



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.

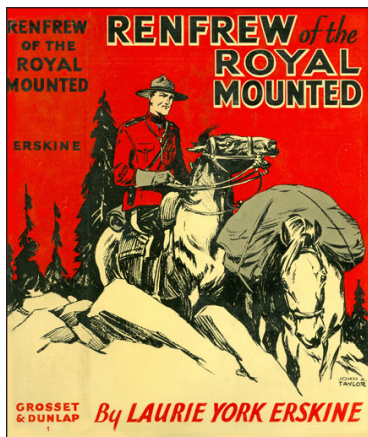
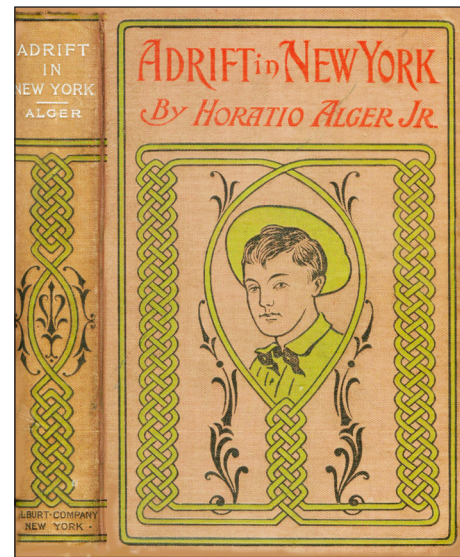
VOLUME LV

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NUMBER 2

Soft and hard-cover first editions

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Laurie York Erskine rides with *Renfrew of the Royal Mounted*

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Noted researcher, author John Dizer dies at 95

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President's column

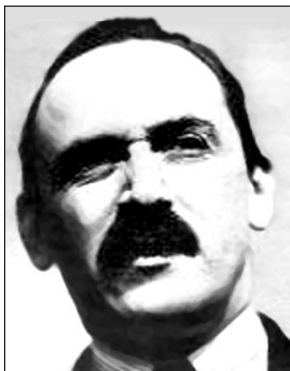
As we all know by now, Horatio Alger's name gets taken in vain quite often. We're accustomed to reading the obituary writer's cliché that some businessman's "life was a rags-to-riches Horatio Alger story" without ever giving any more insight into what that means. Not surprisingly, social critics have long been blaming Alger for the grossest excesses of capitalistic behavior.

Recently, a **New Yorker** writer, in the process of blasting the Lyft car service for abusing its employees while depicting them as sturdy independent operators, recalled how Nathanael West had satirized Alger in 1934 in a novel called *A Cool Million*. Although West's novel starts out in classic Alger fashion — a young man charged with saving his mother's house from foreclosure — his hero comes to grief and a very grisly end. West was a grim satirist.

"Alger is to America what Homer was to the Greeks," West once wrote, according to **The New Yorker**. That might be regarded as high praise, since Homer does remain a pillar of our culture, even if in our day, unlike Alger's, learning to read that bard in the original Ancient Greek is sadly no longer part of the standard educational curriculum.

More to the point, however, Alger was no apologist or defender of industries or commercial ventures that treated their workers badly. He did stand up for those forced to ply low-paying lines of work such as bootblack or newsboy. Nevertheless, he urged the boys engaged in those pursuits to save whatever earnings they made so they could move on.

He showed no sympathy for those who supplied the bootblacks with their blacking, nor the newspaper titans who did benefit from treating the newsboys as independent contractors. Alger encouraged those who would emulate his boy heroes to work hard so that they could rise from being low-paid itinerants. After all, Ragged Dick becomes a bookkeeper in the employ of the businessman whose daughter he saved from drowning, and even his one-time adversary, Micky Maguire, gets taken on in



Nathanael West

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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

Soft and hard-cover first editions

By Robert D. Eastlack (PF-557)

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Such a question can also be asked by a book collector when referencing soft covers and hard covers. It is rarely asked about the soft cover if the hard cover is an established first edition. However, it is of some concern when the soft cover is given initial status.

When a librarian catalogs a book, the publisher and the date of publication are looked at to ascertain which came first. When there is a change in publishers from soft cover to hard cover the determining factor is the date of publication.

With that in mind I reviewed the 20 soft covered Alger first editions. To determine their hard cover counterparts, I compiled the chart shown on Page 5 from Bob

Bennett's *A Collector's Guide to the Published Works of Horatio Alger, Jr.*

There are seven titles for which Bennett did not identify a hard-cover counterpart.

Five of those titles were published by A.L. Burt, Publisher. Rob Kasper, in two articles on the Burt soft covers clearly stated: This would indicate that, *prima facie*, Burt was issuing paper- and hard-cover editions simultaneously from at least Number 4.¹

In his second article he summarizes by saying, "The limited evidence at this time indicates that "Boy on Horse" format was the first Burt hard-cover edition of this series and was not repeated. If you accept this theory, then the earliest Fez printing of *Joe's Luck* would be considered a

(Continued on Page 4)

Convention update

Less than a month to go!

Final details are being worked out by host Barry Schoenborn as the 2017 Horatio Alger Society convention on May 4-7 is less than a month away.

As most of you have heard, either from emails or by visiting the official H.A.S. website, horatioalgersociety.net, "Strong and Steady in Sacramento" will now take place at the Ramada Sacramento, 2600 Auburn Blvd., (916) 664-3780. We won't go into detail here, but maybe Barry will be happy to regale us during the weekend with his tales of horror in dealing with the previously selected venue, necessitating a last-minute switch.

The Ramada Sacramento has a breakfast bar and free Wi-Fi connectivity, a business center and fitness center. All of our official activities **except** the Friday lunch and dinner, along with the Saturday banquet, will take place at the hotel. For your convenience, an updated registration form and schedule of events are enclosed, the latter which updates the Friday morning presenters and other details.

Because the hotel's airport shuttle service is appar-



The Ramada Sacramento will host the 2017 Horatio Alger Society convention on May 4-7.

ently not operating at present, the front desk recommends taking a cab from the airport (typical fare is about \$25, which is the same the shuttle van would have cost). They recommend using KMM Cab Company at (916) 444-0000, either to or from the airport. Several attendees will have personal or rental vehicles, so carpooling to Friday's dinner at the Florez Mexican Bar & Grill and the Cherry Hill Golf Course for Saturday night's banquet will likely be arranged.

Barry will have directions to these locations available in the hospitality room, along with lists of area restaurants for those meals we are having on our own.

We hope to see you in Sacramento!

Editor's notebook

Our hobby has lost a true giant

The field of juvenile literature research lost one of its pioneers on March 23 with the death of John T. Dizer, Jr. (PF-511), at age 95 at the home of family members in Ohio, where had moved as his health declined in the weeks following the holidays.

Born in Norwood, Massachusetts, on Nov. 7, 1921, Dizer grew up in the Connecticut River town of Bellows Falls, Vermont, calling himself "a true Yankee, and proud of it!" He lived most of his adult life in the town of Marcy, just north of Utica, N.Y., with his wife, Marie (she passed away in late 1993). They raised five children.



Author, engineer and longtime H.A.S. member John Dizer.

To Jack, the "the fun was in the hunt," and when eBay came along, he had little interest in paying the kind of money books were starting to attract on the Internet. His purchases slowed down following his retirement as Dean of Engineering at Mohawk Valley Community College. His degrees in Master of Science in Engineering, along with his Ph.D., were both from Purdue University.

Dizer's main collecting interest was Edward Stratemeyer and the Stratemeyer Syndicate, with particular interest in Tom Swift (from one engineer to another). He even named his family's small outboard boat the "Arrow," in tribute to Tom Swift's similar craft from 1910. His first book on juvenile literature, *Tom Swift & Company* (McFarland, 1982), had several chapters devoted to his favorite fictional hero, along with essays on such other authors as William O. Stoddard and fellow New Yorker Clair Hayes of "Boy Allies" fame.

Since the news of Jack's passing came just as this issue was going to press, we will offer more coverage of his career and contributions to our hobby in the May-June issue. Partic'lar Friends who knew Jack are invited to email me at hasnewsboy@aol.com with letters of tribute or remembrance.

