



# THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

# NEWSBOY



*Horatio Alger, Jr.*

1832 - 1899

A magazine devoted to the study of Horatio Alger, Jr., his life, works, and influence on the culture of America.

VOLUME XLVII

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2009

NUMBER 1

2009 H.A.S. Convention preview

## *The Charlottesville Charivari*

-- Page 3



*Registration form*  
*Schedule of events*  
*Hotel information*

Historic Michie Tavern in Charlottesville, Va., will be the site of the annual Horatio Alger Society banquet.

Photo by Jeff Looney

## Worthy challenger to the Stratemeyer Syndicate

*A.L. Burt's inexpensive series books*

-- Page 8

## President's column

In my last column I told of the book that started my collection. What has always intrigued me are the inscriptions in the front of many books. They are usually given as gifts for Christmas, birthdays, Sunday school attendance or from school teachers.

I would like to tell about three of my books. The first two are inexpensive and in poor condition but have memories.

The first is a Donohue copy of *The Store Boy*. The inscription reads "Barna Eastman 1926 ... from Fred Duncan". Mr. Eastman was my scoutmaster when I was 12 years old. I don't know where I purchased the book and had not seen Mr. Eastman since I was in his scout troop.

The second book is also a Donohue copy of *Jed, the Poorhouse Boy*. The inscriptions are stamped and read "Stacy Harrington Vestal N Y Broome Co".

A second stamp reads "Handle With Care Property of Stacy Harrington". A week after Vivian and I were married in 1955, I started a new job in the Circulation Department of a daily newspaper in Endicott, *The Endicott Daily Bulletin*, where I worked for 18 months. Mr. Harrington was the photographer for the newspaper, and I have not seen him since leaving the paper in 1957 to go to work for IBM.

The third book is an Alta Edition of *Helen Ford* and is in fine condition. There are two inscriptions. The first reads "Horace from Ida, Wishing you a happy birthday February 17th 1890". The second, on the opposite page, reads "Alicia Wilbur, from Aunt Ida 1931". This book was Alger's first and only effort to write a book for older girls, and I find it very interesting that it was first given as a birthday gift to a boy in 1890 and many years later, as a used book, it was given to a girl by her aunt (also Ida).

If any of our readers have similar inscriptions from books in their collections they would like to share with us, please drop our editor, Bill Gowen, a note and he will include them a later issue. The mailing address is at the bottom of the column at the right.

Mike Morley reports that Deidre Johnson (PF-596) has been working on a *Newsboy* index (an annotated compilation of all articles that appear in each issue) that currently dates back to 1995. There is a link to Deidre's index on the home page of the H.A.S. Web site, [www.thehoratioalgersociety.org](http://www.thehoratioalgersociety.org). Mike reports that he fre-

(Continued on Page 4)

## HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. and to encourage the spirit of *Strive and Succeed* that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes — youngsters whose struggles epitomized the Great American Dream and inspired hero ideals in countless millions of young Americans for generations to come.

### OFFICERS

LAWRENCE R. RICE	PRESIDENT
ROBERT G. SIPES	VICE-PRESIDENT
CHRISTINE DeHAAN	TREASURER
ROBERT E. KASPER	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BERNARD A. BIBERDORF	(2009) DIRECTOR
KYOKO AMANO	(2009) DIRECTOR
CAROL NACKENOFF	(2009) DIRECTOR
ROBERT PETTITO	(2010) DIRECTOR
BARRY SCHOENBORN	(2010) DIRECTOR
MARY ANN NYBERG	(2010) DIRECTOR
ARTHUR W. SMITTER, JR.	(2011) DIRECTOR
ROBERT L. KERSCH	(2011) DIRECTOR
J. JEFFERSON LOONEY	(2011) DIRECTOR
LEO "BOB" BENNETT (1932-2004)	EMERITUS
RALPH D. GARDNER (1923-2005)	EMERITUS

### PAST PRESIDENTS

KENNETH B. BUTLER	GEORGE W. OWENS
JACK ROW	WILLIAM R. WRIGHT
DR. MAX GOLDBERG	ROBERT E. KASPER
STEVE PRESS	MARY ANN DITCH
JUDSON S. BERRY	JOHN CADICK
LEO "BOB" BENNETT	CARL T. HARTMANN
JERRY B. FRIEDLAND	ARTHUR P. YOUNG
BRADFORD S. CHASE	CAROL NACKENOFF
ROBERT E. SAWYER	ROBERT G. HUBER
EUGENE H. HAFNER	ROBERT R. ROUTHIER
D. JAMES RYBERG	MICHAEL MORLEY

*Newsboy*, the official newsletter of the Horatio Alger Society, is published bi-monthly (six issues per year). Membership fee for any 12-month period is \$25 (\$20 for seniors), with single issues of *Newsboy* \$4.00. Please make remittance payable to the Horatio Alger Society.

Membership applications, renewals, changes of address and other correspondence should be sent to **Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255**.

*Newsboy* is indexed in the Modern Language Association's International Bibliography. You are invited to visit the Horatio Alger Society's official Internet site at [www.thehoratioalgersociety.org](http://www.thehoratioalgersociety.org)

*Newsboy* ad rates: Full page, \$32.00; one-half page, \$17.00; one-quarter page, \$9.00; per column inch (1 inch deep by approx. 3 1/2 inches wide), \$2.00. Send ads, with check payable to Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255.

