



**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.

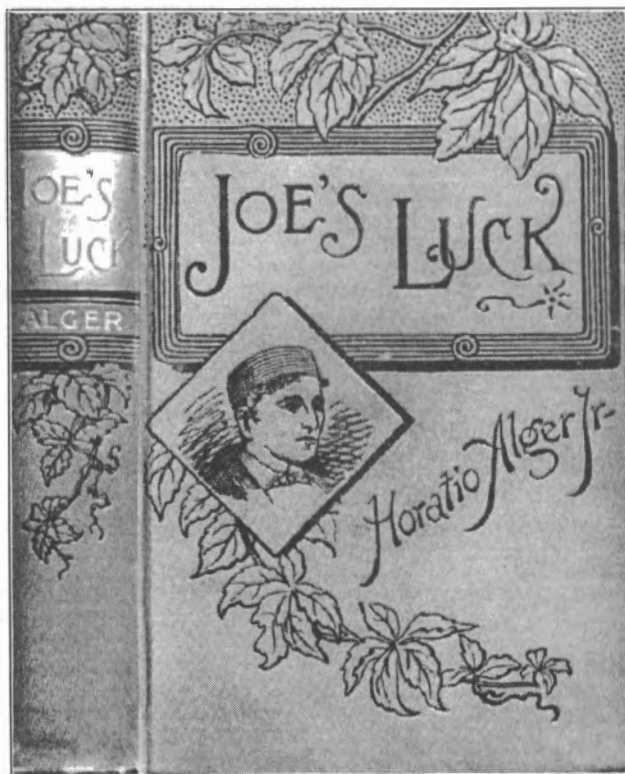
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NUMBER 4

*The A. L. Burt  
Boys' Home Series*

-- See Page 3



Capwell Wyckoff's  
Mystery Hunters

-- See Page 13

## President's column

I hope you've been enjoying the summer. I have just finished a paper to be presented at the political science meetings in San Francisco over Labor Day, and I hope I'll get to see the Morleys while there. Then it's back to teaching, department chairing, and pre-law advising. And I am co-hosting a big conference here on the legacy of Jane Addams in the winter.

One treat this summer for my family has been the weekly supply of wonderful organic vegetables from a Mennonite farm near Lancaster, Pa., that is delivered to our garage. A large group of people bought "shares" of the farm's annual produce, making it possible for at least one family farm here and there to avoid the middlemen and stay in business. With all the groundhogs we have to contend with here, I'm extremely happy not to be dependent on my own gardening efforts.

Alex attended the National Boy Scout Jamboree in Virginia, plus about five more weeks of Boy Scout camp this summer. Now he's working on scuba certification in his remaining free days.

Ralph Carlson has had a fantastic trip to Africa this summer, including a five-day climb to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, where the temperature was zero. He also went on safari in Tanzania, and saw most species of large animals and birds he hoped to see. He has also been busy with planning a great convention for us next May. We are just about to finalize the hotel contract and Ralph has meals arranged. I'm totally pumped for Salt Lake City already, but my travel agent tells me it's too early to buy a plane ticket!

I have talked a bit with Vice President Bob Huber, and I hope we'll hear from him in a future column about thoughts for advertising and outreach in connection with the membership committee he chairs. Bob has been having a quiet summer.

Ed Mattson got to do some traveling in England this summer, and he also got my first edition of *Seeking His Fortune* fixed up nicely, with an acid-free box, too.

I want to hear your news! Let me hear from some of you over the next few months!

Your Partic'lar Friend,  
 Carol Nackenoff (PF-921)  
 302 S. Chester Road  
 Swarthmore, PA 19081  
 E-mail: cnacken1@swarthmore.edu

## 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 — lads whose struggles epitomized the great American dream and flamed hero ideals in countless millions of young Americans.*

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

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You can visit the Horatio Alger Society's official Internet site at [www.ihot.com/~has/](http://www.ihot.com/~has/)

**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.

# The A. L. Burt Boys' Home Series

By Robert E. Kasper (PF-327)

The first part of this article appeared in the July-August 2000 issue of *Newsboy* and focused on the five Horatio Alger, Jr. titles first published by A. L. Burt in paper wrappers. This concluding article will attempt to ascertain the earliest hard-cover editions of these titles and where they fit in the publishing sequence. It has been commonly accepted that the paper editions were printed first and the hard-cover editions followed later, although there is no general consensus on how much later.

The titles in question are *Joe's Luck* (1887), *Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy* (1887), *Tom Temple's Career* (1888), *Tom Thatcher's Fortune* (1888) and *The Errand Boy* (1888). This article should be read in conjunction with the earlier article mentioned above.

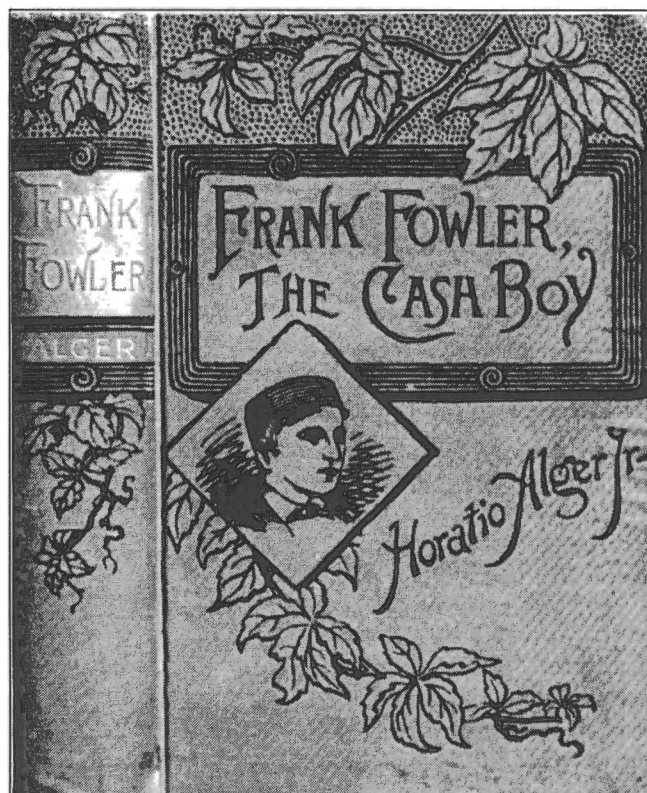
Frank Gruber was the first Alger researcher and author to postulate about the printing sequence of the A. L. Burt paperback and hard-cover Fez editions, although it wasn't publicly known until he published his Alger bibliography in 1961.<sup>1</sup> His November 1948 article in *Antiquarian Bookman*, an "authoritative and extensive Alger check list," identifies the five titles as first appearing in paper wrappers with no mention of any hard-cover editions.

In private correspondence with long-time society member Stanley Pachon, on Dec. 10, 1953, Gruber writes, "Some of those Burt Boys' Home Library will really throw you. The first few numbers, I traced down, the paper backs turn out to be the firsts, but some of the later (author's note: cloth editions) were issued simultaneously with the paper-backs and only the study of typewear, etc. gives the answer. Fortunately, I was in the printing business at one time and can determine this."

Two weeks later, Gruber writes Pachon again and states that the "first five issues are definitely first editions, but after that the cloth and paper editions suddenly are simultaneous publications — so advertised." He undoubtedly had in his possession a copy of *Ben Burton, the Slate Picker* (Number 6 in the *Boys' Home Library*) by Harry Prentice and saw the following notice on the rear cover:

*The above stories are printed on extra paper, and bound in Handsome Cloth binding, at \$1.00 per copy. They may be had of Booksellers or the Publisher.*

If Gruber's statement were true, then any title after Number 5 (which includes three Alger titles) would consist of coterminous paper and hard cover first editions.



Ex. 1: *Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy* by Horatio Alger in the Fez Format 1 binding.

In his 1961 book, Gruber takes the next step and mentions the existence of a hard-cover edition of *Joe's Luck* with the 162 William Street address and that it "could be simultaneous publication, but type wear indicates paper edition is first."<sup>2</sup> He also mentions that the other four titles were found in the same binding, but all contained A. L. Burt's 67 [sic] Reade Street address, which would indicate a later printing. If Gruber had access to other early Fez editions, with William or Beekman Street addresses, he may have reached a different conclusion.

In 1959, well-known Alger researcher and collector Morton S. Enslin described the paper editions as "real firsts" with the Fez editions "gradually replacing the earlier 25-cent paperbacks" with no further explanation.<sup>3</sup>

Enslin expands his description slightly 12 years later, in 1971, in an article regarding Alger titles in two issues of *Dime Novel Round-Up*.<sup>4</sup> He describes the hard-cover editions as being "immediately reissued" or printed from the same plates "immediately following" the paper editions.

Ralph Gardner was the first researcher to quantify the actual sequence and date of publication and did so in

(Continued on Page 5)

## Editor's notebook

The summer has passed quickly, and with it the opportunity for book-hunting trips. As you read this, I will be on my annual fall vacation to New England, and hopefully, some exciting "finds." I made a quick trip to the Boston area in June to see a Red Sox game and attend a Boston Pops concert and returned with about a dozen books, but nothing exceedingly scarce.

However, one of the book-hunter's sacred rules, which I did not follow, was reinforced: be sure to call ahead. One store in Rhode Island was closed because the proprietor was reportedly in the hospital and another one just down the highway was also closed because the owner had recently passed away. Also, a quick trip to Cape Cod netted next to nothing in the way of books, although the scenery was gorgeous.

One obvious change is the growth of the Internet, which, contrary to popular opinion, has not driven the storefront operation out of business. In many cases, used-book stores are able to stay open because of increased revenues through the Internet. In almost every store we visited, the owner was also an active Internet entrepreneur, in many cases working busily at the computer as we walked in the door.

Susan Siegel, who along with her husband, David, owns Book Hunter Press in Yorktown Heights, N.Y. (publisher of the popular *Used Book Lover's Guides*, confirms what we saw. Even though many shops have closed and their owners are now operating out of their homes over the Internet, in total numbers, brick-and-mortar antiquarian and used-book stores are doing as well as ever, if not better.