Soft and hard-cover first editions

(Continued from Page 3)

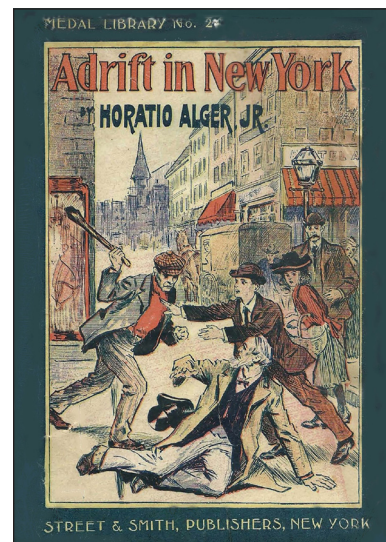
second edition. The other four Fez editions were printed simultaneously with the paper editions, with the first issues possessing the attributes previously described."²

The sixth title, *Robert Coverdale's Struggle*,³ was published by Street & Smith as a soft cover. A discussion on the first hard-cover issue of *Robert Coverdale's Struggle* was published in the January-February 2017 *Newsboy*. Two companies published this title with a hard cover: A.L. Burt Company, Publishers, and Superior Printing Company (both soft and hard cover). The Burt hard cover in the Capped Head Walker format (Chase Format No. 33 in the **Chimney Corner Series**) was identified as the first hard cover edition.

This leaves only *Adrift in New York; or, Tom and Florence Braving the World*, to be discussed. Based on copyright law by 1904 it had been 15 years since the story first appeared, thus opening up publication to multiple publishers.⁴ No copyright date would appear on subsequent volumes because the copyright had expired. It is worth quoting what Bennett had to say regarding this title:

"This title has created considerable controversy as to the true first edition. The story first appeared as a serialization in Norman Munro's **Family Story Paper**, Nos. 835-847, October 5 to December 28, 1889. It was serialized again in **Golden Hours**, Nos. 711-722, September 14 to November 30, 1901. It

next appeared as a two-part supplement to **Comfort Magazine**, May, June, 1902. Strangely, this publication has drawn support as the first edition. However, because it is not complete in one volume, it must be classified as a serialization and not a book. The next candidate for first edition honors is the October 31, 1903 publication in Street & Smith's **Brave and Bold Weekly**, No. 45. This large



Ex.1: S&S Medal Library No. 243 (soft cover) was the first overall book edition of *Adrift in New York*.

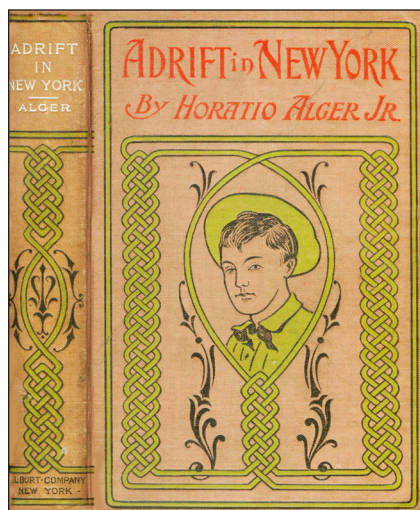
magazine-size publication can be readily dismissed as it is a severely abridged version of the original Munro serialization. The **Medal Library**, No. 243 is the first complete appearance of the story in one volume [Ed.: Example 1]. The story was advertised by Mershon in the **Rise of Life**

Series in 1900 but apparently was never issued. It was, however, issued in later Mershon editions."⁵

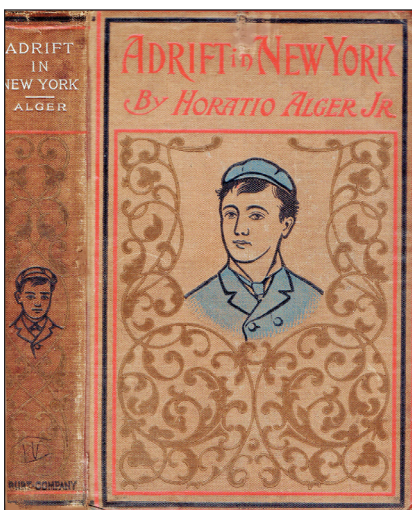
The controversy continues when attempting to identify the first hard-cover edition. Ralph Gardner⁶ identifies a

(Continued on Page 6)

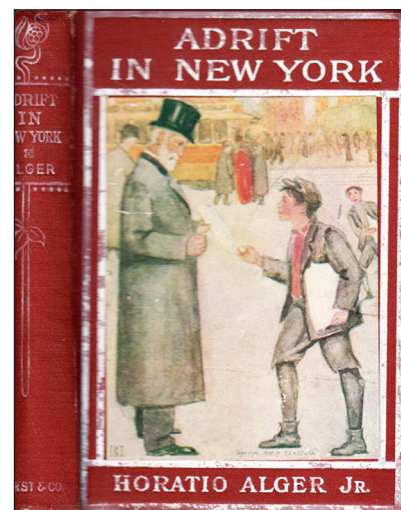
	TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Soft	Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy	A. L. Burt, Publisher	1887
Hard		<i>Undefined by Bennett</i>	
Soft	Joe's Luck	A. L. Burt, Publisher	1887
Hard		<i>Undefined by Bennett</i>	
Soft	Errand Boy, The	A. L. Burt, Publisher	1888
Hard		<i>Undefined by Bennett</i>	
Soft	Tom Temple's Career	A. L. Burt, Publisher	1888
Hard		<i>Undefined by Bennett</i>	
Soft	Tom Thatcher's Fortune	A. L. Burt, Publisher	1888
Hard		<i>Undefined by Bennett</i>	
Soft	Ralph Raymond's Heir	F. M. Lupton	1888.07.28
Hard		F. M. Lupton	1892
Soft	Number 91	Frank A. Munsey	1887.12
Hard		John W. Lovell	1889
Soft	Young Acrobat, The	Frank A. Munsey	1888.03
Hard		John W. Lovell	1889
Soft	Tom Tracy	Frank A. Munsey	1888.05
Hard		John W. Lovell	1890
Soft	Striving for Fortune	Street & Smith	1901
Hard	Walter Griffith	Street & Smith	1902
Soft	Tom Brace	Street & Smith	1901
Hard		Street & Smith	1901
Soft	Adrift in New York	Street & Smith	1901
Hard		<i>Undefined by Bennett</i>	
Soft	Robert Coverdale's Struggle	Street & Smith	1910.02.15
Hard		<i>Undefined by Bennett</i>	
Soft	\$500; or, Jacob Marlowe's Secret	United States Book Company	1890.05.10
Hard	The \$500 Check	United States Book Company	1891
Soft	Ned Newton	United States Book Company	1890.05.17
Hard		American Publishers Corporation	1894
Soft	Mark Stanton	United States Book Company	1890.05.23
Hard		Street & Smith	1900
Soft	Erie Train Boy, The	United States Book Company	1890.05.31
Hard		American Publishers Corporation	
Soft	New York Boy, A	United States Book Company	1890.06.28
Hard		American Publishers Corporation	1894
Soft	Dean Dunham	United States Book Company	1890.07.12
Hard		American Publishers Corporation	1891
Soft	Silas Snobden's Office Boy	J. S. Ogilvie & Company	1899
Hard		Doubleday and Company	1973



Ex. 2: A.L. Burt Weave Format



Ex. 3: A.L. Burt Blue Cap Format



Ex. 4: Small Hurst Format S9B

Soft and hard-cover first editions

(Continued from Page 5)

possible first hard-cover edition when he writes:

“By the time this enigmatic title appeared between hard covers — the edition published by A.L. Burt Company — towards the end of 1904, the story had already appeared in five separate and varied formats.”

For the most part, Brad Chase established publication dates for Burt through dedication dates and/or the Burt Catalog.⁷ None of those formats he lists in his book as published in 1904 (Rings Format, Flutist Format, and Brown Cap Format) contain *Adrift in New York: or, Tom and Florence Braving the World* in the respective lists of Alger titles. Two formats attributed to being published in 1905 are the Weave Format (Example 2) and the Blue Cap format (Example 3).

Though not included in Chase’s listing, it is one of 28 Alger titles listed as part of **The Rugby Series for Boys** on a Weave format dust jacket. All 13 of the titles published in the Rings and the Flutist formats were included in this listing, thus Chase writes, “The Alger titles include some beyond those listed in previous formats giving evidence of a later publication date than 1904.”⁸

It is possible that this was one of the titles issued in 1904, with other titles appearing later, but how to corroborate that as a fact comes into question. Ken Broadie’s copy of this title has an inscription page with a 1900 date. Apparently the person writing the inscription had a senior moment. The title page reflects Burt’s incorporation of 1902 by listing the publisher as A.L. Burt Company, Publishers; thus could not have been published in 1900. Additionally, a 1900 date of

publication would have been in violation of existing copyright laws.

Two copies of this title in the Blue Cap Format have been viewed. (Chase put the publication date at about 1905 or 1906).⁹ This author’s personal copy of this title carries a 1907 inscription, precluding it from consideration.