The above rates apply to all want ads, along with ads offering non-Alger books for sale. However, it is the policy of the Horatio Alger Society to promote the exchange of Alger books and related Alger materials by providing space **free of charge** to our members for the **sale only** of such material. Send ads or "Letters to the Editor" to *Newsboy* editor William R. Gowen (PF-706) at 23726 N. Overhill Dr., Lake Zurich, IL 60047. E-mail: [hasnewsboy@aol.com](mailto:hasnewsboy@aol.com)



## 2009 convention preview

# The Charlottesville Charivari

By Jeff Looney (PF 903)

Everything is now set for this year's convention, the Charlottesville Charivari, 29 April–2 May 2009. We are now accepting registrations, with the registration form and schedule of events enclosed with this issue and also readily available on the Society's Web site.

The convention hotel is the newly refurbished Holiday Inn on Emmet Street, conveniently situated just north of town with ready access to the University of Virginia and the beautiful downtown mall. The hotel has an indoor heated pool and a fitness facility.

Registration will begin in our hospitality room on Thursday, April 29, with the board of directors meeting later that afternoon.

On Friday morning we will officially open the convention and hear presentations by Jack Bales, Terry Belanger and Bill Gowen. Terry, who

is the director of the prestigious Rare Book School, will also be giving a tour of the school's holdings of Boy Scout series books and Harry Castlemon's Gunboat series for those who are interested during free time on Saturday afternoon. After Friday morning's presentations, we will have the business meeting and begin the auction, which will continue after lunch at the hotel and will feature the Larry Rice Collection, the Les Langlois Collection and additional books from the Ann Sharrard Collection. A number of Alger first editions have already been consigned. Friday evening we will meet for dinner at the China King Buffet, located about a 5-minute drive from the hotel.

Saturday morning we will hold the annual H.A.S. book sale. I have urged some local dealers and collectors to bring books to this sale, and I hope that members attending the conference will also bring some of your better duplicates and surplus holdings of Alger, series books, and dime novels, as well as your check-

books, and make this sale a big success.

If necessary, we will also finish up the auction Saturday morning. Saturday afternoon will be open, with the optional tour of the Rare Book School mentioned above, followed by an optional tour of the editorial suite of the Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series, where I will talk a little bit about what goes into creating the anticipated 23 volumes of this definitive edition of Jefferson's writings. This will be followed by an optional

private after-hours tour of Monticello, during which we will have this unique historic mansion to ourselves for an hour.

The annual banquet will take place immediately afterward just down the road at the Michie Tavern, a historic structure dating to the 1780s and renowned for its fried chicken, stewed tomatoes, and other delicacies (see enclosed brochure).



The Monticello Visitors Center in Charlottesville, Va. Photo by Jeff Looney

The banquet will feature the awards presentations, including the always inspirational **Strive and Succeed Award**, and a keynote address on Thomas Jefferson's book-collecting proclivities by Eric Johnson, a research librarian at the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

Charlottesville is the center of a district full of wonderful historical, cultural, and scenic sites, of which I will say a little more in the next *Newsboy*, and I hope that many of you will add a few days to your stay on either end of the convention.

My wife, Judy, and I are convinced that this will be one of the most enjoyable and interesting conventions ever, and we invite you to join us. I look forward to renewing acquaintances with old friends and making new ones. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or suggestions, and we will see you soon!

**Hotel reservations:** Phone the Holiday Inn's direct toll-free line at 1-800 242-5973. Please call by April 1, after which our rooms will be released to the general public.

## *Editor's notebook*

This is our convention preview issue, and I hope you read host Jeff Looney's welcome article and study the enclosed registration form and schedule of events.

This will be the Horatio Alger Society's second visit to Charlottesville, the first being "The Monticello Meeting," hosted by George and Alice Owens in 1987.

That time, we enjoyed the regular tour of Monticello, but on May 2 you are in for a real treat, because Looney has arranged an optional after-hours tour exclusively for our group, which will include to parts of the mansion not open to the general public.

A reminder: the newly remodeled Holiday Inn will be holding our block of special-rate rooms until April 1, so phone the toll-free number at the bottom of the enclosed yellow convention registration form (a direct line to to the hotel's desk) to reserve your room NOW.

**Real "Electric Rifle" inventor dies:** Jack Cover, who invented the Taser stun gun now used by thousands of police agencies, died last month at age 88. Cover, who had Alzheimer's disease, died of pneumonia in Mission Viejo, Calif., according to a statement from Taser International, the Scottsdale, Arizona-based company that now makes the stun gun.

Cover, a one-time NASA scientist, began developing the Taser in the 1960s. He coined the acronym TSER in fond recollection of reading *Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle* during childhood.

"What an amazing thought, stunning people with blue balls of electricity," Cover told *The Washington Post* in 1976, recalling his fascination with the book, produced by the Stratemeyer Syndicate in 1911.

Cover added that an "A" was added to the name of his invention because "we got tired of answering the phone "TSER" for "Tom Swift's Electric Rifle."

Some stories report that TASER stands for "Thomas A. Swift's Electric Rifle," but nowhere in the Tom Swift Series is his middle initial used. Today, more than 13,400 law enforcement, correctional and military agencies in 44 countries use Taser stun guns, according to Taser International's Web site.



**Jack Cover (1920-2009)**

## An important message from NIU

Dear colleagues:

I am saddened to announce that the Horatio Alger Fellowship for the Study of American Popular Culture will not be offered in 2009 due to a lack of sufficient funds.

The Fellowship comes out of our Horatio Alger Society endowment, which is "... to be used for the benefit of the Horatio Alger Society Repository. Special emphasis will be placed on strengthening and preserving the Horatio Alger Collection and its related fields and will be used for an annual Horatio Alger Research Fellowship."

There are not sufficient funds in the endowment this year to fully fund the fellowship, so what funds are available will be used to strengthen the collections instead.

We hope to reinstate the fellowship in 2010.

