



# 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 LV

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2017

NUMBER 1

## 2017 Convention Preview

# ‘Strong and Steady in Sacramento’

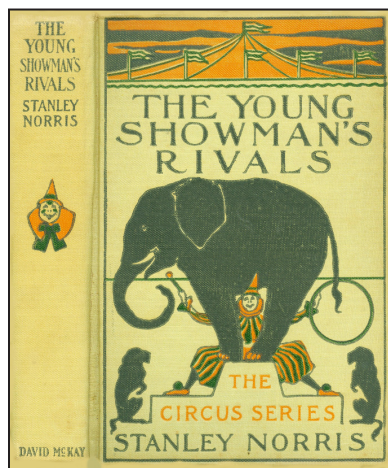
*Places to visit, along with convention registration form and schedule of events*

-- See Page 3



## *Robert Coverdale’s Struggle: Some thoughts on editions*

-- See Page 3



*‘The Greatest Show on Earth’ may be closing, but the circus lives on through books*

-- See Page 11

## President's column

To prepare for our upcoming Sacramento convention — “Strong and Steady in Sacramento,” to be held on Thursday, May 4 through Sunday, May 7—there seemed no better place to turn for a good introduction than—who else? — Horatio Alger. Consider the following:

At length the little party reached Sacramento. This was already a place of some importance, as it was in the neighborhood of the mining region, and it was here that mining parties obtained their outfits and came at intervals to bring their gold dust and secure supplies. Situated, as it was, on the Sacramento River, with communication with San Francisco by water, it was, besides, the starting-point of numberless lines of stages bound for the different mines. For a town of its size the activity seemed almost incredible. The party went to a hotel, where, for very indifferent accommodations, they were charged five dollars a day. (Alger, *Digging for Gold* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1892), at p. 132).

In all, Alger traveled three times to California, in 1877, 1878, and 1890-91<sup>1</sup>, generally seeking material for the several novels which contain Western themes. According to Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales, he spent most of his time enjoying the comparatively refined pleasures of San Francisco, so much of his “local color” as it relates to gold mining was obtained from second-hand sources.

Nevertheless, it will be wonderful to be out in California for this convention, and I urge you to attend. Your board of directors showed confidence at last year’s meeting in Barry Schoenborn’s planning (registration form and schedule enclosed with this issue of *Newsboy*) and on the official H.A.S. website, by pledging to make the journey. As one who has often traveled to the West Coast over the years, I can attest that very frequently, airfares between the two coasts of the U.S. cost less than trying to go anywhere in between.

If you are able to spend more time out west in Northern California, in addition to visiting the Sierra Nevada mountain territory that Alger wrote about in several books and as to which I defer to Barry, whom I’m sure can inform you on the particulars of touring the Gold Country, there’s also the famous Napa wine country

1. Gary Scharnhorst with Jack Bales. *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), at pp. 111-116, 133-134.

(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](http://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](mailto:hasnewsboy@aol.com)

## 2017 Convention Preview

# Sacramento: An exciting mix of history, fun

By Barry Schoenborn (PF-1087)  
Convention Host

The Horatio Alger Society's 2017 convention, "Strong and Steady in Sacramento," will be held in Sacramento, California, on Thursday, May 4 to Sunday, May 7, 2017. As always, we'll have special presentations and our annual auction and sale. But there's plenty to do in and around Sacramento. You'll find historic sites, museums and special adventures during your visit. Before we get to the "What to do in Sacramento" part of this preview, let's look at the basics:

**Registration:** \$130 per person, payable by check or money order. The official registration form and convention schedule are enclosed, and are also available in PDF form online at [horatioalgersociety.net](http://horatioalgersociety.net).

**Convention hotel:** Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham, 321 Bercut Drive, Sacramento. Our special convention rate is \$89 per night, multiple occupancy. To make your reservation, call the hotel directly at 1-916-441-1200. The hotel's amenities include breakfast, bar and lounge, along



The Sonoma, an attraction at the California Railroad Museum, was one of three locomotives built in 1876 for the narrow-gauge North Pacific Coast Railroad.

with an airport shuttle. The hotel also has shuttles to Old Town Sacramento and Sutter's Fort State Historic Park.

**Meals:** Included with your registration fee are Friday lunch at Denny's Restaurant, located next to the hotel; Friday dinner at Florez Bar & Grill Mexican Restaurant, where you can order off the menu; and the annual H.A.S. banquet on Saturday at Cherry Creek Golf Course.

More information about restaurants for your "on your own" dining, along with additional area attractions, will be available in the hospitality room.

### What to do in Sacramento

Note that my preview article on our website includes links to many of these attractions to save you the trouble of typing web addresses into your browser.

The California Railroad Museum in Old Town Sac-  
(Continued on Page 7)

## Robert Coverdale's Struggle: Some thoughts on editions

By Robert D. Eastlack (PF-557)

The purpose of this article is to document the first hard-cover edition of *Robert Coverdale's Struggle*. My premise is that only three companies published this title: Street & Smith (soft cover); A. L. Burt Company, Publishers (hard cover) and Superior Printing Company (both soft and hard cover). This premise is based on my having researched more than 80 different publishers of Alger material [see [horatioalgersociety.net](http://horatioalgersociety.net); click on Works; then click on Publishers and Their Formats].

Bob Bennett writes: "The story first appeared as a serialization under the title, 'Robert Coverdale: or, The Young Fisherman of Cook's Harbor,' in *Golden Days for*

*Boys and Girls*, Vol. 1, No. 33 to Vol. 2, No. 5, October 30, 1880 to January 15, 1881. Prior to publication in book form, the story was serialized three more times, in *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, Vol. 9, Nos. 11-23, February 11 to May 5, 1888; in *Young Folks Paper* (English), Nos. 913-925, May 26 to August 18, 1888; and, in *Golden Days for Boys and Girls*, Vol. 26, Nos. 4-16, December 3, 1904 to February 25, 1905."<sup>1</sup>

Street & Smith, Publishers issued this story as No. 555 as part of their **New Medal Library Series** (1907-1911) and as No. 72 in their **Alger Series** (published between 1915 and 1933). They only issued this title in paperback editions. The **New Medal Library** first soft-

(Continued on Page 5)

## Editor's notebook

Convention time is getting nearer, and now is the time to start making your plans! This issue contains host Barry Schoenborn's convention registration form and schedule.

At last May's annual business meeting, when Barry's proposal to host this year in Sacramento was voted upon, everyone in the room raised his or her hand. If you approved it then, please say you'll make the trip to Sacramento this May. Barry has budgeted his convention expenses based on a certain number of attendees, and we want to have a nice turnout.

