

The Fossil

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Amateur Journalism: Rooted in Adolescence

by Jessica A. Isaac, PhD

THOUGH AMATEUR JOURNALISM has been largely the domain of adults for more than a century, it began with a younger crowd. Amateur journalism proper, with its highly developed social organizations, began in the late 1860s and 1870s when hundreds of youths in their teen years printed their own newspapers. I spent a week with the American Antiquarian Society's collection of these papers in 2009 and a month with the Library of Amateur Journalism in Madison in 2013. I've also worked extensively with my notes and images from those collections as well as their catalogs and the catalogs of other major collections around the US and New Zealand. What surprised me more than their vast numbers or their remarkable writing was the cohesiveness of their sense of audience. The amateurs wrote for each other more than for anyone else, and together they imagined the 'Dom to be a complex, vibrant, and important place.

What I will share with you now is a version of my 2012 article published in *American Periodicals* which won awards from the Research Society for American Periodicals and the English Department at the University of Pittsburgh, where it became part of my dissertation. I argue that amateur journalists of the 1870s used their newspapers to create a new kind of age-based identity. The idea of adolescence taken up by social scientists, institutions, and the popular imagination of the twentieth century was articulated most powerfully by G. Stanley Hall in 1904, but the category had already begun to emerge decades earlier. As Kent Baxter explains in *The Modern Age*, a large number of social, cultural, and structural changes led to, what he calls, the "invention" of adolescence at the turn of the twentieth century.¹ My research shows that the young people living through those changes experienced an emerging version of adolescence as real, as a state produced by their social and cultural conditions. Since that state was new in historical terms, it had yet to accumulate traditions, behaviors, expectations, and precedents. Amateur journalists of the 1870s used their newspapers to develop adolescent traditions and to speak from an adolescent perspective. They used their papers to figure out what an adolescent perspective might be.

As my first section discusses, the amateurs' papers were made possible by new toy printing presses produced in the late 1860s, but the amateurs' desire to use the presses to create a public community of youths was motivated by changes in education, age stratification, and work that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. They defined amateur as an age-based category and amateur journalism fit well into the growing expectation that middle-class teenagers should spend their time in study or leisure, but not ser-



Early amateur journals were produced by teenagers for other adolescents. These images of 1870s and 1880s publications are from the Library of Congress collections in the Internet Archive.

ious labor. This section concludes by suggesting that the amateurs collectively developed a peer culture that functioned as a public, and that the amateurs' ability to create a public youth culture ought to alter our understanding of the kinds of collectives young people can create.

The second section describes a few characteristics of the amateurs' self-representations in the youth public that was Amateurdom. To be clear, the amateurs themselves do not use the term "adolescent," nor do they explicitly articulate their project as one of identity negotiation. Newspapers, however, were seen as a reflection of their editor's character and the amateurs spent a great deal of ink proving, disproving, commending, and insulting one another's reputations. They were very concerned about how they represented themselves, and how others represented them, on paper. In the service of this concern, they adopt the gestures of formality and respectability, but they over-deploy them. They defended their reputations so vigorously as to almost seem ironic, as though they are parodying defenses of character. I argue that this over-defensiveness characterized the style of the amateurs' youth public and that it was a response to the ill-defined social and cultural status of teenagers in the 1870s.

In my conclusion, I speak a bit to the changes within Amateurdom in the 1880s forward, but my knowledge of later periods is scant. I'd like you to continue the conversation and share with me your understanding of how amateur journalism has grown and changed. Dave Tribby has kindly agreed to share some of our correspondence in future issues of THE FOSSIL. You can contact me at jessica.isaac@thatcanbeme.org.

Amateurdom and Its Historical Moment

Though young people published their own amateur periodicals since at least the first decade of the nineteenth century, the newspapers printed after the Civil War took on a significantly different character. Before 1867 amateur newspapers were relatively rare, but after 1867 "the number of amateur newspapers in existence increased from fewer than 100 to almost 1,000."² In part, this is due to the technological affordances of the small press itself. While earlier amateurs had struggled with home-made presses, paid a professional printer, used large professional presses, or, as in Nathaniel Hawthorne's case, "printed" their paper by writing it out to mimic newspapers, the small presses of the post-Civil War era allowed young people to print papers with relative ease.³

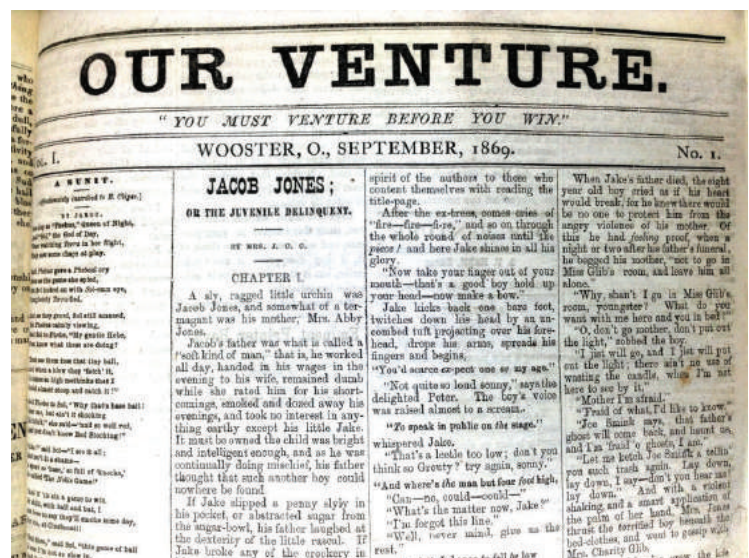
However, the popularity of amateur newspaper-publishing in the 1870s was fueled by more than the availability of a small, affordable press. Young Americans who were coming of age in the 1870s experienced that period of their lives much differently than the preceding generations. They found themselves held out of the workforce and inhabiting an emerging life category that had yet to be anchored by high school, as it is today. They were a new peer group around which institutions and social expectations had yet to be totally formed. These circumstances made printing and circulating an amateur newspaper a labor-intensive hobby worth pursuing. The amateurs could connect with others in their situation, and debate (implicitly and explicitly) the qualities that people of their age and station should possess. The amateur newspapers of the 1870s thus not only allow us a window into the experience of

Pictures Taken During Research

These and later images are from volumes in the LAJ Collection, by courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Tad Lincoln, son of the recently deceased President, and a friend published an amateur newspaper, The Brown School Holiday Budget, for their school in 1866. (Pardon my fingers – the pages are delicate and difficult to photograph.)



Our Venture from 1869 is a particularly fine example of the form that amateur newspapers would follow throughout the 1870s.

the newly age-conscious young people of that decade, but also provide an example of a youth-controlled public peer culture that shaped, at least for a while, the parameters of what would come to be called adolescence.

Let me begin with some description of late nineteenth-century amateur newspapers, *Amateurdom*, and the amateurs themselves. The newspapers produced by the 1870s amateurs largely include the same kinds of written material and use a standard structure. Of a four-page issue (one large sheet folded in half), the first page or two usually contains fiction (short stories or serials) and poetry. The creative work of the amateurs, as Paula Petrik points out, frequently emulates Oliver Optic's work and other popular fiction of the period, sometimes nearly reproducing it.⁴ The middle pages of most issues contain a mixture of less elevated departments: the editorials, the "exchange" column, possibly a puzzle or two, and notices or announcements. These pages show the amateur's collective sense of their peer culture most clearly and will be my main focus here. The last page was usually filled with advertisements from local businesses and from other amateurs, frequently advertising consumer goods, writing or printing materials, other amateur papers, and the affordable printing services of industrious amateurs (used presses for sale often make an appearance here). The advertising section, like the middle pages, communicates a sense of life within *Amateurdom* by making visible the connections between papers and the connections between amateurs and their local communities.

The larger size and shape of *Amateurdom* during this period is not easy to ascertain. I have been com-

paring the holdings of multiple large collections by graphing them by year, as Dave Tribby and Ken Faig have discussed in earlier issues of *THE FOSSIL*. My graphs are available online at

<http://jessicaisaac.net/GraphingAmateurdom.html>

Thanks to the assiduous archiving efforts of so many amateurs (key among them Edwin Hadley Smith, who created the Library of Amateur Journalism), large collections of these papers have been preserved in repositories around the U.S. and in New Zealand. Dave Tribby has assembled information on those collection on The Fossils website. Geographically, *Amateurdom* reached all corners of the continental United States, and even included a bit of transatlantic interchange as well as some Canadian papers.

