



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.

VOLUME LIV

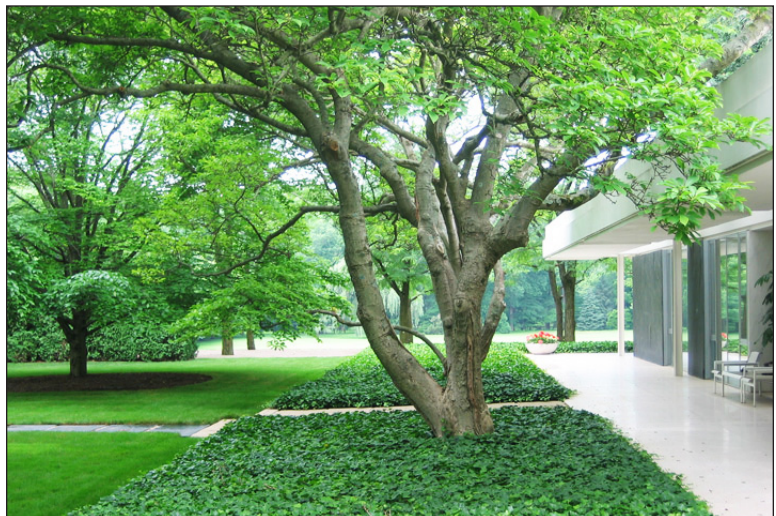
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2016

NUMBER 1

'Back home again in Indiana'

2016 H.A.S. convention preview:

- * Convention overview
- * Registration form
- * Hotel, travel information
- * Schedule of events



Architect Eero Saarinen's Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Indiana, designated a National Historic Landmark in 2000.

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'A fluent and facile style'

Edward Stratemeyer becomes the literary heir to Horatio Alger, Jr. — Part 3

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President's column

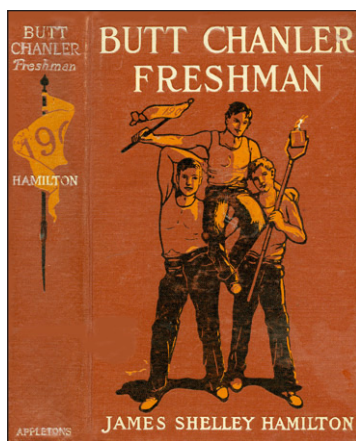
According to the British book collector Richard Heber, owning only a single copy of a book did not suffice. He explained himself thus: "Why, you see, Sir, no man can comfortably do without *three* copies of a book. One he must have for his show copy, and he will probably keep it at his country house. Another he will require for his own use and reference; and unless he is inclined to part with this, which is very inconvenient, or risk the injury of his best copy, he must needs have a third at the service of his friends" (quoted in Louis B. Wright, *Of Books and Men* [Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1976], 33-34).

While our long-suffering families might object to Heber's reasoning and oppose duplicate book ownership for sordid practical reasons such as lack of space in our homes, I would argue that owning multiple copies of a book can have important research advantages. I can point to three examples in my own collection.

In preparing an earlier President's Column I noticed a typographical error on page 11 of my 1903 Doubleday, Page & Company edition of Ralph Henry Barbour's *The Land of Joy* (it reads "raturally avese" instead of "naturally averse"). Fortunately, I owned a second copy of this edition, and when I turned to it I discovered that the error was corrected there. I thus learned that that two states of the first edition exist, and that I own an example of each.

At one point I also found myself in possession of three copies of James Shelley Hamilton, *Butt Chanler, Freshman* (D. Appleton and Company, 1908). The title is the first in a two-volume series that is somewhat difficult to find.

I wondered if it had had a second printing, and found by checking the last page that it had indeed done so and that I owned two copies of the first and one of the second. Four titles were advertised, but the third and fourth were never issued, and so it is likely that my two printings of *Butt*



(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 books, 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, 1004 School St., Shelbyville, IN 46176**.

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.horatioalgersociety.net.

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, 1004 School St., Shelbyville, IN 46176.

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 advertisements 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

'Back home again in Indiana'

By Bob Sipes (PF-1067)

We welcome anyone interested in collecting children's series books, dime novels, story papers and related collectibles to Columbus, Indiana, April 28 to May 1, 2016 for the Horatio Alger "Back home again in Indiana" Convention. We are looking forward to seeing old friends, making new ones, and having a great time while doing so.

This is the first year that we are advertising our convention outside of **Newsboy** and our website. We are advertising in upcoming issues of Dime Novel Round-Up and Yellowback Library.

Convention preview We will also be advertising using various Internet and social media outlets to generate new interest and a growth in attendance. We welcome additional advertising and communications by our membership and those who read this article.

While it is the works of Horatio Alger that have brought us together for 52 years, most of our members enjoy, collect and research Alger's contemporaries, such as Harry Castlemon, Edward Ellis, Oliver Optic, Edward Stratemeyer and his syndicate, and a host of other authors, series, and children's publications such as dime novels and story papers. For over two decades, we have published articles related to series books and authors other than Alger with great success, and a few years ago we modified our mission statement as follows: "The Horatio Alger Society embraces collectors and enthusiasts of all juvenile literature, including boys'



The Holiday Inn Express in Taylorsville, Indiana, will host the 2016 Horatio Alger Society convention.

and girls' series books, pulps, and dime novels."

We would like to see the annual H.A.S. convention grow to include those collectors who would like to connect with other collectors of boys' and girls' series books and publications. I personally have collected boys' and girls' series books since I was a young child, but did not know an organization such as H.A.S. existed until 2002. My wife and I attended our first convention in Houston in 2003, and I have not missed one since. It was a pleasure to finally meet others with the same interests and book collecting passion as myself, and I want others to

(Continued on Page 5)

Exciting new project at the H.A.S. website

H.A.S. member Bob Eastlack (PF-557) has been working on a large, complex project for the Horatio Alger Society's official website, a comprehensive "Publishers and Their Formats" listing. When complete, it will list all known Alger publishers, both first-edition publishers and reprint publishers. Each publisher will have its own web page with all known formats and titles. In addition, each publisher will be linked to a printable, savable PDF file summarizing that publisher's web page.

For several years, cover images of all the Alger first editions as well as pertinent points of issue have been available for viewing on our website. This project constitutes a major, labor-intensive expansion — not yet complete — but we're getting there. Bob has based his work on the seven books on various Alger publishers' formats by Brad Chase (PF-412), along with the published research on the Winston formats by Bob Sawyer (PF-455)

and Jim Thorp (PF-574). Of course, he is relying on the Bennett and Gardner bibliographies as well, and he has received support, advice, and information from former Executive Director Rob Kasper (PF-327). In addition, he has consulted the bibliographic work of the late Bob Routhier, and **Newsboy** articles written over the years.

You can visit the website at www.horatioalgersociety.net, click on the left-hand sidebar menu, hover over "Works," and then click on "Publishers and Their Formats." If you want to go directly to the page, visit:

<http://bit.ly/1KDjHmn>

PDF files for 34 publishers are in place now, and more will be there soon. Then, the HTML web pages will be added. Of course, your comments are very welcome! Just contact me at the email address, below.

— Barry Schoenborn (PF-1087)
barry@wvswrite.com

Editor's notebook

I have the sad duty to report the passing of former Horatio Alger Society President and 1987 convention host George W. Owens (PF-586), of Palmyra, Virginia, in late November, which his wife, Alice, recently reported to former Executive Director Rob Kasper. George was in hospice care for approximately six weeks before he died suddenly on Thanksgiving evening, less than a month from his 90th birthday.

George W. Owens was born in Glenwood, Arkansas, on Dec. 21, 1925, and he was one of our nation's dwindling members of "The Greatest Generation," who



George W. Owens (P-586)

served their country with distinction in World War II and are now dying at a rate of some 1,500 per day. He served in the U.S. Navy in the South Pacific from 1944 to 1946 and was a member of VFW Post 8169 in Scottsville, Va.

Longtime members of the Society (your editor included) remember with fondness George's 1987 convention, "The Monticello Meeting" in Charlottesville, Va., which

was well attended and included several memorable activities, including our first visit to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello (we went to Monticello again in 2009, thanks to our convention host that year, Jeff Looney). We also enjoyed a walking tour of the University of Virginia campus, which Jefferson also designed.

George, who joined the Horatio Alger Society in 1979, was H.A.S. vice president at the time of his convention, and he was elected to his two-year term as president at the 1988 convention in Ada, Oklahoma.

Owens worked for the Centel Corporation for 39 years, and he was a longtime member of IBEW Local 1181, of which he also served as secretary and treasurer for many years.

He was a member of Mt. Eagle Baptist Church in Charlottesville, and it was there that his Life of Celebration service was held on Dec. 2, 2015. If you wish to send a note or card to Alice Owens, write to her at 23 Kiowa Lane, Palmyra, VA, 22963.