Barry's preview article is also in this issue, along with the registration form and schedule. As noted, he has placed web links to the various visitors' attractions mentioned in his preview article offered on our website, [horatioalgersociety.net](http://horatioalgersociety.net). That saves you the time and trouble of manually typing in URL addresses, or going through Google. However, I am contradicting that advice by adding a website here for a very good online "Visitor's Guide to Sacramento," below. This one is worth the effort to type manually into your browser:

[www.visitsacramento.com/visit/](http://www.visitsacramento.com/visit/)

**A sad note:** I am a little late in mentioning the sudden passing this past November 11 of longtime Massachusetts book collector/dealer Phyllis Butters, at age 67. She was a mainstay in **Yellowback Library** for more than two decades, her full-page "Calling All Boys ... Calling All Girls" book sale ads a place we all turned to when opening each monthly issue.

I knew Phyllis personally through our regular dealings at the annual book fairs in Boston and Concord, New Hampshire, where her neatly organized booth was always a "must visit." In recent years, a couple weeks before my once- or twice-annual trips to New England, I would email a short list of "wants," and she invariably would bring me a book or two by such scarce authors as William Heyliger or Lewis Theiss, always very reasonably priced. She was apologetic if a book's condition wasn't perfect, or the fact that series books in dust jackets were getting impossible to find.

A very private person, Phyllis only did shows or sold books by mail, never by visits to her home. But she always responded in a friendly manner to my emails, with either good or bad news about certain books' availability.

Books became a late avocation, or "fun" business, for Phyllis. An English graduate from Salem (Mass.) State

## President's column

(Continued from Page 2)

on the way to San Francisco, or you can travel south to Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks.

A more unusual experience in terms of sightseeing occurred a few years back when I was with the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission (a conversation-stopper if ever there was one). I attended a related hearing on correctional policy that was to be held at Folsom Prison, the California correctional institution located outside Sacramento.

It turned out that the hearing was being held in a small building right outside the rather medieval-looking prison gates, probably so those attending did not have to pass through the standard heavy prison security. A pleasant gentleman sitting next to me at the meeting mentioned to me after we were introduced that he was the warden of the prison and offered to take me on a tour, on which he would be the guide.

I accepted with alacrity and willingly signed all the waivers presented to me at the gate by which I agreed that if anything unfortunate should happen to me, the prison and the State of California would incur no liability. As with most prisons built in the 1870s and still in use, the prison was very dark and depressing, with cells that looked smaller and less comfortable, if possible, than those in many other institutions I had visited as part of my work.

But my eyes, as well as the warden's, brightened when we turned a narrow corner and emerged onto a large open space that looked like it could be used for basketball and other sports. Pointing to a stage at one end, the warden smilingly informed me that this indeed was where Johnny Cash gave his famous performance of "Folsom Prison Blues" to an audience of inmates on January 13, 1968, eventually released on his *At Folsom Prison* album. (He'd first recorded the song in 1955, years before he ever saw the place.)

By the way, *Digging for Gold*, despite a lively plot

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College, she ran a successful commercial typesetting business for many years in her home town of Danvers, Mass. Her other interests included music (she played flute with the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra during high school and college). She also was an avid archer throughout the 1960s and '70s, and was a life member of the National Field Archery Association.

The death of Phyllis Butters leaves yet another empty space in the changing landscape of juvenile books, a place where dealers and fellow collectors respect both each other and our hobby.

## Robert Coverdale's Struggle: Some thoughts on editions

(Continued from Page 3)

cover edition (Example 1) was published in February 1910, and is the overall first book edition of this title.

A.L. Burt issued the story in hard cover as part of that publisher's Capped Head Format of the **Chimney Corner Series**. The story appeared in all five hard-cover editions of this format, and none of those editions carried a copyright date. The only difference between one edition of the Capped Head Format to the next was a change in covers.

The first hard-cover edition was published in the Walker Format in 1910, with the cover image imprinted directly onto the cloth (Example 2). The four other versions of the Capped Head Format had the same spine design as the Walker Format, but carried one of four different full-page applique illustrations (pastedowns) on the front cover. These applique editions were produced after 1910, according to Chase.<sup>2</sup>

I can only speculate as to how A.L. Burt was able to publish this story. Given the 1909 revision of the

Copyright Act it seems highly unlikely that Burt could lay claim to the printing rights. The only plausible suggestion that I can make is that Burt purchased the right to print hard-cover copies from Street & Smith. Street & Smith subsequently re-issued the story several times

between 1915 and 1933. The Burt editions should be considered reprints. To list the 1910 Walker Format of this title as a first hard-cover edition is both accurate and misleading. But list it we must, to be bibliographically complete.

**Editor's note:**  
The title character of this story also was used by Street & Smith in its August



Example 2

1940 issue of *Shadow Comics*, this very loosely adapted eight-page version titled "Robert Coverdale's Luck and Pluck." It was reprinted in the November-December 1998 issue of *Newsboy* (Vol. XXX, No. 6).

### NOTES:

1. Bennett, Bob. *Horatio Alger, Jr.: A Comprehensive Bibliography*. Flying Eagle Publishing Co., 1980, p. 97.
2. Chase, Bradford S. *Horatio Alger Books Published by A. L. Burt*. 1983., pp. 72-77.

that includes an attempted stagecoach robbery and a plucky hero who foils various villains — ranging from in-laws scheming to steal his widowed mother's inheritance and the usual crooked co-worker who attempts to implicate our hero — did not turn out to be one of Alger's best-sellers. But I'm certain that we will enjoy better accommodations at the Hawthorn Suites at the special convention rate than the "indifferent" ones that Alger's fictional visitors to Sacramento obtained, albeit for five dollars a day.

Another traveling writer who spent time in the California gold and silver country in the 1860s, a decade or so before Alger's trip, was, of course, Mark Twain, who left a fine welcome to the mining country:

It was a splendid population — for all the slow, sleepy,

sluggish-brained sloths stayed at home — you never find that sort of people among pioneers — you cannot build pioneers out of that sort of material. It was that population that gave to California a name for getting up astounding enterprises and rushing them through with a magnificent dash and daring and a recklessness of cost or consequences, which she bears unto this day — and when she projects a new surprise, the grave world smiles as usual, and says "Well, that is California all over."

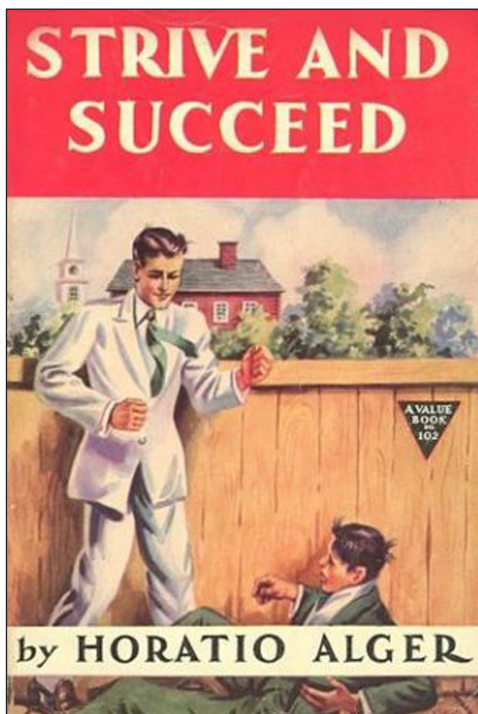
(Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, 1872, ch. LVI)

Your Partic'lar Friend,  
Richard B. Hoffman (PF-570)  
2925 28th St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20008  
(202) 667-6481

# 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 2016:*

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 Arthur W. Smitter (PF-952)  
 Dean C. Steele (PF-661)  
 Isaac Trolinder (PF-1136)  
 Harold Wedding (PF-1100)

*If you made an S&S donation in 2016 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.*

# 'Strong and Steady in Sacramento'

(Continued from Page 3)

ramento houses a giant collection of locomotives and passenger railcars spanning the early days of steam trains to the age of diesel and electric. This huge collection of rolling stock and related memorabilia is one of the largest in the United States and is highly recommended, whether you're a railroad buff or not.

