

The Fossil

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President's Message

Ella Maud (Murray) Frye: Foundress of the Hub Amateur Journalists' Club

by Ken Faig, Jr.



President Ken Faig, Jr.

THE HUB CLUB as established by Ella Maud Frye on March 10, 1890 (a Monday) was not the first such entity. Seven or eight Boston-area amateurs had begun exchanging journals as early as 1857 (Spencer 13). Boston amateurs had organized as early as April 1858, when they formed an "Editorial Union" with Edward C. Richardson as president and G. A. Hunnewell as secretary (Spencer 17). The first Hub Club was organized on October 8, 1873, with J. Fred Sayer as president. A new organization of the Club lasted from 1877 to 1879, and yet another from 1883 to 1884. But it was the Club as reorganized by Ella Maud Frye in 1890 that was to last thirty-four years until falling into inactivity after the Boston NAPA convention in 1924. Charles E. Wilson was first president, and Blanche M. Clay first editor. The Club finally settled on *The Hub Club Quill* as the name of its periodic official organ in 1901 (Spencer 177). Edith Miniter (1867-1934) arrived in Boston to stay in December 1893 (after a prior residence from August 1892 to February 1893), and quickly became the Club's prime mover. She and her mother Jennie E. (Tupper) Dowe (1840-1919) entertained the local amateurs and visitors at their homes at 77 [East] Berkeley Street (1897-1906) and 17 Akron Street (1906-1918).

Curiously, there were some Fries in the earliest Boston clubs. Eben S. Frye was Hub Club president in 1879 (Spencer 177). Edward W. and Eben S. Frye published *Eastern Sunbeam* from Boston in 1877-79 (Spencer 178). I have not discovered any family connection with Ella's eventual husband George Edgar Frye. Edward

Whittier Frye (b. Dec. 2, 1859 Boston) and Eben[ezer] S. Frye (b. Sept. 20, 1862 Boston, d. Sept. 19, 1892 Boston) were the sons of Edward A. Frye (b. Mar. 11, 1827 Vassalboro, Maine, d. Mar. 17, 1865 Boston) and Esther Jones (Whittier) Frye (b. Feb. 20, 1829 Dover, New Hampshire, d. Feb. 24, 1918 Boston). Edward A. Frye was the son of Ebenezer Frye; Esther Jones (Whittier) Frye, the daughter of Moses Whittier and Sarah (Hacker) Whittier. Edward Whittier Frye married Edith M. Alden (b. 1866/67 Auburn, Maine), the daughter of Oscar F. Alden and Hattie C. Hyman, in Malden, Massachusetts on July 10, 1901. Edward Whittier Frye was listed as a real estate agent in the Boston directory as late as 1933. Eben S. Frye worked as a printer and was residing with his widowed mother and his elder brother at 156 Poplar Street in Boston at the time of his death.

Ella was born Ella Maud Murray in Halifax, Nova Scotia on March 6, 1865. She was the daughter of William Murray (1829-1912), an English-born physician, and Martha Elliott (1830-1923). (Her mother's name was recorded as Mary in the 1871 and 1881 censuses.) Her parents' household was enumerated in New Glasgow, Pictou, Nova Scotia in the 1871 and 1881 censuses; she had older brothers Howard and George and a younger sister Bessie. The Murrys were Presbyterians. Ella has FamilySearch ID KL2P-8BW and readers may find her maternal ancestry traced through multiple generations there. Her grandparents were William Murry and Mary Sheradon (paternal) and George Alexander Elliott and Susannah Sarah Bezamson (maternal). Her primary ancestral lines were Scotch.