President's column

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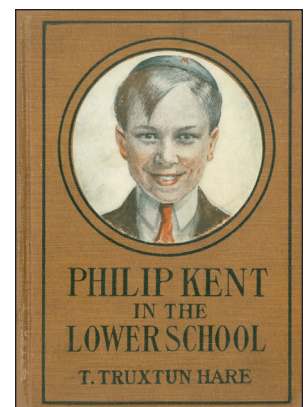
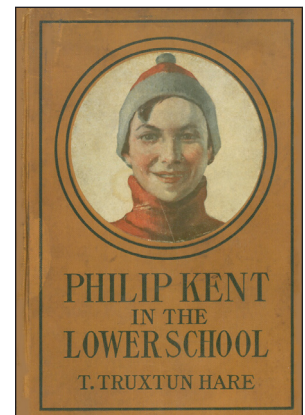
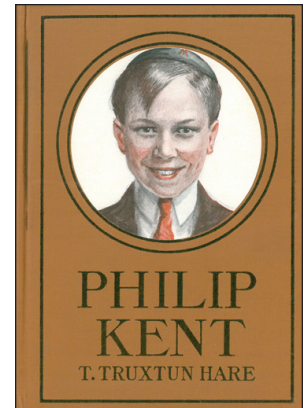
Chanler were the only ones published.

Finally, I recently obtained a second copy of T. Truxtun Hare, *Philip Kent in the Lower School* (Penn Publishing Company, 1916; this year of publication on title page of both copies). Each title has a circular portrait of the hero in an appliqué on the front cover. I already owned the four titles in this series, and I knew from my set and from the description in the invaluable bibliography of Mattson and Davis that the portraits of Mr. Kent inside the appliqué are specific to each title.

Or so I thought, but in my second copy of *Lower School*, I was surprised to find that Kent's portrait was different from that in the first copy. Instead it matches the portrait in my 1917 copy of the first title, *Philip Kent* (1914). I will need to see more copies of each title to determine whether this repetition of images was a publisher's error, or whether for the second title they ran out of the new portraits at some point and used some leftover old ones, or whether they used both portraits more or less indiscriminately for both titles.

These finer points of bibliography are among the many things that make this such an interesting hobby. I would therefore encourage my fellow collectors to stand firm and collect multiples copies of titles when they have the means and opportunity to do so.

Your Partic'lar Friend,
Jeff Looney (PF-903)
1712 Concord Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22901



'Back home again in Indiana'

(Continued from Page 3)

become aware of the H.A.S. convention and discover the friendships that I first made many years ago.

This is the third convention Wendy and I have hosted. The first was in Shelbyville in 2007 and the second in Greenwood in 2013. We decided to host the 2016 convention in Columbus, Indiana, for a few reasons. It is not far from our home in Shelbyville; it is a rather unique and well-known city considering its size; and it is near many local attractions that our attendees might find enjoyable before, during and after the convention.

Columbus is a relatively small town, well known for its modern architecture. So well known, in fact, that National Geographic Traveler ranked it 11th out of 109 historic U.S. destinations, noting that Columbus has "a world-class collection of modern architecture by master architects ... it is authentic, unique, and unspoiled ... this town is truly part of America's architectural heritage."

J. Irwin Miller, past CEO of Cummins, Inc. which has its headquarters in Columbus, instituted a program in which Cummins funded architects' fees for new building projects. He conceived the idea following a couple of failed attempts to design a new local school. He offered to pay for the design if one of five architects he selected was used, although he would take no part in the design.

That project's success initiated a program that has since created a large number of architectural landmarks, including schools, churches and government/municipal buildings. In 1987, Miller stated "It is expensive to be mediocre in this world. Quality has always been cost effective. The tragic mistake in history that's always been made by the well-to-do is that they have feathered their own nests. Today we know that society does not survive unless it works for everybody."

The architecture for which Columbus, Indiana, is known may have been partially funded by Irwin's program, but ultimately it is a community effort to express the values of the community itself. On Page 1 of this issue is the Miller House and Gardens, a national historic landmark designed by the eminent Finnish architect, Eero Saarinen, and commissioned by J. Irwin Miller and his wife, Xenia Simons Miller, in 1953.

For more information regarding the architecture of Columbus, I recommend the following website, which provides pictures and history: www.52weeks.rickyberkey.org/main-menu/ I also recommend the Tour of Columbus Architecture, which can be booked at www.columbus.in.us/art-architecture/architecture-tour. I will see if we can get a group rate for the tour, if there is enough interest.

We chose the Holiday Inn Express in nearby Taylorsville, Indiana, for multiple reasons, two of which are located next door. The first is the Edinburgh Premium Outlets Mall, which is a short walk away and features approximately 85 stores for your retail shopping pleasure. The second is the Exit 76 Antique Mall, billed as "The finest antique mall in the Midwest," that many of you have experienced from our previous two conventions. The mall features several used-book dealers.

There are also other area antique stores, flea markets, and specialty stores in the Columbus area.

Columbus is also just a short drive (20-30 minutes) from Nashville, Indiana, located in beautiful Brown County near Brown County State Park and is the center of the Brown County Art Colony started in the early 20th century by many notable resident artists, including T.C. Steele. Nashville is a tourist attraction with a large number of artisan, antique, and specialty shops, art galleries, and more than 25 unique local restaurants. We are trying to place our Saturday evening dinner in Nashville, but have not yet confirmed a location.

Included in this issue is the tentative schedule detailing what will be an entertaining, interesting, and successful convention. Bill Gowen and at least two other speakers will be presenting book and author-related topics on Friday morning. These presentations are always informative and entertaining. We will be holding the annual book auction Friday afternoon and the book sale Saturday morning. We are anticipating a good number of quality books for both the auction and the book sale. I will be advertising the Saturday book sale locally and hope to drive an increase in buyer traffic and interest.

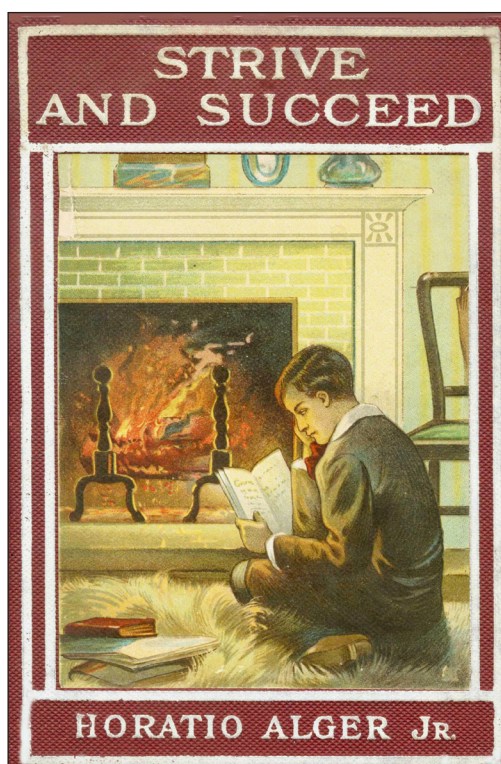
A registration form is included, along with the schedule, and you may also register via the Horatio Alger Society website. Hotel reservations should be made as soon as possible directly to the Holiday Inn Express in Taylorsville (please note the address for the hotel states Edinburgh). The hotel phone number is (812) 526-4919. Please tell the hotel that you are with the Horatio Alger Society to ensure that you receive the special convention rate of \$99. This rate includes free wireless, newspaper, and an excellent Continental breakfast, and will apply for your entire stay, including preceding and following dates. Please note that the block of rooms held for our use will expire on the March 27.

We will post convention information and updates to the Horatio Alger Society website and Facebook page. Wendy and I are looking forward to seeing all of you at the 2016 "Back home again in Indiana" convention!

Strive and Succeed Award

*The Horatio Alger Society appreciates the generosity of its members in donating to the H.A.S. **Strive and Succeed Award** fund. The **Strive and Succeed Award** is presented each spring at the annual convention to a deserving high school senior to help defray his or her college expenses. The following Partic'lar Friends made contributions during calendar year 2015:*

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 Barry Schoenborn (PF-1087)
 Robert G. Sipes (PF-1067)
 Arthur W. Smitter (PF-952)

If you made an S&S donation in 2015 and your name does not appear on this list, contact us at 1004 School St., Shelbyville, IN 46176, and we will list it in the March-April Newsboy.

'A fluent and facile style'

Edward Stratemeyer becomes the literary heir to Horatio Alger, Jr.

By James D. Keeline (PF-898)

Part 3

Introduction: The first two parts of this article described the circumstances and source material that allowed Edward Stratemeyer to achieve a life-long aspiration. He was able to not only write stories like two of his favorite authors from his youth but also to write stories under their names. One of those stories was by "Oliver Optic" (William T. Adams) and was designed to complete a Civil War series.

However, the others were published under the Horatio Alger, Jr. name and featured varying levels of Alger content. The first two "Alger completions" were expanded from a partial manuscript that had been divided into two books by Stratemeyer. Some others

were either rewritten from Alger dramas or expanded from short stories.