**Old Town Sacramento** is an eight-block historic district in the downtown area that includes more than 100 shops and restaurants, carriage rides and other amenities. Old Town dates back to 1849 and the California Gold Rush.

**Sutter's Fort State Historic Park**, open daily to the public, is tied to the building of the original fort by Swiss immigrant Johan Sutter in 1839 in the town then called Helvetia (now part of Sacramento). In 1848, Sutter's foreman, James W. Marshall, discovered a shiny metal deposit in the tailrace of a lumber mill he was building near the fort. And that's how the great California Gold Rush got started!

**California State Capitol:** In the last few years, the H.A.S. convention has visited the capital cities of Ohio, Indiana and Maryland. Now you can add California to the list, with the 19th century statehouse open for free tours seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Established in 1885, Sacramento's **Crocker Art Mu-**



**Take a ride on the short line! This trip on the Sacramento Southern Railroad offers 45-minute excursions down the Sacramento River on weekends.**

**seum** is the oldest public art museum on the west coast, and it holds large collections ranging from classic to contemporary paintings.

If you want to venture outside Sacramento, drive 45 miles to the **Jelly Belly Gourmet Jelly Bean** factory in the town of Fairfield. Visitors are welcome daily for free self-guided tours.

- Photos of several of these attractions can be found on Pages 8-9. Again, direct links to their official websites are available by going to [www.horatioalgersociety.net](http://www.horatioalgersociety.net).

## MEMBERSHIP

### New life member

Douglas E. Fleming (PF-899)  
1557 Blakeney Road  
P.O. Box 221

Pakenham, Ontario CANADA KOA 2X0

Doug, who joined the Horatio Alger Society in 1992 and hosted the 2001 convention in Ottawa, Ontario, has decided to become a life member. Congratulations!

### New address

William Thieme (PF-1109)  
10804 Sea Hero Lane  
Austin, TX 78748

### New phone number

Dennis Hood (PF-854)  
(847) 613-9194



*‘Strong  
and Steady  
in Sacramento’  
places to visit*

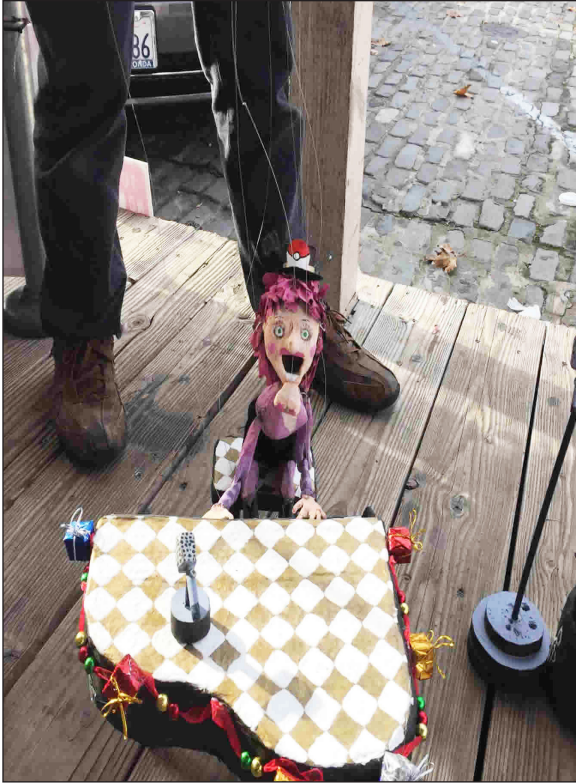
The main display floor of the California Railroad Museum in Old Town Sacramento displays trains of many vintages.

The entrance to the Jelly Belly gourmet jellybean factory in the town of Fairfield. Former President Ronald Reagan always kept a bowl of Jelly Bellies on his Oval Office desk, which helped to put the popular confection on the map throughout the USA. Free self-guided tours are available daily.



Sutter's Fort State Historic Park in Sacramento. Dating back to 1839, this site is near Sutter's Mill, where gold was discovered in 1848, sparking the California gold rush.





Old Sacramento, an eight-block section of downtown established in 1849, includes more than 100 businesses, including gift and gourmet food shops and restaurants. Maybe you'll see "Peggy Lee" singing, as shown here.



You can visit the Crocker Art Museum, founded in 1885 as the first public art museum in the western United States. Built by Edwin Crocker, this mansion houses the main collection, with the museum also including an adjacent modern wing. The museum is one of Sacramento's most popular tourist attractions.

The assembly chamber of the California State Capitol, which also houses the state senate and governor's office. The neoclassical capitol building, at 1315 10th St., was completed between 1861 and 1874. It is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 pm. daily.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*This letter was sent via email several weeks ago to former H.A.S. president Barry Schoenborn, who replied that he'd pass it along to our board of directors and membership:*

Dear Barry:

Three years ago you sent us a small box of Horatio Alger Jr. gems, to supplement my homeschool curriculum and for my personal, classic library.

My goal is always to expand the passion for learning in my kids. At the time I had a 7th grader who exhausted all the books in the house, and I am an insatiable old-timer. Seth took and read *Brave and Bold*; at first it was a push. The next week, I woke to quiet voices. I robed my arms, slipped my toes and shuffled out to scold my disobedient children for gathering in the great room before breakfast. What I saw upon entering brought tears to my eyes, and I stood silently dripping as I watched. My 13-year-old had built up the fireplace, lit, and sat reading aloud to 3 younger siblings.

Today, I can't order Alger books fast enough. At 11, my middle son, Joseph, first devoured the "Ragged Dick" series. He has now (at 12) read every classic book we can find, and begs for more. Big favorite, Mark Twain! In between book orders, Joseph is reading the enormous Reader's Digest *Ben-Hur*.

I must find another resource for Alger books to complete our collection. Joseph is probably your greatest fan, high respect for those who protect and honor his hero! Joseph would like to write to you and thank you himself. Please look for his letter.