The results of the Siegels' survey on this subject are available by visiting [www.bookhunterpress.com](http://www.bookhunterpress.com). You can also order their regional guides from this site, or even better, subscribe to on-line versions of these guides, whose databases are continually being updated (store openings, closings, changes in hours, etc.).

Of course, how the Internet has influenced the prices being asked for used books is the subject for another column. But in the meantime, be assured there are still plenty of stores along the highways and byways of America that keep regular hours.

Speaking of the Internet, eBay recently changed its procedures regarding the retraction of bids late in an auction cycle to prevent a situation known as "bid shielding." Now, eBay users are prohibited from re-

(Continued on Page 9)

### BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY H.A.S.

- Horatio Alger, Jr., A Comprehensive Bibliography*, by Bob Bennett (PF-265); republished by MAD Book Co., 1999
- Horatio Alger or, The American Hero Era*, by Ralph D. Gardner (PF-053).
- The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*, by Carol Nackenoff (PF-921).
- Publication Formats of the 59 Stories by Horatio Alger, Jr. as Reprinted by the John C. Winston Co.*, by Bob Sawyer (PF-455) and Jim Thorp (PF-574).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by M.A. Donohue & Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by Whitman Publishing Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by The New York Book Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.*, by Gary Scharnhorst with Jack Bales (PF-258).

## MEMBERSHIP

### New members

Debbie Wiggins (PF-1059)

P.O. Box 3628

North Myrtle Beach, SC 29582

Debbie is the daughter-in-law of longtime member Ella Ree' Wiggins, who passed away in May. "Her membership and book collection were among her most loved possessions. We hope to continue her book adventure and her love of the Alger collection," Debbie says.

Dennis W. Martin (PF-1060)

5453 Rawson Lane

Pensacola, FL 32503

(850) 476-8993

Dennis, a college teacher who enjoys reading Horatio Alger's books, has 25-plus titles in his collection. His other interests include music.

Dilworth C. Strasser (PF-1061)

2327 Logan Way

Salt Lake City, UT 84108

(800) 937-3500

Dilworth was introduced to the Society by director Ralph J. Carlson (PF-955).

Steven K. Vogelzang (PF-1062)

230 Abraham Drive

Ames, IA 50014-7628

(515) 296-2478

Steven is a business consultant who, in addition to Alger, enjoys photography. He learned about the Society through the Internet.



## The A. L. Burt Boys' Home Series

(Continued from Page 3)

his 1964 book.<sup>5</sup> His research concluded that some titles were published simultaneously in paper and hard cover editions and other titles were published separately.

The Fez edition was A. L. Burt's mainstay hard-cover juvenile binding for more than a decade ending in 1899.

Although Burt made a few minor changes to this series in 1892, the binding remained relatively unchanged. The Fez editions were known as the **Boys' Home Series** and later the **Alger Series for Boys**. The Fez edition is classified into two formats as per Burt researcher Brad Chase.<sup>6</sup> An example of Fez Format I is shown in example 1.

The binding was produced in a variety of colors and endless variations of endpapers with no bibliographical importance associated with these attributes. Almost every hard-cover edition contained advertisements — I don't recall seeing a copy without ads — and they are, of course, helpful in dating the book in question. However, caution should be used since old or outdated advertisements could have been bound into a later book.

Many of the later editions contain copious ads in the rear of the book (up to 40 pages), but occasionally a page or two is found in the front. It seems that many of the earlier copies fit the latter category. My copy of *The Errand Boy*, with a 56 Beekman Street address, contains a single page of ads between the front flyleaf and endpaper listing 20 titles from the **Boys' Home Series**. It is an early copy, but not the first printing of the hard-cover edition.

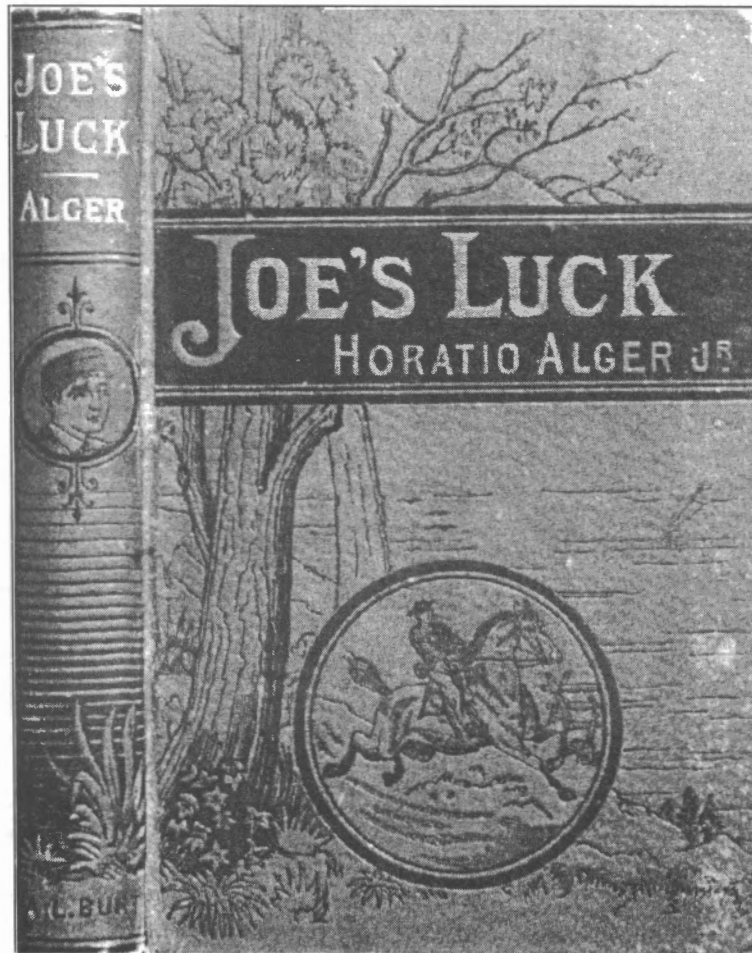
Some of the Fez editions contain "filler" stories — 15

have been identified so far — with no known significance regarding placement or authorship correlating to the publishing sequence.

Notwithstanding the format changes made in 1892, the primary bibliographical difference between the hard-cover editions is one of thickness. The text casings of the earliest editions will be thin — the same thickness as the paper editions since they were most likely printed at the

same time. The only difference is that some copies were bound in hard covers and sent to booksellers to be priced at \$1.00 and others were bound in paper wrappers to be mailed to subscribers for 25 cents. Internally, the books were identical.

At this point it might be prudent to describe a previously unknown Burt hard-cover edition of *Joe's Luck* known as the "Boy on Horse" format (see example 2). This copy is bound in brown cloth with the title and author blindstamped against a black panel across the upper front cover. The background includes a tree-lined lake scene with a sailboat in the distance. The lower section contains a vignette of a boy riding a horse enclosed by two black circles. The spine contains the title and authoringold. Below that appears a fez-adorned



**Ex. 2: The first hard-cover edition of *Joe's Luck* "Boy on Horse" format. No other Alger titles are known to exist in this binding.**

boy enclosed in a circle followed by a series of uneven lines ending at the foot with the publisher's name in black.

A meticulous examination of the type between this copy and the paper first edition revealed that they were identical in all respects. Other internal features matched the paper edition exactly including dimensions, thickness, advertisements (six pages of Burt's "Useful and Practical Books"), number of illustrations — even the toning of the pages was identical. The only difference is the inclusion of

(Continued on Page 6)

## The A. L. Burt Boys' Home Series

(Continued from Page 5)

endpapers and a front flyleaf in the hard-cover edition.

Based upon the close inspection of these two books it would appear that the "Boy on Horse" format was Burt's first hard-cover edition of this series and was likely printed simultaneously with the paper edition in September 1887. I have seen three copies of *Joe's Luck* in this format, all bound in brown cloth, but never any titles by other authors. This leads me to speculate that this printing was an experimental binding that was quickly abandoned.

We know that the Fez edition was available in December 1887. A copy of *Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy* (Number 4) containing a bona fide Christmas 1887 inscription has been located. This copy is a thin edition with the 162 William Street address and contains the same set of advertisements found in the two previous examples of *Joe's Luck*.

It would appear that Burt made a decision in late November or early December of that year to produce the Fez binding and printed *Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy* in time for Christmas sales. At the same time, Burt probably issued the previous three numbers in the same format to make the series uniform. A close examination of an early copy of *Joe's Luck*, containing the 162 William Street address, will substantiate this theory (see example 3). This copy is identical to *Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy* in dimensions and thickness and contains the same six ad pages of Burt's "Useful and Practical Books."

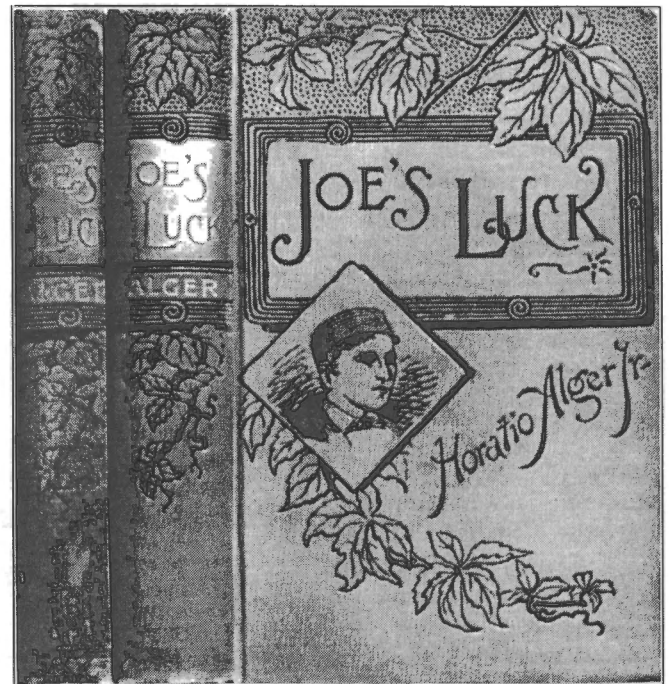
While there were no noticeable instances of type damage in the "Boy on Horse" format and paper edition of *Joe's Luck*, this copy contained one on page 9 (the letter "e" in when, last line). This would give some validity, albeit tenuous, to a slightly later printing than September 1887. This type damage was repaired in later editions.