Cordially,  
Lynne M. Thomas, Curator  
Rare Books and Special Collections  
Founders Memorial Library 402A  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
(815) 753-0255; Fax: (815) 753-9803  
E-mail: lthomas@niu.edu  
www.ulib.niu.edu/rarebooks/index.cfm  
Blogging at: niurarebooks.blogspot.com

*Editor's note: Feel free to contact Lynne with any suggestions on growing the H.A.S. endowment in order to support the possible return of the fellowship in 2010.*

## *President's column*

(Continued from Page 2)

quently uses the index to reference appropriate articles whenever an Alger-related question comes up. Thank you Deidre — keep up the good work.

I am looking forward to our "Charlottesville Charivari" on April 30-May 3 with great anticipation of another enjoyable convention and would like to see you there, even if you have not previously attended. A registration form, schedule of events and additional information are enclosed in this issue, with convention host Jeff Looney's article of welcome on Page 3.

Your Partic'lar Friend,  
Larry Rice (PF-757)  
P.O. Box 181  
36 Church Street  
Maine, NY 13802-0181  
E-mail: lrice5@stny.rr.com

# THE ARTIST'S APPRENTICE.

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

**B**urel, a Flemish artist, was one day busily engaged in his studio, when his attention was drawn to a timid knock at the door.

"Come in," said he, hastily.

The door opened slowly, and when at length the artist found time to look up, he saw standing before him a rough uncouth lad, dressed poorly, and apparently quite embarrassed — since he was swinging his coarse straw hat in one hand while the other contained a thin packet.

"Well," said Burel, in some surprise, "what would you like with me? What is the business which calls you here?"

The boy still fumbled with his hat.

"What is your name?" continued Burel.

"Hans."

"Well, have you no other? There are many of that name."

"Sach. My name is Hans Sach."

"Well, master Hans Sach, since that is your name, I would thank you to declare your business without further ado, since I am busy."

"I want to be an artist," said the boy, very abruptly.

"Ah, that is it. But what proof have I that you have the requisite talent? It is not everyone that can become an artist."

"I know that, sir; but I believe I have some taste for it. I will show you what I have done already."

With these words he took a knife from his pocket, quickly cut the string which contained the package which he carried, disclosing several little designs which he had executed. These he put into the hands of Burel.

The latter took them carelessly, and cast an eye over them, but his attention was speedily riveted. Judge of his surprise then when he beheld in these little sketches, clearly unstudied, and the fruit of nature alone, evidences of the most surprising talent.

Burel at once saw that it would be for his advantage to secure this genius in a rough exterior for a pupil. He was a shrewd, politic man, however, and was far from displaying the admiration with which these sketches had inspired him.

The boy looked at him with a gaze of eager inquiry, as if

to learn what opinion he had formed.

"Hans," said he, "they are all well enough. I think and with hard study you might become a respectable artist. You wish to learn the art; is it so?"

"Yes, sir," said Hans.

"And you would like to become my pupil?"

"If you would be kind enough to take me."

"It is usual to give me a fee on entering upon the study. Are you in a condition to do it?"

The boy's countenance fell.

"Alas! sir," he replied, "my parents died recently, leaving me only their blessing with which to make my way through the world. I had hoped to become an artist; but I have not a florin. I must e'en become a plough-boy, as they would have me." He turned to go out.

"Stay," said Burel, "you are in too great haste. You are unable to give a fee, but I have not said I would not take you without one."

Hans' face lighted up once more.

"If you are willing to work hard, and fare plainly, I will take you. Shall it be so?"

"Most gratefully, sir, I will accept your offer."

Hans was immediately installed in the establishment of the artist as apprentice. He was not the only one. Here were some half dozen studying under the same master. They were all of them sons of rich men, but none of them had any considerable taste for the art of which he had become a student. Being able, however, to pay the entrance fee,

Burel, who was exceedingly fond of money, had received them without the least objections, and was wont to give some flattering accounts of their progress to their friends whenever inquiries were made. He spent but little time with them, acquainting them with the few fundamental rules of the art, and then leaving them to make applications of them as best they might.

Being indolent, and having, as I have already said, little taste for the art, this contented the pupils, who disposed of the time which rested upon their hands as seemed most agreeable to them. Burel, however, did not introduce Hans into the company of his older apprentices. It did not suit his purposes—that he should employ his time in the same idle manner.

At the top of the house there was a small attic, sufficiently rough looking without plastering and unpainted. Into this apartment Hans was introduced.

"This," said Burel, "will be your apartment. Upon the floor is a bed on which you will rest at night. Here, by the window, is a table on which you can work."

"And what shall I do? What shall be my first lesson?"

"I shall not give you a regular lesson. You may execute any designs you think of similar to those which you showed

(Continued on Page 6)

---

*"The Artist's Apprentice" was first published in The Flag of Our Union on August 26, 1854, and subsequently appeared in Gleason's Literary Companion (January 28, 1865) and Gleason's Monthly Companion (August 1873). It was first published in Newsboy in April 1977.*



## THE ARTIST'S APPRENTICE

(Continued from Page 5)

me yesterday. Work industriously and you will yet become an artist."

Hans found it a little difficult to conceive in what manner he was to become an artist without instruction, and began to think that he might have made as rapid progress anywhere else as in his present situation. But of course his master knew best, and so he toiled early and late with unremitting ardor.

Three times a day a pitcher of water, and food of the plainest sort, would be brought to him. It was a confined life that he led, for Burel never invited him to leave his attic, except on Sundays, when he would be permitted to wander through the fields.

Meanwhile, Hans accomplished a large amount of work. He threw off the sketches for which Burel had stipulated, with an inconceivable rapidity. These, when completed, were taken away by Burel, but whither Hans knew not. In reality, they were sold at good prices to admiring purchasers, who supposed they were the work of Burel himself. The uncouth apprentice was proving a source of considerable revenue to the artist.