Though the scope of late-nineteenth-century *Amateurdom* was national (even international), its regional ties were particularly important. The amateurs formed amateur press associations at the local, regional, and national levels, but the local and regional associations seem to have provided the most face-to-face contact among amateurs as well as the strongest connections amongst papers. These A.P.A.s, then as now, hosted meetings, elected their own officials, and usually chose the paper of a prominent member to be the official organ of the association. The annual meetings of the National Amateur Press Association (N.A.P.A.) were highly anticipated and thoroughly discussed throughout the 'Dom, but not many amateurs could afford to attend. Fifty or so was a good turnout for the 1870s. A *St. Nicholas* article from 1882 that profiles *Amateurdom* devotes a significant amount of space to discussing the N.A.P.A.'s meetings and detailing the mixture of business and pleasure those meetings entailed.⁶

Amateurdom reflects its age-consciousness and the changing circumstances of youths through its understanding of its members. The amateurs of the 1870s seem to have always conceived of themselves as amateurs by virtue of their age. R. L. Zerbe, in his *Guide to Amateurdom* (c. 1883), explains that an amateur is "a boy editor, or boy journalist," though "there are also ladies who are engaged as editresses," and so an "amateur editor is a young person who publishes, monthly or semi-monthly (usually the former), a small newspaper."⁷ These young persons tended to be in their mid- to late teens. Frank Cropper's *The Amateur Journalists' Companion* for 1873: *An Interesting and Concise Guide for all Amateur Editors, Authors, and Printers*, published in Louisville, Ken-

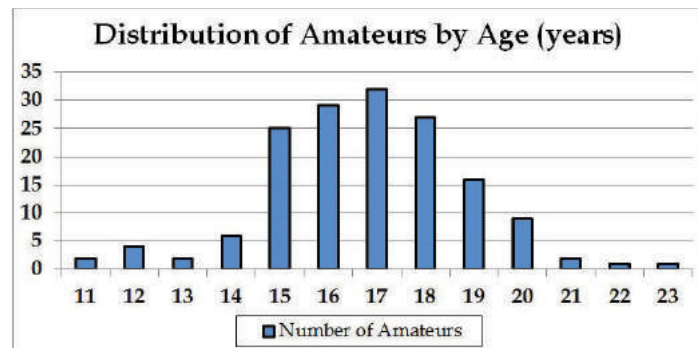


A beautifully printed page of Charles Scribner II's *Merry Moments* from 1869. Second son of the founder of Scribner's publishing house, he helped establish the first amateur press organization. He was 15 in 1869.



A final page of advertisements from *The Victor*, Hartford, CT, August 1879, containing ads common to amateur papers of the time: a dictionary offered as a prize for the most subscriptions sold, used type for sale, Excelsior printing presses for sale, and job printing rates (presumably done by the publishers).

tucky, includes a 20-page list of amateurs which identifies each by name, nickname, age, paper title, and location. Of the 155 I recorded (about half the list), two are 11, four are 12, two are 13, six are 14, twenty-five are 15, twenty-nine are 16, thirty-two are 17, twenty-seven are 18, sixteen are 19, nine are 20, two are 21, one was 22, and one was 23. See Figure 1. Amateurdom writ large initially excluded its older members. In the mid-1870s, when the first group of post-1867 amateurs began aging into young adulthood, the amateurs began calling them “fossils” and debating their place in the ‘Dom. They founded their own alumni organization in 1904 and started publication of *THE FOSSIL*.

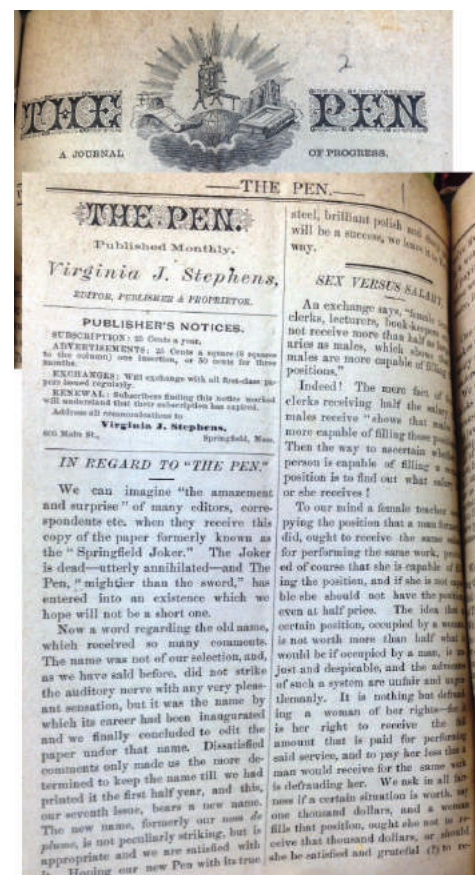


Amateurs' ages as listed in Frank Cropper's *The Amateur Journalists' Companion* for 1873

By claiming the term as their own, the writers and publishers of amateur newspapers of the 1870s were refining the meaning that “amateur” had in the culture at large. The term “amateur” itself begins to take on its current conception, the opposite of professional, in the 1820s. The older connotation of amateur as one who does something because they love to do it, starts to slip away in the 1860s or so, as the use of the term as the opposite of “professional” gains prominence.⁸ By that definition, anyone who produced a non-professional paper at any age could be called an amateur, and the amateur journalists adopt that sense of the term again in the 1880s. For these young people in the 1870s, however, the term “amateur” came to mean something more than one who does something because they love to, or one who does something as a non-professional. Thinking of amateurs as “boy editor[s]” or “young person[s] who publish ... a small newspaper” aligns amateur with “young person” and silently elides professional and “adult.” The title of the *Youthful Enterprise* and other similarly named newspapers emphasizes this distinction by suggesting that an “enterprise” is an adult endeavor unless marked by the adjective “youthful.” By re-defining the term “amateur,” the amateur journalists conjured up a life trajectory which assumed that entry into the professional workforce accompanied entry into adulthood. To say one is an amateur because one is not old enough to be a professional imagines the structure of a work life according to age in a particular and relatively new way.

That amateurs invented this conception of themselves is not surprising given the changing understanding of age in the second half of the nineteenth century. Howard Chudacoff argues that in the 1870s age-consciousness as it is experienced today by those who have protected, privileged childhoods took root because of several large-scale social changes. He contends that “the age stratification of American society began to become more complex in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and ... the age consciousness and age grading that resulted intensified in the first three decades of the twentieth century.”⁹ The gradual entry into the workforce made possible by apprenticeship systems and other less-professionalized forms of labor during the first half of the nineteenth century was disappearing thanks in no small part to the industrialization that followed the Civil War. The gradual move towards universal common (elementary) school education and the development of secondary education led schools which had welcomed wide age ranges within the same classroom before 1850 to begin dividing students into age-based groups. These changes pre-date G. Stanley Hall’s work, as well as some of the recent periodizations of adolescence. Chudacoff outlines in particular the changes in the process of entering the workforce and changes in educational institutions as factors that both reflected and promoted a growing sense that populations ought to be sorted by age, and thus the idea that people in the same age group (rather than people from the same community, or with similar interests or needs) ought to identify with one another.

The rise of age-consciousness particularly affected young people’s relationships with work and school. While their opportunities for employment actually increased a great deal after Civil War-induced industrialization increased the availability of job openings for unskilled laborers,



Editorial page of Virginia Stephens’ *The Pen*, Springfield, MA, July 1879. A vocal female amateur, Stephens composed particularly elegant editorials. In this issue, she announces a change in the name of her paper and argues that women should receive equal pay for equal work.

mandatory schooling laws proliferated at the same time. "By 1885, sixteen out of thirty-eight states had compulsory education laws, and by 1900, thirty-one states required school attendance from age eight to fourteen."¹⁰ So while the number of people under age 15 working for pay swelled after 1870, by 1914 those numbers had dwindled thanks to the "minimum-age legislation linked, in most cases, to education requirements" passed by all states but one.¹¹ Debates over the relationship of childhood to paid labor are partly responsible for the reduction of young laborers, as are the increasing number of working class immigrants entering the country at the same time.¹² The number of high schools in the nation was relatively low during these decades, however, and only a small percentage of American teenagers attended high school. "The number of high schools in the United States had increased from 325 in 1860 to 800 in 1870, but they served a small minority of the public-school population. In 1875, high school enrollment was below 25,000."¹³ By 1890, only about seven percent of fourteen- to seventeen-year-olds were enrolled in secondary schools, public or private, and by 1900 only eleven percent of that age group were enrolled in secondary schools, with only ten to twenty percent of those enrolled graduating.¹⁴ The move away from child labor for the working class that began in the 1870s and the moves toward universal secondary education for the middle and upper classes highlights the degree to which attitudes about the youth, education, and work had changed. Middle and upper class amateurs would have been among the earliest to experience the effects of these changes, including the increasing incidence of secondary education or at least the expectation that the teen years should be spent in study.