The Poirer and Murray Family Tree (P&MFT) on Ancestry identifies Ella's paternal grandparents as Robert Murray (b. 1798 Dundee, Scotland, d. 1850 Halifax, Nova Scotia) and Elizabeth D. Wheeler (b. 1803 Kent, England, d. 1882 Halifax, Nova Scotia). It identi-

fies ten children for William and Martha (Elliott) Murray:

- (1) George William Murray (1853-1921)
- (2) Catherine Murray (b. 1857)
- (3) Lily M. Murray (1858-1879)
- (4) Margaret Jane Murray (1861-1949)
- (5) Robert Parker Murray (1863-1947)
- (6) Ella Maud Murray (1865-1949)
- (7) Claudia Marie Murray (1867-1900)
- (8) Edith Alexandra Suzanney Murray (1869-1959)
- (9) Clifford Elliot Murray (1872-1872)
- (10) Charles Tupper Murray (1873-1933)

Of her siblings, at least George William Murray joined Ella in becoming a Massachusetts resident (he had married Annie M. Beazley (1856-1917) in Halifax in 1880 and married Ellen Murphy (1884-1968) in Massachusetts in 1917). He died in Somerville.

P&MFT has extensive information concerning Ella's father William Murray and reproduces this newspaper drawing of him in 1878:



P&MFT also reproduces this photograph of Ella Maud (Murray) Frye in old age:



Ella married George Edgar Frye in Halifax, Nova Scotia on Sept. 28, 1887. She was twenty-two years six months old at the time of her marriage. She and her husband met in the amateur journalism hobby. Her husband was born in Nova Scotia on Feb. 15, 1860. He stated his ancestry as English in the 1901 Canadian census. In the 1871 census of Halifax Ward 2, George, age 10, was recorded with Deborah Tomkins, age 22. They were both Methodists and Deborah had been born in England. In the 1881 census, George, age 21, working as a clerk, was recorded in the household of John Smart, age 69, born England, church sexton, and his wife Mary Smart, age 65, born England, cook. Mary Smart, age 27, born Quebec, was also in the 1881 household. The younger Mary Smart was a Presbyterian, but all the other members of the household were Methodists. It's easy to make the assumption that George was an orphan; whether this is a correct assumption or not I do not know. FamilySearch ID KL2P-8BC for George does not identify any ancestors.

Truman Spencer wrote this sketch of George Edgar Frye for his *Literary Cyclopedia of Amateur Journalism* in 1891 (pp 34-35):

GEORGE EDGAR FRYE

Mr. George Edgar Frye, who is known as the "father of amateur journalism in Nova Scotia," started the first amateur paper there, in March 1878, *The Young Blue-nose*. In 1880 he was elected official editor of the Nova Scotia Association, and the next year was chosen its president. After this he spent three years in England, contributing freely to the amateur press. In 1886 he was chosen official editor of the Canadian association. He removed to Boston in 1888, and the next year was elected official editor of the New England Association. His more important contributions to the press were in verse, his prose work possessing but little literary merit. Many of his poems were written as rondeaux, but they lacked some of the essential features of this form of verse, his "Life's Lesson" in March 1886, *Maple Leaf* approaching nearest to perfection. His best verses were: "I would miss you," *Criterion*, May 1883; "True Friendship," *Canada*, April 1886; "Evening Reveries," *Youth*, October 1885; "Life's Lesson," *Maple Leaf*, March 1886; "Good Bye," *Nugget*, April 1886; "When Love is King," *Amateur Journalist*, November 1889; "Opportunity," *Thistle*, December 1889; "Dear Christmas Bells," *Mercury Magazine*, Christmas No., 1889; "Thro' Trusting Years," *Our Compliments*, November 1889; "There is Sweet Trust," *Our Compliments*, June 1889; "Christmas Cheer," *Mayflower*, January 1890; "Nature's Harmony," *Monthly Visitor*, June 1887; "The Well Of Life," *Union Lance*, May 1889; "A Fragment," *Mercury Magazine*, Oct. 1889; "Life's Mystery," *Enterprise*, June 1890; "Baby," *Dunlop's Magazine*, 1888.