Incidentally, the earliest known hard-cover editions (pre-1888) lack advertising for any of the **Boys' Home Library** titles unlike the paper editions, which promoted current and projected titles. A Fez edition advertising fewer than six titles would be an interesting discovery.

I am reasonably confident that Fez editions for *Julian Mortimer* (Number 2) by Harry Castlemon and *Adrift in the Wilds* (Number 3) by Edward Ellis were also published in early December 1887. Whether you could differentiate between an edition printed in November or December is problematical until copies of the appropriate titles are located.

The question now is to determine what hard-cover editions, if any, Burt published in October and November 1887. Did they publish other titles in the "Boy on Horse" binding or did they wait until the Fez edition was available? Was the Fez edition available in October or November?

The first hard-cover edition of *Tom Temple's Career*



Ex. 3: Two editions of *Joe's Luck*, comparing thickness between early and later printings.

(Number 7) was published in March 1888 probably in conjunction with the paper edition. I have examined a thin edition containing the 162 William Street address now advertising titles from the **Boys' Home Series**. Again, the text casing was identical with the paper edition — including type wear — the only difference being the paper edition advertising 10 titles (seven in print, three projected) and the Fez edition listing 11 titles. Did Burt publish an edition listing 10 titles uniform with the paper edition? It's possible, although I think it unlikely that Burt was updating every advertisement in every Fez edition each month. The hard-cover editions were probably printed in batches, perhaps a two-month supply, and sent to distributors or directly to booksellers.

I did not compare the paper edition of *Tom Thatcher's Fortune* (Number 11) with the corresponding Fez edition, but a thin copy with the proper Burt address of 56 Beekman Street does exist. Both editions advertise 13 titles, so I think we can safely assume simultaneous publication for this title.

*The Errand Boy* (Number 14) was published in October 1888 and the paper edition lists 17 titles, the last three projected. I have seen two early Fez editions with the 56 Beekman Street address, a thin edition listing 20 titles and a thick volume listing 22 titles. These are likely second, or later, printings. The genuine first issue, if one were encountered, should not list more than 17 titles.

A unique and unquestionably early Burt hard-cover

edition of *Tom Temple's Career* is illustrated in example 4. Brad Chase refers to this binding as the "Blindstamped" format.<sup>7</sup> The front cover contains the title blindstamped in the center with two half-inch ornamental scrolled bands (also blindstamped) along the top and bottom. The bands continue on the rear cover. The upper spine has the title and Alger's name gold-stamped, separated by a ruled line. The lower half contains two urn-like filigree symbols, also in gold.

A thorough examination of this book with the paper first edition revealed no differences—all internal features were identical. I noted seven instances of type damage in the paper edition and they were precisely duplicated in the blindstamped edition. The text casing is small, measuring 4 5/8 x 6 7/8 inches, which is the same size as some of the earlier paper editions. It seems clear that this book was originally a paper edition rebound by the publisher for some unknown reason.

Originally thought to be the "missing link" between the "Boy on Horse" format and the Fez edition, I think it would be judicious to explore other possibilities. It seems unlikely that Burt would produce such a plain and ordinary binding as an experiment, especially between

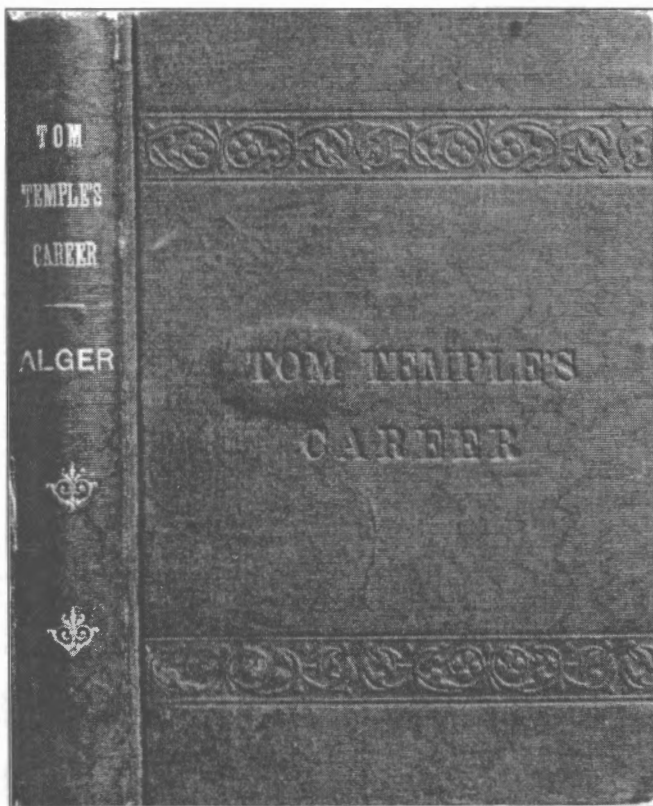
the handsome "Boy on Horse" binding and the equally attractive Fez edition.

There are three known copies of titles in this format, including *Adrift in the Wilds* (Number 3) and *A Runaway Brig* (Number 16) by James Otis. The Otis title is illustrated in example 5. The "missing link" theory can be discarded due to the later publishing date of December 1888 for *A Runaway Brig*. If Burt were experimenting with different bindings in late 1887 before deciding on the Fez format, they wouldn't be using this binding 12 months later. Any experimentation would have ceased at Number 4 when the Fez binding was introduced.

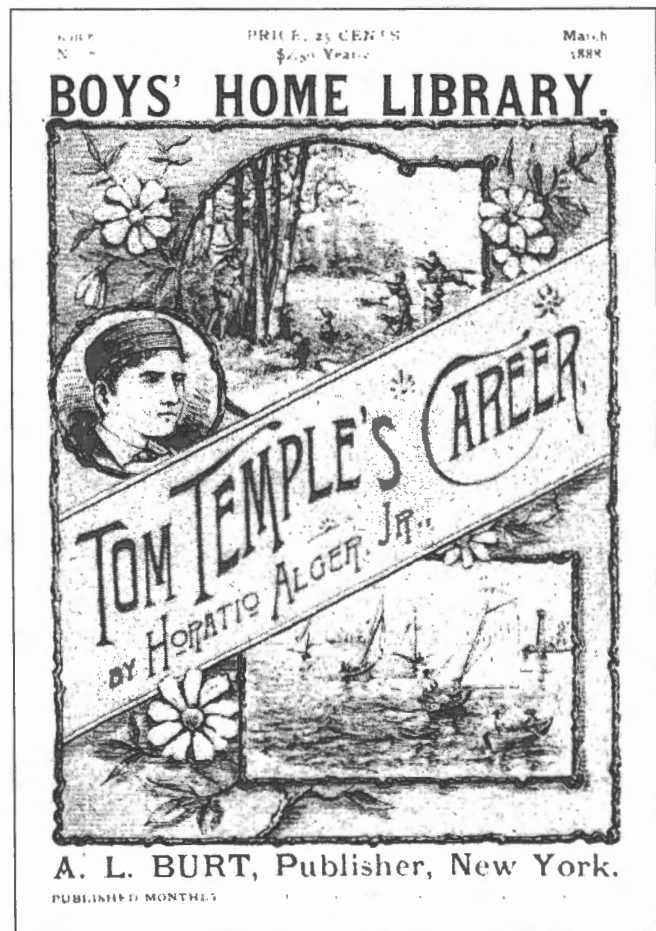
Another theory promotes that both formats were published concurrently and available for sale at \$1.00 each. If this were true, I think more than three copies of the blindstamped editions would have surfaced by this date.

A close examination of the Otis title revealed that it was internally identical to the paper edition, suggesting again that it probably was originally bound in paper wraps. Without additional titles to examine, I can only speculate why Burt produced this binding. Perhaps a few

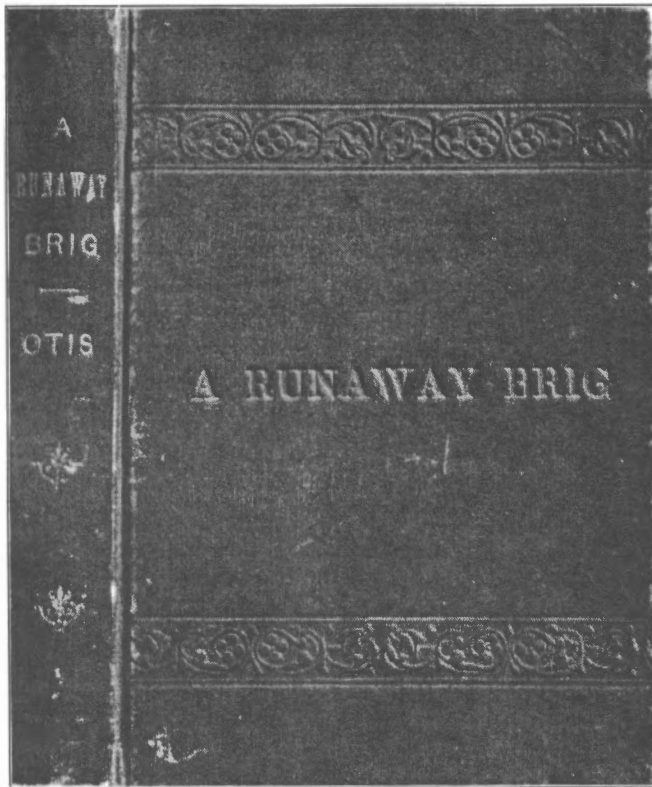
(Continued on Page 8)



Ex. 4: *Tom Temple's Career* in the Blindstamped format, above, and the first-issue paperback edition. The Blindstamped edition was likely a rebound paperback issue.







Ex. 5: A Blindstamped edition of *A Runaway Brig* by James Otis.