L. Frank Baum (1856-1919), author of the *Wizard of Oz* series, is a telling example. A member of a prominent Syracuse family with a very successful entrepreneurial father, Baum encountered amateur journalism at a moment in his teenage years when he was not attending a school but was still expected to be learning. He was sent to Peekskill Military Academy at age twelve after having been kept home because of a heart condition, only to return home two years later after experiencing a heart attack. At fourteen, while being privately tutored at home, Baum saw a toy press in a printer's shop which his father purchased for him. Baum biographer Katharine M. Rogers estimates the press and equipment cost between \$15 and \$50. Baum and his younger brother began producing the *Rose Lawn Home Journal*, named for the family estate east of Syracuse, in October 1870.¹⁵ L. Frank Baum and his brother Harry C. Baum appear in the listing mentioned above in Frank Cropper's *The Amateur Journalists' Companion for 1873* for a subsequent paper, called the *Empire*:

Baum, Harry C. "Fritz." Age 14. *Empire*. Syracuse, N.Y.

Baum, L. Frank. "L'Auteur." Age 17. *Empire*. Syracuse, N.Y.¹⁶

That same year, the Baum brothers were enrolled in

Syracuse Classical School, however, and according to Katharine M. Rogers they collaborated on the *Empire* with a schoolmate, Thomas G. Alvord Jr., "a son of the lieutenant governor, who grew up to be a distinguished newspaperman."¹⁷ The toy press seems to have functioned as a respectable, educational hobby for these boys while they moved in and out of secondary schools, one which was supported by their father (who even contributed "the first installments of a 'History of the Oil Company,' describing the beginning of the petroleum industry in Pennsylvania" of which he was a prominent part).¹⁸

On another end of the economic scale, but motivated by similar circumstances, the Lukens sisters of Brinton, Pennsylvania began a paper in 1870, first hand-writing it, then printing, then selling subscriptions, until in 1873, when the girls sold their subscription list, they had over 1,000 paying readers. Louisa May Alcott, whose *Pickwick Papers* in *Little Women* had inspired the Lukens's literary efforts, even wrote a story that she allowed the girls to publish exclusively in their paper.¹⁹ For a *St. Nicholas* article about the Lukens sisters and their newspaper in 1920, Carrie Lukens Smith explained the genesis of their periodical:

[Brinton had] no public High Schools and not very satisfactory elementary schools. We two older girls were accustomed to attend the Academy in a nearby town. Tuition was high and one year found us without enough funds...to cover food, clothes, and school for the five little girls so school had to be dropped and lessons at home substituted. We faced a lonely Winter. There was little or no congenial social life in the neighborhood and we missed school-life.²⁰

The Lukens sisters were kept from school by lack of funds, but their amateur paper had a function similar to that of the Baum brothers' papers: an educational pastime that allowed them to both fill their idle hours and supplement the kind of social life they had experienced at school. The Lukens sisters were even involved in the A.P.A.s, attending the 1871 convention of the old N.A.P.A. in Pittsburgh.²¹

Though the Baum brothers and Lukens sisters are only a few among many, the circumstances that led to their engagement with amateur journalism suggest that people in their age group had needs and desires that required a new pastime. Expecting, and expected, to associate with others of the same age, not yet enveloped by compulsory high schooling but now considered too young to begin an adult career, the amateurs made use of the newly available small



One issue of *Little Things* from January of 1873 has been preserved in the Library of Amateur Journalism.

presses to serve the social and educational needs that their new age-based identity created.

The nature of their collective response to this situation, however, supports the idea that the material and social conditions of the second half of the nineteenth century made peer-to-peer communications on a mass scale possible. Scholars have begun to address the ways in which the young communicated with one another, particularly through periodicals, in the late nineteenth century, but they have yet to appreciate the scope of those cultures, a scope which the depth and breadth of Amateurdom makes clear. Robin Bernstein, for example, argues that children communicated their understanding of race to one another by writing about their play for periodicals (she cites a group of disturbingly cheerful letters published in a Minneapolis newspaper in which white children describe their lynching play).²² Older children and teenagers also wrote to magazines like *St. Nicholas*, communicating with one another within the rising generationalism that Angela Sorby identifies and responding to the professionalization of childhood that Anna Redcay documents.²³ The amateurs, however, took the construction of peer culture to an entirely different level, creating what we might call a youth public that functioned as a forum within which the amateurs could connect to one another and try out new modes of self-representation.

The only full-length article on Amateurdom to date articulates the amateurs' relationship to the adult public sphere during the 1870s but does not fully explore the amateurs' use of their public to formulate and experiment with self-representation. Instead, Paula Petrik structures her discussion of the amateur journalists'

writing through its connections to adult writing and debate by considering how the amateurs borrowed and remodeled Oliver Optic's plots and by linking the amateurs' discussions of race and gender parity to those topics' importance in adult publics of the time. She concludes, much as I do here, that "the literary tyros of the 1870s showed themselves to be active participants in their own socialization as they confronted the issues of their time."²⁴ However, in highlighting the amateurs' debates of topics common to adult publics of the time, Petrik overlooks the debates unique to the 'Dom which distinguish its discourse from debates within other groups. By emphasizing their relationship to the concerns of the adult public sphere, Petrik neglects the amateurs' relationship to their own needs and desires at a time when they faced acute demands to reconcile their ages and their identities. By imagining Amateurdom as a public which came into existence because of the needs of young people, we may understand it as a youth public that existed to define some of the terms through which the new age-based identities of youths would be constructed by young people themselves.

Self-Representation in Amateurdom

In her December 1876 issue of the *Youthful Enterprise*, "editress" Libbie Adams displays a particularly acute anxiety about her readers' belief that she can indeed publish her paper. The *Youthful Enterprise* itself is impressive. Running to ten pages, it includes a broader range of materials than most. In particular the "Boys and Girls' Corner" (which reprints the letters and literary efforts of her readers and is mediated by Adams's pseudonym "Nettie Sparkle") makes clear that she has a wide and enthusiastic readership. In this December issue, however, Adams reprints an affidavit attesting to her age and abilities in response to an accusation from another paper, *Our Free Lance*, that someone else was publishing her paper for her. "Girls of fourteen are not supposed to 'print, edit and publish[]' an amateur paper as large as the *Enterprise*. Queer, isn't it?"²⁵ The accusation initiated a string of correspondence between Adams and the editor of *Our Free Lance*, which she reprinted alongside the following affidavit:

1st. *BE IT KNOWN*, that L. Libbie Adams, of the City of Elmira, Chemung County, and State of New York, on being sworn, *deposeth, and saith*, that she is the editor and proprietor of a ten(10)pp., thirty(30)column publication, entitled "*The Youthful Enterprise*," now published at No. 400 High St., Elmira County and State, aforesaid.

2nd. That *all* the *Composition Work, Revising, &c.*, of said paper is performed by her, unaided or assisted by any other person or persons.

3d. That from January 1st., 1874 up to May 1st. 1876, the press work also, was performed by herself, on an eighth medium, hand-inking Star press; and since that date, on a quarter medium Job Press (Gordon) by assistants.

4th., That her exact age is fifteen (15) years, nine (9)

Jessica Isaac

by Ken Faig, Jr.

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For more information about Books@Work and a capsule biography of Dr. Isaac visit

<https://www.booksatwork.org/>

You can also visit Dr. Isaac's own website

<http://www.jessicaisaac.net/index.html>

which contains a more detailed biography and some graphs from her paper "Graphing Amateurdom," now accepted for the 2015 volume of *Book History*. Her amateur journalism research contributed two chapters to her dissertation "Compliant Circulation: Children's Writing, American Periodicals, and Cultural Change, 1870-1920." ♦



months and twenty-six (26) days.

5th., That she started said paper on Jan. 1st., 1874, in the city of Carbondale, Luzerne Co., Pa., and removed to Elmira, April 1st, 1876, where said paper is now issued in the manner above recorded.

To all of which she now subscribes and makes oath this 20th. day of November, 1876.

Signed, L. Libbie Adams.²⁶

Adams also included "A Testimonial" signed by six prominent adult men which testified to her abilities and her editorship of the *Enterprise*. In the correspondence between Adams and *Our Free Lance*, it is clear that Adams's ability to do the print composition and press-work is in question, but in her affidavit Adams takes the opportunity to defend *all* her activities. She is "editor and proprietor," performs "*all the Composition Work, Revising, &c.*" and used to do all the press work, though now she has assistants. She confirms the run of the paper and "her exact age" of "fifteen (15) years, nine (9) months and twenty-six (26) days." In short, in response to a rude comment in *Our Free Lance*, Adams not only writes back—she marshals all the official and legal resources at her disposal to prove that someone of her age and gender is capable of putting together a paper as impressive as the *Youthful Enterprise*.