The remaining stories contained more Stratemeyer and less Alger, since his sister, Olive Augusta Cheney, had sold off most of the remaining publication rights as the executrix of her late brother's estate. There were some scrapbooks containing stories by Alger. One scrapbook survives at New York Public Library in the Stratemeyer Syndicate Records Collection,¹ containing early short stories, articles, and short humorous filler pieces intended for newspapers and story papers. Most of them are from the 1850s and 1860s. They include bylines of Alger, Cantab, both Prestons, some new names, and anonymous works.² The idea was that Stratemeyer

(Continued on Page 8)



"BOOKS! YOU GET RIGHT OUT OF THIS DOORWAY!"—P. 112.
Young Book Agent

THE YOUNG BOOK AGENT

Or, Frank Hardy's Road to Success

BY

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

AUTHOR OF "LOST AT SEA," "NELSON THE NEWSBOY," "OUT
FOR BUSINESS," "YOUNG CAPTAIN JACK," "RAGGED
DICK SERIES," "TATTERED TOM
SERIES," ETC.



NEW YORK
STITT PUBLISHING COMPANY

1905

'A fluent and facile style'

(Continued from Page 7)

would use these short pieces as either source material or as inspiration for new stories.

An unstable publishing environment

The first six Alger completions were published by Mershon, a company founded in 1873 by William Livingston Mershon.³ Initially, the company was a printer and binder for other publishers. By the 1890s, the firm had become a full publisher with a traveling sales force. Their line included standard reprints, along with Stratemeyer's Rover Boys and Flag of Freedom series and the Alger completions.

However, by 1904, William Mershon wanted to return to the business of printing and binding and leave the publishing and sales to others. At the beginning of 1905, his key traveling salesman, William M. Stitt, Jr., was head of a new company with permission to publish the former Mershon titles.⁴ Mershon was an officer in the new company. They even managed to persuade Stratemeyer to invest in the new company.⁵

The publishing industry for these kinds of books was anything but stable during this period. The first two publishers that issued Stratemeyer's books were no longer in business. Merriam went into receivership in October 1897.⁶ The printing rights and plates for some of the Stratemeyer books published by William L. Allison went to Donohue Brothers⁷ and some were handled by the publisher that would be primarily associated with books under Stratemeyer's own name: Lee & Shepard.

Stratemeyer also worked with a couple other publishers to ensure that he did not have all of his fortunes tied to a single publishing house. Two books were issued by A. Wessels⁸ and another two were issued by A. S. Barnes.⁹ The sales of these, and three Mexican War series¹⁰ titles published by Dana Estes, were so poor that he negotiated to buy the plates and took them to other publishers.

After publishing books for about a year, Stitt elected to leave the publishing business and return to work as a traveler, representing books from specific publishers.¹¹ William L. Mershon was once again a publisher in 1906, and his firm's name was returned to the title pages and spines of the books. By October 1, 1906, he managed to sell his interest in the publishing side to Chatterton-Peck and the Rahway, New Jersey, printing plant to a new firm, Quinn & Boden Company.¹²

Stratemeyer entered into an ambitious schedule to produce 17 books for Chatterton-Peck in 1907. However, sales were poor and not all the delivered manuscripts were actually published. Stratemeyer and Chatterton-Peck had a series of lawsuits in New Jersey and New York to finally put Stratemeyer into a position that al-

lowed him to buy the printing plates and take them to the publisher of his choice.¹³

Cupples & Leon was well aware of Stratemeyer's difficulties and they spoke and corresponded privately about it. They had begun publishing a new line of Stratemeyer Syndicate books that included series such as the Motor Boys and Great Marvel series, as well as one of the Alger completions, *Joe the Hotel Boy* (1906). They expressed a good deal of disappointment when Stratemeyer opted to take the plates for the Mershon, Stitt, and Chatterton-Peck books to Grosset & Dunlap for publication in 1908. However, Stratemeyer and Cupples & Leon resolved to place this disagreement in the past and move forward with additional new lines of books:

... I also think, that in view of all your verbal and written promises, we are entitled to the first consideration as to the line. If you make any other arrangements, I shall be compelled to always consider that you have broken faith with us.

— Victor W. Cupples to Edward Stratemeyer,
14 February 1908.

Under this sometimes tumultuous environment were the last five Alger completions produced. A 1904 contract agreement with Cheney arranged for the publication of four stories:

For and in consideration of the sum of Three Hundred Dollars, (\$300.) the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I, as executrix of the estate of the late Horatio Alger, Jr., author, do hereby transfer and set aside to Edward Stratemeyer, of Newark, N.J., all right, title and interest in four stories, based upon stories written by the said Horatio Alger, Jr., and now contained in two dramas and in a large volume of miscellaneous writings. The tentative titles of the four stories are as follows:

"The Young Book Agent." (Telling of the trials and successes of a youth who becomes a book agent and makes enough money to educate himself.)

"From Farm to Fortune." (Telling of the doings of a youth who makes his living on a small farm and how he gains wealth.)

"Randy the River Boy." (Telling of the doings of a river boy in a large city, based partly on a drama.)

"A Boy of the Mountains." (Telling of the haps and mishaps of a boy who lives among mountaineers. Based partly on a drama.)

In making this transfer I hereby give to Edward Stratemeyer the right to edit and enlarge the stories as he may see proper, also the right to change titles if desired, and to bring out either under the name of Horatio Alger, Jr., alone, or in connection with the name or nom-de-

plume of some other writer. I also agree that none of the matter used in any of the above named books shall be used in any form whatsoever by or through me after this transfer is executed.

— Cheney and ES agreement, 31 March 1904.

Like *Lost at Sea*, the remaining stories were said to be based on short stories by Alger. Stratemeyer had suggested this method of adding books to the line and finally received Alger's own scrapbook of his clippings. Many of these are not listed in the short story bibliographies of Victor Berch/Edward T. LeBlanc (1990) and Bob Bennett (1999).¹⁴

The Young Book Agent

The agreement (above) that mentioned the four titles was accompanied by Cheney's letter:

39 1/2 Pond St.,
Natick, Mass., Apr. 3, 1904

Dear Mr. Stratemeyer,

Your letter and cheque were received and I return the contract signed.

I also give permission to use the material you desire from the scrap-book, to be used in connection with the two stories of "The Young Book Agent" and "From Farm to Fortune."

I wrote to Ormond Smith, in relation to the publication in cloth of the biographical books by the Federal Book Co., and he has promised to present the matter to them.

I shall be glad to have you return the scrap-book, as soon as you have made a transcript of the matter you need from it.

Thanking you for your promptness in the business matter, I remain,

Very Truly Yours,
O.A. Cheney

— Cheney to ES, 3 April 1904.

The basis for *The Young Book Agent* is an 1893 short story by Alger titled "How John's Idea Came Out: A True Story of a Boy Who Went Into the Book Business." It was published in several newspapers on or around October 29, 1893, including the **Boston Sunday Globe**, the **Philadelphia Inquirer**, the **Inter Ocean** of Chicago, the **Salt Lake Herald**, and the **Scranton Republican**. A loose copy of this story was tucked into the Alger Scrapbook and is part of the microfilmed NYPL material.

As with the book version, "How John's Idea Came Out" features a boy who sets out to be a "book agent," taking sample copies to homes and offices in the hopes of selling copies by subscription. [Editor's note: This story, discovered in 1992 by researcher Gary Scharnhorst,

made its first appearance in **Newsboy** later that year. It is reprinted on pages 17-20 of this issue].

In the latter third of the 19th Century, selling books by subscription was a significant part of the publishing industry. For example, several Jules Verne titles, expensive books for their day, bear phrases like "Sold By Subscription" on the title page. Newspaper ads were taken out to find these young men and occasionally young women. There are also a number of memoirs of the experiences of these agents.¹⁵

Stratemeyer's completion of the story follows a similar theme but the name of the hero was changed from John Dudley to Frank Hardy, a name he would reuse as the elder brother in the Hardy Boys series in 1927.

The Young Book Agent; or, Frank Hardy's Road to Success was written in November and December 1904, according to Stratemeyer's Literary Account Book. It was listed in **Publishers' Weekly** on October 21, 1905. Stratemeyer's preface does not mention in detail the source material, as he had in the earlier Alger completions:

Many years ago the author of the present volume resolved to write a long series of books describing various phases of village and city life, taking up in their turn the struggles of the bootblacks, the newsboys, the young peddlers, the street musicians — the lives, in fact, of all those who, though young in years, have to face the bitter necessity of earning their own living.

— Preface for *The Young Book Agent*, 1905.

Although this book was ultimately published by Stitt, Stratemeyer first offered the publication rights to John C. Winston of Philadelphia, that firm having recently taken over the Henry T. Coates line, which included many Alger titles formerly issued by A.K. Loring of Boston and its successor, Philadelphia's Porter and Coates. The Winston acquisition occurred on January 19, 1905, less than a month after a fire on December 19, 1904 at Coates destroyed their inventory of bound stock. Fortunately, plates and printed sheet stock had been located at various binderies in the Philadelphia area. The **Publishers' Weekly** article about this fire appeared immediately above the announcement of the formation of the Stitt Publishing Company.

