'lar Friends, they included book and antique hunting in all of their convention trips.

Unlike many spouses who accompany their husbands (or wives) to the annual conventions, Ruth was a *bona fide* bibliophile in her own right. In addition to an impressive Tasha Tudor collection, Ruth collected Agnes Sligh Turnbull and shared a superb Ohio history library with Paul. She was no amateur with Horatio Alger books, either, with a keen sense for collectibility and value. Ruth often purchased Alger books at the annual convention for Paul and herself.

Ruth's personal interests were varied and numerous. She was a member of the Eastern Star Morning Light Chapter, White Shrine of Jerusalem, Life member of the Order of the Amaranth and served on the Trumbull (County) Branch Advisory Board of the Kent State

University. Ruth was also a past regent of the Mary Chesney Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, which recently honored her with a special award of appreciation for 60 years of devoted service. She was an active member of the Vienna (Ohio) Historical Society and was instrumental in publishing a history of Vienna during its bicentennial in 1999.

Ruth was perhaps best known for her love of music. She was a long-time member of the Vienna Methodist

Church and was the organist there for many years. She played the organ and piano for many weddings, funerals and other occasions. Whenever a piano was available at a Horatio Alger Society convention, Ruth would regale us with nearly any kind of requested music.

One might assume that Ruth's copious church, charitable and other activities prevented her from other endeavors, but this was not the case. She was appointed by President Harry S. Truman as the United States Postmaster for the Vienna Post Of-

fice, a position she held for 35 years. She was appointed during a time when very few women were selected for this occupation. During her tenure, several rural routes were added and it became an official first class post office. When she retired, the Vienna community honored her with a *This is Your Life* ceremony at a local high school.



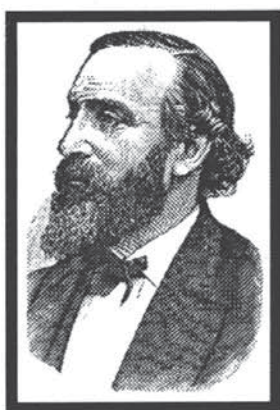
Partic'lar Friends Paul and Ruth Miller were convention regulars from the 1970s through the late 1990s. Photo courtesy of Bernie Biberdorf

Memorial contributions may be sent to the Vienna United Methodist Church, 4265 Warren-Sharon Road, Vienna, OH 44473, or to Hope Lodge, 11432 Mayfield Road, Cleveland, OH 44106.

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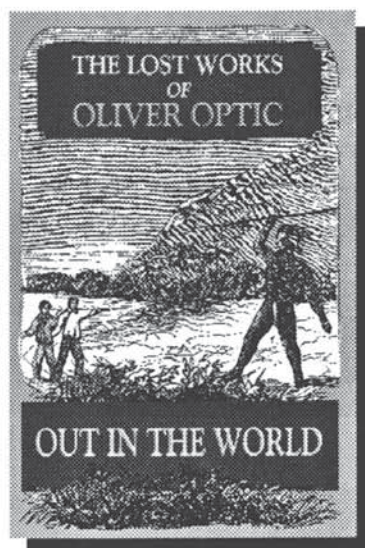
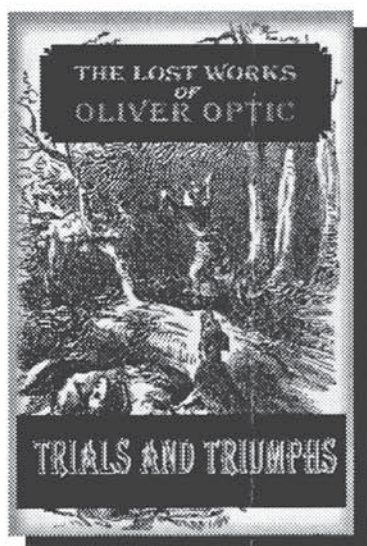
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NIU fellowship reinstated for 2011

By Lynne M. Thomas
Northern Illinois University

We are pleased to announce that the Horatio Alger Fellowship for the Study of American Popular Culture has been reinstated after a brief suspension from lack of funds.

The University Libraries, Northern Illinois University, is now accepting applications for the fellowship. Funding is available to scholars who will be using materials from the NIU Libraries' major holdings in American popular culture. These holdings include the Albert Johannsen and Edward T. LeBlanc Collections of more than 50,000 dime novels, and the nation's preeminent collections related to Horatio Alger, Jr., and Edward Stratemeyer, along with many other authors. Topics which could draw on the collections' strengths might include the plight of urban children, image of the American West in popular literature, widespread use of pseudonyms, and stereotypical portrayals. Preference will be given to applicants who signify an interest in research related to Horatio Alger, Jr. The Fellowship award consists of a \$1,500 stipend.

In 2011, the fellowship will be offered twice in the calendar year, this year only, to help rectify the previous suspension of the award due to lack of funds in 2009 and 2010.