Spencer also printed Frye's poems "There is Sweet Trust" and "Life's Lesson." It is difficult to specify Frye's three years in England as described in Spencer's

sketch. The period 1881-83 is just a guess. I have not identified his place of residence during his three-year English visit in the 1880s. Discovering this might provide a clue regarding his parents.

Writing in "A Rearward Glance, Mrs. Miniters recorded of Mrs. Frye:

Mrs. Frye came to Boston from Nova Scotia some time in the late '80s. She had been prominent among the amateurs of her own country, who were then existing in considerable numbers, owing to the efforts of the Grant brothers, J. H. I. Munroe, and especially to those of George Edgar Frye, always referred to as "father of amateur journalism in Nova Scotia." Coming to Boston almost as a stranger, Mrs. Frye organized the Hub Club as a sheer cure for loneliness. She says she was discouraged in her first efforts by the boys, but she went ahead and called a meeting, borrowing for the purpose, the home of a friend in Maplewood, a suburb of Boston, as her own was not large enough (VG 344-345).

Maplewood was an unincorporated neighborhood in Malden, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb. The 1891 Malden directory recorded George E. Frye, a clerk in Boston, with house on Mt. Pleasant Avenue in Maplewood. The 1892 Boston directory listed George E. Frye, editor, 178 Devonshire, room 302, with house at Maplewood. The 1893 Malden directory recorded George E. Frye, a salesman in Boston, with house on Orchard Street, beyond Columbia Street, in Maplewood. Just to complicate matters further, Mrs. Miniters recalls in an additional anecdote in "A Rearward Glance" that she got lost trying to commute by trolley to the Frye residence on Webster Street in Maplewood (VG 347). The occasion was the Fries' wooden wedding anniversary, presumably Sept. 28, 1892.

At one point—probably before the arrival of Jennie Dowe in Boston in 1896—Ella shared a residence with Edith Miniters.

They were both photographed in the front row of the group photograph taken at the Boston NAPA convention in July 1894 (Spencer, photographic section). They both wore light blouses with long, dark skirts and placed their hands on their knees. Edith looks more intense than Ella, whose hair is more carefully coiffed. They both wear bow ties. Notably, both George Edgar Frye and John T. Miniters (1864?-1900) are absent in the group photograph. Mrs. Miniters had separated from her husband as early as 1891.

Much of the activity of the Fries in the Hub Club over the ensuing decade could probably be established through an examination of Hub Club publications. Ella was editor of the *Hub Official* in the year of the 1894 convention. In the 1898 Boston directory, George E. Frye, insurance agent, was recorded with house at 15 Highland Avenue in Roxbury, the same Boston suburb where Edith Miniters and her mother would locate in 1906.

But home soon beckoned to the Fries. I have not found them in the 1900 U. S. census. They had apparently returned to Halifax before the enumeration date since the 1899-1900 membership directory of the First Baptist Church of Halifax lists Mrs. George E. Frye of 109 Hollis Street among the members. The 1901 Canadian census enumerated the Fries in Halifax. George was a 41-year-old insurance agent, Ella was a 36-year-old "lady journalist." Both were recorded as born in Nova Scotia—George of English and Ella of Scotch ancestry. George specified his religion as Unitarian, Ella listed hers as Baptist.

However, marital disharmony interjected into the Frye family in the next decade. By the time of the 1910 U.S. census, Ella was living at 333 East 31st Street in Manhattan (Ward 21). She called herself a 43-year-old widow, born in Nova Scotia of an English-born father and a Nova Scotia-born mother. She had borne no children, and specified her employment as private secretary to a "literary man."