In one way, Adams's vigorous response is unsurprising. As a girl participating successfully in a mostly male public, she faced significant openly-voiced opposition, as Petrik documents.²⁷ In another, however, Adams's mode of response highlights the way in which amateurs tended to assert their ages and identities with heightened vigor and defensiveness. The amateur papers are endlessly preoccupied with reputation, honor, and self-presentation, and they frequently reference (or refute) age as an index of ability. In other words, the amateurs were preoccupied with constructing a convincing age-based *ethos* in their writing. They not only demonstrate their abilities through the act of putting together a respectable paper, they also insist on and inflate the strength of their characters by using highly formal language (and genres) as well as polemic to represent themselves. The contemporary concerns about the character of newspaper editors, about the reading of newspapers, and about the reading habits of the young partly produced a situation in which young newspaper-writers might feel defensive about their reputations.²⁸

It stands to reason, though I do not address this here, that the practices of self-representation utilized by adult newspaper-writers would have influenced the amateurs' writing too. However, the particularly polemical and even aggressive quality of the amateurs' representations not just of their ideas, but of their imagined selves, suggests that in the 1870s amateurs had another reason to cultivate bombastic or officious self-representation. Michael Warner articulates the notion that publics not only host or foster discussion, but they also ask their members to write or behave in certain ways—that collectively the members of a public ima-

gine a world for themselves and imagine the identities possible within that world.²⁹ The style of the amateurs' public discourse was a response to their experience of the historical moment when middle-class teenagers were being increasingly infantilized by the growing length of the "idle" years of dependence. Adopting and over-deploying professional modes of self-representation and showing keenness to defend one's ability or assert one's identity helped them use their public to imagine a world where they were not so infantilized and where their activities enjoyed as much importance as adult professional work.

An editorial dated the same month as Libbie Adams' affidavit in Richard M. Truax and J. A. Fynes Jr.'s paper, *Idle Hours*, displays a concern about *ethos* similar to Adams' and illustrates the kind of polemic common to amateur defenses of reputation. Truax had apparently been recently criticized by "innumerable fly-by-night sheets, who with vituperative tongue spent their malicious spite upon" him. The co-editors returned their "thanks to those gentlemen who have continued to favor [them] with their journals, even after [they] had been blackmailed and 'trod upon.'" After pledging to adhere to "the principles of Truth and Honesty in every sense of the word," Truax and Fynes attack those amateurs who value the reputations of others too lightly.

The injustice which certain 'amateurs' do their brethern [sic] is unaccountable. If one amateur unknown to another be pronounced dishonest, or if the slightest whisperings be heard in regard to his character, then those petty traffickers take up the cry and hail it through the fraternity, bartering the reputation of the (supposed) offender. The progress of such unheard-of maliciousness should be impeded, ere it prove disastrous. For because of a brief delay in payment (sometimes of a debt not amounting to 10 cents) shall an honest person's reputation be impaired to satiate the morbid appetite of some puppy? No! most emphatically, *No!!* An instance occurred recently when a prominent amateur was foisted through the columns of several diminutive, ink-besmeared sheets, and what for? Simply because a ten-cent debt was neglected for a couple of days. Let us have no more of this, we say. The reputations of such amateurs as Barler and Truax are beyond reproach. Mark you, Bertron, and Hallock.³⁰

Truax and Fynes exhibit an anxiety about reputation similar to Adams's while at the same time communicating a sense of the kind of amateur they believe one ought to be. They imagine that instead of capitalizing on rumor, amateurs should suppress it, and that when rumor arises, they should ignore it rather than feed it, thus constructing a gentlemanly respect for and reluctance to sully the reputations of others. They also mention honesty twice and dishonesty once in these lines, suggesting both that honesty was the character flaw at issue in these attacks and that honesty is part of the honor code of the amateurs.

The quality of Truax and Fynes' response, as well as of Adams' response, speaks powerfully to the amateurs' sense of their collective enterprise and to their sense of who they were, and could be, in writing. Their defensiveness and officiousness comes across so strongly that it seems to suggest intentional irony, that the amateurs meant to send up this sort of obsession over reputation, though it is unclear to what degree the amateurs themselves were aware of this potential. What appears certain is the sense that these papers are highly performative, that Amateurdom was brought into being in order to provide a space for the performance of identities that insisted on their own importance and that borrowed from professional adult (and thus sanctioned and important) means of self-representation. Warner articulates the issue of world-making as an issue of style. The fact that public discussion is often understood as rational discussion obscures the degree to which public discourse imagines and sets out to actualize a social entity with specific characteristics: "Public discourse says not only 'Let a public exist' but 'Let it have this character, speak this way, see the world in this way.'"³¹ The amateurs' style articulates a vision of the world as they would like it to be, a vision of themselves they find satisfying. That this style is bombastic, simultaneously petty and ambitious, and deeply defensive suggests that the conditions of their historical moment put them in a position which made these characteristics meaningful and satisfying. The composition of amateur self-representations speaks to the amateurs' class position (professionalism and officiousness are particularly tied to being middle-class), but also to the way in which they were negotiating the demands of what would soon come to be called adolescence.

For images of the pages from *The Youthful Enterprise* and *Idle Hours*, please see the original article, available online at

<http://www.tinyurl.com/YouthfulEnterprises>

Maturing Voices

Evidence suggests that amateurs' perspective on their bombastic style of self-representation began to change as they aged. The career of one prominent amateur, Thomas G. Harrison (b. 1860), illustrates this change particularly well. Harrison was a prolific and well-known amateur journalist; his paper, the *Welcome Visitor/Visitor*, ran from 1876 to at least 1882, and he was elected president of the N.A.P.A. in 1880. In "A.P.A. Typical" (1878), an editorial published in the *Welcome Visitor*, Harrison advocates the kind of writing performed by Adams and Truax and Fynes above, particularly when it is in the service of amateur campaigns for office ("politics"). He writes:

Without our A.P.A.'s we would be without Politics, and without Politics our little 'Dom would amount to but little. No, no; we doubt not in the least that if by a spontaneous move politics were banished from our ranks, the 'Dom would truly [sic] to "all to

pieces." Why there is one thing which proves our assertion alone. Where would our idealess brother editors obtain the subjects for the [c]ompilation of their editorials, if we were without Politics? Their readers would undoubtedly be deprived of this pleasure or, worse yet, be inflicted with such soul-harrowing themes as "Spring," "Degeneration," "Swearing," etc. It may be that they (the readers) would relish this better, but for our own part we advocate the discussion of politics if only for the purpose of giving our go-ahead youngsters a chance to spread themselves, or in fact, as Lord Dundreary saith, "make infernal athes of themselves."³³

Harrison's remarks here are particularly interesting for their articulation of the identity of Amateurdom, for the way in which they encourage a particular amateur style, and for the way they oppose amateur writing and school writing. Harrison articulates an identity for Amateurdom and implies a sense of purpose for it by insisting that "Politics" and the A.P.A.s are the glue that holds Amateurdom together. The 'Dom "would amount to but little" or "would truly 'all to pieces'" without its politics—without its sources of common conversation, without its most important reason to continue writing. His final sentence encourages a style for engaging in politics: "youngsters" ought to "spread themselves," or even "make infernal athes of themselves." Lord Dundreary was the lisping, malapropism-prone British fop of the popular play *Our American Cousin* (1858). Dundreary's disapproval registers a kind of out-of-touch adult disapproval of youths' self-assertion or intervention. By referencing Dundreary, Harrison supports the kind of style Adams and Truax and Fynes adopted. He contrasts this kind of writing with "soul-harrowing" themes, naming a kind of writing assignment common to the period (and which, it bears mentioning, educators themselves were beginning to criticize as well).³⁴

By 1881, Harrison's perspective on these issues had changed dramatically. In that year, Harrison turned twenty-one. He was also occupied enough with work to have only nights and weekends open for pursuing his amateur journalism.³⁵



In his long-running *Welcome Visitor*, Thomas G. Harrison first argued strongly for the inclusion of amateur politics. Here is a sample editorial from January, 1879.

At that point, Harrison writes in his paper that his “views upon amateur politics [had] undergone a radical change.” He declares, “we think it would be for the welfare of Amateurdome were Politics entirely eschewed from its column. The only thing that brings Amateurdome into repute as an Educational Institution is the facility it affords for the promulgation of literary tastes among the youth of the land; that which commends it to the views of a discriminating public is its literature.”³⁶ He goes on to detail the pernicious effects of politics, arguing that they “cast a shade of ‘boyishness’” on the “Dom, and that ‘hot-blooded’ teens’ love of political furor causes them to lose sight of their literary pursuits. In these lines, Harrison articulates a new identity for Amateurdome, valorizes literariness as an object in writing, and shows that this new notion about amateurs has changed his own style of writing. Amateurdome ought to be an “Educational Institution,” he argues—a starkly different view from his earlier notion that it ought to be held together by politics. This new conception of Amateurdome celebrates “the promulgation of literary tastes” and the writing of “literature,” where earlier he had advocated “youngsters ... spread[ing] themselves.” And his earlier, slightly flamboyant tone, illustrated by his use of commonplaces, of sensational descriptors like “soul-harrowing,” and his reference to Lord Dundreary, had been replaced with seriousness and formality in word choice and sentence structure. What’s more, as I pointed out above, he links politics to “boyishness,” thereby suggesting that he understood “making [an] infernal ath” of oneself to be a mode of writing particularly prevalent amongst boys and not suited for older amateurs like himself. By arguing that all of Amateurdome ought to orient itself toward more staid literary pursuits, he implies that teen-aged amateurs ought to be guided away from such writing as well.