## The A. L. Burt Boys' Home Series

(Continued from Page 7)

copies of each title were bound for filing or storage purposes and were for the publisher's use only. Or maybe these "cheaper" books were distributed as free samples. A more likely scenario is that Burt rebound its dead stock of paper editions (which were dated on the front wrapper) and shipped them to booksellers for sale along with the Fez editions. Many of the paper editions were too small for the larger and thicker Fez bindings used from mid-1888 onward; hence this inexpensive and unpretentious cover was produced to accommodate the text casings.

The limited evidence at this time indicates that the "Boy on Horse" format was the first Burt hard-cover edition of this series and was not repeated. If you accept this theory, then the earliest Fez printing of *Joe's Luck* would be considered a second edition. The other four Fez editions were printed simultaneously with the paper editions with the first issues possessing the attributes previously described. The "Blindstamped" format would be considered the second state of the first-issue paper edition, the only difference being one of binding material.

Unfortunately, the small number of books available for examination has required a certain amount of conjecture regarding the publication sequence of these

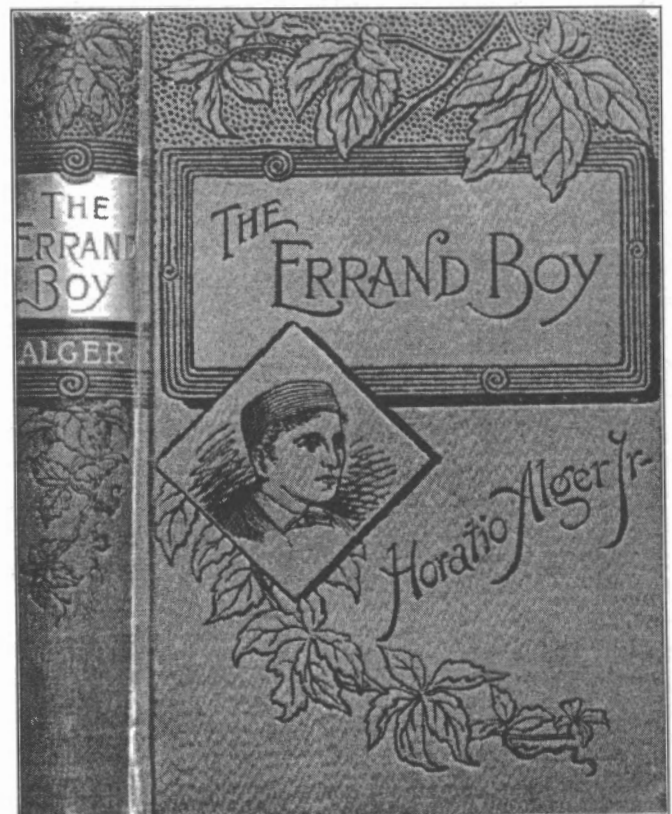
Burt variations. Perhaps additional copies will be discovered, containing inscription dates and addresses, that will assist future researchers in resolving this enigmatic subject.

\* \* \*

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Brad Chase (PF-412) and Bill Russell (PF-549) for access to their collections and for their extensive knowledge of Horatio Alger, Jr. A special acknowledgement to Brad Chase whose continuing research of A. L. Burt hard-cover and paper edition variations made this article possible.

### NOTES

1. Frank Gruber, *Horatio Alger, Jr.: A Biography and Bibliography*. Los Angeles: Grover Jones Press, 1961.
2. Gruber, p. 68.
3. Morton S. Enslin, "An Alger Check List," *Antiquarian Bookman*, July 6-13, 1959.
4. Morton S. Enslin, "A List of Alger titles," *Dime novel Round-Up*, Aug. 15, 1971, Vol. 40, No. 8, Whole No. 467, pp. 74-84; and Sept. 15, 1971, Vol. 40, No. 9, Whole No. 468, pp. 90-106.
5. Ralph D. Gardner, *Horatio Alger, or The American Hero Era*. Mendota, Ill.: Wayside Press, 1964.
6. Bradford S. Chase, *Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt*. Enfield, Conn.: privately printed, 1983, pp. 17-23.
7. Chase, p. 15.





## Editor's notebook

(Continued from Page 4)

tracting bids during the final 12 hours of an auction. Previously, you could retract a bid at any time, right up to the end of an auction, which set up the possibility of shielding, in which the late rescinding of a bid tended to negate higher bids — in effect, manipulating the price.

There are a couple of exceptions to this new rule: If you place your bid within the final 12 hours of the auction cycle for that item, you have one hour to retract that bid. Also, a retraction is still permissible if (1) the bidder accidentally enters the wrong bid amount; (2) the seller significantly changes the item's description; or (3) e-mails sent to the seller are returned to the originator as "undeliverable."

Regardless, the eBay landscape has been a little drier lately. It's hard to find a real bargain because there are too many knowledgeable collectors in cyberspace.

We now — finally — approach the end of our survey of the leading publishers of juvenile books and what (if any) means they used to identify first editions. This series began 10 issues ago, in January-February 2000, and has methodically crept along in alphabetical order (by publisher) since then. The concluding chapter in this series will be presented in the next issue.

Sources used in this series have included *A Pocket Guide to the Identification of First Editions*, compiled by Bill McBride (self-published, Hartford, Ct., 1995); *First Editions: A Guide to Identification*, third edition, edited by Edward N. Zempel and Linda A. Verkler (Peoria, Ill.: The Spoon River Press, 1995); and *How to Identify and Collect American First Editions*, by Jack Tannen (New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1976). Additional information came from examining the books themselves. The previous installment discussed the Stitt Publishing Co.

### Street & Smith, New York

This publisher is well-known to Horatio Alger, Jr. collectors because of the 13 hard-cover Algers available in Street & Smith's **Boys' Own Library**, which came on the scene shortly after the turn of the 20th century. The Street & Smith plates were later leased to Federal, which republished the books (retaining the Street & Smith title page). Then, in 1906, the **Boys' Own Library** was taken over by David McKay of Philadelphia. For the best information on the history of the **Boys' Own Library**, you are referred to Chapter 13 of John T. Dizer's *Tom Swift, The Bobbsey Twins and Other Heroes of American Juvenile Literature* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).

The first so-called "popular" history of Street & Smith was Quentin Reynolds' *The Fiction Factory or, From Pulp Row to Quality Street* (New York: Random House, 1955). While a "fun" read, subsequent research has pointed out



some inaccuracies in the text. However, it remains a helpful resource.

Therefore, to obtain the most current and accurate capsulized information on Street & Smith and its myriad dime novel and serial publications, please consult J. Randolph Cox's *The Dime Novel Companion* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000). Also, the numerous bibliographic listings of Street & Smith's various serial publications, produced by **Dime Novel Round-Up**, are invaluable to the researcher.

To summarize the history of one of America's most important popular-culture publishing firms, quoting from Cox, "One of the five major dime novel publishers (Street & Smith was) founded when Francis Scott Street (1832-April 15, 1883) and Francis Shubael Smith (Dec. 29, 1919-Feb. 1, 1887) entered into partnership to purchase Amos J. Williamson's *New York Weekly Dispatch*. ... Traditionally, the date set for the founding of the firm is 1855, but the names of F.S. Street and F.S. Smith did not appear on the masthead until May 21, 1859."

The Alger hard-cover editions published by Street & Smith in its **Boys' Own Library** were, in alphabetical

(Continued on Page 12)

# Memories of '2001 — An Alger Odyssey'



**Jeanette and Bob Routhier, front, and Brad and Ann Chase enjoy breakfast in the Consulate Cafe in Ottawa's Embassy West Hotel Conference Centre during the 2001 Horatio Alger Society convention.**

Photo by Doug Fleming



**Marc Williams, left, makes a point with Bob Kersch during the annual members' book sale on Saturday morning at the Ottawa Travelodge.**

Photo by Bernie Biberdorf

**Janice and Michael Morley pose for the camera during the annual banquet.**

Photo by Bernie Biberdorf



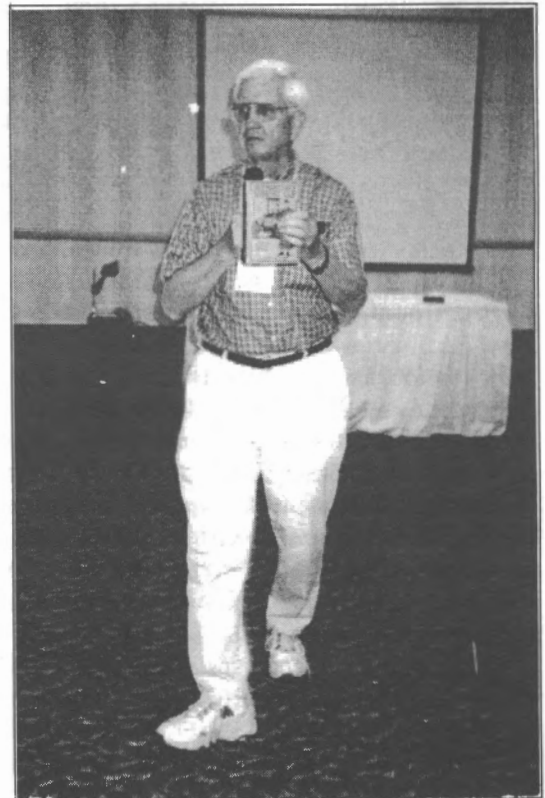
An informal get-together in the hospitality room, from left: Steven Sutton, Carol Nackenoff, Janice Morley, convention host Doug Fleming, Richard Hoffman and John Cadick.



Larry Rice asks for an opening bid on *Dick Hamilton's Touring Car* by Howard Garis during Friday's Owen Cobb estate special consignment auction in the North American Ballroom. Photo by Doug Fleming



H.A.S. President Carol Nackenoff makes welcoming remarks during the annual banquet. Photo by Doug Fleming



## Editor's notebook

(Continued from Page 9)

order: *Adventures of a Telegraph Boy*; *Dean Dunham*; (*The Erie Train Boy*); (*The Five Hundred Dollar Check*); *From Canal Boy to President*; *From Farm Boy to Senator*; *Mark Stanton*; *Ned Newton*; (*A New York Boy*); *Tom Brace*; *Tom Tracy*; *Walter Griffith*; and (*The Young Acrobat*). Many of these are highly sought by collectors because they are the first hard-cover appearances of earlier serials and stories appearing in very scarce paperback editions.