Stratemeyer replied to Winston about Alger material:

Yours of the 7th inst. to hand and contents noted. I do not wish to hurry you, but as I have an offer for the Alger stories I think best to write without delay.

I have two first-class stories, and I am going to re-write them, or rather given them a vigorous editing, so that they will be practically new. Each is about 60,000

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'A fluent and facile style'

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words long. I expect to have one ready for the printer by April 1st. and the second by May 15th. Mr Alger's executrix asked me to go over them with care and I shall do so. As an editor of long experience and as a writer I feel sure that I can do this to the satisfaction of everybody. But I shall not permit my name to appear in this transaction.

I have been holding the stories at \$1000 each, but if you wish to purchase both of them, I will give an absolute title for \$1500, payable half cash and balance in ninety days. As you must know Alger stories are now very valuable, and a new MS always helps to sell the old books.

— ES to John C. Winston, 10 January 1905.

Evidently, Stratemeyer thought there was some benefit in seeing the new Alger completions go to the primary authorized publisher of Alger's books. A reading of the statement about declining sales and his decision not to attach his name to the new books suggests he was beginning to distance himself from the project. The Stitt first edition of 1905 does not note "Completed by Arthur M. Winfield," as seen on the title page of the Mershon volumes prior to *Lost at Sea* (1904).

Stratemeyer finished reading Stitt's galley proofs for *The Young Book Agent* on May 8, 1905. He sent one of the sets of galley proofs to his favorite artist at the time, Augustus Burnham Shute, on May 10:

Dear Mr. Shute:

By order of the Stitt Pub. Co. I am sending you to-day proof sheets of an Alger story, entitled "The Young Book Agent."

Your good illustrations are wanted for this story, and I trust you will turn them out in a reasonable space of time, as other stories are on the way. On the proof sheets I have marked six or eight good points for pictures. Use your judgement, only giving us as much variety as possible in subject, and pretty fair spacing, also one picture showing the book agent at work, either in the car, or better yet — at the door of a house.

Kindly acknowledge receipt of proof sheets, and let the Stitt Co. know when they may expect the four pictures.

Yours truly,
Edward Stratemeyer

— ES to A.B. Shute, 10 May 1905.

The paintings were sent to the publisher in less than three weeks and Stratemeyer saw them at their offices:

I have seen the pictures for Mr. Alger's story, "Young Book Agent" and on the whole think them very good. In the coal mine scene the hole at the top might have been jagged instead of perfectly round, and one of the boys might have been younger — but we will let that pass.

— ES to Shute, 31 May 1905.

The American Boy magazine

After the book publication, the story was serialized in six installments in **The American Boy** magazine from June to November 1906, when William Cyrus Sprague was still editor of the Detroit-based publication. Sprague was willing to run stories by the older authors like "Oliver Optic," and he had even written an Alger-like story for the magazine,¹⁶ so it is not too surprising that he would be willing to run an Alger story, especially if it was a fairly new one. In later years, Stratemeyer would have strong disagreements with Sprague's successor and business partner, William Ogden Ellis.

Sprague requested that Stratemeyer write a serial for **The American Boy** in a March 6, 1906 letter. Stratemeyer replied on March 9 that he could not write anything new but did have some material that he could offer:

I have on hand, awaiting publication in book form as the first of a North & South Series, a strong civil war story, with a boy hero in the northern army and his chum in the southern army. This gives fair play to both sides and might interest you. It is about 70,000 words long. I expect to use it as a book as soon as one of my series now running comes to an end. I sell right to use as a serial once only.

With this I mail you a catalogue of my Lothrop, Lee & Shepard books, also some books of the Syndicate issued by the Mershon Co. By special arrangement I can sell you serial right to any of these volumes. Perhaps, outside of a Stratemeyer story, you can use one by Horatio Alger, always immensely popular, and some of the others. I have an old Alger I am going to edit for publication when I can get around to it, and you might have that, if you wished it.

Kindly let me know what you would pay for serial right to a Stratemeyer story, the new one and also from book form. On the Syndicate books I have but one price, \$100, for use as a serial, payable when publication begins.

— ES to W.C. Sprague, 9 March 1906.

The Civil War story was published in serial form as "In Defense of His Flag" (May 1906-June 1907) and soon after published in book form as *Defending His Flag* (LL&S, 1907). Stratemeyer had apparently written this around the time that he did the "Optic" completion, but Lee & Shepard was not interested in it at the time. Once



When serialized in *The American Boy* magazine from June to November 1906, *The Young Book Agent* retained Augustus Burnham Shute's frontispiece for the story's initial chapters, above, but used Sprague's own artist for later installments.

the manager learned of the serial, it was easier to get it published as a book. Sprague replied that he couldn't read a great many of the books Stratemeyer offered but would rely on his judgment to make a couple selections from which he might choose.¹⁷

Upon receiving two sample Alger volumes for possible serialization, Sprague wanted to know how it was possible that Alger could still be writing:

I note, too, that you are sending two Alger books, which you say are new. I thought Horatio Alger died in 1899. These two books being copyrighted in 1904 and 1905 leads me to wonder if I am mistaken. If I find a good Alger I think there can be no great objection to our running it serially in connection with an unpublished serial.

— Sprague to ES, 15 March 1906.

Stratemeyer revealed relatively little of the nature of these stories:

Your letter of the 15th inst. to hand and contents noted. Regarding the Alger stories, I wish to state that what I meant by new was, that the stories had never been published before. When Mr. Alger died I purchased from his executrix, his sister, all his unpublished material — a great quantity, including regular MSS and some unused juvenile dramas, and I also purchased the right to edit MSS and novelize the dramas. I found material for twelve volumes and so far ten have been issued. The other two need considerable editing and some lengthening before being issued. The two I send you have never been used as serials and so are, in a sense, now. I know your readers will hail either one with satisfaction, and if you want both — one after the other, say so and I will hold for you.

— ES to Sprague, 19 March 1906.

Perhaps Stratemeyer's letter to Detroit had not yet arrived when Sprague asked again:

I ran through "Lost at Sea" and the book agent story by Alger. The two are quite unlike. There is more movement and adventure in "Lost at Sea," but more of the teaching quality in the book agent story. I think with a war story running we had better have something a little more quiet than "Lost at Sea," if the two are to run simultaneously. There is little, if any, moral to "Lost at Sea," while the book agent story aims to teach something, and so appeals to me. The title is not particularly attractive, but maybe it will do.

What about these Alger books? Who wrote them? The book agent story is copyrighted 1905. Is this a short story of Alger's enlarged and edited by you? What is the true history of it? I would like to know, if I am to buy it.

— Sprague to ES, 20 March 1906.

Sprague asked for Stratemeyer's photograph and autograph to publish in the magazine to promote the story. Stratemeyer supplied this and later provided an autograph clipped from a letter along with his personal copy of the Alger portrait that he told Cheney he used when writing as Alger:

I do not know when I can get at these stories to fix them up for I have several under my own name to attend to first. One of the others, "The Young Book Agent," is now completed and will be used this coming summer. I feel quite sure you will like it and that it will not detract from your late brother's reputation. I have his photograph

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before me on the shelf and it often acts as an inspiration to get into his peculiar style when at work over the material he left.

— ES to Cheney, 2 January 1905.

The above-mentioned *carte de visite* photograph of Alger was returned to Stratemeyer and is present in the Stratemeyer Syndicate Records Collection at NYPL.

New illustrations were made by one of Sprague's artists, who signed as "Grant" for most of the installments. The first installment used the original Shute frontispiece, with Frank Hardy greeting a woman at the front door of her house.

From Farm to Fortune

The Alger completion about Nat Nason is not so easily associated with one or more specific short stories. According to Stratemeyer's Literary Account Book, it was written in March 1905 and was "... an old Alger story revised and lengthened."¹⁸

According to a letter to William Stitt on July 1, 1905, Stratemeyer stated that he had delivered the two Alger manuscripts along with four other books. On April 20, 1905 Stratemeyer noted in his Literary Account Book receipt of \$500 as a "sum outright on 'Young Book Agent' and 'From Farm to Fortune' as per contract."¹⁹ This was a figure in addition to royalties, not an advance against royalty payments. This kind of arrangement was part of the contracts for the previous books with Mershon. In today's professional sports world they might call it a "signing bonus."

After seeing the artwork for *The Young Book Agent*, Stratemeyer again arranged with artist Augustus Burnham Shute to select possible themes for illustrations. Four illustrations were used ultimately:

- Sale of cow by hero.
- Rescue of young man at rapids of Niagara.
- Escape from miserly uncle onto lake Erie boat.
- Saving the stout man's papers on Brooklyn Bridge.
- Hero unconscious in house, had man taking papers from him.

— ES to A.B. Shute, 31 May 1905.

From Farm to Fortune was listed for sale in *Publishers' Weekly* on October 3, 1905.²⁰ It is not clear which and how many stories by Alger from the scrapbook might have inspired this volume.