Evidence suggests Amateurdome as a whole aged along with Harrison. Changes to the postal code in 1879 that increased the cost of circulating an amateur paper from one penny a pound to one penny a paper seem to have caused a large dip in circulation in

the early 1880s.³⁷ As amateur journalism moved into the twentieth century, many amateur journalists still participated during their youth, but that often included the years of early adulthood as well. Arguments for a more reserved mode of amateur writing like Harrison’s, however, register an early version of the antagonism towards adolescents that persists into the present.³⁸ Though adolescence appears more as a structure of feeling than a well-defined identity category in the 1870s and early 1880s, the large structural social changes that would eventually produce that category were already impacting the way young people spent their time and understood themselves. For those who chose to publish an amateur newspaper, the conditions of youth existence seem to have encouraged a mode of writing and self-representation that favored the highly assertive, nearly ironic defense of one’s character. This bombastic style, and the seeming move in the 1880s away from that style, suggests that the teenaged amateurs of the 1870s were engaged in a project of world-making, and even of self-making, that linked self-assertion to youth and defensiveness to being young. Their style suggests that the particular circumstances of youth in that period made these kinds of writing and self-representation desirable, satisfying, and sustainable. That they managed to bring a youth public into being with this character and to sustain it for over a decade opens up the possibilities for understanding the way teenagers responded to the conditions of their age group in the post-Civil War period and for examining the kinds of collectives young people are capable of producing.

FOOTNOTES

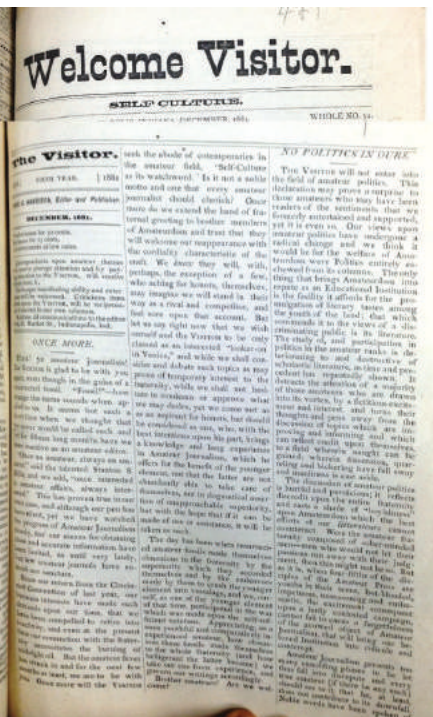
¹ See Kent Baxter, “New Kids on the Block: School Reform, the Juvenile Court, and Demographic Change at the Turn of the Century,” in *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 21-43.

² Dennis R. Laurie, “Amateur Newspapers,” *American Antiquarian Society*, last modified September 2, 2004, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/amateurnews.htm>.

³ See Laurie, “Amateur Newspapers,” n.p., and Paula Petrik, “The Youngest Fourth Estate: The Novelty Toy Printing Press and Adolescence, 1870-1886,” in *Small Worlds: Children & Adolescents in America, 1850-1950*, eds. Elliott West and Paula Petrik (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 126-7. For a history of the development of small presses during the Civil War and their use by amateur journalists in the late nineteenth-century, see Elizabeth M. Harris, *Personal Impressions: The Small Printing Press in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2004).

⁴ Petrik, “The Youngest Fourth Estate,” 127-30.

⁵ Kenneth W. Faig, Jr., “Passion, Controversy and Vision: A History of the Library of Amateur Journalism” (unpublished manuscript, Memorial Day, 2003), PDF file, http://www.thefossils.org/laj_hist.pdf, 5,10, 23.



By 1881, Harrison's views had “undergone a radical change,” as he declared in an editorial titled “No Politics in Ours.”

⁶ Harlan H. Ballard, "Amateur Newspapers," *St. Nicholas* 9, no. 9 (1882), 718.

⁷ R.L. Zerbe, *A Guide to Amateurdom: Being a Complete and Accurate Synopsis of Amateurdom and Its Manifold Phases* (Cincinnati: Am. Book Publishing Co., c. 1883), 1.

⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "amateur," accessed March 29, 2012. The OED entry for amateur happens to use the title of the *St. Nicholas* article "Amateur Newspapers" as one of its quotations for this entry, but under the definition "Done by amateurs."

⁹ Howard P. Chudacoff, *How Old Are You? Age Consciousness in American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 5.

¹⁰ Alec Fyfe, "Coming to Terms with Child Labor: The Historical Role of Education," in *The World of Child Labor: An Historical and Regional Survey*, ed. Hugh D. Hindman (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 51.

¹¹ Fyfe, "Coming to Terms," 51.

¹² Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 63-4.

¹³ Catharine Reef, *Education and Learning in America* (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 62.

¹⁴ Reef, *Education and Learning*, 101.

¹⁵ Katharine Rogers, *L. Frank Baum: Creator of Oz* (New York: St. Martin's, 2002), 4.

¹⁶ Frank Cropper, *The Amateur Journalists' Companion for 1873: An Interesting and Concise Guide for all Amateur Editors, Authors, and Printers* (Louisville: Frank Cropper, 1873), 49.

¹⁷ Rogers, *L. Frank Baum*, 5.

¹⁸ Rogers, *L. Frank Baum*, 4.

¹⁹ Daniel Shealy, "The Growth of *Little Things*: Louisa May Alcott and the Lukens Sisters' Family Newspaper," *Resources for American Literary Study* 30 (2005): 173

²⁰ Qtd. in Shealy, "The Growth of *Little Things*," 161-2.

²¹ Mentioned by Thomas G. Harrison *The Career and Reminiscences of an Amateur Journalist, and a History of Amateur Journalism* (Indianapolis: Thos. G. Harrison, 1883), 33-34, and Shealy, "The Growth of *Little Things*," 166.

²² Robin Bernstein, "Children's Books, Dolls, and the Performance of Race; or, The Possibility of Children's Literature" *PMLA* 126, no. 1 (January 2011): 166-7.

²³ See Angela Sorby, "A Visit from *St. Nicholas*: The Poetics of Peer Culture, 1872-1900," *American Studies* 39, no. 1 (1998): 59-74, and Anna M. Redcay, "'Live to learn and learn to live': The *St. Nicholas* League and the Vocation of Childhood" *Children's Literature* 39, no. 1 (2011): 58-84. Sarah Lindey also speaks to this issue in "Boys Write Back: Self-Education and Periodical Authorship in Late-Nineteenth-Century American Story Papers" *American Periodicals* 21, no. 1 (2011): 72-88.

²⁴ Petrik, "The Youngest Fourth Estate," 142.

²⁵ *Youthful Enterprise*, December 1876, 6.

²⁶ *Youthful Enterprise*, 6

²⁷ Petrik, "The Youngest Fourth Estate," 135.

²⁸ See Yale President Noah Porter's *Books and Reading; Or, What Books Shall I Read and How Shall I Read Them?*

(New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871) for an influential contemporary articulation of these concerns.

²⁹ Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," in *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone, 2002), 114-124.

³⁰ *Idle Hours*, November 1876, 4.

³¹ Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 114.

³² *Welcome Visitor*, December 1881, 1.

³³ *Welcome Visitor*, June 1878, 1.

³⁴ Insisting that students should write from their own experience, textbook writers like Albert Raub, author of *Practical Rhetoric and Composition* (1887) told students to leave "such subjects as Evolution, Freedom of the Will, and the like to such as understand them more thoroughly" (qtd. in Lucille Schultz, *The Young Composers: Composition's Beginnings in Nineteenth-Century Schools* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 31-32).

³⁵ "Once More," *Welcome Visitor*, December 1881.

³⁶ *Welcome Visitor*, December 1881, 1.

³⁷ The *Typo*, an amateur paper from Boston, provides the basis for these sums as well as several revealing editorials on the effects of the rise in postage on Amateurdom. See the *Typo*, May 1879.

³⁸ Gabrielle Owen excavates the shifting uses of the term "adolescence" in American newspapers of the nineteenth century, locating the earliest negative connotations for the word in the 1860s and 70s. See Gabrielle Owen, "Adolescence as Narrative," in "Queer Theory and the Logic of Adolescence" (doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2011), 16-31. ♦

Secretary-Treasurer Report

by Tom Parson

NEW MEMBER:

George Chapman, 405 North Broadway Street, Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

EXPIRED MEMBERSHIP:

Frederick Moe, 36 West Main St., Warner, NH 03278

BANK BALANCE on November 30, 2015: \$3968.26

BANK ACCOUNT DEPOSITS:

George Chapman membership	\$15.00
James Dawson donation to LAJ	\$40.00
Kent Chamberlain donation	\$20.00

CHECKS WRITTEN:

Gary Bossler (Oct FOSSIL printing, mailing)	\$32.00
UW Foundation (LAJ endowment donation)	\$40.00

CASH AVAILABLE on January 14, 2016: \$3969.26

We need to follow up with PNC bank. We could save a monthly \$2 fee if we had an on-line account instead of having statements mailed to me. I am the only person on The Fossils' account. Last year I tried but failed to add other officers to the account, but it turns out changes like that must be done in person, in a PNC branch bank...and there are no PNC branches west of the Mississippi. ♦

Amateurs of a Certain Age: 1870 and 2016

by Ken Faig, Jr.