Bless you guys!  
Jenny Walker  
P.O. Box 1293  
Alpine, TX 79831

Dear Bill:


I just discovered several Street & Smith advertisements [Ed.: two examples reproduced at right] online in **The Era: An Illustrated Monthly**. This magazine was originally called **The Literary Era: A Monthly Repository of Literary and Miscellaneous Information**. It was published by Porter & Coates beginning in January 1894 and continued by Henry T. Coates for sixteen volumes until December 1904. Their advertising section included many illustrated ads, including ones from various publishers.

In these examples, from the December 1902 issue, the new hard-cover offerings from Street & Smith for the **Boys' Own Library**, along with related series, are listed, with selected cover images. Edward Stratemyer edited some of the serials and dime novels for these book publications.

Sincerely,  
James D. Keeline (PF-898)  
Email: james@keeline.com

The Era Advertiser

### BOY'S OWN LIBRARY.



A SERIES OF 100 BOOKS FOR BOYS  
By Edward S. Ellis, George Manville Fenn, Horatio Alger, Jr., Capt. Ralph Bonehill, James Otis, Frank H. Converse, Matthew White, Jr., Wm. Murray Graydon, Arthur M. Winfield, Brooks McCormick, and Other Celebrated Authors.

The looks are bound in twelve highly illuminated cover designs. Price, 75 cents per volume.

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*In Barracks and Wigwam*. Wm. Murray Graydon.  
*King of the Island*. Henry Harrison Lewis.  
*Boats, Bats and Bicycles*. Ernest A. Young.  
*The Boy from the West*. Gilbert Patten.  
*For Home and Honor*. Victor St. Clair.

*The Erie Train Boy*. Horatio Alger, Jr.  
*Perils of the Jungle*. Edward S. Ellis.  
*Randy the Pilot*. Lieut. Lionel Lounsbury.  
*The Secret Chart*. Lieut. James K. Orton.  
*Waeceling for Fortune*. James Otis.  
*Mark Dale's Stage Venture*. Arthur M. Winfield.  
*The Young Acrobat*. Horatio Alger, Jr.  
*With Doer and Britisher*. Wm. Murray Graydon.  
*Chased Through Norway*. James Otis.  
*Tom Tracy*. Horatio Alger, Jr.

A Complete List of Titles Sent on Application.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, NEW YORK.

The Era Advertiser

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Consists of three books, each being a good, clean story of athletic training, sports and contests, such as interest every healthy, growing boy of to-day. While aiming to avoid the extravagant and sensational, the stories contain enough thrilling incidents to please the lad who loves action and adventure. The description of their Baseball and Football games and other contests with rival clubs and teams make very exciting and absorbing reading; and few boys with warm blood in their veins, having once begun the perusal of one of these books, will willingly lay it down till it is finished.

- 1—THE ROCKSPUR NINE.  
A story of Baseball.
- 2—THE ROCKSPUR ELEVEN.  
A story of Football.
- 3—THE ROCKSPUR RIVALS.  
A story of Winter Sports.

Each volume contains about 300 pages, 12mo in size, cloth binding, per volume, \$1.00



#### THE FAMOUS FRANK MERRIWELL STORIES.

By Burt L. Standish.

No modern series of tales for boys and young men has met with anything like the cordial reception and popularity accorded to the Frank Merriwell Stories, published exclusively by this house. There must be a reason for this and there is. Frank Merriwell, as portrayed by the author, is a jolly, whole-souled, honest, courageous American lad, who appeals to the hearts of the boys. He has no bad habits, and his manliness inculcates the idea that it is not necessary for a boy to indulge in petty vices to be a hero. Frank Merriwell's example is a shining light for every ambitious lad to follow.

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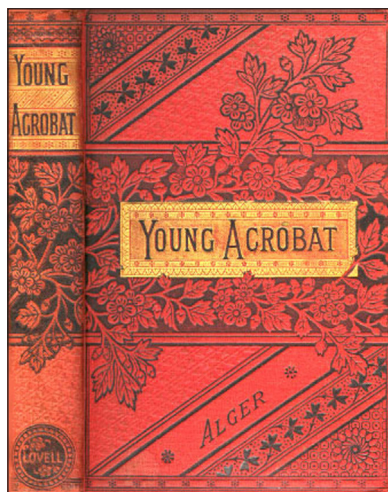
STREET & SMITH, Publishers, NEW YORK.

# 'The Greatest Show on Earth' may be closing, but the circus will live on through books

By William R. Gowen (PF-706)

One of the signature American entertainment experiences will be gone in May with last month's announcement that the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus — "The Greatest Show on Earth" — will close forever after more than a century. The end seemed inevitable last spring, when the circus decided elephants would no longer be part of the show, thanks in part to pressure from animal-rights groups.

"After much evaluation and deliberation, my family and I have made the difficult business decision that



more dramatic drop. This, coupled with high operating costs, made the circus an unsustainable business for the company," Feld said.

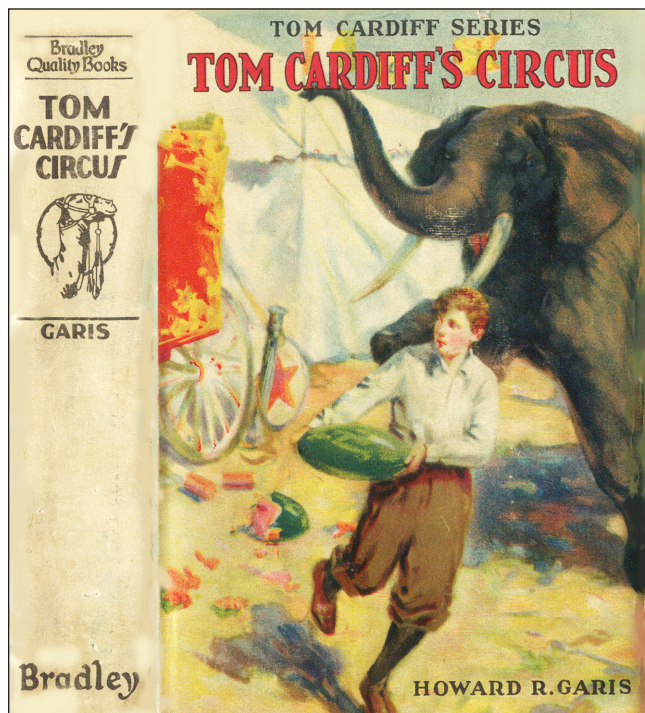
The final two shows will be in Providence, Rhode Island, on May 7, and in Uniondale, N.Y., on May 21.

Of course, smaller regional circuses and traveling carnivals will soldier on, but to nearly every American, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey was THE circus. It was the centerpiece of Cecil B. DeMille's Academy Award-winning "The Greatest Show on Earth" movie in 1952 and whose legendary stars included the clown Emmett Kelly and the Flying Wallendas aerial act.

The history of the traveling circus in this country

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey will hold its final performances in May of this year," said Kenneth Feld, chairman of Feld Entertainment, which has operated the circus for the past half century.