Top-Notch Magazine

Another Stratemeyer Syndicate story, unconnected with these Alger completions except by theme, was ul-

timately published with the same title, "From Farm to Fortune," in Street & Smith's **Top-Notch Magazine** in 1923. It was originally called "From Farm to Wall Street; or Tom Blossom's Strange Fortune" by Stratemeyer, but the editor of the magazine published it as "From Farm to Fortune" as by "Allen Chapman." It was described as an Alger-like story:

An up-to-date story written in the Alger style, relating how Tom Blossom, an orphan, lives in the country with a hard-hearted farmer whose son was the torment of Tom's life. Dolph took the farmer's flivver one night and got into an accident and then claimed that Tom had been the one to take the machine. Threatened with arrest, Tom ran away from the farm, and, after many adventures, reached New York City.

That version of "From Farm to Fortune" was published in five semi-monthly installments from October 1 to December 1, 1923 and includes 32 chapters on 85 two-column pages. The title proposal and four-page outline survive at NYPL. The story was not published in book form.

A second story for **Top-Notch Magazine**, "Two Boys of the Movies; or, The Mystery of the Becket Twins" was outlined, and Howard R. Garis wrote the 30,000-word manuscript in July 1923, but it was not published. The outline begins:

This is to be an up-to-date story written in the Horatio Alger, Jr. — "Frank [V.] Webster" — style with plenty of bright conversation and a good holding point at the end of each chapter.

Of course, since Garis wrote many of the books in the Syndicate's Webster series, he understood Stratemeyer's reference to the Webster style.²¹ Edward Stratemeyer read Alger in his youth, wrote stories of a similar style early in his career and soon after, he wrote stories *as* Alger for the completions. Through Syndicate series such as the Webster series (1909-1915) and the Boys of Business/Boys of Pluck series (1906-1911), both for Cupples & Leon, he was able to produce Alger-like stories with updated themes and style using Syndicate house names such as "Frank V. Webster" and "Allen Chapman."

Randy of the River

The last book published by an imprint of the Mershon complex was not the next Alger completion published after *From Farm to Fortune*. However, for the purpose of this article, it is more logical to discuss it first.

Randy of the River was written in July 1906, according to Stratemeyer's Literary Account Book, in which

it is described as merely “an Alger story, rewritten and lengthened.”²²

The copyright was registered as by Stitt on October 25, and the two copies were received at the Copyright Office on November 16. The first-edition title page lists Chatterton-Peck as the publisher, and it was so listed in *Publishers' Weekly* on February 9, 1907. The illustrations were by Clare Angell, another Stratemeyer Syndicate artist.

Once again, the book's preface does not mention the source of this story, but it does say something about the career of its hero, Randy Thompson:

In the present tale we have a youth of sturdy qualities who elects to follow the calling of a deckhand on a Hudson River steamboat, doing his duty faithfully day by day, and trying to help others as well as himself. Like all other boys he is at times tempted to do wrong, but he has a heart of gold even though it is hidden by a somewhat ragged outer garment, and in the end proves the truth of that old saying that it pays to be honest, — not only in regard to others but also regarding one's self.

Life on a river steamboat is not so romantic as some young people may imagine. There is hard work and plenty of it, and the remuneration is not of the best. But Randy Thompson wanted work and took what was offered. His success in the end was well deserved, and perhaps the lesson his doings teach will not be lost upon those who peruse these pages. It is better to do what one finds to do than to fold your hands and remain idle, and the idle boy is sure, sooner or later, to get into serious mischief.

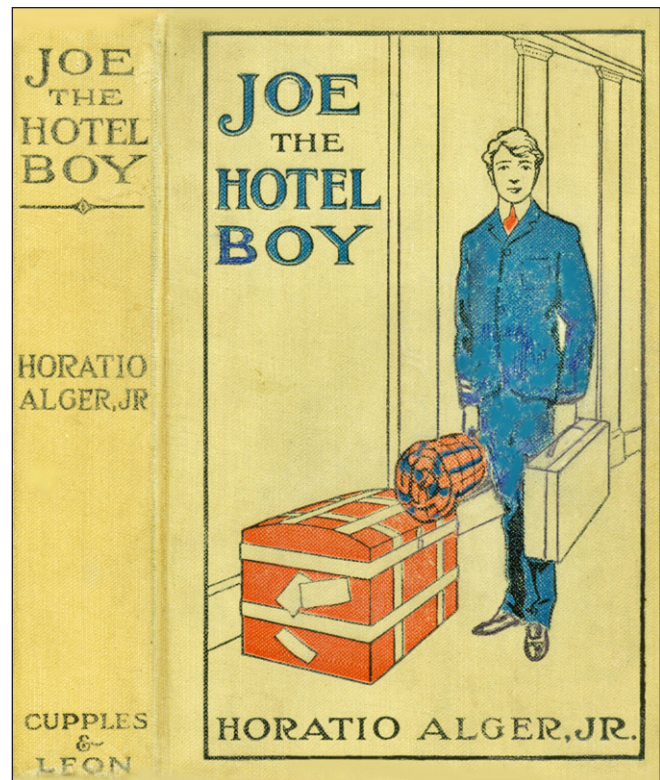
— Preface to *Randy of the River*, Chatt.-Peck, 1906.

This is a bit interesting because Stratemeyer once said that if he could not be a writer, the career that appealed to him the most was being a canal boat pilot. Of course, “Mark Twain” (Samuel L. Clemens) is well known for his association with riverboats, and one could not help but think of him occasionally when reading this volume.

Joe the Hotel Boy

While the other Alger completions were published by what has been called the Mershon complex, including related imprints of Stitt, Chatterton-Peck, and Grosset & Dunlap, *Joe the Hotel Boy* is a departure, as it was published by Cupples & Leon in 1906, along with many other new stories for the Stratemeyer Syndicate, including the first volumes of the Motor Boys series and Great Marvel series.

Once again, the book's preface does not cite a source for the story (how much is Alger and how much Stratemeyer). It is hard to know the amount of weight to give Stratemeyer's lack of specifics, but it might be an avenue



The 1906 first edition of *Joe the Hotel Boy* has “Cupples & Leon” in block letters instead of in a circle at the base of the spine, as in later printings.

for research. If a scene or situation seems distinct, an analogue might be found in a newspaper database.

It may be added here that many of the happenings told of in this story, odd as they may seem, are taken from life. Truth is indeed stranger than fiction, and life itself is full of romance from start to finish.

— From preface to *Joe the Hotel Boy*, C&L, 1906.

The manuscript was written in December 1905. Stratemeyer was working on proof sheets in February 1906. As a new publication, there was some wrangling with C&L about the size of the page layout, which was supposed to be set up like the first volume in the Motor Boys series and was calculated by Stratemeyer to be 250 pages. The book ended up being 268 pages in the published version.

The contract agreement with Cheney, below, makes a \$100 payment for this particular story and another:

For and in consideration of the sum of One Hundred Dollars, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I, as executrix of the estate of the late Horatio Alger, Jr., author, do hereby transfer and set aside to Edward

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'A fluent and facile style'

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Stratemeyer, author, of Newark, N.J., his heirs and assigns, all right, title, and interest in two stories, based upon stories written by the said Horatio Alger, Jr., and partly contained in a scrap book and other material left by the said Horatio Alger, Jr., the titles of these two stories being as follows:

"Joe, the Hotel Boy." (A tale of city life.)

"The Boys of Boxwood Hall." (A tale of school and country life.)

In making this transfer I hereby give to Edward Stratemeyer the right to edit and enlarge the stories as he may deem proper, also to change titles if he desires, and to bring out each story either under the name of Horatio Alger, Jr. alone or in connection with the name or nom-de-plume of some other author. I also agree that none of the matter contained in the above named books or in the scrap book used for enlarging the stories, shall be used in any manner whatsoever by or through me after this transfer is made.

Signed and witnessed at the place and on the date above named.

O. Augusta Cheney
Executrix of the will
of the late Horatio Alger, Jr.

— Cheney and ES agreement, 2 January 1905.

Once again, Stratemeyer arranged to have \$250 as a "sum outright on contract" for this story paid when the manuscript was turned in. That payment was made on December 26, 1905.

The copyright for *Joe the Hotel Boy* was registered on July 7, 1906. The two deposit copies were received on July 23. It was announced in *Publishers' Weekly* on February 24, 1906, but the actual listing for the available book was made in the September 29 issue.

After some slow sales through Cupples & Leon, the book was reprinted by Grosset & Dunlap in 1912 (see below).

Ben Logan's Triumph

Although the phrase "Boxwood Hall" was used by Stratemeyer on a later Motor Boys volume, *Ned, Bob and Jerry of Boxwood Hall* (1916), the other title on the January 2, 1905 contract agreement refers to the story that became *Ben Logan's Triumph*; or, *the Boys of Boxwood Academy*. Before this, the story had been referred to as "Ben Logan's Success" in one letter.²³

This last published book of the Alger completions was the second Cupples & Leon effort. The work on the book was delayed because the sales of their first Alger comple-



tion was not as strong as the other Syndicate books. By 1908, C&L was ready to add it to their line. Stratemeyer wrote it in January and February of 1908. Again, further research is awaited to determine how much of the finished book is from the Alger source story released by Cheney and how much is Stratemeyer.