AS I PUT PEN TO PAPER in mid-December 2015, discussions are underway regarding the amateur journalists' meeting proposed for Madison, Wisconsin in July 2016 to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of Fossil sponsorship of the Library of Amateur Journalism (LAJ), since 2004 housed in the Special Collections Department of the University of Wisconsin Library in Madison. LAJ has now been cataloged as Collection ZL and is available for re-

search at Memorial Library in Madison; see

<https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9910014279602121>

NAPA has voted to hold its 2016 convention in conjunction with the proposed meeting. AAPA has agreed to hold a regional meeting in conjunction with the proposed meeting. Of course, The Fossils also plan to participate in the occasion. But many details concerning the exact convention days and the meeting schedule remain to be hammered out. It is possible that this issue of THE FOSSIL will have more late news received prior to the publication deadline. Details will be posted to The Fossils website (www.thefossils.org) as they become available. I certainly hope we will be able to announce further details concerning the proposed meeting in our April 2016 number.

By joining academia.edu (no charge), I was able to access Jessica Isaac's paper "Youthful Enterprises: Amateur Newspapers and the Pre-History of Adolescence, 1867-1883" (originally published in *American Periodicals*, Vol. 22 No. 2, 2012). This article was the basis for the lead article in this issue of THE FOSSIL. Dr. Isaac argues that amateur journalism as it developed in the 1870s was more strongly identified with the youth of its participants than it was with non-professionalism. She argues that amateur journalism as then practiced offered adolescents not fully entered into adult life the opportunity to develop their own culture, with its own ethos and politics, sometimes mimicking adult institutions. If anything, the amateur journalists of the 1870s decade were earnest about their endeavors and responded vigorously to criticism. From the start, both boys and girls participated in the amateur journalism movement, although the ladies did not attend a convention of the 1876-founded NAPA until the 1885 gathering in Boston. Dr. Isaac notes that the Lukens sisters of Brinton, Pennsylvania, attended the 1871 convention of an earlier National association in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The aging of the original amateurs of the 1870s decade (and a postal increase in 1879) gradually impelled amateur journalism toward a more mature culture. Aging amateurs argued against bickering and character

assassination in print. By the 1890s, papers with serious literary literary ambitions like Dr. Edwin B. Swift's *Red Letter Days* were emerging. Young women assertive of their own identity founded their own (albeit short-lived) Young Women's Amateur Press Association in 1887. Amateur politics became more mature but not necessarily any gentler. The much-disputed election at the NAPA convention in New York City in 1902 was marked by the firing of a gun by an overenthusiastic participant.

Fossilized or inactive former members had existed from the very inception of the hobby. Most of the amateurs who had been active during the revolutionary decade of the 1870s and the so-called "halcyon days" of the 1880s eventually became inactive and regarded their youthful amateur activity as a thing of the past. Eventually, in 1904, a formal organization of inactive veterans of the hobby, dubbed The Fossils, came into existence. (Both Edwin Hadley Smith and Charles W. Heins formed later alumni associations—Smith focusing on National veterans and Heins on United veterans—but the 1904 organization has proved the most enduring.) The Fossils gathered in favorite New York City restaurants like Pontin's to share their memories of the past. Most of their members felt that mature adults should drop their active participation in the hobby. They felt that participation by mature adults discouraged adolescents from participation.

The Fossils' push to drive mature adults out of active participation in the hobby came to a head as the first decade of the twentieth century came to a close. Some of the leaders of The Fossils, like Charles C. Heuman and Louis Kempner, had maintained their memberships in NAPA. Nelson G. Morton filed treason charges against Heuman and Kempner with the NAPA Executive Judges on February 11, 1911. Two of the three Executive Judges (chair Edith Minter and Irving Sinclair) found in favor of Morton's charges. But the third judge, Walter "Pop" Mellinger, disagreed: "... I believe that the accused have been sufficiently punished by the discussion their actions have occasioned; I believe that said actions were ill-advised, but not worthy either of suspension or expulsion, and I recommend that the entire matter be dropped." The NAPA convention in Chicago in July 1911 sustained Mellinger's view, and Heuman and Kempner were reinstated as NAPA members.

Since the NAPA convention in 1911, I am not aware that any significant amateur press associations in North America have attempted to exclude adult participation. For many years thereafter, however, some of The Fossils continued to look with jaundiced eyes on the participation of adults in the hobby. When Charles C.

Heuman acquired LAJ from Edwin Hadley Smith in 1916, some Fossils argued the collection ought to be purged of the adult publications of recent decades. Fortunately, this did not happen. However, the collection was mostly dormant during its years in Fossils' headquarters in New York City in 1916-35. When the collection was removed to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia in 1935, Edwin Hadley Smith again took charge as Fossil librarian and worked diligently to fill in the gaps left by the collection's dormant years. Smith had brought the collection back up to date by the time of his death in 1944.

The question remains whether Fossils who argued against adult participation in the hobby during the first quarter of the twentieth century put forth any valid arguments. While amateur journalism organizations still benefited from periodic injections of "young blood," a solid majority of the membership of most twentieth-century amateur organizations were adults. (A few specifically youth-oriented organizations like the Lone Scouts might be excepted. However, the Lone Scouts were only tangentially amateur journalists.) Where youths were present in substantial numbers, older youths and adults nevertheless still generally controlled the organizations, benefiting from their experience and greater financial resources. Far from opposing adult participation in the hobby, by the 1940s and the 1950s, The Fossils had transformed themselves into an honor society of the most active amateur journalists. (Of course, there were still distinguished hobby veterans on the Fossil membership rolls, as well.) The fifteen-year experience requirement which still appertained during this era excluded the hobby's younger participants from the Fossils. Many active amateurs eagerly awaited an invitation from Edward H. Cole or Edna "Vondy" Macdonald to join The Fossils after celebrating their fifteenth anniversary in the hobby.

Mature wisdom has many benefits. When she contended unsuccessfully against E. Dorothy Grant (later Mrs. George Julian Houtain) for the NAPA presidency as a young woman in 1921, Edna "Vondy" Macdonald was criticized for rudeness, disrespect and breaking promises. She was accused of smoking in the stairwell and kissing in the grape arbor while an amateur meeting proceeded upstairs at the Plainfield, New Jersey home of veteran amateur Charles W. Heins. Yet, as a mature amateur, she enriched the world of amateur journalism with the wonderful wisdom of her mimeographed journal *Bellette* (short for *belles lettres*). Today, a demographically aged population of active amateur journalists searches for young recruits. What is it that we lack to attract young recruits? Is it the "youth culture" which prevailed when amateur journalists redefined adolescence in the 1870s that is lacking? Or is it simply the medium (paper and ink versus electronic) that rebuffs potential youthful recruits?

I think the participation of mature adults in our hobby has been more than worth the occasional problematic interloper. If our culture remains paper and ink

focused, it may be that our proper recruiting domain today is retirees belonging to the Baby Boomer generation. There is no dishonor in this. LAJ and other institutional collections of amateur journals record for us the hobby of the past including that revolutionary 1870s decade analyzed by Dr. Isaac. It remains for us to determine what will be the contents of these collections for the years 2016 forward. In recent years, both NAPA and AAPA have heard from members who believe it is time to "strike the colors." Nevertheless, a majority of active members in both associations want to continue to go forward, each with its own traditions and institutions. There will surely always be a future for hobby letterpress printers—ever since Gutenberg, printing has represented too important a component of our cultural heritage to be allowed to fall by the wayside, even as a hobby endeavor. Whether copy shops or home-based laser printers can sustain a more humble paper-based hobby remains to be seen. The viability of an Internet-based electronic apa also remains to be determined.

Today's Fossils wish for the continued success of the hobby—whatever the ages of its participants and the medium of their expression. My friend the writer L. Sprague de Camp often expressed his amazement that anyone would undertake the hard labor of writing other than for good pay. Nevertheless, I believe that there should be opportunities for the ordinary man and woman—including those who have not yet attained their eighteenth birthday—to speak their minds in a more intelligible way than 140-word tweets and laborious social media "likes" and "dislikes." Cogent essays and well-argued theses should not be the sole domain of paid scribes. Wherever and whenever a not-for-hire man or woman is able to give written expression to his or her thinking in an accessible medium, the amateur journalism spirit has triumphed.