Meanwhile, his other apprentices were filled with the greatest curiosity to know who could he be whom their instructor so carefully kept apart from the rest of them. They seized an opportunity when Burel was away to satisfy themselves on this point.

Creeping up stairs they called on Hans to open the door. Entering, they beheld with surprise the mean quarters in which their fellow pupil was confined. But their surprise was still greater when they cast their eyes over a sketch which he had just completed.

"Is this by Burel, left for you to copy?" they inquired, scarcely believing their eyes. "In good faith, he has improved of late."

"That is my own," said Hans.

"Your own? And do you execute many such?"

"Yes, that's all I do. I am at work upon them all the time."

They looked at each other in surprise.

"Certainly you possess no ordinary talent," said they — for they knew sufficient of art to appreciate excellence.

"Do you think so?" asked Hans, overjoyed.

"Think so? — There can be no doubt of it. Burel himself could not do so well."

"But what becomes of these sketches, after you have completed them?"

"I do not know. M. Burel comes and takes them away, and I see no more of them."

"I'll warrant it, the miserly old curmudgeon. He sells them, no doubt, for a good round sum, which he coolly puts

into his own pocket, and all the while that he is making money out of you, he starves you on such fare as this."

The speaker lifted contemptuously a plate of hard bread that lay on the table whereon Hans was working.

"I'll tell you what," he continued, "it's no more than fair that you should have at least some of the fruits of your own labors. I will engage you to paint for me designs emblematic of the four seasons, and I will give you ten francs apiece. If they are equal to this sketch, they will be well worth it. Don't have any scruples about diverting your time from Burel's employment. He has made enough out of you already. You may now work a little for yourself."

It will be believed that Hans readily acceded to this proposition which was so much to his advantage.

As he devoted but two hours a day to his own purposes, he accomplished sufficient for his master in the remaining part of the day to prevent any suspicions on his part; and when this commission was completed, it was followed by another on the part of his fellow students, who wished the months designed. This, also, was done to the complete satisfaction to the one who ordered it, and was immediately succeeded by something further from still another, till each of his fellow apprentices had given him a task to accomplish. As they were well paid for, Hans had accumulated what appeared to him quite a large sum of money. By this time, his fellow pupils having no more employment to offer him, advised him to run away from M. Burel's service.

"It is clear," said they, "that all the instruction you get is not from him, but due only to your own exertions. No longer stay to be imposed upon. Elsewhere you will get paid for the whole of your labors, and will not be compelled to work with next to nothing for a recompense, for his advantage."

Hans saw that this advice was good, and did not hesitate to follow it. Rising in the early morning, he collected what sketches he had executed, and stole forth as silently as possible, leaving, however, the following note for M. Burel:

"M. Burel — If you had acted fairly by me, I should not now leave your house. I find, however, that you have used me solely with a view to your own profit, without any regard to my advantage. I have become tired of serving as a source of revenue in which I, myself, have no participation.

Hans."

When M. Burel discovered this note, and the disappearance of Hans, his anger and disappointment were unbounded. But he had no legal claims upon the services of the latter, as he well knew, and therefore thought it best to say as little as possible about it. Meanwhile, Hans

walked leisurely through the city, of which, during his stay with M. Burel, he had seen but little, gazing at the principal objects of curiosity.

His attention was directed towards a shop wherein objects of art were displayed in a tempting array. He stopped to examine them more closely, and after a slight pause went in. A gentleman, well-dressed and of prepossessing appearance, was bargaining for an article which, on a casual glance, Hans was surprised to find was one of his own designs.

"My dear sir," said the shopkeeper, "you will find fifty francs not dear for so charming a design. It is, you perceive, by Burel, who of late has cultivated this branch of art with distinguished success. Shall I put it up for you?"

"If you please."

"You are fortunate to obtain it. It is the last I have. The fact is, these designs of Burel command a ready sale, being universally admired, so that I am rarely able to keep one in my shop for more than twenty-four hours."

Hans was pleased to find how popular his sketches had become, and his indignation was in the same measure heightened against his master, who had diverted to his own purposes, both the reputation and the profit of his labors. He was resolved to unmask him. Stepping forward, he said composedly to the purchaser:

"That sketch is not by Burel."

"Is not by Burel!" said the shopkeeper, indignantly, scanning the rather rough-looking appearance of Hans. "Not by Burel? Perhaps, then," he continued, in an ironical man-

ner, "Monsieur will deign to inform us whose it is."

"Mine," said Hans with composure.

"Yours!" The shopkeeper laughed scornfully. "And you expect us to believe this? Where is your proof?"

"Here," said Hans, and at the same time he unrolled the package in his hand, and displayed three more sketches.

"The shopkeeper examined them with surprise.

"Certainly," said he, "these are the same style; but what assurance have I that they are yours, and how does it happen that the others had the name of Burel?"

"I was a pupil of his; and instead of instructing me, he kept me to work upon these sketches, which he sold for his own advantage. That they are mine I will satisfy you."

Seating himself at a table, Hans quickly improvised a sketch which though not so finished as the others, displayed the same artistic talent. There was now no room for doubt. The shopkeeper purchased at a good price Hans' remaining sketches.

The gentleman who had before bargained with him invited him home to dinner, and, being a man of wealth, took care that he should receive the consideration due his talents. Hans studied faithfully the principles of the art in which as yet he was imperfectly grounded, and became in time one of the most eminent of Flemish artists. His old instructor, Burel, learned to look up with reverence to the uncouth, awkward boy, who years before had made known to him his intention to become an artist, and he could not sufficiently regret the ill-advised love of money which had lost him the boast of having trained up the first artist in the kingdom.

## MEMBERSHIP

### New member

Marvin H. Brady (PF-1104)  
914 N. Main St.  
Abingdon, IL 61410 (309) 462-3207

Marvin, who is retired, enjoys reading Alger and has 122 titles. He learned about the Society from Executive Director Robert E. Kasper.