It seems unlikely that this "literary man" was George Edgar Frye. He may be the George E. Frye listed in the 1905 and 1906 Somerville, Massachusetts directories with house at 259 Broadway. In 1905, he was a clerk working in Boston, in 1906 a collector working in Boston. In 1907, he had moved to 261 Broadway in Somerville; he was still working as a collector in Boston. The 1911 Cambridge, Massachusetts directory listed George E. Frye, insurance agent at 671 Massachusetts Avenue, with house at the same address. The 1912 Cambridge directory listed George as a representative at 689 Massachusetts Avenue, with house at Somerville. The 1917 Cambridge directory lis-



Mrs. Ella M. Frye and Mrs. Edith Miniters at the NAPA 1894 convention in Boston

ted George as a roomer at 13 Clinton. Just how many of these directory listings are really our George Edgar Frye I am not certain.

The *Yonkers Herald* for March 6, 1919 (p. 4) reported:

George Edgar Frye

George Edgar Fry, a reporter for the Bronxville Review, died in the White Plains hospital, on Tuesday night. He was injured in an automobile accident on February 25th last and had been unconscious for 180 hours, dying without regaining consciousness. He was 59 years old.

The accident occurred on the Post road near the Town Hall in Scarsdale. Frye had just alighted from a trolley car when he was struck by a Red Cross ambulance driven by Mrs. Jessie Drake, of New Rochelle. He was rushed to the hospital where it was found he had sustained a fractured skull and other severe injuries.

A Canadian by birth, Frye had lived in this section but a short time. He had been employed on the Bronxville paper since last October. Prior to that time he was associated with the Robert E. Farley organization.

Frye's March 5, 1919 death was also reported in the New York *Herald* and the New York *Evening World* of March 6, 1919. The *Herald* reported that he had been associated with the *Bronxville Review* and the *Scarsdale Inquirer*. He was a resident of Mount Vernon, New York at the time of his death and was alighting from the Mount Vernon trolley at the time of his fatal accident. He can probably be identified with the George E. Frye, business manager, Bronx Valley Press, who was listed with house on Palmer Avenue in the 1918 and 1919 White Plains, New York directories.

The 1921 Canadian census enumerated Ella in her mother's household at 96 Inglis Street in Halifax: Martha Murray (head), age 90, born Nova Scotia of Irish-born father and Nova Scotia-born mother; Ella Murray (daughter), age 45, born Nova Scotia of English-born father and Nova Scotia-born mother; Rita Mansley (friend), age 16, born Nova Scotia of English-born father and Nova Scotia-born mother; Thomas Murray (lodger), age 31, born Scotland of Scottish born father and Canadian-born mother. P&MFT makes Rita Alice (Mansley) Mannering (b. Mar. 3, 1905 Halifax) an adopted daughter of Ella and specifies her biological parents as Thomas Mansley and Rebecca Boutillon.

By 1930, Ella was back in the New York City metropolitan area. In the 1930 U. S. census she was enumerated at 2112 Regent Place in Brooklyn, New York. She called herself a 65-year-old widow, born in Nova Scotia of an English-born father and a Nova Scotia-born mother. She stated that she had been married at age 21, and emigrated in 1888. She had kept her Canadian citizenship and was an alien. Also in her household were nine lodgers—a heavy load for a 65-year-old if she was managing the household on her own.

Ella had returned to Halifax in time for inclusion in the 1935 voters' roll. She did travel from Halifax to Boston by boat (*S.S. Lucy Nelson*) on May 21-23, 1936 and Dec. 17-19, 1936. She specified her U. S. relative as Ruth Woolwork in May and Mrs. Currie Smith in December. She named Boston amateur journalist Laurie Sawyer as an "other" contact in December. Of course, these visits were too late to see Edith Minter, who had died at the home of Evanore Olds Beebe in Wilbraham's Glendale neighborhood on June 4, 1934.

In 1940 and 1943, Ella resided at 139 South Park Street (apt. 3) in Halifax. She died in Halifax on July 30, 1949, age 84.

Like Edith, Ella Maud (Murray) Frye was very intelligent. One of the topics on which she lectured was the single tax. What we cannot recover are all the merry Club events which helped Mrs. Frye pass her time in the 1890s. I am afraid we can only imagine those lively times.