At least 13 other publishers made use of *Adrift in New York*, three purportedly as early as 1904. M.A. Donohue issued this title in two distinct formats in 1904 (See Format 01: Salesman and Format 04: Rower, in Chase’s book).¹⁰ Because the title appears with a subtitle and the Donohue formats do not include the subtitle, they cannot be taken into consideration as a first hard-copy edition. According to the Hurst catalogs, Thomas D. Hurst¹¹ offered this title in 1904 in his small book format (Format S9: Looped Vines; Format S9B: Hanging Dagger, Example 4) and in the standard formats of Format 14: Hockey Player — Hurst’s Young America Library and Format 16: Knee Patch — Olive Edge Edition. Chase notes, “This format was carried in the Hurst catalogues as part of **Young America Library** in 1904 with six Alger titles; in 1905 that number increased to 29.”¹² He then confirmed that *Adrift in New York* wasn’t published until 1905.¹³

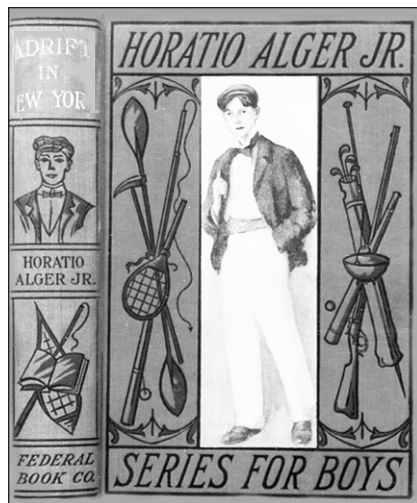
The Federal Book Co., [as the F. M. Lupton Publishing Company was renamed in 1902 which went out of business in 1904] carried this title in its Format 01 (Sports/Appiqué, Example 5) and Format 02 (Boys’ Own Library). Because no catalog was available, the listing of titles published in these formats was taken directly from book ads. This author has no way of knowing which format was published first, nor in what

order the titles were printed over the three-year existence of the company. At least one copy of the Sports/ Appliqué edition is known to exist.¹⁴

Copyright law may have been the reason Mershon advertised but did not publish this title in 1900. The later Mershon editions to which Bennett referred were published in 1905 in two formats, Yoke and Two Circles. The other known uses of this title antedate 1904.

In summary, two publishers and their respective formats can be considered when determining who published the first hard cover edition of *Drift in New York*: the two Federal Book Company formats or A.L. Burt Company, Publisher's Weave format. This assumes that the Federal Book Company did not list this title in one year and print it in another, as was the case with the Hurst publications. Do we accept Burt's Weave format as the Gardner reference? How do we establish 1904 as the publication date? If the 1904 date of publication cannot be authenticated with either publisher, one must then logically move forward to 1905 to consider the publishers and formats using this title.

I am at an impasse. Is there a member of the Society who could provide the necessary data to breach this impasse, such as a Federal Book Company catalog or an advertisement establishing the publication date for Burt's Weave edition? Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.



Ex. 5: Federal Appliqué' Format 01

NOTES:

1. Kasper, Robert E.: "The A.L. Burt Boys Home Library." *Newsboy*, July-August 2000, p. 9.
2. Kasper, Robert E.: "The A.L. Burt Boys Home Library." *Newsboy*, July-August 2001, p. 8.
3. Eastlack, Robert D.: "Robert Coverdale's Struggle: Some Thoughts on Editions." *Newsboy*, January-February 2017.
4. Copyright Act of 1790, which granted American authors the right to print, reprint or publish their work for a period of 14 years ... <www.arl.org/focus-areas/copyright-ip/2486-copyright-timeline#>
5. Bennett, Bob: *A Collector's Guide to the Published*

Works of Horatio Alger, Jr. Newark, DE, MAD Book Company, 1999, pp. 36-37.

6. Gardner, Ralph D.: *Road to Success; The Bibliography of the Works of Horatio Alger.* Mendota, IL, The Wayside Press, 1971, p. 47.

7. Chase, Bradford S.: *Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt.* Enfield, CT, Sandpiper Publishing, 1983.

8. Chase, *Op. Cit.*, p. 41.

9. The University of Michigan notes publication date from Gardner, rev. 1971 ed. Chase dates it 1905 or later. Assigning it a 1904 publication date. <www.HathiTrust.com>

10. Chase, Bradford S.: *Horatio Alger Books Published by M.A. Donohue.* Enfield, CT, Sandpiper Publishing, 1994, pp. 36, 42.

11. Chase, Bradford S.: *Thomas D. Hurst and his Publication of Horatio Alger Books.* Enfield, CT, Sandpiper Publishing, 2012.

12. Chase, Bradford S.: *Op. Cit.*, pp. 86-87.

13. Chase, Bradford S.: *Small Horatio Alger Books Published by Thomas D. Hurst,* Enfield, CT, Sandpiper Publishing, 2014, Table 4, p. 62.

14. Broadie, Kenneth: <www.horatioalgersociety.com>, email exchange.

SOURCES:

Bennett, Bob: *A Collector's Guide to the Published Works of Horatio Alger, Jr.* Newark, DE, MAD Book Company, 1999.

Broadie, Kenneth (PF-1053), email exchange.

Chase, Bradford S.: *Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt.* Enfield, CT, Sandpiper Publishing, 1983.

Chase, Bradford S.: *Horatio Alger Books Published by M.A. Donohue.* Enfield, CT, Sandpiper Publishing, 1994.

Chase, Bradford S.: *Thomas D. Hurst and his Publication of Horatio Alger Books.* Enfield, CT, Sandpiper Publishing, 2012.

Chase, Bradford S.: *Small Horatio Alger Books Published by Thomas D. Hurst,* Enfield, CT, Sandpiper Publishing, 2014.

Eastlack, Robert D.: "Robert Coverdale's Struggle: Some Thoughts on Editions." *Newsboy*, January-February 2017.

Gardner, Ralph D.: *Road to Success; The Bibliography of the Works of Horatio Alger.* Mendota, IL, The Wayside Press, 1971.

Kasper, Robert E.: "The A.L. Burt Boys Home Library." *Newsboy*, July-August 2000.

Kasper, Robert E.: "The A.L. Burt Boys Home Library." *Newsboy*, July-August 2001.

Kasper, Robert E. (PF-327), Email correspondence.

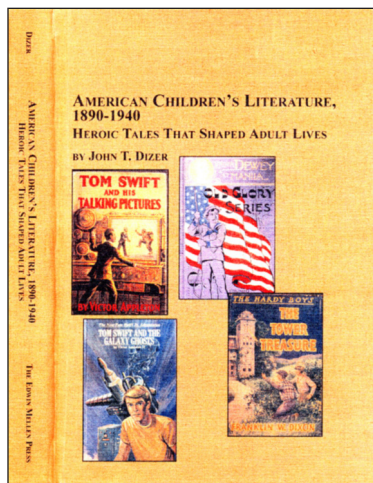
Schoenborn, Barry S. (PF-1087), Email correspondence.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Bill:

I was saddened to learn of the passing of Jack Dizer on March 23rd. He has been a good friend and mentor for more than 25 years, when I began to research series books in general and Edward Stratemeyer in particular. His articles and books and our many conversations have informed and inspired me and many others.

Jack began to research and write about series books and related fields in a time when few others were looking



at the material in a serious manner. His work spanning five decades since the 1960s has made important contributions to give our field of interest respectability.

Most of his original articles published in *Newsboy*, *Dime Novel Round-Up* and *Yellowback Library* have been collected into four books, beginning with the

ground-breaking *Tom Swift & Company: "Boys' Books"* by Stratemeyer and Others (McFarland, 1982).

Jack was a regular participant at the Popular Culture Association conferences since 1987 until a few years ago when lengthy trips became too burdensome. The latest conference I attended with him was the Dime Novel Conference at Villanova University in 2013 that was organized by Demian Katz. Indeed, upon learning that Jack, Peter Walther, Deidre Johnson, members of the LeBlanc family and others would be there, I made a special effort to attend and make a presentation.

Jack was also part of the team which made a pitch to Chubb Insurance, which secured funding for the processing of the Stratemeyer Syndicate Records collection at New York Public Library. As shown by the case of the Syndicate's book collection, which went to the NYPL Rare Books division but remains completely uncataloged and unavailable to researchers after two decades, it seems rather certain we would not have our current access to the related Stratemeyer records without the gathering of researchers and collectors, led by Jim Lawrence Jr. to get the donation from Chubb.

Jack was always available to listen to questions and ideas and provide advice and loan materials from his extensive collections. A few years ago his large series book collection joined the Harry K. Hudson materials

at the University of South Florida in Tampa. A longer article in the May-June *Newsboy* will detail his original research on series book topics for conferences, periodicals, and books.

Sincerely,
James D. Keeline (PF-898)
5707 Spartan Drive
San Diego, CA 92115
james@keeline.com

Dear Bill:

I enjoyed the latest *Newsboy*, and I was quite intrigued with your article about circus-themed children's books. I instantly thought of the prized books by Booth Tarkington in my own collection. Although not at all circus-oriented, Tarkington's *Penrod* includes chapters on a boys' carnival that the characters put on in a hay loft. Furthermore, the dustjacket features a scene from the "big show."