**Usual identification method:** Because most of its hard-cover books were reprints of titles previously appearing in serials, or in its own paperback series (Medal Library, for example), there was no proprietary way of identifying S&S hard-cover "firsts." There is no date on the title page, and often two copyright dates, the first for serial publication and the latter for hard cover.

It is generally agreed that the first printings of many of the S&S hard-cover books used solid-colored spine lettering, while subsequent printings switched to gold lettering. Note that this is the opposite of usual practice among the early publishers, but we can deduce from advertisements, inscriptions, etc., that gold lettering came later. For example, the Frank Merriwell hard-covers used red lettering, then switched to gold; the Gilbert Patten titles and Edward Ellis titles used white lettering, then gold; and the "Lt. Frederick Garrison" (Upton Sinclair) West Point books used slate-blue lettering, then gold. You can deduce that a copy of a book with solid-colored lettering is the first-format Street & Smith binding in most (but not all) instances.

**Prominent series and authors:** Street & Smith's **Boys' Own Library** did not begin and end as a self-contained entity (please refer to Dizer, noted above). Many titles were added and subtracted along the way (McKay later followed the same practice).

**Prominent series and authors:** There are four prominent S&S series that began as advertised stand-alone series before being integrated into the **Boys' Own Library**. They are Gilbert Patten's three-volume **Rockspur Athletic Series** and six-volume **Frank Merriwell Series**; and two series by St. George Rathborne: the **Ranch and Range Series** and **Camp and Canoe Series**.

The **Rockspur** series written especially for hard-cover editions and the **Frank Merriwell Series** reprinted from **Tip Top Weekly** serials (and later, the **Medal Library** thick paperbacks)

However, these four series are more readily associated with the **Boys' Own Library** and are usually collected as such. Note that the **Frank Merriwell Series** (as a sub-series of the **Boys' Own Library**) was expanded to 28 volumes by David McKay.

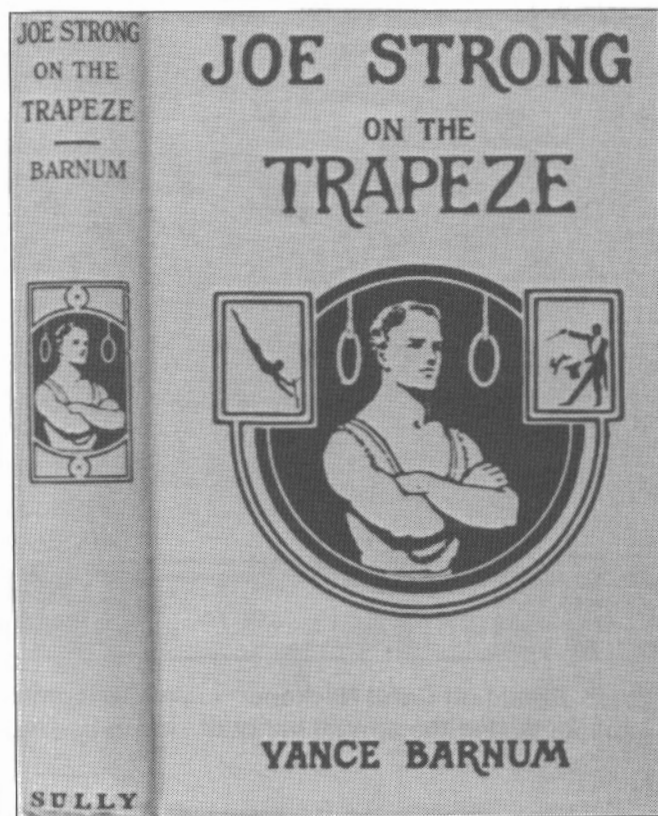
**Sully & Kleinteich; later, George Sully & Co., New York**

This publisher worked with Edward Stratemeyer in the early years of the Syndicate, with such series as the **Back to the Soil Series** and **Rushton Boys Series**.

**Usual identification method:** There is no set pattern. For J.W. Duffield's eight-volume **Bert Wilson Series** (1913-14), Sully & Kleinteich used corresponding years of publication on the copyright page (verso) and title page. For the two-volume **Back to the Soil (Hiram) Series** (1914-15), it did not. When Sully & Kleinteich became George Sully & Co. in the late teens, there were no dates printed on the title page. In a statement from the publisher in 1928: "We do not mark the first editions of our books in any particular manner." George Sully and Co. ceased operations in 1937.

**Prominent series and authors:** In addition to the above-mentioned series, there are these Stratemeyer-controlled series: **Army Boys Series** by "Homer Randall," **Air Service Boys Series** by "Charles Amory Beach," **Navy Boys Series** by "Halsey Davidson" and the **Rushton Boys Series** by "Spencer Davenport" (the latter was first published by Sully & Kleinteich).

Also, Sully reissued these original Stratemeyer Syndicate series originally put out by other publishers: **Joe Strong Series** (Hearst's International Library Co.), Howard Garis' **Young Reporter Series** (G&D) and the **Frank and Andy Series** (three of six titles, originally published as Cupples & Leon's **Racer Boys Series**).





# Capwell Wyckoff's Mystery Hunters

## *Sleuthing in the Great Outdoors*

By Frank W. Quillen (PF-1035)

For devotees of juvenile series books, the name of Capwell Wyckoff evokes memories of vicarious adventures set in the great outdoors. Although the plots of Wyckoff's mystery-adventures for boys usually focus on a building of some kind, the protagonists are constantly involved in such outdoor activities as camping, hiking and boating.

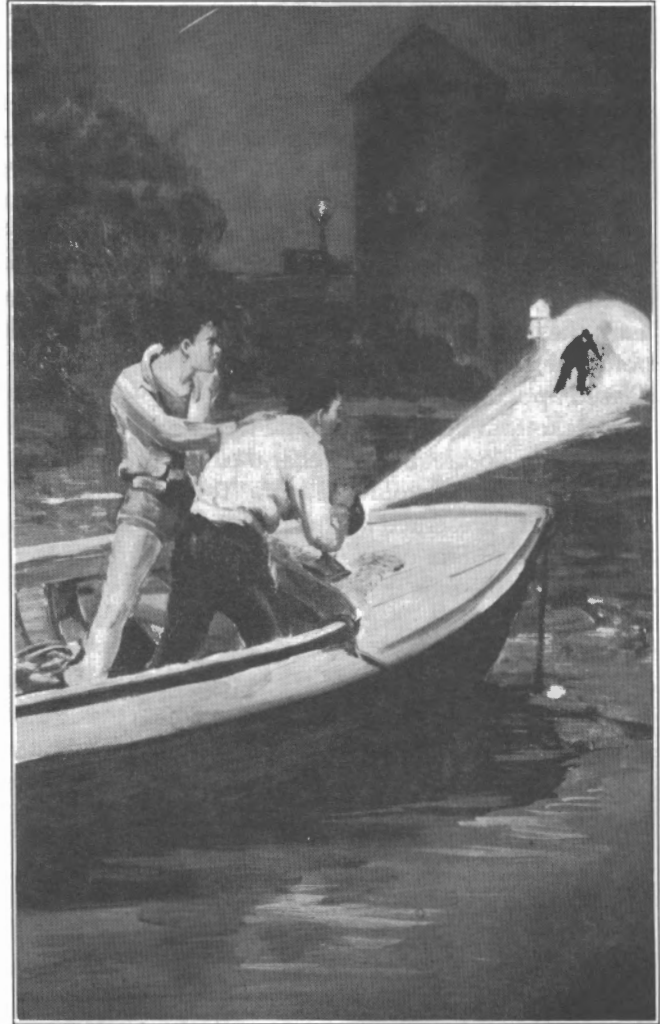
Wyckoff's world is one of pristine landscapes interspersed by crystal-clear lakes and rivers. Although such settings could be taken for granted somewhat during the 1930s when Wyckoff penned the books, we readers of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century find them especially appealing, since for us such scenes are quickly disappearing. Perhaps no one has been more skilled than Wyckoff in capturing the cozy atmosphere of basking before a fireplace in a cabin by a lake, surrounded by a blanket of snow outside. Although his books have been long out of print, Wyckoff is warmly remembered and revered by a number of persons who still receive a familiar tingle of excitement whenever they take one of his books off the shelf and turn its yellowing pages.

Altogether, Wyckoff authored 21 mystery-adventures for boys. This canon of work includes five single volumes; what might be considered a two-volume series (*Secret of the Armor Room* and *The Mystery of Lake Retreat*), the Mercer Boys Series and the Mystery Hunters Series.

Although Wyckoff is perhaps best remembered for his more extensive (10-volume) Mercer Boys Series, which appropriately has been described as "one of the first series to achieve a modern pace, dialogue and characterization"<sup>1</sup>, it is in his last series concerning the four boys called The Mystery Hunters that Wyckoff reached the peak of his storytelling skill. These four volumes constitute a satisfying blend of convincing characterizations, interesting settings, mysterious atmosphere and cleverly wrought plots.

The Mystery Hunters Series was first published by A.L. Burt Company and later reprinted by Saalfield. The first three volumes were first published in 1934, while

*Other authors...  
...other books*



*The light revealed a man who was frantically searching for his boat.*

(Page 243)

(THE MYSTERY HUNTERS AT LAKESIDE CAMP)

the fourth and last volume appeared in 1936.

The four protagonists of the series, known collectively as the Mystery Hunters, are Barry Garrison, Kent Marple and the Ford twins, Mac and Tim. These young men live in the small town of Cloverfield, Vermont. In the first book in the series, they are seniors at Cloverfield High School, and all four are members of the football team. Wyckoff allows these characters to develop. They are not frozen in time like the protagonists of many juvenile series.