Abbreviations:

P&MFT: Poirer & Murray Family Tree (Ancestry).

Spencer: Truman J. Spencer, *The History of Amateur Journalism*, The Fossils, Inc., 1957.

VG: Edith Minter, *The Village Green and Other Pieces*, Hippocampus Press, 2013. ♦

Halifax Chronicle, Aug. 1, 1949

Well Known Halifax Woman Dies

Mrs. Ella Maud Murray died at her residence, 139 South Park Street, on Saturday morning following a lengthy illness. She was born in Halifax 84 years ago.

With the exception of a period of twenty years spent in the United States, Mrs. Murray spent her life in her native city and was actively interested in its development up to her death.

Mrs. Murray was a pioneer in dramatics and musical circles in Halifax and was awarded the Canadian Drama Award in recognition of her untiring efforts in those fields. She was presented with an honorary degree by the Nova Scotia College of Art in 1935 in appreciation of her work for that institution.

For twenty-three years, Mrs. Murray was a member of the editorial staff of the *Halifax Chronicle* and *Echo*. She was the first, and for many years the only, woman editorial writer on a Canadian newspaper. She collaborated with the late Bolton Hall in the United States in the publication of two books.

Mrs. Murray is survived by an adopted daughter, Rita Mannering, Halifax; two sisters, Mrs. E. A. Thompson, Lake Charlotte, La., and Mrs. H. K. Avery, Los Angeles, Cal., and one nephew, Clyde Murray, Park Avenue, New York City. ♦

Sonia Greene and the Cape Ann Sea Serpent

by David Goudsward

"... the full moon reflecting its light in the water, a peculiar and unusual noise heard at a distance as of a loud snorting and grunting, the shimmering light forming a moon-path on the water, the round tops of the submerged piles in the water exposed a rope connecting them like a huge spider's guy-line..."

Sonia H. Davis, *The Private Life of H. P. Lovecraft*

In June of 1922, Lovecraft was in Magnolia, Massachusetts, a small seaside village and a neighborhood in Gloucester, at the invitation of the future Mrs. Lovecraft, Sonia Greene. One evening, he and Sonia took a stroll up Hesperus Avenue and then Western Avenue toward downtown Gloucester, a 4-mile walk (they took the bus back). Before crossing the Blynman Canal Bridge, they noticed what Sonia referred to as "a beautiful esplanade." That esplanade was the entrance to Hough Avenue, which follows the coast through Stage Fort Park.

They decided to explore the esplanade on another evening stroll. Sonia thought it was beautiful scenery. Lovecraft would have looked into the history of the walkway while Sonia was at work. He discovered that Stage Fort Park was the site of Gloucester's first settlement in 1623, so it appealed to him. The couple turned onto Hough at its southern intersection with Western. They strolled past beaches and well-kept lawns overlooking Gloucester Harbor. As they neared the northern terminus of Hough, where it rejoins Western, it was getting dark, and a full moon had risen over the waters.

Suddenly, they heard what Sonia described as "a peculiar and unusual noise heard at a distance as of a loud snorting and grunting." Sonia pointed out to Lovecraft that this was the perfect setting for one of his stories, between the odd noises, the way the light played on the ocean, and the spider-like quality of the ropes on the pilings. Lovecraft suggested that if she felt the setting was inspirational, perhaps she should write the story. As they continued to walk, she described the scene as Lovecraft prompted her and encouraged her to solidify her idea. Sonia felt his enthusiasm was so sincere that she stayed up and outlined the story when they returned to their respective rooms. Naturally, Lovecraft later revised her draft of the story.