"Ringling Bros. ticket sales have been declining, but following the transition of the elephants off the road, we saw an even



dates back to the years following the Civil War, and the complexity of circus mergers and buyouts is too much to discuss in detail — but here's a condensed version:

In 1875, Dan Castello and William Cameron Coup persuaded businessman P.T. Barnum to lend his name and financial backing to the circus they had already created in Delavan, Wisconsin. It was named "P.T. Barnum's Great Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, and Hippodrome." The promotional nickname "Greatest Show on Earth" was added later.

In 1907, the Ringling brothers purchased the P.T. Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, and ran the circuses separately until 1919. By that time, Charles Edward Ringling and John Nicholas Ringling were the only remaining brothers of the five founders, and they decided that it was too difficult to run the two circuses independently. So, on March 29, 1919, the new "Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows" opened in New York City.

The circus' most tragic day occurred on July 6, 1944, when the huge tent caught fire during a matinee performance in Hartford, Connecticut, killing an estimated 167 patrons (many of them children) and injuring scores of others. A crowd of more than 7,000 was in attendance.

Exact cause of the fire was never determined, but the fact that the canvas tent had been waterproofed with a solution of paraffin wax and gasoline caused the fire to spread into an inferno within minutes. The usual non-flammable waterproofing chemicals were not available to

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## Circus-themed books

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the circus because of their conscription for military tents and uniforms during World War II. Court settlements eventually cost the circus more than \$5 million.

In 1956, then-circus president John Ringling North announced the circus would no longer use the “big top,” and the following year the circus only visited cities and towns with permanent theaters or sports arenas with suitable seating capacity, such as Madison Square Garden in New York. In 1967, Irvin Feld and his brother Israel, along with Houston Astros owner and Astrodome developer Roy Hofheinz, bought the circus from the Ringling family. In 1971, the Felds and Hofheinz sold the circus to Mattel, buying it

back from the toy company in 1982. Following the death of Irvin Feld in 1984, the circus has been a part of Feld Entertainment, headquartered in Florida.

### The circus as a theme for juvenile books

Not long after P.T. Barnum’s name became linked to the circus in 1875, the world of juvenile literature took notice. Among the first circus-related books was perhaps the most famous of all: *Toby Tyler, or Fifteen Weeks with the Circus*, authored by James Otis (Kaler) and published by Harper & Brothers in 1881. Not only did the story make many young readers more aware of circus life, it also propelled “James Otis” toward a long and distinguished career as writer of books for young people.

Dime novels, which came into prominence in the early 1860s, also became a home for circus stories, as did story papers and eventually, series books. What about Horatio Alger, Jr., you ask? Two of his books with a circus theme stand out: *The Young Circus Rider* and *The Young Acrobat*.

*The Young Circus Rider* was first published by Porter & Coates in 1883 in the Brown (or Gold) Apple cover

format and reprinted by P&C’s successor publishers, H.T. Coates and John C. Winston, in various formats. The story first appeared as a serial in the **Boston Weekly Globe** from May 22 to June 24, 1882, under the title “The Star of the Circus, or The Mystery of Robert Rudd.”

*The Young Acrobat* first appeared in serial form as “The Young Acrobat of the Great North American Circus,” in **Golden Argosy** between April 30 and August 20, 1887. Its first appearance in book form was in soft cover in **Munsey’s Popular Series** No. 8 in March 1888, also offered in Frank Lovell’s **Leather-Clad Tales of Adventure and Romance**, No. 20, in 1890. Its first hard-cover edition was John W. Lovell’s **Rugby Edition**, under Alger’s pen name “Arthur Lee Putnam” (first state) and Alger’s own name (second state). It also appeared in S&S’s soft-cover **Medal Library** (No. 42) and **Brave and Bold Library** (No. 68) as well as in the hard-cover **Boys’**

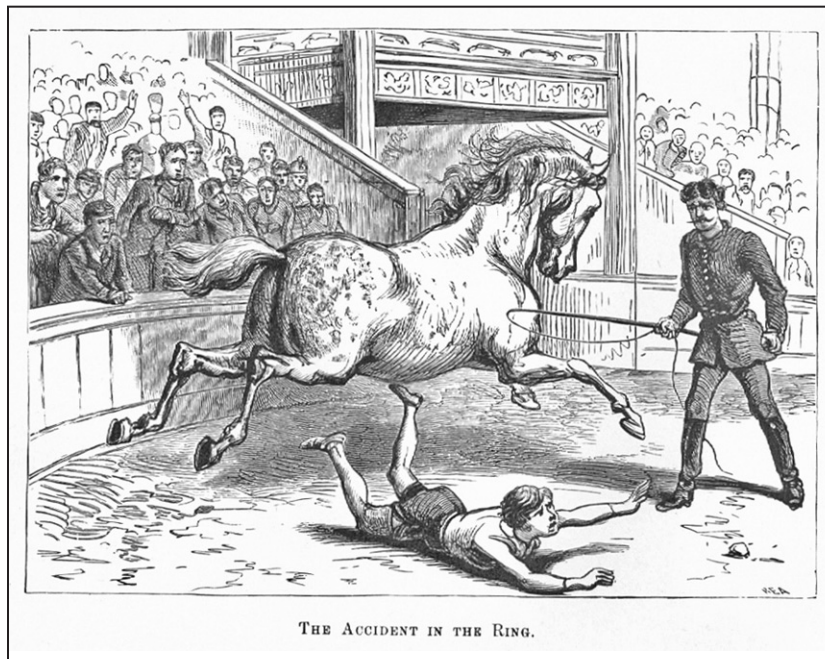
**Own Library** (S&S, Federal and McKay). It also was offered by numerous other reprint publishers, in several cases with its original long title, *The Young Acrobat of the Great North American Circus*.

### Edward Stratemeyer and the Stratemeyer Syndicate

Ever the astute businessman, Stratemeyer wanted to capitalize on the growing popularity of the numerous traveling circuses and carnivals of the era, although his circus-themed books were far outnumbered by historical novels and school stories.