Cupples & Leon declined to pay a sum upon delivery of the manuscript as they had for *Joe the Hotel Boy*. The copyright was registered on March 25 with copies received at the Copyright Office on June 18. It was listed in *Publishers' Weekly* on August 1.

Andy, a Boy of the Mountains

A partial Stratemeyer manuscript at NYPL is called "Andy, a Boy of the Mountains." The outline has the subtitle "The story of the Stanhope fortune," which sounds like something from his Rover Boys series, while the typed manuscript uses "The Fortunes of a Messenger." The manuscript is 15 pages and includes two full chapters and part of a third:

Introducing the Mountain Boy.
In the Old Coal Mine.
The Man in the Mine.

The outline tries to sum up an Alger-like series of episodes complete with progress, setbacks, providing assistance to a mentor, and restoration of an identity,

March 16, 1912 Publishers' Weekly 993

Grosset & Dunlap's Juveniles

To Be Published During the Spring and Summer

TALK with our salesmen about these books. Our co-operative selling helps will help you to make these famous juveniles a very profitable proposition.

<p>THE ROVER BOYS SERIES By ARTHUR M. WINFIELD Uniform with the Volumes issued in 1911. List Price, 60 Cents per Volume The Rover Boys in the Air; Or, From College Campus to the Clouds.</p> <p>THE DICK HAMILTON SERIES By HOWARD E. GARIS New Individual Cover Design. List Price, 60 Cents per Volume Dick Hamilton's Football Team; Or, A Young Millionaire on the Gridiron.</p> <p>THE FLAG AND FRONTIER SERIES By CAPTAIN RALPH BONEHILL With New Cover Design. List Price, 60 Cents per Volume (Combining "Frontier" and "Flag of Freedom" Series.) With Custer in the Black Hills; Or, A Young Scout Among the Indians. Boys of the Fort; Or, A Young Captain's Pluck. The Young Bandmaster; Or, Concert, Stage and Battlefield. When Santiago Fell; Or, The War Adventures of Two Chums. A Sailor Boy with Dewey; Or, Afloat in the Philippines. Off for Hawaii; Or, The Mystery of the Great Volcano. Pioneer Boys of the Gold Fields; Or, The Nugget Hunters of '49. Pioneer Boys of the Great Northwest; Or, With Lewis and Clark Across the Rockies. With Boone on the Frontier; Or, The Pioneer Days of Old Kentucky.</p> <p>ALGER'S RISE IN LIFE SERIES List Price, 40 Cents per Volume Two new titles added as follows: Joe, the Hotel Boy; Or, Winning Out by Pluck. Ben Logan's Triumph; Or, The Boys of Boxwood Academy.</p>	<p>THE TOM SWIFT SERIES By VICTOR APPLETON Uniform with the Volumes issued in 1911. List Price, 40 Cents per Volume Tom Swift in the City of Gold; Or, Marvellous Adventures Underground. Tom Swift and His Air Glider; Or, Seeking the Platinum Treasure. Tom Swift in Captivity; Or, A Daring Escape by Airship. Tom Swift and His Wizard Camera; Or, The Perils of Moving Picture Taking. Tom Swift and His Great Searchlight; Or, On the Border for Uncle Sam.</p> <p>THE SEA TREASURE SERIES (Formerly Deep Sea Stories.) By ROY ROCKWOOD Formerly 60 Cents per Volume. Reduced to 40 Cents per Volume Adrift on the Pacific; Or, The Secret of the Island Cave. The Cruise of the Treasure Ship; Or, The Castaways of Floating Island. The Rival Ocean Divers; Or, The Search for Sunken Treasure. Jack North's Treasure Hunt, taken from "Enterprise Series."</p> <p>THE YOUNG REPORTER SERIES By HOWARD E. GARIS (Formerly Newspaper Series.) New Cover Design on New Stock. List Price, 40 Cents per Volume Two new titles added as follows: Larry Dexter and the Bank Mystery; Or, A Young Reporter in Wall Street. Larry Dexter and the Stolen Boy; Or, A Young Reporter on the Lakes. Titles already published: Larry Dexter's Great Search; Or, The Hunt for the Missing Millions. From Office Boy to Reporter; Or, The First Step in Journalism. Larry Dexter, Reporter; Or, Strange Adventures in a Great City.</p>
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GROSSET & DUNLAP, 526 West 26th Street, New York

G&D's Publishers' Weekly advertisement of March 16, 1912 announcing the addition of *Joe the Hotel Boy* and *Ben Logan's Triumph* to their catalog.

including some improbable coincidences. Though listed in the March 31, 1904, contract agreement between Cheney and Stratemeyer (see above), this manuscript fragment was not developed into a book.

Grosset & Dunlap

When Cupples & Leon realized the sales of *Joe the Hotel Boy* and *Ben Logan's Triumph* were no longer satisfactory for them, they sold the printing plates and cover dies to Stratemeyer. The same day in 1912, he walked from the offices of Cupples & Leon to his other New York publisher of the period, Grosset & Dunlap. They agreed to issue the two Cupples & Leon Alger completions as part of their existing Rise in Life series of nine "Alger" volumes, which had come over from the Mershon complex. The existing C&L cover designs were used for these two titles.

Street & Smith's Alger Series

After sales declined with the Grosset & Dunlap reprints, the plates were sold to be used in thick pulp paperbacks issued bi-weekly by Street & Smith in their Alger Series as volumes numbered 87 to 97, appearing in a different order from the original publication sequence. Color illustrations were provided by S&S artists for the books' covers, thematically linked to the titles.

No. 87 <i>Lost at Sea</i>	9 June 1919
No. 88 <i>From Farm to Fortune</i>	23 June 1919
No. 89 <i>Young Captain Jack</i>	7 July 1919
No. 90 <i>Joe the Hotel Boy</i>	21 July 1919
No. 91 <i>Out for Business</i>	4 Aug. 1919
No. 92 <i>Falling In With Fortune</i>	18 Aug. 1919
No. 93 <i>Nelson the Newsboy</i>	8 Sept. 1919
No. 94 <i>Randy of the River</i>	22 Sept. 1919
No. 95 <i>Jerry the Backwoods Boy</i>	6 Oct. 1919
No. 96 <i>Ben Logan's Triumph</i>	20 Oct. 1919
No. 97 <i>The Young Book Agent</i>	3 Nov. 1919

By the 1920s, sales of copyrighted Alger stories such as these were suffering, as cheap and abridged versions of the old Algers were flooding the market from numerous publishing houses. In his correspondence with Cheney, Stratemeyer noted this on several occasions, and it lowered the amount he could pay her over the years. This dampened the enthusiasm the publishers had to issue new titles at any price.

However, the themes seen in Alger stories of a young person making his way in the world and advancing through examples of his good character being noticed by a mentor still had a place in reading, even if not under Alger's name. Stratemeyer had written his own career-type stories, such as *Bound to Be An Electrician*, *Bob the Photographer* and *Joe the Surveyor*.

As his rapidly growing Syndicate developed new material into the teens and twenties, career and technology series carried forward traditional "strive and succeed" Alger themes. Tom Swift, the Moving Picture Boys, the Motion Picture Chums, and the Radio Boys all have the Alger spirit to a degree. In particular, the Syndicate's Boys of Business/Boys of Pluck series (1906-1911) by "Allen Chapman" and the Webster series (1909-1915) by "Frank V. Webster" were closest to the Alger model. In the first example, the protagonist from one story helps out those from a later story, just as one sees in some of the Alger publisher libraries labeled "series."

The 25-volume Webster series has individual stories with no pretense of connections between characters or plots, and the following C&L advertising blurb, likely written by Edward Stratemeyer, mentions Alger:

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'A fluent and facile style'

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Mr. Webster's style is very much like that of the boys' favorite author, the late lamented Horatio Alger, Jr., but his tales are thoroughly up-to-date. In fact, Frank V. Webster is known as the new Alger, and he certainly deserves the title, for these are the cleanest, cleverest boys' stories obtainable to-day, and they are rapidly taking first place in point of sales and popularity.

* * *

Conclusion: Further research may reveal additional source materials used for the Alger completions discussed in this article, in particular the later titles when original Alger estate material began to thin out. Ralph Gardner and a number of others tend to discount the "Alger completions" as being more like Stratemeyer than Alger, perhaps containing no elements of Alger at all. In this article we have shown, in particular in the earlier volumes, that was not necessarily the case.

However, one thing remains certain: the opportunity to write stories as his favorite childhood authors, "Oliver Optic" and Horatio Alger, Jr., was a distinct source of pride for Edward Stratemeyer.