It is the fact that amateur journalism has given voice to the minds of ordinary men and women that makes the archives of its productions so valuable for cultural historians. How can we make sure that this voice continues to be heard? I am reminded of the young amateur journalist who printed his journal on a paper bag with the instruction: "Blow It Up and Bust It!" He took these journals with him to NAPA's Boston convention in 1885. I doubt if many, or even any, examples of his paper bag journal survive. They got busted. What's the moral for amateur journalists? To my way of thinking it is this—keep on having fun! If we do that, the archives will have something to record of amateur journalism in the years 2016 and beyond.

Don't get me wrong. For recreation, the majority of humanity is still going to prefer cheering on their favorite sports teams, playing their favorite sports, partying with friends, watching their favorite television shows, dining out, listening to music, attending plays and concerts, watching movies, playing cards, making love, meeting new friends through social media on the Internet, etc. There's nothing wrong with that. Amateur journalists will be doing many of those things, too.

(Remember the *ajay* convention baseball games of yesteryear, with the hosts versus the visitors?) But we will also be giving expression to ourselves in the written word, without the expectation of pay, in some medium. These expressions will be our contributions to the amateur journalism archives of the future.

I hope the proposed amateur meeting in Madison, Wisconsin in July 2016 will be both entertaining and informative for everyone who chooses to attend. To the extent possible, I hope that the needs, preferences and traditions of all of the supporting amateur organizations will be successfully accommodated—including a shared auction and a shared banquet at mutually convenient times. If the attendees have the opportunity to experience some of the rich tradition of LAJ and Silver Buckle Press which Barry Schrader, my wife and I experienced during our Madison visit in May 2015, I know they will have good memories to take home with them.

Surely, every amateur journalist interested in the history of the hobby ought to have the opportunity to visit LAJ at University of Wisconsin in Madison. If the 2016 Madison meeting is successful, perhaps future conferences in cities with major amateur journalism archives will be considered. The amateur journalism collections at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts (Truman J. Spencer & other collections) and the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa (William H. Groveman & other collections) rank with LAJ in importance.

On the next tier, the amateur collections at the New York Public Library in New York City, New York ("Tryout" Smith & other collections), the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio (Warren J. Brodie collection), and the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California (Hyman J. Bradofsky collection) also have rich holdings. Each substantial collection of amateur journals likely contains some items whose only extant exemplars reside in that specific collection.

In closing, I hope that the amateur journalists and the scholars of amateur journalism of the year 2116 will be well familiar with all these great collections. By that year, there may be new institutional collections of amateur journals that do not even exist today. Perhaps many surviving amateur journals will have been digitized and made available on the Internet. Meanwhile, we can remember the collecting passion of Edwin Hadley Smith and the providence of Charles C. Heuman in purchasing Smith's collection for The Fossils in 1916. We mark the centenary of Heuman's purchase in 2016. The common joke within the amateur journalism hobby used to be "to err is Heuman." I am sure that Charlie Heuman made his share of mistakes over his long career in the hobby, but I don't believe that his purchase of Edwin Hadley Smith's LAJ collection was one of them.

LAJ and the other great institutional collections of amateur journalism contain permanent records of the written expression of the mostly ordinary men and

women— young and old—who have contributed to our hobby over the years. These records are invaluable not only for amateur journalists but also for students of our culture. The writings of paid scribes working for newspapers and magazines ought not to be the exclusive record of our culture. Amateur journalism has provided a mechanism for the ordinary man and woman to speak their mind in a way which persists. ♦

LAJ Donations: \$10,453

by David M. Tribby

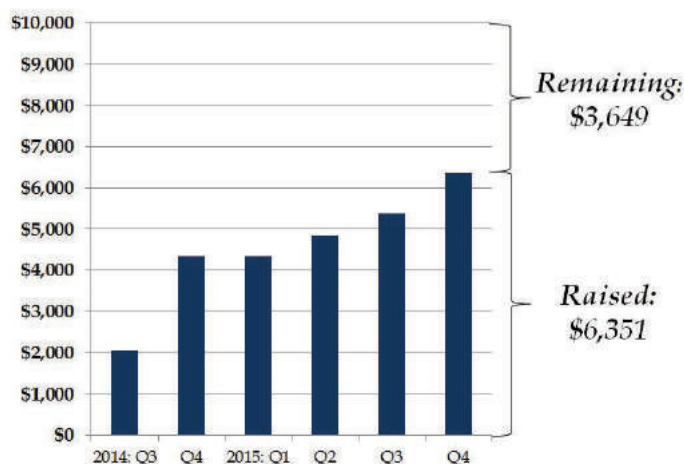
BEN STRAND, Director of Development for the University of Wisconsin Libraries, provided totals of donations made to two Library of Amateur Journalism (LAJ) funds as of December 31, 2015. The endowment fund (named in memory of Leland M. Hawes, Jr.) has received a total of \$6,351.45 while a separate fund for ongoing work tallied \$4,102.05.

Individual Fossils are encouraged to make donations. The easiest method may be to add an amount to your renewal check, although only gifts made directly to the University of Wisconsin Foundation are tax deductible. Information on making a gift, including ensuring it goes to the appropriate fund, can be found on The Fossils' website:

www.thefossils.org/supportlaj.html

The UW Foundation requires a minimum of \$10,000 to establish a permanent endowment. The Hawes Fund has reached 63% of this goal since fundraising began in September 2014. Fossils' President Ken Faig challenged other donors to put the Hawes Fund "over the top" by making a personal \$500 donation in August. Nearly twice that amount was raised for the Fund during the fourth quarter of 2015. ♦

Total Endowment Funding



Since September 2014, the Leland M. Hawes, Jr. Memorial Endowment Fund has received donations of \$6,351.45 towards its \$10,000 minimum goal.

Amateur Journalism Conference 2016: July 21-23

by David M. Tribby

DATES FOR Amateur Journalism Conference 2016 have been set: Thursday, July 21 through Saturday, July 23 at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, home of the Library of Amateur Journalism (LAJ).

The Conference is a multi-organization affair. It was first proposed by Fossils President Ken Faig to celebrate the centennial of The Fossils' purchase of LAJ from its creator, Edwin Hadley Smith, and to highlight the stewardship of UW staff in preserving and organizing it since 2004. Last July, the National Amateur Press Association voted to hold its 141st annual convention in conjunction with the conference. Later, the American APA designated it as a regional meeting. (AAPA has not had a national convention since 2012.) All groups have been working together, and with UW staff, to create a schedule that accommodates the needs of all groups.

NAPA's constitution mandates they hold business meetings (to approve officers' reports, vote on resolutions, elect officers, etc.) on three consecutive days. These business sessions will be scheduled for the mornings of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, leaving NAPA members available for socializing and attending non-business sessions in the afternoons and evenings. Arie Koelewyn is chairman of the 2016 NAPA Convention Reception Committee.

AAPA conducts all official business by mail, and its conventions have been social affairs with some discussion of ajay topics. This year, AAPA-specific sessions will be held on Friday and Saturday mornings. Barry Schrader is in charge of setting the AAPA agenda.

Although The Fossils will not schedule any Fossils-only sessions, President Ken Faig has been working with the other representatives, and UW staff, to line up speakers for the general sessions and to ensure appropriate facilities are available. The Fossils hopes to host a luncheon open to all.

Everyone is invited to attend presentations on the LAJ, housed in Memorial Library, on Friday afternoon. Other planned joint events include the Charlie Bush Memorial Chinese Dinner, an auction, and a banquet on Saturday evening. Jessica Isaac, author of the lead article in this issue, has agreed to give a presentation at the banquet. Schedule planning is ongoing. For the latest information, visit The Fossils website.

UW staff has set aside 15 rooms for conference attendees at the Lowell Inn and Conference Center, located just a short walk from Memorial Library. Nightly rates range from \$94 (one person, standard room) to \$131 (two people, deluxe room). All rooms have cable TV, free wireless Internet, in-room coffee makers, hair dryers, and a spacious desk. A swimming pool, sauna, and workout room are accessible to all guests. A complimentary expanded continental breakfast is included. Although on-site parking costs \$10 per

day, off-site parking is complimentary and located only three blocks away. For more information on the Lowell Center, visit

<http://conferencing.uwex.edu/lodging.cfm>

A special link is available for booking rooms online:

<http://bit.ly/uwlib20jul2>

If you want to make reservations via phone, call 866-301-1753 and refer to group code UWLIB.

If you have any interest in attending (even if you are not yet ready to commit), please contact me at e-mail editor@thefossils.org or the postal address in the masthead. Please let us know your interest early so there will be adequate resources available. ♦

Letter to the Editor

DEAR FELLOW FOSSILS:

Thanks so much for the invitation to submit a letter to the editor and for mentioning me in issue no. 364. I apologize for my procrastination in doing this, especially since letters to THE FOSSIL was my own suggestion.

I have been reading THE FOSSIL, though somewhat spottily. I fully understand the importance of its many detailed reports, so I don't mean to criticize them, but I just don't have the type of brain that absorbs all their information: the who's, where's, why's, how's, and how-much's; all the names, dates, and organizations. But I think I've gotten the gist—that encouraging efforts have been made in moving old amateur journal collections into good libraries, with capable and enthusiastic professionals overseeing them, and that funding is growing and showing promise. I'm pleased to hear all of this.