In the second book the boys, who have now graduated from high school, travel to New Hampshire to participate in a summer camp operated at Frontier Col-

(Continued on Page 14)

*Editor's note: This article was presented as a paper on April 13, 2001 in Philadelphia at the 31st annual conference of the Popular Culture Association.*

## Capwell Wyckoff's Mystery Hunters

(Continued from Page 13)

lege, an institution of higher learning in the state of New York that the boys plan to enter the following fall. The third book relates an adventure shared by the boys during their freshman year at Frontier. The fourth and last book takes place when the boys return home to Cloverfield to find summer jobs in preparation for their return to Frontier the following fall. In the last sentence of the fourth book, Wyckoff tells us that "they all returned to Old Frontier where further unsolved mysteries awaited them."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, readers are unable to learn the nature of these further mysteries, since at this point the series stops, leaving its fans with an unappeased appetite for more.

Wyckoff, in keeping with the trend of his time, did not hesitate to idealize his characters, thus creating role models for his young readers. Yet, despite the fact that they are presented as fine physical specimens who are also exemplars of sportsmanship and virtue, they still manage to come through as believable and sympathetic personalities, largely because of their lively and witty dialogue.

Barry Garrison, who might be taken as the leader of the group, or at least the character on which the author most often seems to focus, is described as having a "clean cut, manly face" and "sparkling eyes."<sup>3</sup> As Wyckoff goes on to describe Barry:

He had been the right halfback on the school team this year and had helped to lead it to a glorious place on the Conference list. He was an all-around athlete and stood well in his second-year studies. Although Barry Garrison would have turned the idea aside with a good natured laugh, he was the most popular boy in high school.<sup>4</sup>

Barry lives in a brownstone house with his parents and his younger sister Pearl, a high school freshman. Barry's father is a respected lawyer in the town of Cloverfield, and it appears that the Garrison family is happy and financially comfortable.

Kent Marple, Barry's close friend since early childhood, is described by Wyckoff as being "broader than Barry, with a heavy shock of black hair and a chin that was a trifle determined."<sup>5</sup> Kent's father owns a hotel, and Wyckoff gives the impression that the Marple family is quite affluent. The reader is told, for example, that Kent "had enjoyed many advantages in life."<sup>6</sup>

Physical proximity may have played a part in the longtime friendship of Kent and Barry, since the boys live only two doors away from each other.

Although the remaining members of the Mystery

Hunters, Mac and Tim Ford, are twins, it is obvious they are fraternal rather than identical. As Wyckoff describes them:

At first glance there was little to distinguish between Mac and Tim Ford. They were both the same height and build, stocky young fellows who had made splendid ends on the [football] team. But at closer range some differences were apparent. Mac was sandy-haired, and Tim was gifted with a light brown mass of hair that sometimes managed to stay combed. Both boys had attractive, lively countenances and were well-liked by everyone in the small town. They were often the leaders in the fun and could always be counted on to join in any kind of a lark.<sup>7</sup>

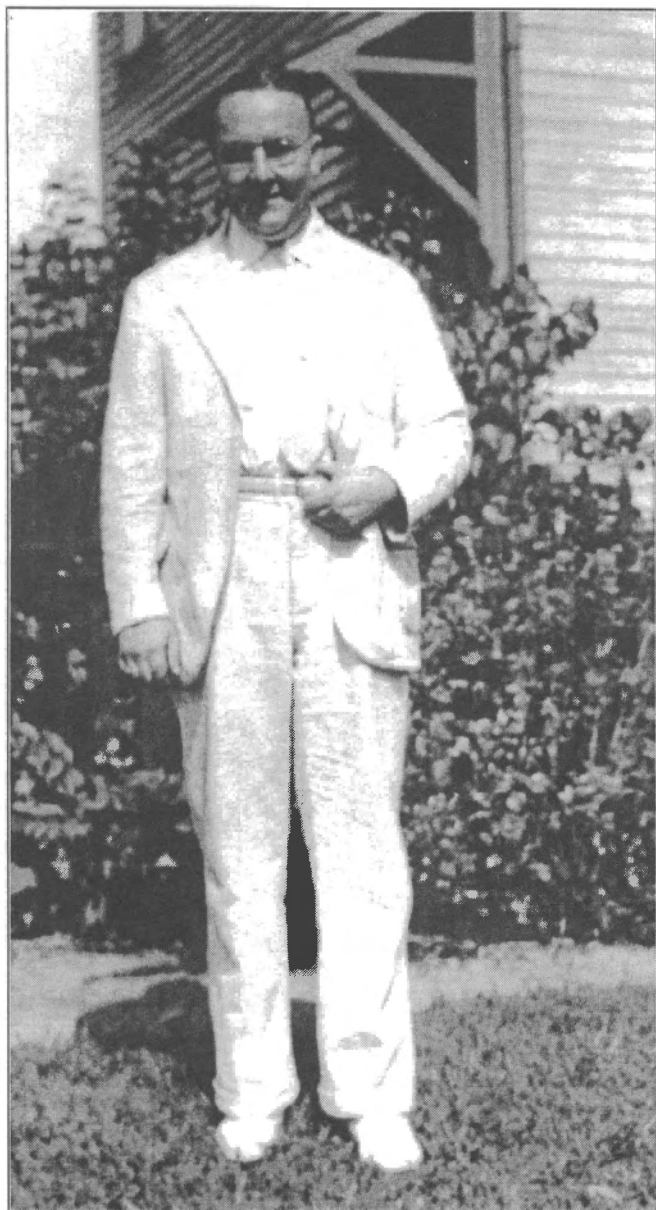
Although Mr. Ford, the father of Mac and Tim, runs a successful dry goods business and makes a decent living, the Ford family is not as financially prosperous as the Garrisons or the Marples. At one point their home is described as "modest."<sup>8</sup>

We are not told a great deal more about the family life of the Fords, but we do know that Mac and Tim have at least one sibling, a sister named Gertrude, or "Gertie" to her brothers. She is a telephone operator who sometimes eavesdrops on conversations while she is involved in her work. She seems a colorful character, and it is rather a shame that she is not introduced in the series until the fourth and last book. Her personality might have been further developed had the series continued. One other fact to note about Mac Ford is that he enjoys a special friendship with Barry Garrison's sister Pearl, and their relationship might have blossomed into a real romance had the series gone on.

The first volume of the series, *The Mystery Hunters at the Haunted Lodge*, is a winter book. Wyckoff's evocation of atmosphere allows the reader to savor vicariously both the joys and treacheries of a Vermont winter in the early 1930s. At the beginning of this book, we are introduced to the characters, and we learn that they came to be called the Mystery Hunters because they successfully rigged up a hidden camera to catch a boy named Carter Wolfe, who had been stealing from the student lockers at Cloverfield High.

Sometime later, Barry Garrison's lawyer father tells his son about a hunting lodge that belongs to one of his clients. This building has remained deserted because those who have tried to stay there have been scared away by strange sounds and loss of personal property. A boat has been scuttled, clothing has been stolen, and loud thuds have been heard in the night. Private investigators have been sent to the lodge, but they have been unable to capture the elusive culprits.

The four Mystery Hunters decide to travel to the lodge and do their own investigating. This adventure



**Capwell Wyckoff in front of his home in Elizabeth, N.J., on Sept. 6, 1936, the year the final volume of *The Mystery Hunters Series* was published.**

will involve the boys in the joys of winter sports as well as the dangers of combating the elements. The journey of several miles to the lodge is made on ice skates. The boys travel up the Buffalo River onto Lake Arrowtip, on the banks of which the lodge is located. At times they are forced to leave the river and temporarily take detours on land. At one point they stop to pitch tents and spend the night.

When they arrive at their destination, they move into a small cabin near the lodge, and here they spend the first two nights. Because of a snowstorm that causes a limb of a tree to blow onto the cabin roof and knock off

a corner of the chimney, however, the boys decide to move into the lodge.

Although the boys encounter many mysterious phenomena during their visit to the lodge, the most dangerous ordeal is confronted by Barry and Kent when they leave the Ford twins behind and travel to the nearest community to buy provisions. On the way back they become lost in a snowstorm and find that they have been traveling in circles. They are forced to seek refuge under an overhang at the foot of a bluff where they finally manage to get a fire started and thereby avoid freezing to death. After a time they manage to get their bearings and find their way back to the lodge, much to the relief of Mac and Tim Ford, who have been anxiously awaiting their return.

The boys are disappointed when they receive a message from Barry's father asking them to return home. They feel a sense of defeat for not having solved the mystery of the lodge. Later, however, after they have returned to Cloverfield, they have the opportunity to visit the lodge again by organizing a group of their friends to take a straw ride chaperoned by the high school football coach and his wife. On this occasion they manage to solve the mystery after Barry undergoes a harrowing adventure trailing a shadowy figure through a secret tunnel. Although the plot of the story centers on the lodge, the charm of the book is derived from the winter setting and the invigorating experiences in the outdoors.

The second book in the series, *The Mystery Hunters at Lakeside Camp*, is in great contrast to the first because it is a summer book. Our four protagonists have now graduated from high school and are planning to attend Frontier College in the fall. Although Frontier is located in New York state, it runs a summer camp on the shores of Yankee Lake in New Hampshire. The boys decide to spend their summer at the camp in order to meet some of their future classmates.

The boys travel by train from their hometown of Cloverfield to the New Hampshire town of Madison, and, carrying their luggage, they start walking from the train depot to the camp. This trip involves a walk through the town as far as the lake, after which they are to continue along the shore of the lake until they arrive at the camp. When they first reach the lake shore, they spot an old opera house that has not been in use for a number of years, since the people of Madison, tired of traveling so far out of town, have built a new theater inside the town to replace the old one.