I have all of Tarkington's children's books, including *Penrod* (1914), *Penrod and Sam* (1916), *Penrod Jashber* (1929), and also his *Seventeen* (1916), each with its attractive, period Grosset and Dunlap dust jacket. In fact, a few months ago I picked up a fine Grosset and Dunlap edition of *Penrod Jashber* while prowling through used book stores in Richmond, Virginia, with fellow H.A.S. member Rob Kasper.

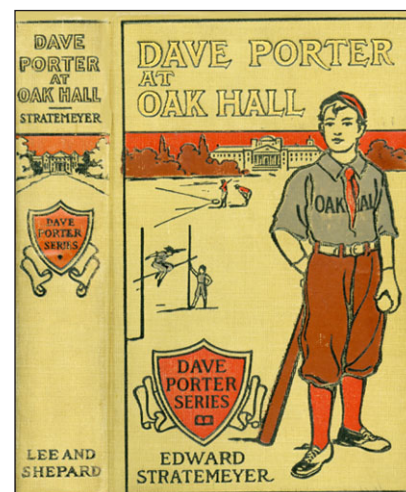
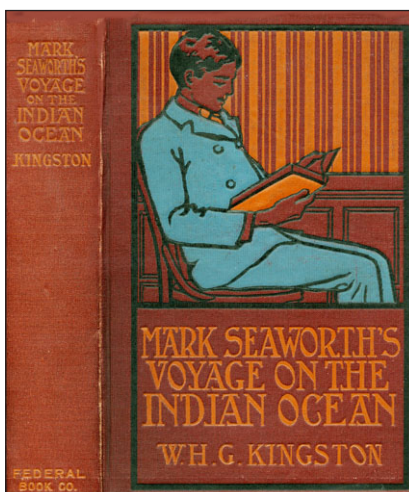
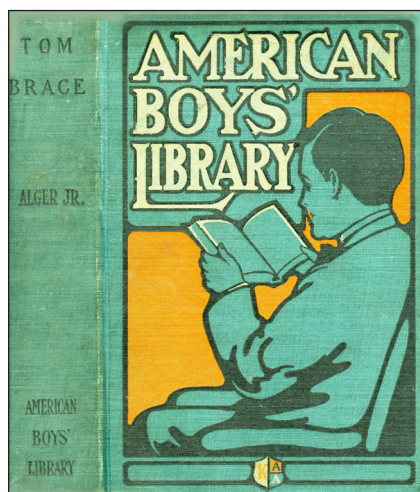
By the way, I have always liked the Burt Alger reprints with the pictorial covers and I've started re-collecting them. I just ordered two last week for less than ten dollars each.



Cordially,
Jack Bales (PF-258)
422 Greenbrier Court
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
jbales@umw.edu

Dear Bill:

I'm sorry to report there has been no progress on the American Boys' Library series research. Several contacts with the S&S archives at Syracuse have produced nothing at all, and the *U.S. Catalogue* for 1902 and 1902-1905 do not mention the series. Surprising, as both the Boys' Own Library and the Boys' Popular Library are indicated parenthetically in the S&S listings. One thing we can



say — this series was contemporary with the other two S&S series, as at least one of the books I have has ads for both in the back. As all the titles we have located so far were also issued in these other series, it seems as if the publisher saw this series as redundant and canceled it quickly. These books may have had only one printing in this format, the primary reason for their scarcity today.

I did come across two new (to me, anyway) formats for Federal issues of the two libraries. One is a direct copy of the Boys' Popular Library (W.H.G. Kingston's *Mark Seaworth's Voyage on the Indian Ocean*), although it's bound in a dark burgundy cloth and the boy's suit is a bit more blue (as opposed to slate blue on the S&S issues).

There are also two variants I've seen only on Algers. One has the orange stripes, book cover and lettering replaced with dark green, with the cloth in a chocolate brown. The lettering and design on this format is so difficult to discern that I doubt it was used for long. We have a copy of *Strive and Succeed* in this format. We also have another Alger (*Try and Trust*) in a very pale green cloth with the stripes, book and lettering in a medium green. Both of these are entirely S&S inside, as is the Kingston.

The other format is similar, although the boy reading is dressed differently and the illustration has a bookcase, lamp and desk besides. I have *Don Kirk's Mine* (Gilbert Patten) in this format, with the cloth color being a medium green. I also have another copy of the Kingston mentioned above in this format, although the cloth is beige. These, too, are entirely S&S inside. The ads in all these Federal issues are early, showing only three Merriwells.

And that sums up what I've found.

I read your circus article with enjoyment; I don't think I've seen anyone do an article on this aspect of collecting before. I have most but not all of the books,

as I have no Altemus series at all. And as you left the door open for comments, I do have three circus books not mentioned, although none are series books. You may know of these already:

- *Limber Lew, the Circus Boy! or, the Battle of Life* by Edward S. Ellis. Published by Henry T. Coates in 1903. First edition.

- *Redney McGaw: A Story of the Big Show and the Cheerful Spirit* by Arthur E. McFarlane. Published by Little, Brown and Company in 1909. First edition.

- *The Circus Boys, or the Novelty Circus Company* by Frank Gordon Oliver. Published by Albert Whitman in 1919. This may be a reprint, as the paper is quite toned. The books I have by Roy Snell, published by this company, are all on high-quality paper, but were issued about five years later. Either Albert Whitman used bad paper during and right after WWI, or this is a 1930s reprint, issued when the company was hard up. No way to really tell, though.

I can supply photos of these if you wish. I also have photos of most of the Federal stuff, although I can't get the one Alger to show any lettering regardless of whether I use the scanner or the camera. Let me know which you'd like, if any, and they will come to you from Mary Ann's computer.

We recently found an L&S copy of *Dave Porter at Oak Hall* on eBay for \$15. A very clean, tight copy with all the plates. I recall that you have a copy, but I'd never run across one for sale before. The odd thing was it had been there for at least two weeks without a buyer. Some days one is lucky, some not.

Sincerely,
Bart J. Nyberg (PF-879)
4657 Mason St.
Omaha, NE 68106
lewarcher@aol.com

President's column

(Continued from Page 2)

the same firm and is promoted to what Alger calls "the responsible position of porter."

So, we may doubt that Alger would have liked the so-called "gig economy" exemplified by Uber and Lyft, in which employees are treated as contractors at best (although some courts have ruled that they are employees) so that they may be deprived of the benefits that go along with the status of full-time employee. He did assume that hard work and ambition would be rewarded, as contrasted with all the goodies going to the top one percent.

West has long been regarded as a preeminent satirist whose novels reflect his pessimistic view of society. His most famous work was *The Day of the Locust*, which takes on America in Hollywood, the dream factory itself. He might be pardoned for depicting the world he saw in the 1930s in dark shades, given that the Great Depression had made life miserable for millions. It's ironic, indeed, that his brother-in-law was a satirist and humorist of a far brighter temperament: S.J. Perelman.

* * *

Although some of our members occasionally pine for the extensive resources that enable the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans to recognize annually those who have reputedly become rich through hard work, Alger was likely enough of an idealist that he would want to know how these honorees made their ways to fame and fortune. If they cut corners on their path to success, Horatio probably would have called them out for that.

One of this year's honorees is football quarterback-turned team executive vice president John Elway. With apologies to those who live in Denver or root for the Broncos, Elway was the proverbial collegiate golden boy who summarily declared that he would not play

football for a team in Baltimore because he felt he was entitled to play in some loftier locale. The then-Baltimore Colts were thus forced not to draft Elway so as to avoid a possible holdout on his part that would necessitate their trading him at a bargain-basement price. He even threatened to play baseball for the New York Yankees in hopes of scaring the Colts away.

Ultimately, the Baltimore club, which had known the glory days of the great Johnny Unitas as quarterback, when he led them to victory in the 1958 title match in overtime over the New York Giants (often referred to as the greatest football game ever), was deprived of a great player like Elway who might have lifted them from the doldrums where they had languished. Finishing last had won them that useless first draft choice.

So not long after, when desperate owner Robert Irsay incurred perpetual ignominy — at least in Baltimore — for moving the team to Indianapolis in the middle of the night, Elway's spoiled-child act — "*I'll only play where I want to!*" — was blamed for Charm City's loss of the NFL team that had been part of the city's fabric. Team members, relatively low paid in those days, were part of the laboring city, especially in the off-season, when they worked at regular jobs in bars, factories, and businesses.

All this should remind us that although Alger's novels are regarded as both simple and repetitive, since he admittedly had a hard time coming up with new plots, his concept of how his heroes should conduct themselves is far closer to the values of the Boy Scout Law ("A Scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent") than the Art of the Deal. He was a more complex man and writer than he is often portrayed.