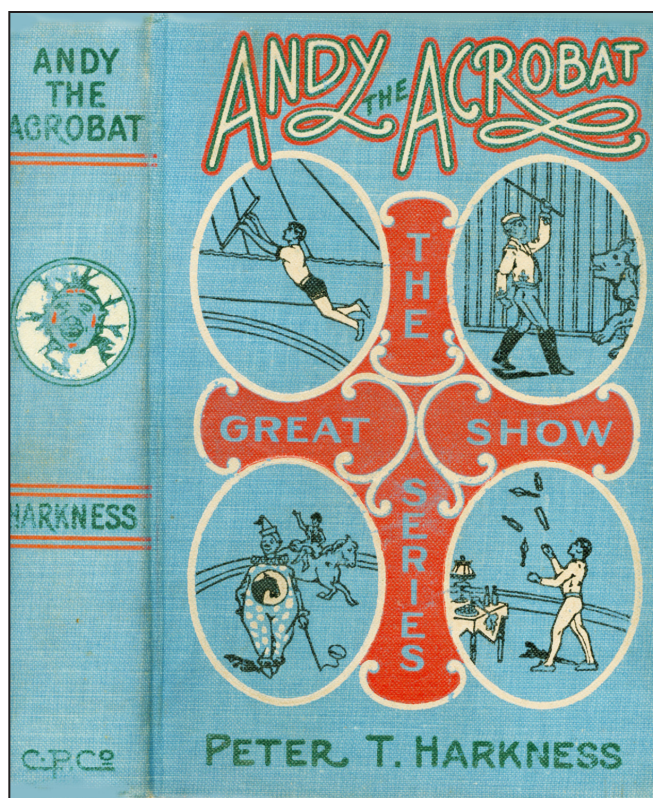
An early example is *Neka, the Boy Conjurer, or A Mystery of the Stage*. Written using one of Stratemeyer’s personal pseudonyms, Capt. Ralph Bonehill, it was first published in book form by Street & Smith as part of its **Boys’ Own Library** in 1902, and later came out as No. 250 in the S&S **Medal Library** on March 19, 1904. The story was first published as a serial in the S&S story paper **Good News** as “Neka, King of Fire, or A Mystery of the Variety Stage,” under another Stratemeyer pseudonym, “Manager Henry Abbott.”

The Stratemeyer Syndicate, founded in 1905, was



Horatio Alger’s *The Young Circus Rider*.

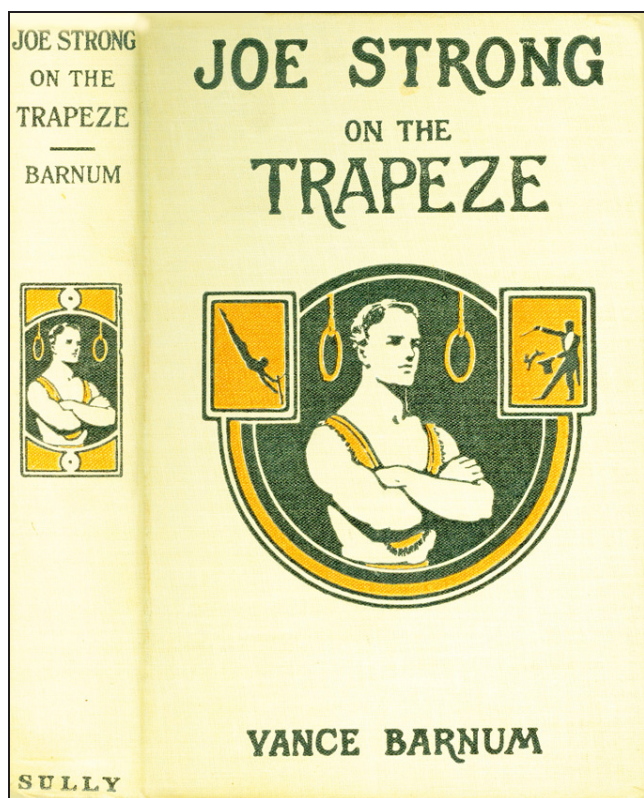
(Facing Page 160)



somewhat more involved with circus stories, although its start was a bit shaky. In 1907, Chatterton-Peck published *Andy the Acrobat*, billed on the cover as part of **The Great Show Series**. A second title, promoted on the final page of the book as *Luke, the Lion Tamer*, or *On the Road with the Great Menagerie*, was never published. *Andy the Acrobat* was written under the house name "Peter T. Harkness." The actual author was the noted dime novel writer Weldon J. Cobb (1849-1922), who was one of Edward Stratemeyer's more prominent contract writers. The artist was Sophie Schneider, who also illustrated the Stratemeyer-controlled *Two Boys and a Fortune* by Matthew White, Jr. (Chatterton-Peck, 1907).

*Andy the Acrobat* and *Two Boys and a Fortune* became tied up in the 1907-08 litigation involving Stratemeyer, Chatterton-Peck and Grosset & Dunlap, which may have contributed to **The Great Show Series'** early demise. Once G&D took over publication, they grouped those two books, along with six other Stratemeyer-authored or controlled books such as *Bob, the Photographer*, and issued them in 1908 as **The Enterprise Books**.

Stratemeyer was still a few years away from issuing a complete circus series. In 1909, Cupples & Leon launched the Syndicate's **Webster Series**, a 25-volume group of stand-alone stories carrying Alger-like Strive and Succeed themes. One of the books, *Jack, the Runaway*, or *On the Road with a Circus*, gave young readers a taste



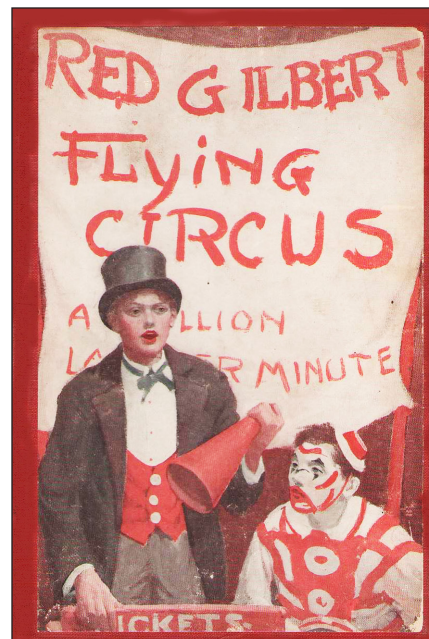
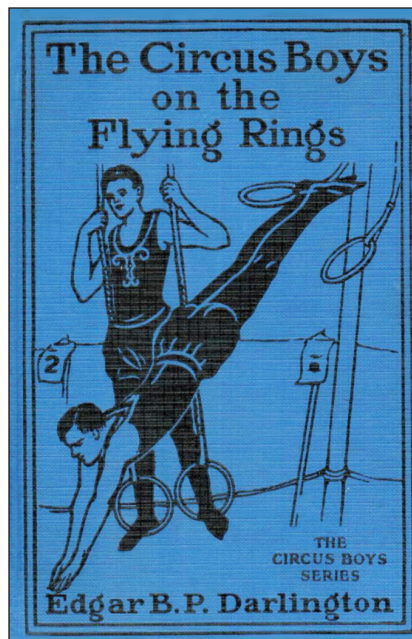
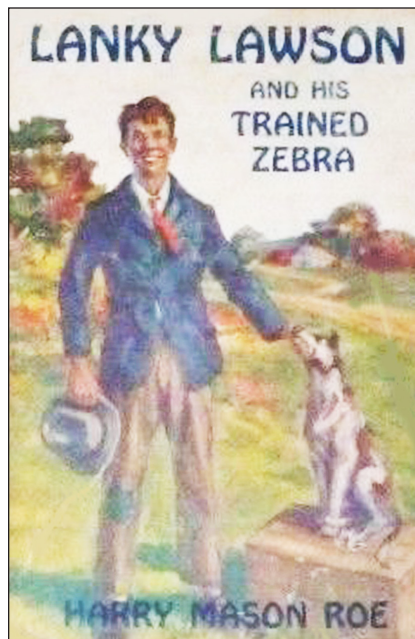
of circus life. It was written by Howard R. Garis (1873-1962), writing under the "Frank V. Webster" house name. Garis was Stratemeyer's most prolific writer, with some 315 Syndicate books to his credit.