Curious to explore the old opera house and in need of shelter from a rainstorm, the boys manage to gain entrance and look around. When they climb to the stage and look out toward the audience, the hush of the

*(Continued on Page 16)*

## Capwell Wyckoff's Mystery Hunters

(Continued from Page 15)

building is broken by the sounds of footsteps in the balcony. Wyckoff's ability to evoke atmosphere is exemplified by his description of the boys' reaction when they learn that they are not alone in the theater:

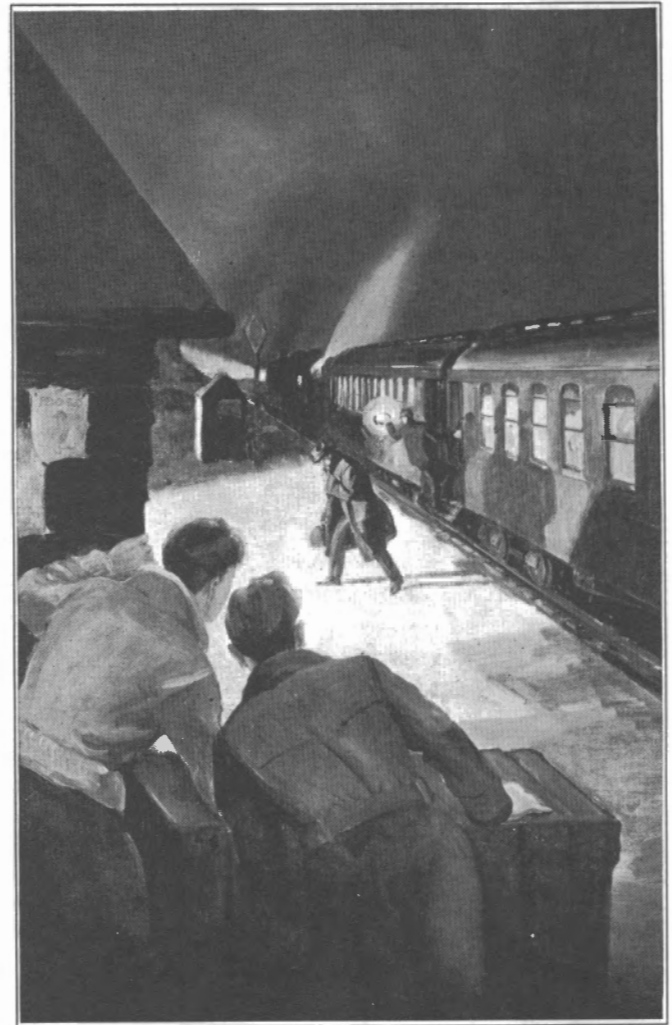
Like four statues the Mystery Hunters stood on the stage of the opera house and listened to the heavy footsteps die out in the gallery. After they had ceased, a stillness that was somewhat thick brooded over the old building. The rain fell softly on the roof, and just off the stage, in the left hand wing, water dripped on the floor from a leak, splashing down from the high offstage skylight. The place was all at once dreary and mysterious.<sup>9</sup>

We learn later that the lurker in the balcony is Glenn Richards, a man who has been falsely accused of stealing a jewel pendant from the neck of a leading actress. The theft had occurred onstage when the lights had gone out during the last play performed in the building. Later in the plot the Mystery Hunters collaborate to help Richards prove his innocence of the crime.

Like other books in the series, although the plot centers on a building, in this case the old opera house, many of the adventures take place outdoors. During their stay at the camp, the boys take part in such activities as swimming, hiking and boating. As many juvenile series books of the time attest, the practice of prep schools and colleges maintaining summer camps was widespread during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Wyckoff's description of Lakeside Camp reveals a part of the American experience of growing up that largely has been forgotten:

Lakeside Camp had the appearance of being well established, and it was indeed an old and well-known one. The tents had board platforms under them and were well drained. The grounds around had been well kept for many years, and everything had the appearance of orderliness. There were twenty tents, facing in a big half-circle toward the lake, and all of them were the large well-type that assured plenty of room. One tent, directly in the center of the half-moon, was larger than the others and was plainly the tent of the supervisor. Off to one side was a long wooden building with screens and glass windows at present hooked up and out of the way. This was without a doubt the dining place, and the shack building next to it was the kitchen.<sup>10</sup>

One of the activities of the camp is a rowboat race. With two boys in each rowboat, the participants row into a swamp where they are to find a tree on which has been hung a piece of cardboard. After they have located the tree, they are to record the number of their boat on the



A single passenger alighted from the train, who carried a satchel and was bundled in an overcoat.

(Page 200)

(THE MYSTERY HUNTERS AT OLD FRONTIER)

cardboard and return to camp. The first boat to do so successfully is to be declared the winner. Unfortunately, in this case, the race is interrupted by a severe storm, which, although it prevents Barry and Kent from winning the race, causes them to attempt to find shelter on an island in the lake, which is inhabited by a strange occupant who plays an important part in the resolution of the plot. Through the book, Wyckoff skillfully weaves together the activities of the camp and the mystery of the old opera house, finally bringing the plot to an exciting and satisfying conclusion.

The third volume of the series, *The Mystery Hunters at Old Frontier*, takes place in the fall following the events related in the second book. When the boys arrive at the college to begin their freshman year, they renew their friendships made at Lakeside Camp and also meet new friends.

Once again, a strange building is at the center of the



mystery. In this case it is a deserted hospital, which stands on the other side of a canal from the boys' dormitory. The hospital was once run by two rival brothers, both physicians, one of whom is now believed to be dead. It is Barry Garrison who first looks out the window of his dorm room in the middle of the night and notices the lights of mysterious visitors at the old building. When a bank robbery occurs in the college town, the boys begin to suspect that the old hospital is being used as a hideout for the thieves and their loot. The mystery deepens when Barry learns from a conversation at a football game that the doctor believed dead has recently been a patient in an institution for the mentally ill.

The climax of the book comes when our quartet of protagonists, with the help of the police, close in on the thieves, who turn out to be confederates of the deranged doctor and his girlfriend, a wicked nurse. A creepy note is introduced when the evil couple attempts to

evade capture by hiding in a mausoleum in a nearby cemetery. Needless to say, the plot is resolved nicely, and the boys are rightly praised for their part in bringing the desperate criminals to justice. In this book, as in the others, the boys enjoy several outdoor activities, and these contribute much to the appeal of the story.

They take long walks in the woods, and on one such outing they manage to put out a fire and save a house from burning. There is also a boat trip up the canal to a lake. By far the most prominent activity in the book, however, as one might suspect from the collegiate setting, is football. Although our boys begin on the scrub team, by the end of the book there is much promise that they look forward to considerable status on the team during their years at Old Frontier.

The fourth and final book, *The Mystery Hunters on Special Detail*, boasts what is perhaps the most skillful

plotting of the entire series, although outdoor activities are not quite as prevalent as in the other three. Here again, the mystery centers on a building, in this case a large house owned by a Mr. Winstead, who is a collector of unusual artifacts from around the world. Winstead is understandably frustrated when his treasures begin to be stolen one by one, even though they are kept in a locked room. In desperation he hires the four Mystery Hunters to live in the house for the summer. Although they are each given a job to do around the estate, their central concern is to unravel the locked-room mystery. The boys accept the job

because they are both intrigued by the situation and hopeful of making some money before they return to Frontier College the next fall.

In order to bring this plot to a satisfying conclusion, Wyckoff makes use of tried and true gothic devices, which also contribute to the creepy atmosphere. As it

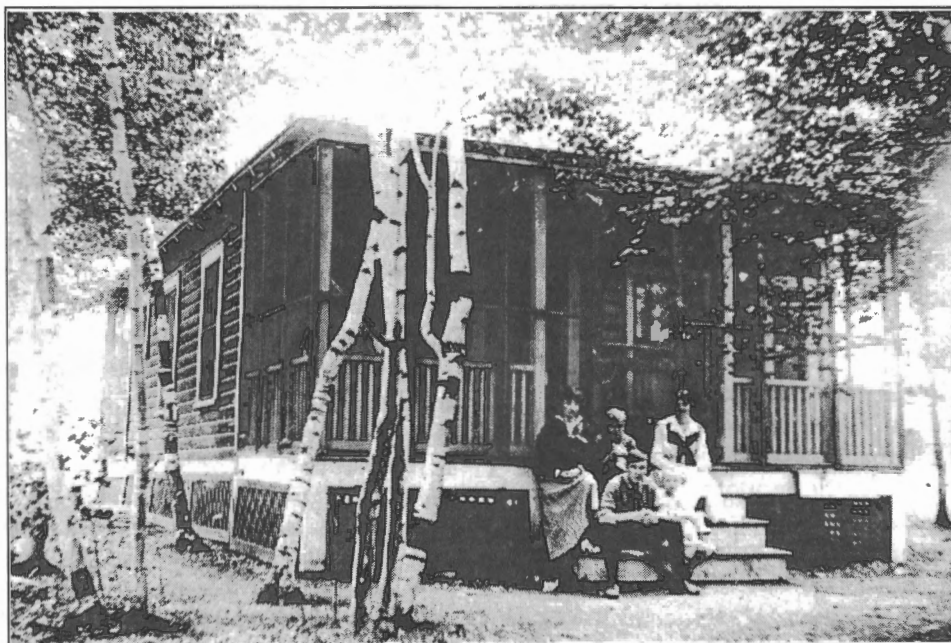
turns out, the thefts are being made by means of a secret panel behind a bookcase. Once again, Wyckoff has one of his antagonists take refuge in a mausoleum of a nearby cemetery.

There are many other goings-on: storms, blackouts and uninvited visitors prowling in the halls of the old house. Somehow, Wyckoff makes all these ingredients come together harmoniously without resorting to melodramatic excess, although in the hands of a less skillful writer such devices might seem trite and contrived.

Most of the outdoor experiences in this book are related to the jobs the boys are given on the estate.

Although Barry Garrison has the rather uninteresting job of pumping gasoline at a small service station the owner has set up on his property, Kent Marple becomes a lifeguard at an artificial beach on the river,

(Continued on Page 18)



**Rose Thorn Wyckoff and her children, Helen, Capwell, Earl and Virginia, at their summer home in Greenwood Lake, New York. Capwell was a teenager at the time this photo was taken.**

## Capwell Wyckoff's Mystery Hunters

(Continued from Page 17)

and his chief concerns are watching over the children who come there, and providing some of them with swimming lessons.