The result was the sea monster tale "The Horror at Martin's Beach," which appeared in the November 1923 issue of *Weird Tales* under Sonia's name. The story was renamed to the spoiler-laden "The Invisible Monster." A ship encounters and kills a 50-foot sea monster. The creature has several notable anatomical peculiarities,

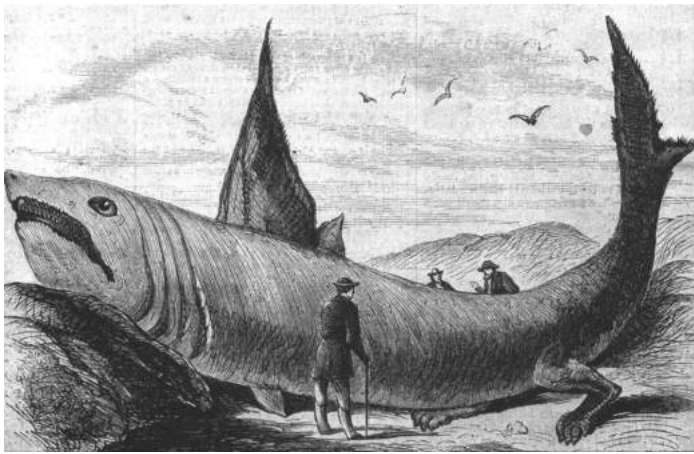
such as a single large eye and rudimentary forelegs. Marine biologists suggest it is a juvenile of an unknown species. The captain who captured the creature tours the seaside tourist towns, charging admission to see the remains. The captain is preparing to leave Martin's Beach, an upscale village on a rocky coast similar to Magnolia. That is when the juvenile's parent comes looking for the captain.

It is no surprise that a seaside stroll inspired a sea serpent tale. It would have been a logical idea to gravitate toward by just being in Gloucester. The city is on the south side of Cape Ann, and Lovecraft was enamored of the area and its history. It is the heart of Lovecraft's haunted landscape, located between Innsmouth (Newburyport) to the north and Arkham (Salem) and Kingsport (Marblehead) to the south. In other words, Lovecraft was aware of the Cape Ann sea serpent.

Cape Ann sea serpent reports date from 1639 into the 1880s, but from 1817-1819, the cryptid frequented Gloucester Harbor, with hundreds of reports, many with multiple witnesses. Most of the Cape Ann Sea Serpent reports are of a creature 60 to 70 feet long with a turtle-like head raised two feet above the water and a vertical undulation form of swimming, resulting in reports with varying numbers of "humps" on the monster.

Even more intriguing is that the Lovecraft/Greene sea serpent's description avoids the local sea serpent's comparatively stereotypical description for one that matches that of a pseudo-plesiosaur, a partly decomposed basking shark carcass. The basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) holds a unique place in cryptozoology—it is only mistaken for a sea serpent after its death. The second-largest living shark, after the whale shark, grows to lengths of 40 feet. They are harmless filter feeders with enormous mouths who are migratory wanderers searching for plankton. Tiny teeth, enlarged gill slits, and cartilaginous gill rakers are evolutionary developments related to the basking shark's filter-feeding mode of life. However, those features also create conditions that cryptozoologist Bernard Heuvelmans named the "pseudo-plesiosaur" effect. The gills of the basking shark rot quickly after death, and when they detach, the shark's jaw also falls away. The skull and backbone are exposed, resembling a small head and long neck.

Similarly, the shark's spine stops at the upper lobe of the caudal fin, so when the lower lobe decomposes and falls off, it looks like a long tail. To entirely trigger the pseudo-plesiosaur effect, the shark's pectoral fins remain attached, resembling decomposing flippers or,



Harper's Weekly of Oct. 24, 1868, described a "wonderful fish" that was likely the remains of a basking shark.

in the case of Martin's Beach, vestigial forelegs. Assuming Lovecraft/Sonia read a report describing the discovery of basking shark remains, the dorsal portion of a basking shark's rostrum (snout) is a hollow structure, which could be mistaken for an eyehole.

Basking shark carcasses are uncommon in New England, and misidentification as a sea serpent happens "coincidentally" in tourist areas, Cape Cod Bay in particular, while fishing industry areas, such as Maine, tended to identify remains simply as a "big fish." Most New England carcasses postdate the story's creation. However, a well-known pseudo-plesiosaur discovery in Florida in 1892 was reported in *The Century Magazine*, a popular mainstream arts and science journal.