While I fully recognize how vital all this preservation of original amateur journals is, and I also recognize that efforts are being made in digital preservation, as I mentioned in my *DIY Printer Wannabe* #4 [NAPA, Dec. 2014], I hope **some** people, at **some** point down the road, will also look into microfilm and microfiche as complementary storage media. Because of the very inter-connectedness of the INTERNET, we need to be aware of the risks involved. I am by no means a lawyer (my knowledge of "Law" is less than rudimentary) but I understand that putting things on the Web involves contracting with WEB HOSTS: businesses that may not have the love we do of these wonderful old journals. At some point, if only for purely hard and practical "business reasons," they may decide to evict us, or they may go out of business. (I have seen entire, decades-old Web forum archives deleted overnight, in a fit of anger or on a whim.) By all means, let us digitize and Internetize, but we ought to keep in view a plan B, and even a plan C.

Plan B, as I've mentioned, would be microfilming. I have old newsletters from the International Society of Animal Rights that contain articles about outmoded microfilm and microfiche machines, which are now dirt cheap. (This was just about at the cusp of the Internet explosion, and they wanted to archive their back issues on microfilm or fiche.) I very much hope these old machines aren't being tossed into landfills or melted down for metal. Investigating where these venerable old machines may be found, and what they cost, if anything, will be one of my many—too many I'm afraid—scattered projects, and I invite any input, from anybody, on the matter.

But I also think there should be a plan (or maybe strategy) C: printing actual facsimile volumes, either complete series or samplers, in book form. From Robert Jennings' very interesting fanzine on old entertainment—pulp, comics, old-time radio and TV, science-fiction/fantasy—I see this is already being done with old comic strips and books, many in full cover. Of course **our** interest, amateur journals, is a bit more esoteric, with a much smaller fan base, so the economics of scale wouldn't be quite as favorable in doing the same with them. But what about books-on-demand? Has this technology drifted into obsolescence, and if so is there another tool that we amateur journalists could exploit?

It's great and vital that we're preserving old amateur journals; finding safe and accessible homes for them. But if we're going to generate interest and enthusiasm, we've got to start making them more visible and enjoyable to people who don't have the time or means to travel to distant libraries, just for a browse, however fun that may be. The history of amateur journalism is very important, but my own interest in it is mainly the journals themselves. Their original appearance, the resourcefulness and artistry in them, whether they were done on letterpress, offset, or even mimeo or ditto; the thoughts and ideas that were recorded in them, and the excitement and enthusiasm of the young people, long ago, who churned them out. Some people enjoyed train sets or Matchbox cars in their youth, and derive great fun from collecting and playing with them in their maturity. With me, it's zines and amateur journals. If more of these were in facsimile book form, I could deep read them, slowly explore and admire their craftsmanship, and totally savor them. Looking at them on a computer screen is nice, but it's not quite the same. Perhaps if such books were in local libraries, a lot of other people would enjoy them, and the ranks of amateur journalism could grow because of them.

Nobody should panic with my torrent of ideas. I do not expect all current efforts to be dropped, and I don't have the illusion all my great ideas would be achieved in a day. I barely have a clue about what technical challenges, time, effort, and complexities would be involved. (I'm no genius.) I'm just dreaming. But you've got to dream before a dream will come true.

Scott Pendleton's article in *THE FOSSIL* 361, "Amateur

Newspapers of Harrison County, Ohio," was **very** interesting. I enjoyed learning about the changing sociology of adolescence in the late 1800s, but Benjamin Woods' table-top press, the Novelty, particularly intrigued me. Scott included the size of each newspaper he listed. I see many of them were roughly the size of a modern, standard sheet of paper, 8½ x 11 inches. Were these printed on the Novelty, or on other larger presses of that era? If I were to produce a journal on a letterpress, I'd prefer it to be at least this size.

I often read how exceedingly difficult it is to learn letterpress printing, yet many teenagers in the 1880s published with little training. Are those who say it's hard perfectionists? Do I need to be a master printer to print a journal any more than I need to be a master typist to type a report? There's a printing museum in the town of Palouse, about 50 miles from where I live. I'll have to visit and see the size of their presses.

I've written down the Library of Congress call numbers for Amateur Journalism provided in *THE FOSSIL* No. 359, and with these hope to do some exploring at several university libraries in my area. I'll let you all know what I find.

I very much appreciate all the hard work you're all doing to keep the amateur journalism alive and well and am eager to see them bear fruit.

James N. Dawson
P.O. Box 950, Spokane, WA 99210

THE EDITOR REPLIES:

Finding a stable long-term digital home on the Internet is important. At current funding levels (\$25/year), *The Fossils* have enough storage for digital copies of *THE FOSSIL*, but not for a general collection of amateur journals. Outsourcing to another website puts us at their mercy, so we must choose partners wisely.

Plan C reminds me of Ralph Babcock's 1983 book *Your Thoughts*, which he sought to place in libraries. WorldCat (<http://www.worldcat.org>) shows it is available in 21 libraries.

Thousands of youngsters have taught themselves letterpress printing well enough to turn out small newspapers. I found it was not too difficult to learn how to hand-set type, but more challenging to ensure all lines in a large form are set so that individual pieces of type or spaces don't work themselves out when the press is moving. Adding a border makes a job more complex (everything in the form must lock-up evenly), and printing in multiple colors means the form must be separated, then each color printed separately without allowing the paper to drift.

I hope you visit university libraries and report on whether they have any amateur journals in their collections. I suggest you check out their websites to determine if there are special rules for gaining access. See if they have an on-line catalog, and look for the subject "amateur journalism."

Thanks for taking the time to write a thoughtful letter. I hope other readers will do likewise. ♦

Communication is the Key

by David M. Tribby

I HOPE THAT many readers will accept Jessica Isaac's invitation to write her with reactions to her article, and descriptions of how amateur journalism has changed. Her article is certainly thought-provoking.

The United APA, founded in 1895, had parallels to the first generation of amateur journalists. Young teenagers who read the popular weekly and monthly juvenile magazines of that era had been forming local clubs throughout America in order to meet and share their interests. UAPA grew out of an impulse to unite these local clubs into a national organization. When NAPA found out about the new organization, they did not take it seriously because its members were so much younger than their own.

By the mid-1930s, the United had become dominated by Roy Erford, then in his 50s. Younger members with new ideas on how to run things formed the American APA in 1936. The group attracted a younger crowd of new recruits, many in their teenage years. (Lee Hawes's 25th anniversary AAPA history was titled "The Stronghold of Youth.") Once again, an ajay group was formed and became a way for young people to communicate with one another.

When I joined AAPA as a teenager in 1970, there were still a number of adolescents in its ranks, although the majority of members were adults. Still, the younger members were always encouraged to publish and run for office.

Upon reflection, my own experience of amateur journalism was nearly the opposite of the youth culture described in Jessica's article. Instead of primarily a way to meet other adolescents, it became a gateway toward establishing relationships with adults who shared my interests. I suppose most people don't create relationships outside their own age group (other than with teachers, parents of friends, or family members) before they enter the workforce.

Many of today's amateur journalists were recruited as adults, and no doubt that is a completely different path than joining as an adolescent. What was your own experience? Tell Jessica!

♦♦♦

Another communication opportunity is a Letter to the Editor (see pages 14 and 15). Even if not for publication, I'm always interested in hearing from readers (whether members or not) with your reactions to the contents of THE FOSSIL, discussion of amateur journalism topics, or personal news.

♦♦♦

An informal poll of 35 amateur journalists turned up 18 likely to attend next July's Conference in Madison, although some needed to work out scheduling issues.

Another five thought there was a chance they could be there. Let me know if you might attend, so the planning committee will know how many people to expect, and so we can update you on the latest developments.

♦♦♦

While taking that poll, I heard from Tom Whitbread that he would not be able to make the trip due to an illness that has lasted since April. "Am on extended sick leave from UT and will officially retire Aug. 31, 2016. No more teaching. Alas!" Tom's home address is 1014 E. 38th St., Austin, TX 78705.

♦♦♦

A large number of Fossil memberships come due this month. Those who are expiring should receive a notice with this issue; your expiration date is also printed on your mailing label. (Many thanks to Gary Bossler for preparing both.) If you are coming due, please send your renewal check to Secretary-Treasurer Tom Parson promptly...and consider making a donation to the Library of Amateur Journalism with your renewal.

The Fossil

THIS IS THE Official Publication of The Fossils, a non-profit organization of those interested in the history of amateur journalism. Individuals or institutions allied with our goals are invited to join. Dues are \$15 annually, or \$20 for joint membership of husband and wife. Annual subscription to THE FOSSIL without privileges of membership is \$10. For further information, visit our website:

www.thefossils.org

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