Candidates should submit a letter of interest, a curriculum vitae, a brief proposal for their research, and two letters of recommendation to:

Lynne M. Thomas, Head, Rare Books and Special Collections, University Libraries, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115-2868

Application deadline for the first round is Nov. 30, 2010. Research funded by the fellowship must take place between Jan. 1 and June 30, 2011. Application deadline for the second round is May 31, 2011, with research taking place between July 1 and Dec. 31, 2011.

Good sports

Ralph Henry Barbour's 'how to play' books for young people

By William R. Gowen (PF-706)

For sports fans, this is the most interesting time of the year. Baseball's Fall Classic is underway, the National Football League and college football are about halfway through their regular seasons, and pro and college basketball and hockey seasons are now underway or just about to begin.

Youth sports are also in the spotlight, with various states about to open their football playoffs, and high school basketball about set to tip off.

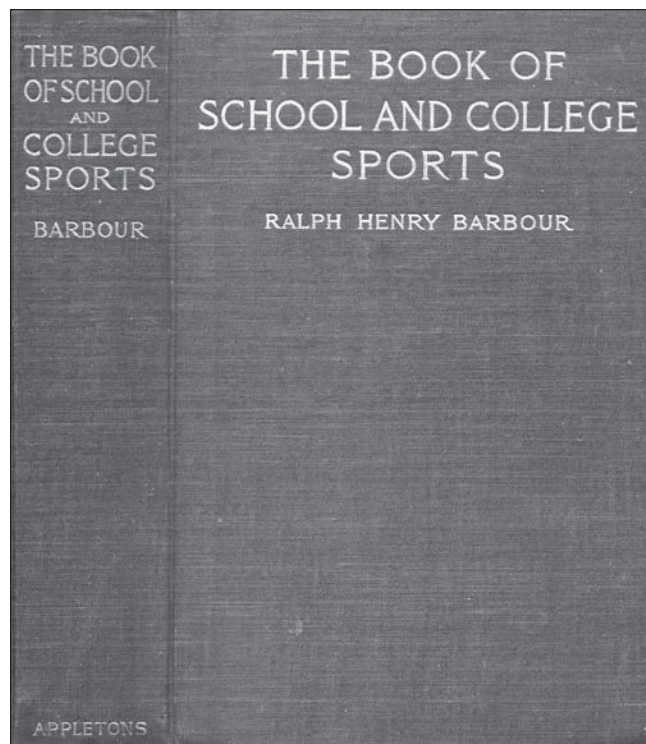
Ralph Henry Barbour (1870-1944) was a prolific author of school and sports fiction for boys, along with a wide variety of youth outdoors adventures and adult romances. His major publisher was D. Appleton & Co., along with its successor D. Appleton-Century Co.

All of this can be found in my article, "Ralph Henry Barbour: Boys' Books and Much More," appearing in the November-December 1993 issue of *Newsboy*. The article contains numerous illustrations and a list of Barbour's 160-plus books. Several of the books on that list include Barbour as co-author, including five adult novels in which he shared credit with Henry P. Holt.

But it is his co-authorship with La Mar Sarra for a series of sports instructional books that is the focus of this article. These five books, all published by Appleton-Century, appeared between 1933 and 1941, late in Barbour's career. The five books are *Football Plays for Boys* (1933), *How to Play Better Baseball* (1935), *How to Play Six-Man Football* (1939), the revised edition of *Football Playas for Boys* (1940) and *How to Play Better Basketball* (1941). Interestingly, although Barbour featured ice hockey in several of his boys' school novels, there is no how-to book for that sport, probably because Barbour then lived in Florida, not a hockey hotbed. Also, Sarra, his collaborator, was a Florida resident.

This is not the first time Barbour wrote a sports instructional book: his *The Book of School and College Sports* was published by Appleton in May 1904. This 438-page volume, profusely illustrated with photographs and tactical playing diagrams, contains major chapters on American football (as opposed to soccer, which the rest of the world calls "football"), baseball, track and field, lacrosse, ice hockey and lawn tennis.

The Book of School and College Sports is one of the more difficult Barbour volumes to find today, probably