This article is an expanded version of a presentation under the same title at the 51st annual conference of the Popular Culture Association on April 2, 2015 in New Orleans, La.

NOTES

1. NYPL Stratemeyer Syndicate Records Collection, Box 317. Microfilm.
2. Peter C. Walther (PF-548) surveyed these in *Newsboy*, May-June 2006 (Vol. 44, No. 3).
3. "Mershon Co. Attachment. Book Publishers Had Sold Out, So There Was Nothing to Levy On." *The New York Times*, October 4 1906, p. 6. Similar information on the organization of the company in other sources.
4. "The Stitt Publishing Company." *Publishers' Weekly*, January 28, 1905, p. 114.
5. Mershon to Stratemeyer, Feb. 10, 1905. Stratemeyer to Mershon, February 14, 1905. Stratemeyer to Mershon, March 10, 1905. Stratemeyer to Mershon, Aug. 8, 1905.
6. "The Merriam Company Fails." *Publishers' Weekly*, October 2, 1897, p. 583.
7. "Business Notes." *Publishers' Weekly*, April 14, 1900, pp. 809, 810.
8. Winfield, Arthur M. *Bob the Photographer* (A. Wessels Co., 1902). Bonehill, Capt. Ralph. *Lost in the Land of Ice* (A. Wessels Co., 1902).
9. Bonehill, Capt. Ralph. *The Island Camp* (A.S. Barnes & Co., 1904). *The Winning Run* (A.S. Barnes & Co., 1905).
10. Bonehill, Capt. Ralph. *For the Liberty of Texas* (Dana

Estes, 1900), *With Taylor on the Rio Grande* (Dana Estes, 1901), *Under Scott in Mexico* (Dana Estes, 1902).

11. "W.M. Stitt, Jr., has sold his interest in the Stitt Publishing Company and is soon to go abroad for rest ..." *Bookseller & Latest Literature*, February 1906, p. 45.

12. "Business Notes." *Publishers' Weekly*, October 13, 1906, p. 1048. See notices for Mershon sale to Chatterton-Peck and formation of Quinn & Boden Printing Co.

13. The author explored this in some detail in his 2011 presentation to the Popular Culture Association conference: "The Stratemeyer Syndicate and Its First Major Challenge: Chatterton-Peck and Quinn & Boden."

14. Several efforts have been made to collect information on the short stories, articles, and poetry by Horatio Alger, Jr. A significant early effort was published in *Newsboy*, December 1974 (Vol. 13, No. 5). This was followed by *The Short Stories, Articles and Poems of Horatio Alger, Jr.* (LeBlanc, 1990) by Victor Berch and Edward T. LeBlanc. An updated listing may be found in *A Collector's Guide to the Published Works of Horatio Alger, Jr.* (MAD Book Co., 1999) by Bob Bennett.

It is probably time for another collaborative effort to fold in the material from the Alger Scrapbook and other discoveries. The author has made his own compilation and digital collection of stories, but it seems wise to collaborate with other projects underway.

15. Some of these examples are true memoirs, but others are comedic fiction to illustrate the encounters the book agents had as they tried to ply their wares. *The Life of a Book Agent* (self published, 1867, 5th ed., 1892) by Annie Nelles Dumond. *The Book Agent: His Book* (Thompson and Smith, 1904) by Joshua Wright. *Confessions of a Book Agent; or, Twenty Years by Stage and Rail* (Co-operative Publishing Company, 1906) by James Howard Mortimer. *Kilo. Being the Love Story of Eliph' Hewlitt, Book Agent* (McClure, 1907) by Ellis Parker Butler.

16. "Tad: The Story of a Boy Who Had No Chance" was serialized in *The American Boy* (December 1906-October 1907) and later published in book form under the Sprague imprint in 1907.

17. W.C. Sprague to Stratemeyer, March 12, 1906.

18. Stratemeyer Literary Account Book, item 217. NYPL, box 317.

19. Stratemeyer Literary Account Book, between items 217 and 218. NYPL, box 317.

20. *Publishers' Weekly*, 3 October 1905, p. 1034.

21. For details on the Webster series, see the author's "The Webster Series: A Stratemeyer Syndicate Series by 'Frank V. Webster' — in the Spirit of the Alger Completions." *Newsboy*, Nov.-Dec. 1998 (Vol. 36, No. 6).

22. Stratemeyer Literary Account Book, item 229. NYPL, box 317.

23. Cupples & Leon to Stratemeyer, 2 January 1908.

How John's idea came out

A true story of a boy who went into the book business

BY HORATIO ALGER, Jr.

"John," said Mr. Dudley toward the end of August. "I have a disappointment for you."

"What is it, father?"

"I hoped to have you finish your course at the high school. It is only one year more, and I should then feel you were moderately well educated. A boy who is fitted for college, even if he does not enter it, may be said to be well equipped so far as education is concerned."

"Has anything happened, father?" asked John, trying not to look too much disappointed.

"Yes, I was incautious enough to stand security for an old schoolmate living in Trenton for the sum of \$800. He has turned out to be a defaulter and I shall have that sum to pay."

"That is too bad."

"It can't be helped now. It represents nearly all that I have been able to save in the last ten years, besides supporting and educating my children. Of course, I feel very much cramped, and I fear it will be necessary to find a position where you can help me by earning your own clothes and perhaps helping me to pay the rent."

"What sum do you think would be sufficient?" asked John, thoughtfully.

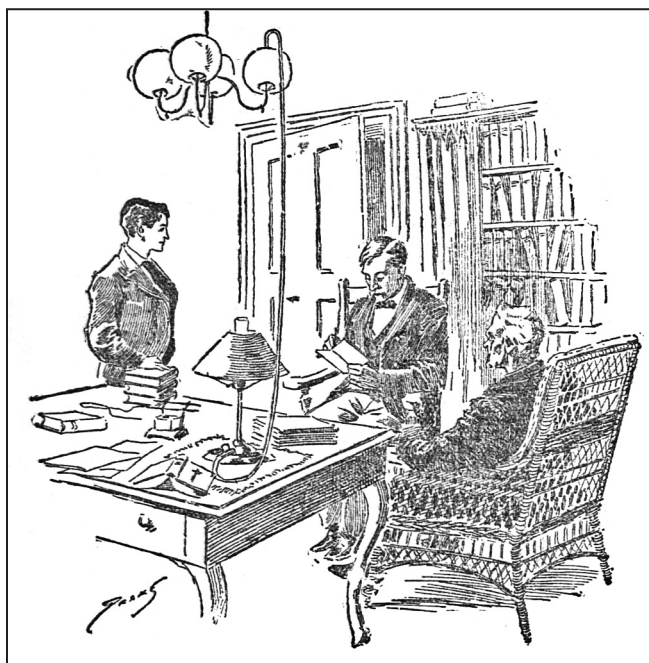
"Your clothing I estimate at \$75. Our rent is \$150."

"Suppose I am able to pay half the rent, besides supplying myself with clothing?"

"That would be a very material help. My salary is only \$800 a year, and I have to spend every dollar for the support of the family —"

"Suppose, father, I were able to earn \$150 a year besides going to school — would that be satisfactory?"

"That would remove the difficulty, but it will be impos-



THE GENTLEMAN MADE AN ENTRY IN HIS NOTE-BOOK.

sible. You wouldn't have more than a couple of hours at your disposal daily. No storekeeper would be willing to pay you three dollars a week for that service — very few would care to employ a boy for that limited time, anyway."

"Probably you are right, father, but I was not thinking of a store."

"What other way have you of earning money?"

"I would rather not tell just now. It is an idea that has come to me, and I don't know yet whether it is a good one. Give me a week to make a trial of it."

"It will be 10 days before the high school commences, so you can have the time."

"That will be sufficient."

"I wonder what the boy has in mind," thought Mr. Dudley. "Probably it is some impractical theme. However, I will ask no questions, but let him find that out for himself."

"May I go to New York tomorrow?"

"Is that connected with your scheme?"

"Yes, father."

"Very well; I won't interfere with you."

The town where John lived was in New Jersey. It was only a dozen miles from New York, and the fare was trifling. John had a few dollars of his own, which he had been a good while in saving, and this money he found very convenient, as he did not want to involve his father in any loss if his plan failed.

When he left his father's presence, he looked for a New York paper of the day before. He turned to a particular page, and read with interest an advertisement which had attracted his attention the day before.

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This Alger short story, expanded into the Edward Stratemeyer "completion" The Young Book Agent (1905), was discovered in the 29 October 1893 edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer by researcher Gary Scharnhorst and submitted in 1992 for publication in Newsboy by former editor Jack Bales. It made its first known reprint appearance in the September-October 1992 issue (Vol. 30, No. 5, pages 5-8).

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This is the advertisement:

“Canvassers wanted to take orders for The Rev. Dr. Gregory’s attractive volume, ‘Scenes in India.’ It is profusely illustrated and will take on sight. It is a bonanza for workers. Those who are handling other publications will do well to drop them and turn their attention to this. One agent made fifty dollars in a single week. Address or call upon Rollins & Co., No. __ Nassau Street.”