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

MEMBERSHIP

New member

Gary Sirak (PF-1140)
4700 Dressler Road, NW
Canton, OH 44718
(330) 493-3211
Email: GSCLU@aol.com

Reinstated member

Michael G. Pagani (PF-974)
P.O. Box 463
Patterson, CA 95363
Email: Mgpagani.mentoring@gmail.com

In addition to Alger, Michael's collecting interests include G.A. Henty and other boys' series books. Welcome back!

SUCCESS IS A DUTY; OR, THE LOVERS' STRATEGEM.

By O. AUGUSTA CHENEY

"Why will you consent to fly with me, Irene? You know that old Jezebel will never agree to our marriage."

"Hush! Charles, you couldn't be so disrespectful, and, besides, she will hear us, I am afraid."

"She couldn't do that unless her ear was at the keyhole, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if it was. I haven't any better opinion of her."

"To tell the truth, I haven't either," said his companion, smiling. Somehow, she seems to be acquainted with all our plans, though how she comes by the information I cannot tell, unless she does listen to our conversation."

"Well, all I have to say is she won't feel flattered at what she hears. You know 'listeners never do hear any good of themselves.'"

"So it is to make good that adage that prompts you to make disparaging remarks concerning her, is it?"

"Not at all. You know very well there is no love lost between us, and she will never favor my suit. It is this thought which prompts me to ask for a secret marriage."

"I do not feel willing to comment to that, unless it should be a last resort."

"I think it will prove to be our only chance of being united during her lifetime."

"I will make one more attempt to conciliate her. If that fails, we will talk over other plans."

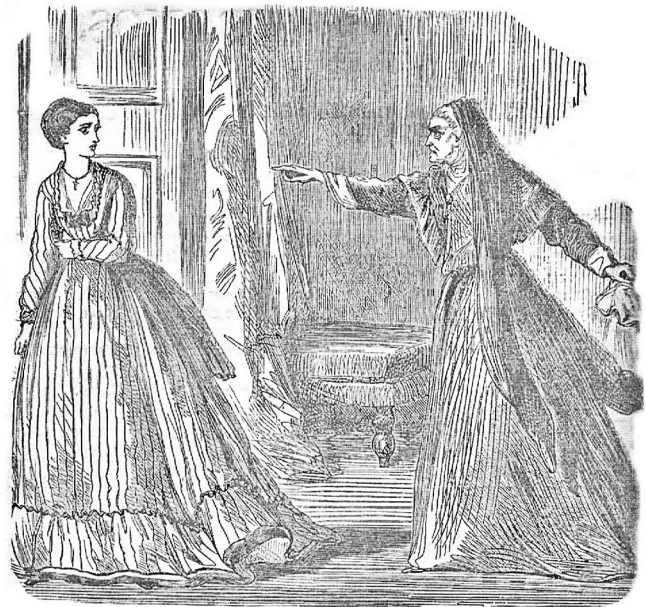
"Very well. I have no objection to your doing so, since it will perhaps be more satisfactory to you. But I think I know how it will terminate. When will you make the trial?"

"To-morrow, unless something should happen to prevent."

"And how shall I learn the result? It will not do for me to call here again so soon, I suppose."

"I will send you a note, giving the particulars of the interview."

"If you speak with her on the subject to-morrow, why not



meet me the next day following? We can have a pleasant walk together, and talk the matter over, much more satisfactorily, to me at least."

"Perhaps that would be as good an arrangement as any," said Irene. "If anything happens to prevent my coming, I will send you a note."

Irene Melville was the daughter of a wealthy merchant. Her own mother had died when she was an infant, and not long after, her father married again.

The present Mrs. Melville was overbearing and tyrannical; but there had never been any disputes or quarrels between herself and her step-daughter, since Irene was amicable, and always preferred to live up to her mother's wishes rather than to have any disturbance. While her father was living, she had a friend who took interest in all her plans, but since his death, which occurred a year previous, her step-mother had been more domineering than before.

Charles Mowbray was head clerk in a store adjoining that formerly occupied by Mr. Melville. He had been acquainted with Irene several years, but had not been regarded by her as a lover, until since her father's death.

Rumors of her engagement had reached the ears of Mrs. Melville, but she gave no credit to the report, saying that Irene would never so forget her position as to marry a low clerk.

The next morning after Irene's conversation with her lover, she entered the drawing-room where her mother was seated.

"Irene," said Mrs. Melville, after a short pause, "who was that young man who called to see you last evening?"

"That was Mr. Mowbray," said the young girl, blushing.

"And what was he here for?"

"As you just said, he came to see me."

"You do not mean to say that he has any serious intentions in coming here," said Mrs. Melville. "Is he the one I heard in

(Continued on Page 12)

This short story by Olive Augusta Cheney, published in Gleason's Monthly Companion (December 1875, Vol. IV, No. 12), is similar in style to early drawing-room sketches written by her brother, Horatio Alger, Jr., starting in the mid-1850s. For more about Cheney's career both as a writer and leading advocate for women's and human rights, readers are directed to Robert E. Kasper's article in the September-October 2003 Newsboy (Vol. XLI, No. 5), available for viewing on the official H.A.S. website.

SUCCESS IS A DUTY

(Continued from Page 11)

connection with yours, a short time ago?"

"I do now know what you have heard in that connection; but Mr. Mowbray and I have been engaged for several months."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Melville, starting to her feet. "Would you, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, demean yourself so much, as to marry a beggarly clerk?"

"Charles Mowbray is a clerk, I grant, but he is none the worse for that."

"And would you be willing to have a luxurious home, where everything that money can supply is provided, for a bare subsistence with as lowly dry-goods clerk?"

"Mr. Mowbray, though a clerk, earns sufficient to provide a modest and comfortable home for me. The possession of wealth alone does not always bring happiness. Besides, I think my father began life in the same capacity, and yet I do not suppose when you married, you considered him any the worse for so doing."

How dare you taunt me this way? What was it to me that your father might have been in by-gone years. When I married him he was a merchant in high standing. I neither know, or wish to know anything of his former life."

"Mr. Mowbray may become a merchant, and attain as high a position as my father did."

"That makes no difference. As yet he is nothing but a low clerk, and I command you to discard him."

"Mrs. Melville, you were the wife of my father, and on that account I have been unwilling to anger you. But you have gone beyond the bounds of reason. I do not acknowledge your authority, and I shall not discard Charles Mowbray at your bidding."

"You will not obey me?" said Mrs. Melville furiously. "then leave the house this instant!"

[SEE ENGRAVING]

"But no," said she, a little more calmly; "I will give you one week in which to decide. All your father's property was left to me. If you leave this house you will be penniless. Should you marry that upstart, Mowbray, not one cent shall you receive from me. But if you consider my wishes, and marry a man whom I consider eligible, I will settle half the property I possess, upon you, now, and the remainder will come to you at my death. You need not answer me now," said she, as Irene was about to speak. I will give you one week in which to consider the matter. At the end of that time I shall expect to hear your decision."

She then passed out of the room, leaving Irene in a state of perplexity, and quite discouraged.

The day following, Irene met her lover according to agreement.

"Well, said Charles, "what news have you for me – agreeable or otherwise?"

"I'm afraid you will find it quite otherwise," returned Irene; and she described the interview which had taken place between her step-mother and herself.

"It is just as I expected," said Charles. "I felt sure she would never consent to our union. You cannot, now, refuse to marry me privately, since that seems to be the only course left us."

"I shrink from such a step as that, Charles. Why can we not wait awhile? It is only your position which she objects to. She has never seen you, has she?"

"Not that I know of. But I have seen her, and her face was not pleasant to look upon. Ah!" said he, starting suddenly, "I have a plan? By Jove, I believe we'll circumvent the old lady yet!"

"What is the plan?" asked Irene, with interest.

"You remember I commenced the study of law at one time, and gave it up when the position of head clerk at Bryant and Pearson's was offered me?"

"Yes."

"Well, I've been thinking for some time of resuming it. I can drop my last name, and be known as Charles Bancroft (Bancroft being my middle name). A few days ago I received a small legacy from an aunt in the country. This will be sufficient to install me in the good graces of your step-mother."

"But she will learn of your deception through others."

"I do not see as there is any deception about it. She will know me as Mr. Bancroft, the lawyer, who has just received a legacy from his aunt. As that is all true, I don't see how there is any deception about it."

"Your explanation is very plausible," returned Irene, smiling. I think you will make a good lawyer. But suppose the story should leak out. Of course your friends will all comment on the change and it would be strange if Mrs. Melville did not hear of it."