When Sonia heard the odd noises that night, the street was less than 300 feet from the water. The location makes it easy to identify the source of the "loud snorting and grunting." The rocks off Stage Fort Park are a popular location for harbor seals. Male harbor seals are particularly known for being noisy. "Grunting" and "snorting" are commonly used to describe their vocalizations. As invisible terrors from the depths go, it is admittedly anti-climactic.

Lovecraft would return to Gloucester on a solo trip in 1927, happily noting that "the main street retains most of its Georgian brick buildings." He mentions touring the Sargent House Museum on Middle Street and the White-Ellery House (now owned by the Cape Ann Museum).

This second visit included a return visit to Magnolia, so Lovecraft walked the same route he had with Sonia. Still, the 1927 trip does not mention further aquatic encounters.

Stage Fort Park also has a notable, non-Lovecraftian association with *Weird Tales* through Lovecraft's pulp competitor, Seabury Quinn. Quinn's occult detective, Jules de Grandin, uses John Greenleaf Whittier as an authority on battling the supernatural with silver. Quinn specifically uses lines from Whittier's 1892 poem "The Garrison of Cape Ann."

"'Ghosts or witches,' said the captain, 'thus I foil the Evil One!'

And he rammed a silver button from his doublet down his gun."

The ballad is Whittier's version of a 1692 account by Cotton Mather of an encounter between soldiers and apparitions at the site's defensive constructions.

This Whittier/Fort Stage connection is the rationale behind de Grandin's use of silver bullets to combat a revenant pirate in "The Black Master" (*Weird Tales*, January 1929). He would use the same quote a decade later in "The Poltergeist of Swan Upping" (*Weird Tales*, February 1939) for de Grandin's justification for using a silver net to catch the titular poltergeist. Unfortunately, the de Grandin antagonists are supernatural, not cryptozoological.

Today, the park is home to Half Moon and Cressy's beaches. A reconstructed Civil War fort sits on a site fortified since 1635. There is a sand volleyball court, a playground, a baseball field, a basketball court, and tennis courts.

Stage Fort Park is the anchor of a statue-filled, landscaped scenic walkway across the Blynman Canal Bridge and into Stacy Esplanade, home of the iconic Fisherman's Memorial. The eight-foot-tall, bronze statue of a fisherman dressed in oilskins standing braced at the wheel on the sloping deck of his ship is a cenotaph and memorial to the hundreds of Gloucester fishermen lost at sea.

The rocks near the park are still a popular sunning destination for harbor seals, allowing modern night strolls to hear the same sounds that inspired an invisible monster.

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Sheldon Pierce Wesson

November 1, 1947 – January 20, 2025

by Dave Tribby



Wesson family in 1949

SHELDON P. WESSON was born into amateur journalism. His parents, Helen A. Vivarttas and Sheldon C. Wesson, were active ajays who met at an Amateur Printers' Club meeting in 1941. In 1946, the Wessons moved to Japan during the post World War II Occupation where Wes was a civilian working in the Textile Branch for the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). Young Sheldon was born in Tokyo the following year. The family returned to the New York City area (Long Island) in 1948.

When the Wesson family, now with younger son David, returned to Japan in 1952, Wes had trouble getting his 7x11 Gordon into the country. Just as customs officers were concluding that the press must be connected to his work as a newspaper writer, they opened another box:

Then to help matters, they found the little 2x4 press that Sheldon the Smaller uses, Little Josette. "My little boy's toy," I explained. That amused them.

"This one is little boy's toy. The other one is my toy."

Gay laughter. "Big toy, no?" And the crisis was over. I was too relieved to follow up with a recruiting spiel.

So Josephine, the former Bilious Bull Press, companion of Alf Babcock and solace of the Wessons, 70 years old, entered Japan as a toy. Duty free.