Garis was at his typewriter for Stratemeyer again in 1916 when he authored the first five volumes of the **Joe Strong Series**, the Syndicate's first full-fledged circus series, for Hearst's International Library Co. Using the "Vance Barnum" house name (very appropriate for circus stories), the books are very well written, placing the boy hero into such performing activities as magic, aerialist, acrobatic swimmer and fire eater (a traditional side show event), along with an unusual title, *Joe Strong and his Wings of Steel*. According to the New York Public Library's Stratemeyer records obtained by James D. Keeline (PF-898), the title was originally proposed as *Tom Swift and his Wings of Steel*, but it was later rejected as a potential book for that series and subsequently reborn as a Joe Strong title.

Garis wrote all seven books in the **Joe Strong Series**, the original five published by Hearst's International Library in 1916 and two additional titles issued by George Sully & Company in 1919, with the five earlier titles reissued by Sully.

The other Stratemeyer Syndicate circus series also involved Garis as its author: the **Lanky Lawson Series**

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## Circus-themed books

(Continued from Page 13)

(1929-30), which was published by Barse and Company under the "Harry Mason Roe" house name. The three books involve the title character in various road show activities. A fourth title was projected, but not published.

The Syndicate had bad luck when it came to circus series because of publishers' shortcomings. Chatterton-Peck had a just brief relationship with Stratemeyer, and **The Great Show Series** did not survive the changeover to Grosset & Dunlap. Hearst's International Library's brief stint with the Syndicate did not work out, and the Joe Strong books did not sell well when reissued by Sully. Finally, Barse was a fringe Syndicate publisher, and the Lanky Lawson books also were poor sellers.

Meanwhile, Garis also wrote many non-Stratemeyer Syndicate books over the years, and prominent among them was the two-volume **Tom Cardiff Series** – *Tom Cardiff's Circus* and *Tom Cardiff in the Big Top*, for the Milton Bradley Company in 1926 and 1927, respectively. Illustrated by W.B. King, these are among the best circus stories of the period aimed at a young teen-age audience, and are highly recommended for adults as well. Garis also wrote a stand-alone title, *Tuftoo the Clown*, for D. Appleton & Co. in 1928, and his many, many books for tots and younger readers included visits to the circus.

### Other non-Syndicate circus series

Russell Gordon Carter (1892-1957) was a well-known author of boys' books, most prominently the **Patriot Lad**

**Series**, a 12-volume Revolutionary War series published by Penn Publishing Co., from 1924-36. Carter also wrote the two-volume **Red Gilbert Series**, also for Penn, the titles *Red Gilbert's Flying Circus* and *Red Gilbert's Floating Menagerie*, highly sought by collectors today.

Another circus series of interest to readers and collectors is **The Circus Boys Series**, written by Frank Gee Patchin (1861-1925) and published by Henry Altemus Co. under the "Edgar Darlington" *nom de plume*. There are five titles in the series, and a sixth title was advertised but not published.

Finally, there is the six-volume **Circus Series**, which first appeared in hard cover in the **Boys' Own Library**, published by Street & Smith, Federal and David McKay. The titles use the author pseudonyms "Stanley Norris" and "Victor St. Clair," the latter the pen name of George Waldo Browne. For more about this series, see the list and note on Page 15, and go to my article "Alger and Beyond: The authors, cover formats for the *Boys' Own Library*" in *Newsboy*, September-October 2013.

**Author's note:** This article was written in response to current events, i.e., the impending closure of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. I am sure additional books with circus themes have been accidentally overlooked here, but this overview still gives an idea of the scope of circus-related stories written for young people between the 1880s and the Great Depression. Compared with mysteries, science adventures, western stories and school and sports tales, books set in the world of the "Big Top" are in the minority. But they remain an important component of our hobby.

## Tom Cardiff Series

By Howard R. Garis

1. *Tom Cardiff's Circus* — Illustrated by W.B. King. 1926, Milton Bradley Co.
2. *Tom Cardiff in the Big Top* — Illustrated by W.B. King. 1927, Milton Bradley Co.

## Red Gilbert Series

By Russell Gordon Carter

1. *Red Gilbert's Flying Circus* — Illustrated by Percy Couse. 1924, Penn Publishing Co.
2. *Red Gilbert's Floating Menagerie* — Illustrated by W.H. Wolf. 1926, Penn Publishing Co.

## Lanky Lawson Series

By "Harry Mason Roe" (Howard R. Garis)  
Stratemeyer Syndicate

1. *Lanky Lawson, the Boy from Nowhere* — Illustrated by David Randolph. 1929, Barse and Co.
2. *Lanky Lawson With the One-Ring Circus* — Illustrated by David Randolph. 1929, Barse and Co.
3. *Lanky Lawson and his Trained Zebra* — Illustrated by David Randolph. 1930, Barse and Co.
4. *Lanky Lawson, Somewhere on the Ocean* — Phantom title. This book was announced at the end of Volume 3, but was not published.

## The Circus Boys Series

By "Edgar Darlington" (Frank Gee Patchin)

1. *The Circus Boys on the Flying Rings, or Making a Start in the Saw Dust Life* — 1910, Henry Altemus Co.
2. *The Circus Boys Across the Continent, or Winning New Laurels on the Tanbark* — 1911, Henry Altemus Co.
3. *The Circus Boys in Dixie Land, or Winning the Plaudits of the Sunny South* — 1911, Henry Altemus Co.
4. *The Circus Boys on the Mississippi, or Afloat with the Big Show on the Big River* — 1912, Henry Altemus Co.
5. *The Circus Boys on the Plains, or Young Advance Agents Ahead of the Show* — 1920, Henry Altemus Co.
6. *The Circus Boys at the Top, or Bossing the Greatest Show of All* — Phantom title. This book was announced following Volume 5, but was not published.

**Note:** The illustrations for this series were uncredited.

## Joe Strong Series

By "Vance Barnum" (Howard R. Garis)  
Stratemeyer Syndicate

1. *Joe Strong, the Boy Wizard, or the Mysteries of Magic Exposed* — Illustrated by Jerome L. Kroeger. 1916, Hearst's International Library Co.
2. *Joe Strong on the Trapeze, or the Daring Feats of a Young Circus Performer* — Illustrated by Jerome L. Kroeger. 1916, Hearst's International Library Co.
3. *Joe Strong, Boy Fish, or Marvelous Doings in a Big Tank* — Illustrated by Jerome L. Kroeger. 1916, Hearst's International Library Co.
4. *Joe Strong on the High Wire, or Motorcycle Perils of the Air* — Illustrated by Jerome L. Kroeger. 1916, Hearst's International Library Co.
5. *Joe Strong and his Wings of Steel, or a Young Acrobat in the Clouds* — Illustrated by Jerome L. Kroeger. 1916, Hearst's International Library Co.
6. *Joe Strong and his Box of Mystery, or The Ten Thousand Dollar Prize Trick* — Illustrated by Walter S. Rogers. 1919, George Sully and Co.
7. *Joe Strong, Boy Fire Eater, or the Most Dangerous Performance on Record* — Illustrated by Walter S. Rogers. 1919, George Sully and Co.