"O, that is easily arranged. I shall give out that I am going West, and shall give up my situation. Then I shall take the cars for Rockville, which lies six miles west of us. There I shall shave off my beard, put on a dark wig, don a suit of black, and return as Charles Bancroft, the lawyer. There are two or three of my intimate friends who will perhaps recognize me. But they will aid me in keeping my secret till the time comes to make it known."

"I hope your plan will work as well as you anticipate."

"I have no doubt it will. But here we are at the bridge. I suppose I cannot go any nearer the house with you. The next time you see me, a change will have come over me."

"I shall await with interest future developments."

At the expiration of a week Mrs. Melville called Irene to her.

"Have you considered the matter we spoke of a week ago, Irene?" asked she.

"I have."

"And what is your decision?"

"I saw Charles Mowbray the day following, and told him

I could not marry him for the present, at least.”

“You have done well, and proved your self a sensible girl as I expected. How did Mr. Mowbray receive your decision?”

“He seemed somewhat disturbed, and I heard that he left for the West next day.”

“That is the best thing that could happen. By the way, Mrs. Pearson called yesterday. She handed me a card of a young lawyer, a friend of hers, who has just come to town, and bespoke for him any business of mine which might come within his province. Here is his card.”

She handed Irene a card bearing this description —

**“Charles Bancroft,
Attorney at law
14 Barristers’ Hall”**

“Have you seen Mr. Bancroft?” asked Irene, with interest.

“No I have not, but I told Mrs. Pearson to ask him to call here this afternoon. If I am pleased with his appearance, I shall employ him to preference Mr. Ellis, who has grown old, and is getting quite careless. I have frequently found mistakes in the accounts he has rendered within the last few months.”

At that moment the bell rang and a servant announced — “Mr. Bancroft.”

Irene looked up quickly, and her gaze fell upon a young man dressed in black, with a closely shaven face. He wore eyeglasses, being, as he said, very near-sighted. He had a slightly foreign accent, and Irene would never have recognized him if she had not known that her lover was to appear in this *role*.

He bowed low on being presented to the young girl, but afterward paid little heed to her, his attention being wholly taken up with Mrs. Melville. The latter, after a few moments’ conversation, engaged him as her business agent, and gave his authority to act for her in all business transactions.

His engagement as Mrs. Melville’s agent brought Charles to the house quite often. Sometimes he found the young girl and her mother together, and sometimes, though rarely, he saw Irene alone. At such times, it is but fair to say, that other business than Mrs. Melville’s was discussed.

One day, a few weeks after Charles’ first appearance as a lawyer, Mrs. Melville came into the room where the young girls was sitting, and said —

“Irene, won’t you call at Mr. Bancroft’s office, on your way down town, and leave this paper? It should have been sent last night, but I did not like to trust a servant with it, I would like to have his opinion of it. Or, perhaps, he can call here to-night. There are some other things that I wish to consult him about.”

“Very well, I will call. It is number fourteen, isn’t it?”

“Yes; fourteen, Barristers’ Hall.”

Half an hour later, Charles Bancroft heard alight tap at the door of his office.

“Come in,” said he, and Irene passed in.

The young man started up. “I didn’t think of seeing you to-day, Irent, that is, unless I should call at the house to-night. It is an unexpected pleasure.

“I merely came on business,” said the young girl, demurely. Mrs. Melville wished me to call and leave this paper.”

Charles took the paper, and without glancing at it, threw it hastily into a drawer in his desk.

“And how am I progressing in Mrs. Melville’s good graces?”

“O, you are in high favor. I dare say if you were to propose, you would get a favorable reply.

“Nonsense,” said the young man. “What I want to know is, would she be willing to receive me as a suitor for your hand?”

“I think so, for only yesterday she was expatiating on your great business capacity, and she said any lady might consider herself fortunate to obtain so talented a husband.”

“Did she say that? By Jove, I believe I must go down to-night, and ask permission to pay my addresses to her daughter.”

“I suppose my consent is only a secondary matter.”

“Certainly,” said he, “secondary, but yet somewhat important. I believe, however, I had that some weeks ago.”

“Now that you mention it, I do remember saying something of the kind. But I must not forget the message I was requested to deliver. Mrs. Melville wishes you call her this evening, as she has some matters concerning which she would like to ask your advice.”

Tell her I will not fail to come, as I also have a matter to which I wish to call her attention.”

That evening, Charles Bancroft called as he had been requested, on Mrs. Melville, and after the business had been completed, the young man said:

“There is a little matter I would like to speak to you about, madam. Since, as your business agent, I have been a frequent caller here, I have become very much interested in your daughter, and I wish to ask your permission to pay my addresses to her.”

“You have my full permission to do so, and I think she will look on you with favor. It will be gratifying to me, also, to receive you as a son.”

At that moment Irene entered, and Mrs. Melville, saying that she was going for a book, went out, and forgot to return. However, her absence was not regretted by the young people, who found no difficulty in entertaining each other.

A few weeks later, they were married. Charles has become quite a celebrated lawyer, and still goes by the name of Bancroft.

Mrs. Melville frequently visits her daughter, and on such occasions often reminds her that but for her interference, Irene might have married Charles Mowbray, the clerk, with a meagre pittance for a salary, instead of becoming, as she has done, the wife of one of the most successful lawyers of his time.

THE END

Laurie York Erskine rides with *Renfrew* of the *Royal Mounted*

By William R. Gowen (PF-706)

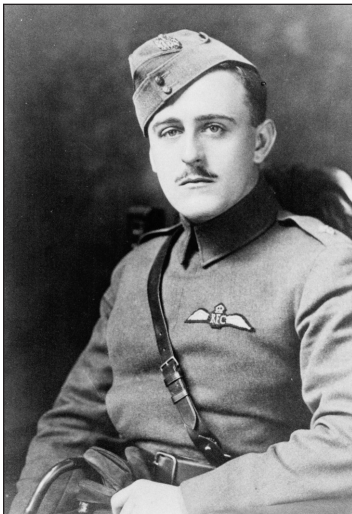
He was born in Great Britain but lived the majority of his early life in the United States, so Laurie York Erskine was an American in spirit and eventually for real upon becoming a naturalized citizen in the 1940s.

Erskine (1894-1976) had a life many would certainly envy: As a young man he practiced several professions, including clerical, sales and acting jobs in New York City and elsewhere, service as a volunteer pilot for the British Flying Corps in World War I, co-founder of one of America's most well-known private boarding/preparatory schools, and finally, as a prolific writer, mostly stories for boys but some adult fiction as well.

Today, we are most familiar with Erskine from the eight books in the *Renfrew of the Royal Mounted Police* series, published by Appleton and/or Appleton-Century and then reissued by Grosset & Dunlap. We'll discuss

how these books came about, a brief discussion of their story-lines, and how the character of Douglas Renfrew entered the expanding multi-media era with appearance on national radio and then in Hollywood with a series of films developed into screenplays from the *Renfrew* books we have enjoyed reading and collecting for many years.

Laurie York Erskine was born on June 23, 1894, in Kirkcudbright, Scotland, although some sources list his



Laurie York Erskine in his Royal Flying Corps uniform during World War I in 1917-18.

This article was presented at the 46th annual conference of the Popular Culture Association at Seattle, Washington, on March 22, 2016, and at the 2016 Horatio Alger Society convention in Columbus/Edinburgh, Indiana.



birthplace as Maidenhead, England.

His parents, Walter Erskine and Ada Margery Erskine, were both actors, and the family traveled to the United States to further their careers on the New York stage. Young Laurie, then age 7, attended the New York City public schools, also receiving musical training at the choir school of the Cathedral-Church of St. John the Divine, seat of the New York Episcopal Archdiocese, located adjacent to Central Park on the city's upper West Side.

As a young man, Erskine traveled throughout the United States and Canada, and at 15 he joined a national touring company of Loretta Taylor's Broadway hit "Peg o' My Heart," although his acting career was brief.

At age 19 he joined Britain's Royal Flying Corps, where he served with headquarters and training squadrons, mostly in France between November 1917 and December 1918. He then returned to the United States, soon moving to Michigan, where he got his

first taste of professional writing as a reporter for the **Battle Creek Moon Journal** before landing a job as an editorial writer for the **Detroit Free Press**, one of the country's major daily newspapers. He worked there in 1921 and 1922.

It appears likely his stay in Detroit led to his longtime affiliation with **The American Boy** magazine, headquartered in that city. The magazine was founded by William C. Sprague in 1899 and remained in business until 1941. Erskine's first story for **The American Boy** was "Dead Men's Tales," in the July 1921 issue, and his last, a school sports story appeared in the October 1940 issue.

But first, let's take a quick step back from Erskine's writing career and discuss the other aspect of his life, one that has earned some of his the greatest accolades: his co-founding of The Solebury School in New Hope, Pennsylvania, in 1925.