### Change of address

Eugene H. Hafner, Past President (PF-175)  
281 W. Oxmoor Road, Apt. 2H  
Birmingham, AL 35209-7532  
E-mail: RENFAH@aol.com

### E-mail update

Ronald A. Murch (PF-970)  
rmurch2@roadrunner.com

*If you are moving, please send your new address and phone number to **Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255**. Also, please provide any recent e-mail address updates.*

# Worthy challenger to the Stratemeyer Syndicate

## *A.L. Burt's inexpensive series books, 1905-37*

By William R. Gowen (PF-706)

The commercial book-publishing world was a whole lot different at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than it is today, when now a handful of major conglomerates control most of the familiar imprints whose work Americans have been reading for generations.

Back then, book publishing was concentrated in four cities: New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago, with New York by far dominating the field as the emerging communications center of the new world.

One of the New York publishers making its mark in the mass-market book field was Albert Levi Burt, which he incorporated into the A.L. Burt Company in 1902.

Albert Levi Burt was born in 1843 in Belchertown, Mass., and as a young adult he began working as a grocery store clerk and later as a traveling salesman. It was while on the road for Hartford-based leather goods distributor Case, Lockwood & Brainerd, that the idea struck that he would not only enter the book business, but concentrate on what we call today mass-market publishing.

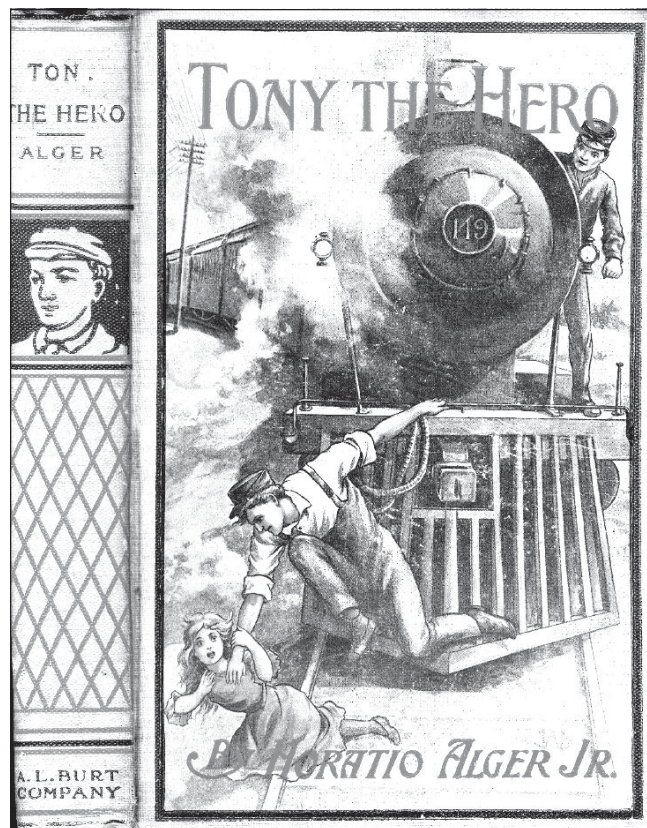
Where better to do it than New York? Soon after moving there in 1883, he began publishing books from a small office at 105 John Street in Manhattan. His first effort was a reprint edition of *The National Standard Dictionary*, followed by other home-reference books.

But Burt wanted to do something on a larger scale, and inexpensive paperback fiction was then in fashion, so he began a line called the **Manhattan Library** in the late 1880s. At the same time, he wanted to publish so-called "good literature," and so he launched **Burt's Home Library** with 25 initial titles, eventually reaching some 500 titles

The juvenile paperback field also beckoned, so he soon added the **Boys' Home Library**. This paperback line, priced at 25 cents (with a yearly subscription for

---

*This article was first presented as a paper at the 38th annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association in San Francisco, California, on March 20, 2008.*



**A.L. Burt's Chimney Corner Series (here in the 1910 Alger "capped head" applique format), was introduced in an earlier design in 1905 for a price of 50 cents (later raised to 60 cents). These Algers set the pace for Burt's future low-priced series books.**

\$2.50), included first editions and reprints by such popular authors of the day as Horatio Alger Jr., James Otis, Harry Castlemon (Charles Fosdick), Edward S. Ellis and many others.

But Burt wasn't stopping there. This same juvenile line was issued, possibly concurrently, in a hard-cover edition selling for one dollar. Recent research seems to support simultaneous publication of the paper and hard-cover editions. In the case of Alger, the paperback **Boys' Home Library** titles, such as *The Errand Boy*, have long been thought to be the true first editions, with the so-called "Fez" edition traditionally regarded as the



first hard-cover edition provided it meets certain internal "points." These books, incidentally, were published between late 1888 and 1892, and the Fez editions continued under a new series name (with the same cover format) through the end of the decade.

Mr. Burt soon found that the paperback market was becoming glutted, and his 25-cent editions were being trumped by "thick" dime novels, plus the 10-cent and 15-cent offerings of other publishers. So, he wanted to concentrate on the hard-cover field. Burt's business was growing to such an extent that between 1888 and 1900 it had moved four times to ever-expanding lower Manhattan quarters, before the firm was officially incorporated in 1902.

Again, taking a look at Alger, the already-mentioned Boys' Home Library "Fez" editions sold for a dollar, and when he redesigned the line (featuring Alger and many of the same authors) into even more attractive bindings such as the "Gold Tulip" and "Ornamental Diamond," they STILL sold for a dollar.