## The Circus Series

By "Stanley Norris" and "Victor St. Clair"

1. *Phil, the Showman, or Life in the Sawdust Ring* — (Norris); illustrated by W.W. Bridges. 1902, Street & Smith.
2. *The Young Showman's Rivals, or Ups and Downs of the Road* — (Norris); artist unknown. 1903, Street & Smith.
3. *The Young Showman's Pluck, or An Unknown Rider in the Ring* — (Norris); artist unknown. 1903, Street & Smith.
4. *The Young Showman's Triumph, or A Grand Tour of the Road* — (Norris); artist unknown. 1903, Street & Smith.
5. *Zig-Zag, the Boy Conjuror, or Life On and Off the Stage* — (St. Clair); artist unknown. 1903, Street & Smith.
6. *Zip, the Acrobat, or The Old Showman's Secret* — (St. Clair); artist unknown. 1903, Street & Smith.

**Note:** This titles in this series originally were part of the Street & Smith and David McKay **Boys' Own Library**, with McKay later advertising it as the stand-alone **Circus Series**. "Victor St. Clair" was a pen name of George Waldo Browne, and "Stanley Norris" was a Street & Smith house name shared by multiple writers.

## BOOK REVIEW

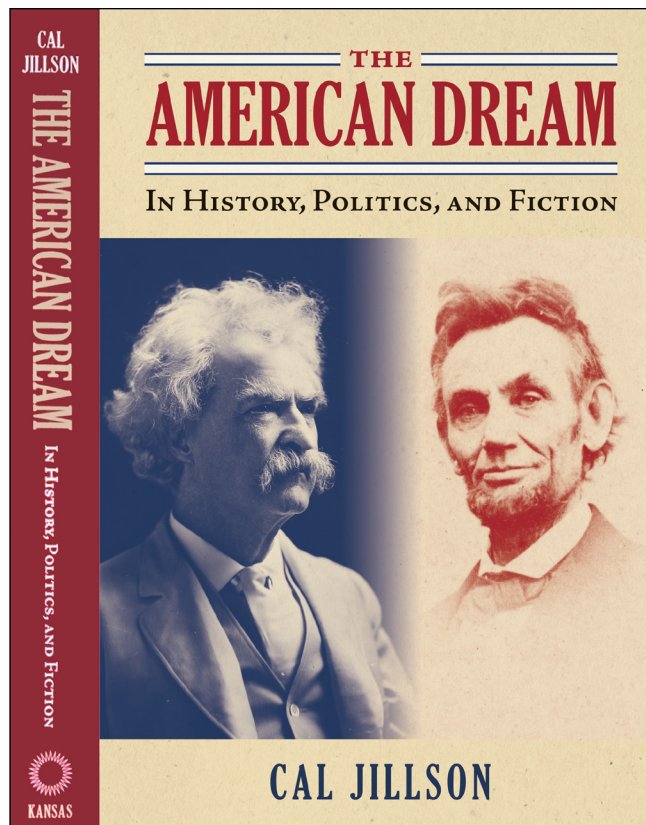
Cal Jillson: *The American Dream in History, Politics, and Fiction*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, ©2016. xv+350 pages; \$45 hardcover (ISBN 978-0-7006-2309-9), \$22.95 paperback (ISBN 978-0-7006-2310-5); Available online from [kansaspress.ku.edu](http://kansaspress.ku.edu); or in ebook or paperback format from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

Reviewed by Carol Nackenoff (PF-921)

Cal Jillson, a Southern Methodist University professor of political science who has authored a number of previous books in American politics (including *Pursuing the American Dream*), is author of the rich and rewarding 2016 volume, *The American Dream in History, Politics, and Fiction*, part of the American Political Thought series from the University Press of Kansas, a press that has an extremely strong presence in American politics, policy, and law. Asked by the publisher to write a blurb for the book, my comment appears on the back cover and reads as follows: "An extremely enjoyable and thoughtful read recommended for anyone who reads fiction and worries about widening economic inequalities and threats to opportunities for mobility in the United States. Comparing analyses of the American Dream by politicians, economists, and novelists, Jillson emphasizes the special emotional power, depth, and range of fiction to plumb these issues. A strength of this book is its attention to those historically excluded from the American Dream, especially on the basis of race and gender."

While Horatio Alger figures in only one chapter, I think Jillson's book will be of interest to a number of our members. I very much like the fact that authors of fiction are placed alongside and in conversation with politicians and economists, as each highlighted figure seeks to make sense of the Dream, the problems accessing it, and who is excluded and included in its promise. A number of great American storytellers, Jillson convincingly demonstrates, have expressed doubts and reservations about American Dream narratives told by political elites. "The American Dream offered a linear counsel: prepare well, work hard, save and invest, and you will have a good chance to succeed and prosper in America. Our great literature, on the other hand, has always described a more complex, challenging, and indeterminate reality confronting Americans," Jillson contends (p. 264). Great fiction writers have concerned themselves with fate and with issues of class, gender, and race; they have therefore been attuned to tensions and anomalies in our dominant political narratives across time.

The American Dream is organized chronologically, beginning with the Puritans, Quakers, and colonial America.



"The Founders' Dream and Its Limits" is followed by a chapter on antebellum America, and another on the Gilded Age ("Individualism and Combination"), where Alger makes his appearance. A Chapter on the Progressive Era and the Depression is succeeded by a chapter covering the period from Truman through LBJ that seeks to demonstrate how the Depression and World War II changed the way Americans thought about society, individuals, and communities. "The Dream in Doubt: Opportunity and Uncertainty from Reagan to Obama" looks at a period after middle-class incomes began to stagnate.

The book concludes with a chapter on "American Dreams and Doubts in the Twenty-First Century" that offers a few considerations on our future. Writers who get a good deal of attention (while interspersed with great figures in American political thought, politicians, and other molders of public opinion) include Hawthorne, Cooper, Franklin, Melville, Faulkner, Twain, Alger, Howells, Norris, Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Steinbeck, Updike, Richard Wright, Philip Roth, Toni Morrison, Richard Russo, and Jonathan Franzen, with a number of other novelists making briefer appearances.

One does not need to be familiar with all these novels and novelists to get into the argument of Jillson's book; reading it stimulated my interest in picking up a few more of the fine books discussed here.