The Ford twins become gardeners and spend much of their time transplanting trees and repairing a fish pond.

Once again, the author's love for nature is evident, although in this last volume of the series most of the mysterious events occur inside the old house.

While several factors come together to make the *Mystery Hunters* a successful series, the major appeal of the books lies in the author's ability to communicate his love for the great outdoors.

Albert Capwell Wyckoff, who lived from 1903 to 1953, was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and spent much of the early part of his life in the northeastern part of the United States, which provided the settings for the *Mystery Hunters* books.

Later in life, however, the author worked with his wife Edna as a "Sunday School" missionary for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the mountains of Arkansas and later in Kentucky. In this capacity he traveled long distances on horseback, visiting and serving the mountain people that he grew to love.

The contrast between the mountains Wyckoff had known in his youth and those he encountered in the South must have impressed him greatly. In *The Mystery Hunters at the Haunted Lodge* one of the characters, a football coach, relates his experiences working in a camp in the Kentucky mountains building roads and cutting

timber. In this passage it is likely that the character serves as a mouthpiece for the author:

"These mountains [in Vermont] are pretty well known ... The people in them have been in contact with civilization for a long time, and tourist and the summer camper have come into them frequently. But in the Kentucky Mountains we find an arrested civilization, and by that I mean that people poured into its hollows and gaps and then progress jumped clear over them and kept going west, while the mountaineer remained the same as he had been in the time of the Revolution. I have frequently seen old mountain women working the old-time spinning wheel, and many of them smoke a pipe all the time."<sup>11</sup>

While preparing this paper I was fortunate in being able to contact Wyckoff's daughter, Virginia "Ginger" Chapman, who shared with me some interesting insights concerning her father. It seems that Wyckoff's love for the outdoors did not begin in his childhood, but developed later when he was doing his mission work in the mountains. According to his daughter, until then he was a "city boy."<sup>12</sup> The need for his love of nature might have been sown earlier in life, however, for she relates that as a boy, although he did not attend summer camp, he did accompany his family to Greenwood Lake in New York each year, where they spent the summer. In Mrs. Chapman's words:

In those days everyone who could afford to do so got out of the city in July and August. The family would rent or own a place, at either the shore or in the mountains. The families stayed while the fathers came out for the weekend on the train.<sup>13</sup>



Capwell Wyckoff, left, conducts a church meeting as a missionary for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in rural Harrison, Arkansas, in the summer of 1940. Because there was no church building at the time, it was necessary to meet outdoors.

It is possible that these summer experiences of living by a lake inspired the Mystery Hunters' adventures of camping by a lake in the first two volumes of the series. Since camping is an important activity in his books, it is interesting that during his years as a missionary in the Kentucky mountains Wyckoff himself helped organize and run a camp for children. In a report submitted by the author during this time, he describes the structure of the camp:

The physical set-up is as follows: at Cow Creek the Presbyterian Board of National missions owns a large house in which reside the missionary and his wife, and next to the building is the county school, a two story affair with classrooms up and down stairs. The boys are quartered in the upper classroom and sleep on piles of straw, and the girls are cared for in the large building next to it.<sup>14</sup>

As Wyckoff sums up his experience of living in the camp:

The formula is simple after all: two buildings, interested boys and girls, leaders who love young people, plenty of straw, enough of food — and there you have it, the results of which are beyond computation in Christian character.<sup>15</sup>

Boating, another activity enjoyed by the Mystery Hunters in two volumes of the series, also played an important part in Wyckoff's life. His daughter recalls that some friends of her father once owned a sloop kept docked in Bay Shore, Long Island, which later became the basis for the Lassie in the Mercer Boys Series.<sup>16</sup>

According to an article in *The Mystery and Adventure Series Review*, these friends, Don and Jim Bannerman, were models for the characters of the Mercer Boys, while Wyckoff used himself as the model for their best friend in that series, Terry Mackson.<sup>17</sup>

Ice skating also played a part in the author's life, although Mrs. Chapman recalls hearing her father remark that he did not skate well because his ankles were not strong. She points out that at that time, ice skates were strapped to the skater's shoes so that they provided little support for the ankles.<sup>18</sup> One can only wonder if Wyckoff could have withstood the ice-skating trip of several miles made by the Mystery Hunters in the first volume of the series.

The author's fondness for football is also acknowledged by his daughter. Wyckoff played football while he was a student at Pringry Preparatory School in Elizabeth, N.J.<sup>19</sup> This sport is important in *The Mystery Hunters at Old Frontier*, and from the plays and strategies described in that book, it is obvious that the author was quite knowledgeable about the game.

Wyckoff's skill in writing becomes quite apparent

## Boys' books by Capwell Wyckoff

(All originally published by A.L. Burt)

### The Mystery Hunters Series

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| 1. The Mystery Hunters at the Haunted Lodge | 1934 |
| 2. The Mystery Hunters at Lakeside Camp     | 1934 |
| 3. The Mystery Hunters at Old Frontier      | 1934 |
| 4. The Mystery Hunters on Special Detail    | 1936 |

### The Mercer Boys Series

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 1. The Mercer Boys' Cruise in the Lassie     | 1929 |
| 2. The Mercer Boys at Woodcrest              | 1929 |
| 3. The Mercer Boys on a Treasure Hunt        | 1929 |
| 4. The Mercer Boys' Mystery Case             | 1929 |
| 5. The Mercer Boys on the Beach Patrol       | 1929 |
| 6. The Mercer Boys in Summer Camp            | 1929 |
| 7. The Mercer Boys as First Classmen         | 1930 |
| 8. The Mercer Boys and the Indian Gold       | 1932 |
| 9. The Mercer Boys with the Air Cadets       | 1932 |
| 10. The Mercer Boys and the Steamboat Riddle | 1933 |

### Other books

- |                                |      |
|--------------------------------|------|
| The Secret of the Armor Room   | 1930 |
| The Mystery of Lake Retreat    | 1931 |
| In the Camp of the Black Rider | 1931 |
| The North Point Cabin Mystery  | 1932 |
| The Mystery of Gaither Cove    | 1932 |
| The Sea-Runners' Cache         | 1935 |
| Search for the City of Ghosts  | 1936 |

**A note on editions:** The *Mystery Hunters Series* was republished in a cheaper, dust-jacketed hard-cover edition by Saalfield, with some abridgement of the text in the latter chapters. Some of the early single titles were also republished by Saalfield. The first four titles in the *Mercer Boys Series* were reissued in the late 1940s in inexpensive dust-jacketed editions by World Syndicate Publishing Co., and later, along with titles five and six, in World Syndicate's Falcon Books imprint, a glossy picture-cover edition in print through the 1950s. The titles of the last two Falcon reprints were changed — *The Mercer Boys on the Beach Patrol* became *The Mercer Boys with the Coast Guard* and *The Mercer Boys in Summer Camp* became *The Mercer Boys in the Ghost Patrol*. The Falcon editions were also edited to bring their late-1920s stories contemporary with the early 1950s.

to the reader. Since his words seem to flow effortlessly onto the page, one cannot help but wonder about his work habits and the manner in which he developed his style. A friend and colleague, writing about his remembrances of the author, provides some insights

(Continued on Page 20)



End-paper illustration for the A.L. Burt first editions of Capwell Wyckoff's *Mystery Hunters* Series.

## Capwell Wyckoff's *Mystery Hunters*

(Continued from Page 19)

which suggest that writing for Wyckoff was a painless leisure-time activity:

He [Capwell Wyckoff] was sitting at his desk in a swivel chair, and behind him was a table on which there was a typewriter, with two piles of paper, one on each side of the typewriter. He explained that when he had a few moments of leisure, he could turn around in his chair, pick up a blank piece of paper from the right-hand side, put it in the machine and write a page of the novel on which he was currently working. When he finished the page, he would look it over, and if he didn't like it, it would go in the waste basket. If he liked it, he would put it down on the left-hand pile and send it to the publisher.<sup>20</sup>

Persons who today read the *Mystery Hunters* Series and other works by Wyckoff find themselves transported back to a simpler and gentler time when youth found joy in simple pleasures, the air was unpolluted, and the whole world seemed young and inviting.

One can only hope that these books may find their way into print again, or at least be made accessible as e-books on the Internet. Capwell Wyckoff left behind a rich legacy of writing for young people that deserves to be rediscovered by new generations of readers.

*Note: The Wyckoff family photographs used with this article were kindly provided the author by Virginia Wyckoff Chapman.*

## NOTES

1. Don Holbrook. "Wyckoff's Stories of Adventure." *The Mystery and Adventure Series Review* (No. 5, Summer 1982), p. 1.
2. Capwell Wyckoff. *The Mystery Hunters on Special Detail* (New York: A.L. Burt, 1936), p. 250.
3. Capwell Wyckoff. *The Mystery Hunters at the Haunted Lodge* (New York: A.L. Burt, 1934), p. 7.
4. Capwell Wyckoff. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 7-8.
5. Capwell Wyckoff. *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Capwell Wyckoff. *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.
8. Capwell Wyckoff. *The Mystery Hunters on Special Detail*, p. 60.
9. Capwell Wyckoff. *The Mystery Hunters at Lakeside Camp* (New York: A.L. Burt, 1934), p. 26.
10. Capwell Wyckoff. *Op. Cit.*, p. 37.
11. Capwell Wyckoff. *The Mystery Hunters at the Haunted Lodge*, p. 217.
12. Telephone conversation between Virginia Wyckoff Chapman and Frank W. Quillen on 5 March 2001.
13. Letter from Virginia Wyckoff Chapman to Frank W. Quillen dated 12 March 2001.
14. Capwell Wyckoff. "A Camp That Is Run on Food." Unpublished paper, p. 1.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
16. Letter. *Op. Cit.*
17. Don Holbrook. *Op. Cit.*, p. 21.
18. Letter. *Op. Cit.*
19. Don Holbrook. *Op. Cit.*, p. 21.
20. D. Campbell Wyckoff. "Reminiscences of Albert Capwell Wyckoff (5.29, 841, 34)." *The Wyckoff House and Association Bulletin*. Date unavailable.