Shortly after wrapping up his newspaper career in Detroit in 1922, he moved to New Hope and decided to settle there permanently. The idea

for what eventually became the Solebury School came about when, at a youth summer camp in 1924, at which Erskine counseled with the school's other co-founders, Robert W. Shaw, Arthur Washburn and Julian Lathrop, the foursome came up with the idea of creating a school utilizing advanced learning philosophies. Erskine had visited many preparatory schools in the United States and Canada and found the learning situation "not a pretty one," according to quotes attributed to him in Shaw's privately published history, *Solebury School: The First Fifty Years* (1977).

In simple terms, most teaching in those days was done by the "learn by rote" method, with its resulting short retention span. The goal of the Solebury School was to train each student's mind, so that, in effect, he taught himself. In addition to providing a better education, this method causes students to be less bored with repetitions, along with an increased hunger to learn. To that end, teachers were hired to train the mind, not

repeat words and numbers from a book from a lectern in a one-directional manner.

The Solebury School opened its doors in New Hope in 1925, using rented quarters, and a year later Erskine & Co. purchased the site of the local Michener Farm, which remains the location of the school today, with a greatly expanded campus. Started as a boys' boarding school, in 1949 Solebury merged with the nearby Holmquist School for Girls, and thus it became one of the earliest co-educational independent schools in the United States.

Erskine believed his shared experiences with young

men in the outdoors of the United States and Canada increased their interest in learning in general:

"Around innumerable campfires and on unnumbered hikes they have eagerly drawn from me information and explanation of every subject they were studying at school, and have avidly reached out for and enjoyed all. I would tell them of history, biography, literature, poetry, mature story — in short, all the world



The Solebury School in New Hope, Pennsylvania, co-founded by Laurie York Erskine in 1925 as a boys' boarding school.

of knowledge that good conversation and friendly discussion could open to them. Discussion seemed to be the key."

Erskine's philosophy of education is found in his writing, in particular the Renfrew stories, which for the most part were first published in **The American Boy** and later put out in book form by D. Appleton and Company and D. Appleton-Century. As mentioned, his stories first appeared in **The American Boy** in 1921, some as short stories and others as serials.

Shown on Page 16 is the cover of the July 1927 issue, announcing the start of the serial "Renfrew Rides the Sky," which Appleton published as the third book in the hard-cover series in 1928.

The last Douglas Renfrew adventure to appear in magazine form (as far as we know at this point) was "Renfrew at Retribution River," published in the April 1943 edition of **Boys' Life**, the official journal of the Boy Scouts of America. Remember, **The American Boy** had

(Continued on Page 16)

Laurie York Erskine

(Continued from Page 15)

ceased publication in August 1941. (The first page of this **Boys' Life** story is shown below).

We should note that Erskine's writings appeared in several other periodicals over the years. He had a short story titled "Calling River," published in **Munsey's Magazine** in March 1922, and his work also appeared in **Argosy All-Story Weekly** and **The Popular Magazine**, and we find numerous examples of adult-oriented short stories in **Collier's** between 1927 and 1936.

Also, three stories appeared in **The Reader's Digest** and a relatively late story, "The Lady and the Lynching," was published in the October 18, 1958, issue of **The Saturday Evening Post**.

In a further note about Erskine's personal life, he married at the rather late age of 42 to Doreene Berkeley, 33, a native of Camden, Arkansas, on August 29, 1936. They lived in New Hope, Pennsylvania. He remained affiliated with the Solebury School the remainder of his

life, and contributed a majority of the income derived from his Renfrew books and other writing to the school he had co-founded.

Radio and the movies

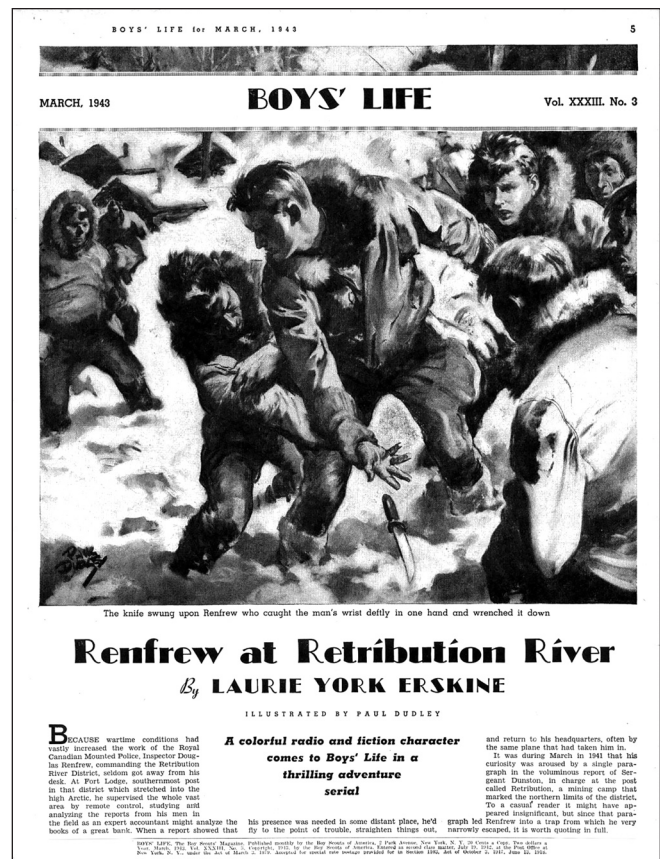
The popularity of the Renfrew books inspired radio and movie adaptations and then, a short-lived television series.

The radio program was broadcast nationally, first as a 15-minute daily serial on the CBS Radio Network in 1938, with Douglas Renfrew played by actor House Jameson and his close friend, Carol Girard, portrayed by Joan Baker. On some stations the show was sponsored by Wonder Bread, promoting it thus: "Listen In. He matches his courage against them all. Ride with Renfrew of the Mounted!" The live introduction by the studio announcer was even more florid:

"Once again, we bring you Renfrew of the Mounted, another story of the famous inspector of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, known to thousands of admirers through the books and stories of Laurie York Erskine. Adapted to radio by George Ludlum. Today, Renfrew investigates the strange case of Corporal Malcolm Sandes ..."



This July 1927 issue of **The American Boy** contains the opening chapters of Erskine's "Renfrew Rides the Sky." The serial was issued as a book in 1928.



Apparently the last Renfrew story to appear in magazine form was "Renfrew at Retribution River," published in the August 1941 issue of **Boys' Life**.



Actor James Newill portrayed Douglas Renfrew in six Hollywood films. This title, “Crashing Thru,” was adapted from the book *Renfrew Rides the Range*.

The show was also offered on the NBC Blue Network under the umbrella title, “Adventure Stories” by Laurie York Erskine and eventually expanded to 30 minutes.

It didn’t take long for Hollywood to get into the act, as the Renfrew books were developed into six films, featuring James Newill in the title role. An original one-sheet advertising poster is shown above for “Crashing Thru,” the film adaptation of *Renfrew Rides the Range*, the sixth of the eight Renfrew books for young people.

Because “singing cowboys” were the rage during that era, Newill played a singing version of Douglas Renfrew as compared with the strait-laced, serious Erskine version. Newill also hosted a short-lived TV series in 1953 in which he introduced excerpts from the earlier movies.

The Renfrew films are available on DVD. Here are five examples: “Renfrew of the Royal Mounted” is from the book of the same title; “Danger Ahead” is adapted from *Renfrew’s Long Trail*; “Murder on the Yukon” is

The Renfrew Series

By Laurie York Erskine

1. *Renfrew of the Royal Mounted* — Illustrated by John A. Taylor. 1922, D. Appleton & Co.
2. *Renfrew Rides Again* — Illustrated by John A. Taylor. 1927, D. Appleton & Co.
3. *Renfrew Rides the Sky* — Illustrated by John A. Taylor. 1928, D. Appleton & Co.
4. *Renfrew Rides North* — Illustrated by Charles E. Dameron. 1931, D. Appleton & Co.
5. *Renfrew’s Long Trail* — Illustrated by Neil O’Keeffe. 1933, D. Appleton-Century Co.
6. *Renfrew Rides the Range* — Illustrated by Neil O’Keeffe. 1935, D. Appleton-Century Co.
7. *Renfrew in the Valley of the Vanished Men* — Illustrated by Hanson Booth. 1936, D. Appleton-Century Co.
8. *Renfrew Flies Again* — Illustrated by Edward Shenton. 1941, D. Appleton-Century Co.

Note: All titles were reissued by Grosset & Dunlap in the 1940s.

adapted from *Renfrew Rides North*; as already noted, “Crashing Thru” is from *Renfrew Rides the Range*; and “On the Great White Trail” is from a story not confirmed in book form.