But take note of those dates — 1905 to 1906. A major event had just occurred in the juvenile publishing field: the formation of the Stratemeyer Syndicate. By using anonymous contract writers to turn out books at a fast rate and then published under Syndicate house names, Edward Stratemeyer was able to create what became known as the "fifty-center," although the price fluctuated below and above that number slightly.

The bulk of the Syndicate's production was handled by mass-market New York-based publishers Grosset & Dunlap and Cupples & Leon. Logically, A.L. Burt regarded them as competitors for the public's readership and hard-earned money.

Not that Burt was doing badly. His one-dollar Alger books sold well, as did his reprints of books by G.A. Henty and other authors of interest to young people. Burt was soon able to reach the adult market by publishing books by Western author Zane Grey, whose second book, *The*

*Spirit of the Border*, sold three-quarters of a million copies in its Burt first edition. Eventually, Burt made considerable money with reprint editions of such other adult authors as Harold Bell Wright and Joseph C. Lincoln.

Burt desired to answer the Stratemeyer Syndicate's low-cost strategy, and one of the first ways he did it was by taking his already-successful Alger line and reprinting it in inexpensive editions.

He came up with with the generic title "Chimney Corner Series," which beginning in 1905 included books by Alger and other juvenile authors in 50-cent editions. Eventually, the price went up to 60 cents.

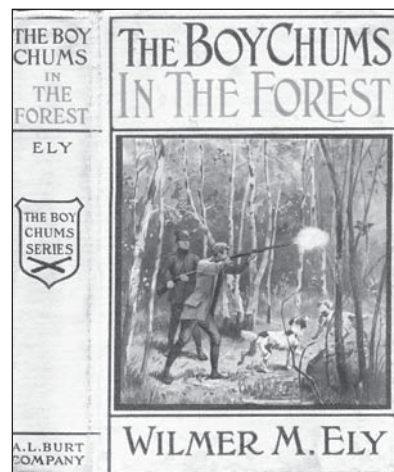
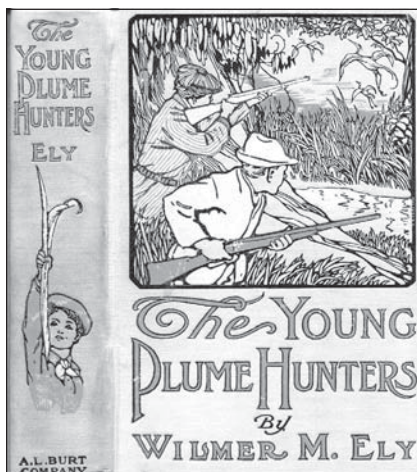
In all, there were 69 Alger titles published over the years in nine different "Chimney Corner" formats. The example on Page 8 is the "capped head" format, which became Burt's best-selling Alger line due to its low price.

By 1911, the "Chimney Corner" Alger reprints were within a few years of ending their market life, so the aging Burt (he was to die two years later), decided to expand even further into traditional, episodic series fiction in response to the various successful Stratemeyer Syndicate series.

As an interim step, the Burt firm redesigned a portion of its existing juvenile book line, coming out with its "illustrated cover" editions between 1907 and 1911. These included two posthumously published Alger first editions, *In Search of Treasure* in 1907 and *Wait and Win* in 1908, plus numerous reprint editions in this format by other noted authors, including Edward S. Ellis, Everett Tomlinson and James Otis. Still, these were one-dollar books, and sales were disappointing. The two Alger books are among the more scarce first editions by that author.

But A.L. Burt had something else in mind. Four of the illustrated-cover one-dollar books (1905-1910) by Wilmer M. Ely, including *The Boy Plume Hunters*, were soon reissued with different titles as the Boy Chums Series, lowering the price from a dollar to 40 cents, and raised

(Continued on Page 10)



During the 1907-11 period, A.L. Burt produced high-quality illustrated-cover editions which sold for one dollar. They included Alger first editions *Wait and Win* and *In Search of Treasure*. Another example was Wilmer M. Ely's *The Young Plume Hunters*, far left, which was reissued under a new title, left, at a reduced price as part of Ely's Boy Chums Series.

## Worthy challenger to the Stratemeyer Syndicate

(Continued from Page 9)

over the years to 50, 60 and 75 cents. Four new titles were added, and the eight-volume series sold well.

When Albert L. Burt died in 1913, his eldest son, Harry Prentice Burt, took over, and the business continued to grow. If anything, the juvenile line became even more competitive.

In order to prime the pump in the early- to mid-teens for original inexpensive series to follow, A.L. Burt Company searched for other publishers' properties for which it could secure reprint rights. Included were the *Jack Lorimer Series*, originally published by L.C. Page of Boston between 1906 and 1912, authored by Walter Leon Sawyer under his "Winn Standish" pen name. Another prominent example was the *Oakdale Series* (1911-1913), originally published by Hurst & Company of New York and written by the prominent boys' author Gilbert Patten under his "Morgan Scott" pseudonym. Just like that, inexpensive editions were available.

Hurst, at the time, was also producing a significant line of fifty-centers, many of them by New York newspaperman John H. Goldfrap (1879-1917), who wrote under a whole list of pseudonyms. So far, 10 Hurst boys' and girls' series have been attributed to Goldfrap, including such well-known entities as the *Dreadnaught Boys*, *Ocean Wireless Boys*, *Motor Maids*, *Bungalow Boys*, *Boy Aviators*, *Girl Aviators* and so forth. Burt chose to secure the rights to Hurst's 14-volume *Boy Scouts Series*, which Goldfrap wrote under the pen name "Lt. Howard Payson"; and the *Border Boys Series*, written as by "Fremont B. Deering."