John read this advertisement with flushed face. “If the book is as attractive as is claimed,” he said to himself, “I shall have a good chance to make sales. I wonder what the price is and how much the agent is allowed on each sale.”

This was something that could only be ascertained by calling at headquarters. The day seemed to pass away slowly. He was impatient to call on the publisher and get to work. He had a good deal of confidence in his own business ability, and was sanguine of success.

“I can talk,” he said. “Mother sometimes thinks I talk too much, but if any talking will bring in money she won’t complain.”

There was a train for New York at 8 o’clock the next morning. John was on hand at the station at least fifteen minutes before the time. He bought his ticket and was the first to board the train when it arrived.

Having some acquaintance with the streets of New York, John found the office in Nassau Street without difficulty. It was in a large office building, eight stories in height. He went up in the elevator to the sixth floor and then getting out found his way to the office occupied by the subscription publishers.

He followed another man in and waited till his companion got through his business. The office was of moderate size and provided with a desk, a table and several armchairs. Mr. Rollins, the gentleman in charge, was a good-looking man, inclined to be stout, and with a pleasant face.

He turned to John when he had completed his business with the first caller and said in a pleasant tone, “What can I do for you, young man?”

“I called to see about an agency. I saw your advertisement in yesterday’s paper.”

“Do you want the agency for yourself?” asked Mr. Rollins in some surprise.

“Yes, sir. I suppose you don’t object to employing boys?”

“Oh, no. A book sold by a boy will yield as much profit as one sold by a man. But it requires talking, and I’m afraid a boy could hardly set forth the merits of the work sufficiently to induce subscriptions.”

“I can talk pretty well,” said John, smiling. “Yes, but can you talk to the point?” asked Mr. Rollins shrewdly.

“After I have had a chance to experience the work and understand the strong points, I think I can do so. Will you show me a copy?”

The book was placed in his hands. It was an octavo of about eight hundred pages, containing over one hundred illustrations.

“The book sells for two dollars and a half,” said the genial agent, “and the agent is allowed to keep a dollar of this as his commission. That represents forty per cent.”

John’s eyes sparkled. To him it seemed liberal.

“Why,” he thought, “I shall only have to sell three copies in a week to make \$3. I am sure I ought to do that, and only half try.”

“Well, what do you think of the inducements we offer?”

“They are quite satisfactory, sir. I shall be glad to work for you.”

“How many copies do you want to take?”

“A dozen,” answered John, ambitiously.

Mr. Rollins opened his eyes.

“I would not advise so many,” he said. “Besides, it would require too large an outlay on your part.

“An outlay?” asked John, puzzled.

“Yes; we require you to pay \$1.50 for each copy, and in case you do not sell them we refund the money on their return.”

That did make a difference, for John had only \$8 with him.

“I think I will take four copies,” he said, after a little mental calculation. “That will make \$6.”

“Exactly. I will have the bundle wrapped up for you. Here, James, pack those books in a neat bundle.”

“Leave out one, please. I want to examine it on my way home.”

“A very good idea. Here is a small pamphlet containing a synopsis of the work with hints to canvassers. I think you will find it of service to you.”

“Thank you, sir. I will report to you as soon as I have disposed of the books.”

Mr. Rollins smiled. “I hope, for your sake, you will be able to report very soon,” he said.

John left the office in excellent spirits. The bundle in his hand represented \$4 profit for himself. He was anxious to begin his work and ascertain what his chances were of success.

On the way over in the ferryboat John examined the book rapidly to get a general idea of its character and contents. It seemed to him to be a very attractive work, and to merit the complimentary press notices contained in the prospectus.

The cars were quite crowded. He sat down in a seat next to an elderly gentleman of pleasant aspect.

How John's idea came out

"You seem loaded down with books," he said, smiling.

"Yes, sir, I have more than I want."

"How's that?"

"They are copies of a work I am selling by subscription."

"Indeed!" You seem to be rather young for a book agent."

"I hope to succeed, however."

"How long have you been in the business?"

"I just started."

"What is the book?" asked the gentleman, in some curiosity.

I will not give John's reply. He described the book briefly, and had the tact to enumerate its leading attractions.

"What is the price?"

"Two dollars and a half. It has a hundred illustrations."

"Let me see it."

The gentleman turned over the leaves and seemed favorably impressed.

"It's my wife's birthday tomorrow," he said. "I ought to give her something. I really think she would like this book."

John waited hopefully to hear more.

"On the whole, I will take this copy," said the gentleman.

He took out a two dollar bill and 50 cents in silver and handed them to John.

"My first success," thought John, joyfully. "I have made a dollar already."

Arrived at home John took his books up to his room. He said nothing to the family. He preferred to wait till he had tested his plan a little further.

"I am going to Newark," he said the next morning at the breakfast table. Then, in answer to a look of inquiry, he added, "I am going on business."

No questions were asked. Mr. Dudley had suggested to his wife to let John work out his plan without questions or interference.

Arrived in Newark John was a little at a loss where to go. Finally he entered a real estate office on the principal street. The occupant of the office, a man with a sallow face, looked around and asked in a disagreeable voice: "What do you want, boy?"

"I should like," answered John, "to call your attention to a valuable book just issued, 'Scenes in India,' by ..."

"Get out of my office at once!" roared the real estate agent, jumping to his feet and flourishing a ruler in a menacing manner. "I allow no book agents or other nuisances in this office."

John stood not upon the order of his going, but went



THE GENTLEMAN TURNED OVER THE LEAVES.

at once. He concluded that real estate agents were not fond of books, and decided that he would not call on any more. All at once it occurred to him to go to the Rev. Dr. Manson, an elderly minister with whom his father had had some acquaintance. He was admitted to the doctor's study and found him in conversation with a quiet man of middle age.

"I am glad to see you, John," said the old minister. "How are your father and mother?"

"Very well, sir."

"Do you bring me any message from them?"

"No, sir; I come on business of my own."

"You don't want to be married?" said the minister with a merry twinkle of the eye.

"No sir, not just yet. I have a book that I should like to show you. It is called 'Scenes in India,' by Rev. Dr. Gregory. I am selling it by subscription."

"Let me look at it."

"It seems very attractive," said Dr. Manson, after a pause. "What is the price?"

"Two dollars and a half."

"That is beyond the means of a poor minister, though I should certainly like the book, of which I have heard good accounts."

"Perhaps you would like it, sir?" said John, addressing the visitor.

"Suppose you give me a little idea of it," said the other.

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John started in and talked for five minutes fluently, setting forth the attractive features of the book and calling attention to some of the best illustrations.

The gentleman smiled.

"Your eloquence has convinced me, my boy," he said. "I will subscribe for two copies, one of which I will ask my friend, Dr. Manson, to accept.

"My good friend," said the minister, "you are indeed kind. I will gladly accept the book and shall find it of great service in preparation for my Bible class. I thank you heartily."

"And I thank you, sir," said John. "You have encouraged me very much."

"Give me your name, my boy," said the gentleman. "Have you ceased attending school?"

"No, sir," said John, explaining how he came to be a book agent.

"Then you will be out of school in a year?"

"Yes, sir."

The gentleman made an entry in his note-book.

"I think, John," said Dr. Manson, "I will give you the names of some of my parishioners who may take the book. You are at liberty to mention my name."

Within an hour John had sold the remaining book. He took the next train for New York.

Mr. Rollins looked at him inquiringly as he entered the office.

"Well, my boy, what luck?" he asked.

"I have sold all the books," answered John, "and I will take six more."

"Is it possible? Why, you beat some of our experienced canvassers. You are certainly a smart boy."

"Thank you, sir; I am glad to have your good opinion. I am also glad of the money I have earned."

"Where did you sell the books?"

"One on the cars going home and the other three in Newark."

"You have done well. I wish you continued success."

It was the day before the school term was to commence.

"Well, John, do you think you can afford to attend school?" asked his father.

"Yes, sir."

"Then your idea proved a good one?"

"You can judge, father. It has already yielded me \$15."

Mr. and Mrs. Dudley stared at John in astonishment.

"Do you really mean it?" asked his father.

"Yes, sir, I can show you the money."

"Then you shall certainly go to school. You have shown much more business ability than I anticipated."

Of course, after school commenced John could not earn

as much money, but during the year that he was at the High School he earned \$400, half of which was deposited in a savings bank to his credit.

On the day of his graduation, he received the following letter:

"John Dudley,

My dear friend — if you have completed your education, I shall be glad to take you into my publishing house at \$8 a week to begin with. It was I whom you met a year since in the study of Rev. Dr. Manson at Newark. You showed so much business tact that I decided on the spot to offer you a position when you graduated. You can report at my store as soon as you like."

This letter was signed by a well-known New York publisher. Of course John had no hesitation in accepting the offer.

He is now a young man, and fills a very prominent, influential and well-paid position in the publishing house he entered as a boy.

I am glad to assure my boy readers that the story I have told is essentially true, and to add that the hero is one of my most valued friends.

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