The Renfrew books

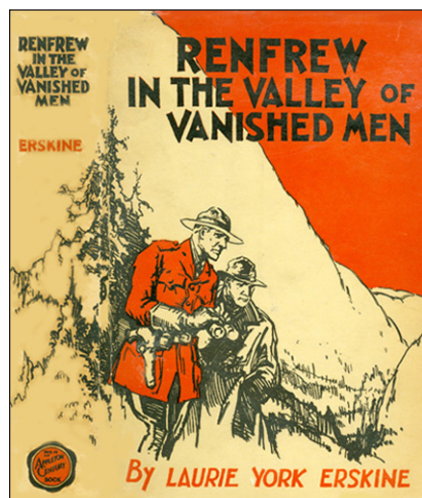
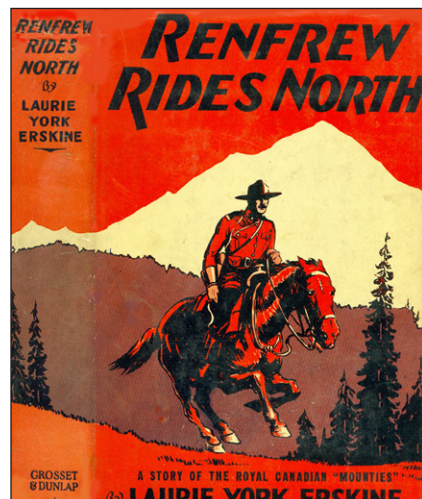
For *Renfrew of the Royal Mounted* (1922), Erskine dedicated this first book in the series “To my mother, Margery Erskine.” It is a collection of Renfrew short stories from *The American Boy*, tied together with a common theme as the narrator (Douglas Renfrew) assembles a group of eager, young boys to hear his tales of the Great Northwest. Alan MacNeil, a young friend of Renfrew in the town of Walney, introduces him to his friends Billy Loomis, Bruce Currie, Paul Hurlbut, Dick Rose, Howard Hough, Phil Mayo and their other friends, all about age 14, as they sit under some trees and watch Renfrew arrive, “sometimes appearing on his glistening black mare, sometimes on foot; always bringing with him the spirit of open places and the vague air of adventure.”

This way of telling his stories can be found throughout the eight books in the “regular” Renfrew series. There is a ninth book, titled *One Man Came Back*, published in 1939 but not listed with the series. Like the other eight books, it draws its material from the pages of *The American Boy*, in this case a book-length serial.

As noted about the first title, some of the books are collections of short stories tied together with a common

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The Renfrew of the Royal Mounted Police books, 1922-41



Laurie York Erskine

(Continued from Page 17)

narrative, and others are from serials, filling a book-length manuscript of 40 to 50 chapters. Examples of the latter include *Renfrew Rides Again* (1927), the second book of the series; and *Renfrew Rides the Sky* (1928), the third book. Here's a brief example of descriptive action from *Renfrew Rides Again*:

Renfrew, at full speed, tackled him about the neck. The two rolled over and over, and Barto tore at Renfrew's throat, his chest, his limbs. He tore Renfrew's clothes from him. He ripped the skin with his great paws. Seeming unable to regain his feet, he twisted his body from the waist and smashed at his enemy with gigantic arms. Again and again he flung the redcoat from him, and again and again Renfrew came back. Beaten, bruised, all but unconscious, gasping for breath, Renfrew was determined that the murderer should not escape him again."

In his foreword to *Renfrew Rides the Sky*, Erskine, drawing from his experiences with the Royal Flying Corps in the Great War, turns very serious in taking on the persona of story-teller Douglas Renfrew:

"When a man tells war stories," he once protested, "it is as though he showed off his medals; as though he strutted in uniform. There's pleasure in telling of stories, but so many good men were killed in the war that those particular stories are not for a man to tell. They don't belong to any man who came through — they are dead men's tales. Understand what I mean?"

"The war was an adventure all right," he said, ' but chiefly, it was a war, and war is a matter of competitive killing on a large scale. That doesn't make a particularly cheerful kind of story."

Unlike the other Renfrew Books set in the Great Northwest, this book was compiled from experiences Erskine observed in Europe during the war. According to David Kirk Vaughan's presentation on Erskine at the 1987 Popular Culture Association conference in Montreal: *"They have at times an irony and even bitterness about them that elevate them above the level of juvenile series writing. To my mind, Renfrew Rides the Sky is one of the finest works of fiction about the war in the air."*

The remaining five titles in the "regular" Renfrew series are shown in the list on Page 17. All eight books were reprinted by Grosset & Dunlap. As mentioned, a ninth title, *One Man Came Back*, is not listed here, as it

was not advertised by Appleton-Century or Grosset & Dunlap as part of the series.

Erskine, as mentioned earlier, wrote many adult-



oriented adventures and romances for periodicals, in particular *Collier's* magazine. Several of those stories reached book form, most of them produced by D. Appleton & Co. and its successor, D. Appleton-Century. Titles include *The Coming of Cosgrove*, *Fine Fellows*, *After School*, *Valor of the Range*, *The Confidence Man*, *The Laughing Rider*, *The River Trail* and

Comrades of the Clouds, the latter title again based on Erskine's World War I experiences in Europe.

Erskine also volunteered to serve in World War II despite being age 47 the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. He is shown below as a U.S. Army major,

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REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER **2619** 1. NAME (Print) **Laurie York Erskine** ORDER NUMBER

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) **52 West 11th NYC NY**

3. MARRIAGE ADDRESS **Same**

4. TELEPHONE **W-5-0211** 5. AGE IN YEARS **47** 6. PLACE OF BIRTH **England**

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS **(Mother) Helen Hughes 52 West 11th NYC**

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS **Self - Free Lance Writer**

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS **52 West 11th NYC NY**

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE

D. S. S. FORM 1
REVISED 4-1-42

Erskine's 1942 Selective Service registration card.



Major Laurie York Erskine, center, flanked by Tarzan creator Edgar Rice Burroughs and Superman creator Corporal Jerry Siegel in Hawaii in 1945.

Laurie York Erskine

(Continued from Page 19)

and was assigned as an anti-aircraft officer as well as contributing his journalistic skills to **Fighting Facts**, a military publication, after he was assigned to the Pacific Theater.

Erskine's Selective Service Registration Card from April, 1942 (above) listed his occupation as "free lance writer" with place of employment New York City, where his publishers were located.

He listed his native country as England instead of Scotland, which may lend credence to his birthplace as Maidenhead, England. Erskine's draft registrar's report described his physical characteristics as 5-foot-8, 160 pounds, light-complexioned and with a mustache.

At about the same time, Laurie York Erskine formalized his United States Citizenship, filing his naturalization petition in Philadelphia. His residence was listed as "Solebury School, New Hope Pennsylvania."

As mentioned earlier, Erskine continued writing following the war. One of the two articles he had published in **The Readers' Digest** was reprinted in the **Winnipeg Tribune**, under the headline "Husky, World's Toughest

Laurie Erskine Dies, Author of 'Renfrew'

Laurie York Erskine, 82, author of "Renfrew of the Mountains" series, died Tuesday in New Hope, Pa., it was reported by his sister, Mrs. Helen E. Upham of Southport.

Mr. Erskine, who published 21 books, was best known for the boys' adventure series on Renfrew, which was serialized on radio and television and made into a movie.

A native of England, Mr. Erskine fought in both world wars, serving with the Royal Flying Corps in World War I and its successor, the RAF.

Along with three others, Mr. Erskine founded the Solebury school for boys in New Hope in 1925, and was actively involved in the school throughout his life, teaching classes in writing there.

Survivors, in addition to his sister in Southport, include another sister, Mrs. Violet E. Ewart of Coral Gables, Fla., and several nieces and nephews.

Dog, Was Man's Key to the North." Obviously, this subject was dear to his heart after so many years traveling throughout the Northwest Territories of Canada.

Erskine died on November 29, 1976, at age 82, at his home in New Hope, Pennsylvania. The December 3 obituary, at left, from the Bridgeport (Conn.) Post, mentions Renfrew in the headline.

An interesting addendum to this story was a meeting between three creative minds in Honolulu, Hawaii, during the week of the Japanese surrender in September 1945. Published in the local newspaper, the article included this photograph (above) showing Major Laurie York Erskine, in the middle, flanked by Tarzan creator Edgar Rice Burroughs and Superman's creator, Corporal Jerry Siegel. It was the first meeting between the three "Masters of Imagination," as the article's headline proclaimed.

During this casual get-together, the below inscription card was presented by Erskine to Burroughs.

To Edgar Burroughs
 that composite of
 Tarzan Superman
 + Renfrew of the Mountains

Laurie Y. Erskine
 Major, CAC
 52 W 11 ST, N.Y.C.