By this time, Burt had contracted with authors to create some original inexpensive series, including the



**Future World War II Army Air Forces leader Major General H.H. "Hap" Arnold wrote the six-volume Bill Bruce Air Pilot Series for Burt in 1928.**

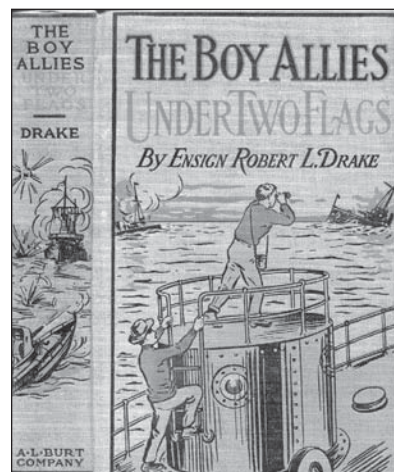
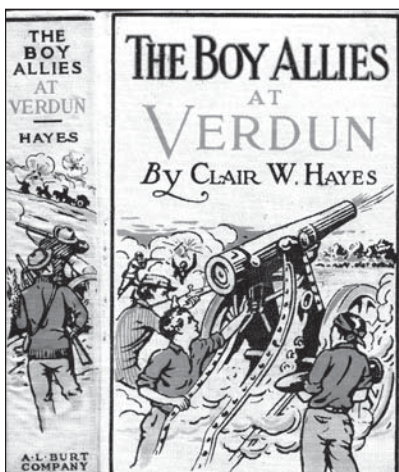
the war as its primary setting: *The Boy Allies* (1915-19). Most boys' and girls' series at the time (including those by the Stratemeyer Syndicate) introduced aspects of the war at home and overseas in various volumes. Examples include *Tom Swift and his War Tank*, and later volumes in *The Motor Boys* and P.K. Fitzhugh's non-Syndicate *Tom Slade Series*.

But Burt got "over there" in a major way with *The Boy Allies*. Rochester, N.Y., native Clair W. Hayes created the parallel series *The Boy Allies of the Army* (13 titles) and *The Boy Allies of the Navy* (10 titles), the latter under the pseudonym "Ensign Robert L. Drake." The 23 books, written in high-energy style with the boy heroes practically winning the war single-handedly, were very solid sellers with an initial price of 40 cents,

noted dime novel author St. George Rathborne. His work for the company included the *Broncho Rider Boys* under the pseudonym "Frank Fowler," and the *Big Five Motorcycle Boys* under the pen name "Ralph Marlow."

World War I soon intervened, and the *Big Five Motorcycle Boys* entered the war when Rathborne set the final three books in Europe as their heroes helped Uncle Sam's cause.

The Big War also allowed A.L. Burt to produce what is the best-known of all series with



Authored by Clair W. Hayes of Rochester, N.Y., *The Boy Allies Series* was Burt's best-selling boys' series during World War I. Hayes wrote 13 *Boy Allies of the Army* books under his own name along with 10 *Boy Allies of the Navy* titles under the pseudonym "Ensign Robert L. Drake." Dime novel author St. George Rathborne during the same period wrote boys' books for A.L. Burt under personal pen names, the series including the *Broncho Rider Boys* and *Big Five Motorcycle Boys*.



though as with other A.L. Burt series, the price was raised to 50 cents, 60 cents and 75 cents over the years.

Hayes also wrote for Burt a postwar series, the four-volume *Boy Troopers Series* in 1922, but sales did not come close to that of the *Boy Allies*.

Burt also visited World War I from the air, publishing the *Our Young Aeroplane Scouts Series*, by Horace Porter, whose full name was Horace Porter Biddle de Hart. The 12 books, although a bit rough with English syntax, delve into technical aspects of military aviation which boys' fiction of the period usually ignored.

A.L. Burt also jumped into the growing wireless radio craze, when it published, starting in 1922, the *Radio Boys Series* by Gerald Breckenridge. This paralleled the years of the *Stratemeyer Syndicate's* own *Radio Boys Series*, published by Grosset & Dunlap. Coincidence or design?

During the mid-1920s, one of A.L. Burt's key authors was Levi Parker Wyman (1873-1950), promoted in dust-jacket blurbs as "Dean of the Pennsylvania Military College." Wyman's *Golden Boys Series*, set in Maine, is considered one of the finest boys' series with an outdoors theme. The 10-volume series (1923-27) sold very well, as did Wyman's seven-volume *Lakewood Boys Series*, written about the same time.

Wyman also helped A.L. Burt take to the air with aviation series books with his *Hunniwell Boys Series* (1928-31), an eight-volume venture likely cut short by the onset of the Great Depression.

And speaking of aviation series, the *Bill Bruce Air Pilot Series*, all four volumes published in 1928, was written by then-Major Henry H. Arnold, who later was promoted to Major General "Hap" Arnold and became head of all U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II.

As the depression approached and then hit with full force, as with most publishers, A.L. Burt's line of series books began to shrink in number of titles and total sales

— but several important authors came on board.

In the 1933 to 1936 period, the bindings of the books were slightly enlarged physically, and the tradition of colorful dust jackets continued. But despite Burt's holding down the retail cost at 75 cents, the books did not sell well, which accounts in part for their scarcity today.

However, it is a girls' series, the *Beverly Gray Series* by Clair Blank, which was the most successful of Burt's mid-1930s editions. The series reached eight titles by 1937, with Grosset & Dunlap taking over and adding 18 additional titles through the mid-1950s.

*Beverly Gray at the World's Fair*, published in 1935 with a Chicago "A Century of Progress" setting, was dropped by G&D due to the upcoming 1939 New York World's Fair. It is a rare book.