***The Book of School and College Sports*, published in 1904, was Barbour's first sports instructional book.**

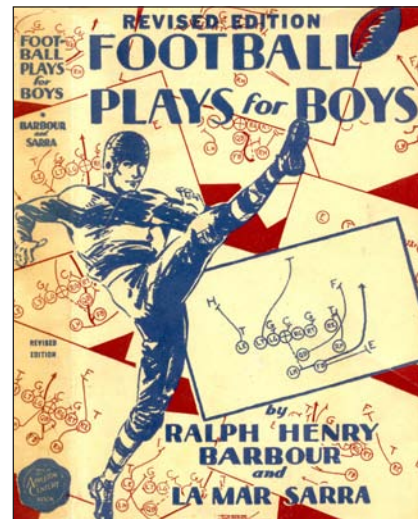
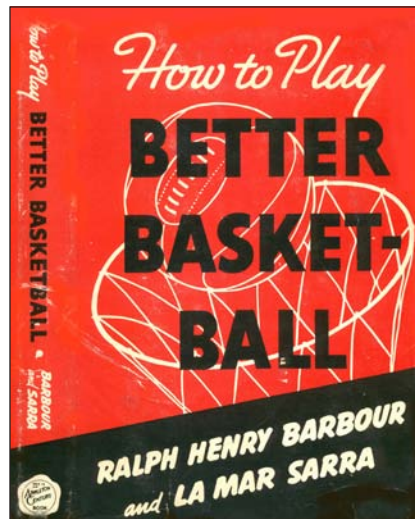
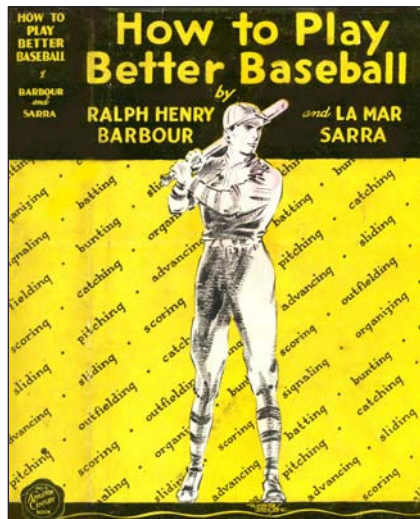
because it was used as a reference work and likely well worn out through daily use on the practice field. Incidentally, it is dedicated to "Sport for sport's sake," and also of note, Appleton concurrently offered a companion volume, *The Woman's Book of Sports, A Practical Guide to Physical Development and Outdoor Recreation*, authored by J. Parmly Paret.

It was not until nearly 30 years later that Barbour again did sports "how-to" books. Now living in Florida, he sought someone with up-to-date expertise on the rules of sports, turning to then-athletic director La Mar Sarra of Tampa's Henry B. Plant High School. Founded in 1926, Plant High School has long been known for its sports programs, most recently winning state football titles in 2006, 2008 and 2009. Among its famous alumni are baseball Hall of Famer Wade Boggs and Stephen Stills of the music group Crosby, Stills and Nash.

Back in the 1930s, Plant High School already had a highly recognized athletic program, so it was a natural fit to have athletic director La Mar Sarra collaborate with Barbour on these five instructional books. At the time, Sarra also served on the rules committee of the National Federation of High School Athletic Associations, so he was in a perfect spot to offer his expertise.

Compared with the 400-plus pages of *The Book of School and College Sports*, these books are much smaller,

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Good sports

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running from just over 100 pages to 170 pages. Still, the football book includes many basic running and pass-blocking schemes for plays still widely in use today.

The same is true for the basketball book, which covers basic shooting and passing skills, along with set plays and fast-break offenses, plus defensive fundamentals. It is amazing how little basketball has changed in 70 years: the court dimensions (94 x 50 feet for colleges and 84 x 50 feet for high schools) are the same today, with the most notable update the widening of the free-throw lane from 6 feet to 12 feet due to the domination of 7-footer Wilt Chamberlain in the early 1950s. According to the authors, this book (actually, all the volumes in the group) is "designed especially for junior and pre-college players and their coaches, deals with the fundamentals rather than the 'higher branches' of basketball."

Of the three popular sports represented in this series, football is the most complex from a strategic standpoint. So, as it evolved in the 1930s and 40s, the need for a revised edition was evident. The authors list the revised edition's audience as "boys anywhere from 12 to 17 who want to play football, but for whom no coach is available. Teachers, pressed into service as coaches, will also find it indispensable."

In that era, football posed a particular problem, since many smaller school districts away from major cities had only 100 to 400 students (total) in grades 9 to 12, not enough to field a roster of 25 to 30 players. Back then, each player participated on both offense and defense, unlike today's era of specialists. In the mid-1950s, when college "two-platoon" rules were passed,

11-man football was still only found in larger prep schools. Many suburban and rural schools were playing by eight-man rules until the late 1950s, when school district consolidations boosted enrollments and sports participation. In the 1930s and 40s, pick-up games on public playgrounds usually consisted of six-man football (if you could even find that many players). Baseball was "America's pastime" during that era.

As a result, Barbour and Sarra's *How to Play Six-Man Football*, along with the 1933 edition of *Football Plays for Boys* were soon outdated. That's likely why they remain among the most difficult books to find among today's Barbour collectors.

The revised 1940 edition of *Football Plays for Boys* places more emphasis on defensive formations, in addition to the basics of Knute Rockne's Notre Dame offense and the straight-T and wing-T formations. Of course, in this edition, Barbour and Sarra continue to emphasize the fundamentals of blocking and tackling, which remain the mantra of coaches to this day.

Only *How to Play Better Baseball* does not include play diagrams, because baseball is, at its core, a duel between pitcher and batter. However, baserunning and sliding techniques, along with defense, are described in great detail, the latter including proper positioning of infielders and outfielders. As far as batting is concerned, that chapter opens with "choosing the right bat," and describes fundamentals of the hitting stance, the proper swing and how to study the opposing pitcher. The sacrifice bunt is also covered in detail.

These books, published some 70 years ago, hold up well in teaching the basics of the sports young people still enjoy today. Whether watching games at your local high school or enjoying college or pro athletes compete on TV, you can see how little has changed since the era of Ralph Henry Barbour and La Mar Sarra.