Young Sheldon published the first issue of his amateur journal, *Jamboree*, in August 1954, at age 6½. The colophon (written by Dad) notes, "In publishing this first number of this paper, Sheldon P. Wesson lays claim to being the youngest writer-printer-publisher in

the history of amateur journalism. He set almost all the type himself (Daddy only justified) and printed 200 copies, all but page 2, on his own 2x4 hand-press, one page at a time." Issues number 2 (Spring 1955) and 3 (July 1957) had the same format as number 1: four 3x4½ inch pages.

After adding a third child, Pamela, the Wessons returned to the U. S. for good in 1962, settling in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. Sheldon P. made use of the Wesson print shop for a variety of jobs, including the fourth *Jamboree* in July 1963, upgraded to 4½x6 inch pages printed with red and blue color accents. The fifth issue, dated June 1964, expanded to 12 pages plus cover. Although another edition was promised for August, it never became a reality. SPW had graduated from Glen Ridge High School and was headed to study Chemistry at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N. Y., where he would eventually earn a PhD.

In the 1980s Dr. Wesson was a senior scientist at Owens-Corning Fiberglas Technical Center where he filed a patent related to glass fibers. By 1990 he was associated with the Textile Research Institute at Princeton, New Jersey. He would become a Principal Scientist at Abtech Scientific ("Advanced Biochip Technologies") and also CEO of his own Ynir Instrumentation Software in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He became an expert in robotics.

In his spare time Sheldon became immersed in the multiplayer online role-playing game World of Warcraft and was active in a related guild.

His sister, Pam, remembers him as both brilliant and kind. ♦



Sheldon P., Pam, and Helen Wesson at 1998 AAPA convention

Ajay Meets Philately

by Mick Taylor

IN ADDITION to amateur journalism, I am also interested in philately, especially that area of philately called postal history. (Without going into the boring details, one can think of postal history as collecting whole envelopes (called covers in philatelic terms) and studying postal systems, rather than just collecting stamps.) There are a few similarities between postal history and the study of amateur journalism, not least of which is that they both deal with old pieces of paper. And, of course, amateur journalism was dependent on the mail for distribution of journals and for correspondence, both official and recreational.

Recently I came across a piece of ephemera that brought my two interests together: an envelope sent by Edward F. Daas addressed to fellow UAPA member Nick Bruehl. Daas is, of course, well known as an ex-President of UAPA, and the man who brought H. P. Lovecraft into the association. I have not found much on the recipient, Nick Bruehl, but he seems to have been a long time member of UAPA. In the *United Amateur* 15:2 (September 1915), Lovecraft, in reviewing a past issue of the journal *The Trail* for the Department of Public Criticism column, notes, "Also by Mr. [Alfred L.] Hutchinson is the well written and animated account of Mr. Nicholas Bruehl, whose artistic photographic work adorns the inside covers of this issue." Evidently Bruehl was an interesting enough fellow to



merit a lively journal article! There he is one up on me.

Of course it would be ideal if the letter was preserved along with the envelope. As it is, one can not really glean that much beyond some obvious points. It was probably used in official UAPA communication, was mailed in Milwaukee on February 12, 1907, and reached Sherwood the next day. This cover is a nice piece of ephemera, rather than a source of information. Still, it was a fun and fortuitous find, and is now a valued part of my philatelic collection. And a more extensive collection of such APA ephemera may well add to our knowledge of communication practices in amateur journalism. Also, if anyone has additional information on Nick Bruehl, I would be most grateful.

Editor's Note: According to an obituary attached to Find a Grave memorial 31621053, Nick Bruehl (1877 - 1958) was a bachelor farmer, "known throughout this region for his varied activities, including sculpture work, amateur photography, and historian of the county. He was a Post-Crescent correspondent and photographer for many years... Many of his photographs, all taken with a simple box camera, won state prizes." ♦

The Fossil

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