Howard R. Garis (1873-1962) was a longtime fixture with the *Stratemeyer Syndicate* until

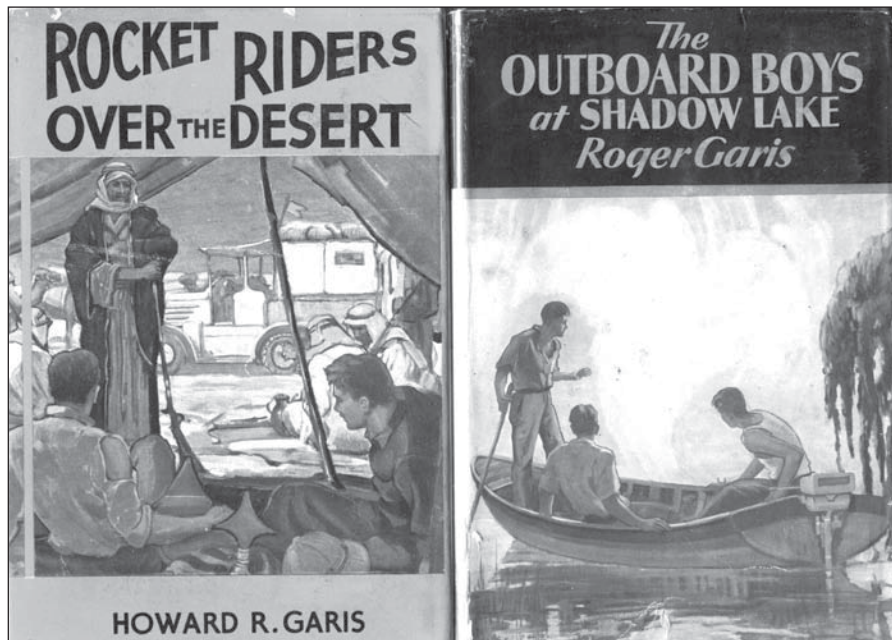
shortly following Edward Stratemeyer's death in 1930. Garis had written the majority of the original *Tom Swift Series* among many other books for the Syndicate.

A very fascinating four-volume series written by Garis for A.L. Burt was the *Rocket Riders Series* (1933-34). It is interesting to note that the plots of the first two books, *Rocket Riders Across the Ice*, and *Rocket Riders Over the Desert*, are similar to plot outlines held in the *Stratemeyer Syndicate* records for proposed titles in the *Tom Swift Series*. James D. Keeline has speculated that Garis outlined these stories as possible *Tom Swift* entries before leaving the Syndicate, later taking the plot elements to A.L. Burt.

Howard Garis' son, Roger Garis (1901-67), contributed for Burt the four-volume *Outboard Boys Series* in the same 1933-34 period.

Author A. Capwell Wyckoff (1903-53) contributed two important series and seven "single" titles to A.L. Burt. The 10-volume *Mercer Boys Series* was published

(Continued on Page 12)



In the latter years of the A.L. Burt Company, Howard Garis wrote the *Rocket Riders Series*, while his son, Roger, authored the *Outboard Boys Series*. Neither sold well, in part due to the Great Depression.



## Worthy challenger to the Stratemeyer Syndicate

*(Continued from Page 11)*

between 1928 and 1933, and the four-volume **Mystery Hunters Series** (1934-36), the latter in the larger-size format of that period. Both are among the best-crafted of all boys' series of the period.

The Stratemeyer Syndicate never did active business with A.L. Burt, although six books either written or at one time controlled by Edward Stratemeyer appeared in inexpensive A.L. Burt editions in the early teens. These titles, including *The Wizard of the Sea* and *The Land of Fire*, were originally published by The Mershon Company in 1900 and saw reprints by Mershon, Stitt and Chatterton-Peck. It is likely that when Stratemeyer

and the Syndicate severed ties with C-P in 1908, it let the rights to those titles lapse, with Burt later simply picking them up.

Eventually, Harry Prentice Burt wanted to retire, and in 1933 he started negotiations with Blue Ribbon Books and its president, Eugene P. Reynal. By 1937, Burt finally bowed out, and Reynal and Blue Ribbon took the company over. By 1939, its reprint rights and assets became the property of Doubleday, which is now part of one of those 2008 publishing conglomerates.

But for the A.L. Burt Co., it was fun (and profitable) while it lasted, and that publisher's legacy among readers and collectors of juvenile fiction is secure.

---

*The author acknowledges the extensive original research by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412) which was represented in his landmark 1983 book **Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt** — a major source for this article.*

## The Adventure Continues . . .

Providing help to Series Collectors

Jim Towey (PF-975), 249 Hartland Road, W. Granby, CT 06090



Over 45 hardcover reprints done — Many sold out  
 Over 2000 recreated Djs done  
 Over 1000 used series books in stock  
 Ken Holt Homepage — [members.cox.net/kenholt](http://members.cox.net/kenholt)  
 Ebay Store — [jim.towey](http://jim.towey) - The Adventure Continues  
 Phone Calls & e-mails welcome — (860) 653-7447 [toweyj@cox.net](mailto:toweyj@cox.net)  
 Please call or e-mail to verify availability or just chat

***New titles (now available) — priority postage included***

**Mark Tidd Series by Clarence Budington Kelland:**

- *Mark Tidd in Palestine* — first time in hardcover - 1<sup>st</sup> ed.
- *Mark Tidd in Paris* — first time in hardcover - 1<sup>st</sup> ed.
- *Mark Tidd Back Home* — first time in hardcover - 1<sup>st</sup> ed.
- Mark Tidd set of three — \$100, each \$35

**Wireless Patrol Series by Lewis Theiss:**

- *Wireless Patrol - The Hidden Aerial* - reprint
- *Wireless Operator with U.S. Coast Guard* - reprint
- Wireless Patrol - Set of two \$55, each \$30

*Payment by check, money order or PayPal, payable to:*

**Jim Towey**  
**249 Hartland Rd.**  
**W. Granby, CT 06090**  
**(860) 653-7447**