


Horatio Alger, Jr.
1832 — 1899

THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NEWSBOY

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



HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY
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2012 convention preview

'Dash to DeKalb III'

- ◆ Official registration form
- ◆ Schedule of events
- ◆ Hotel and travel information

-- See Page 3

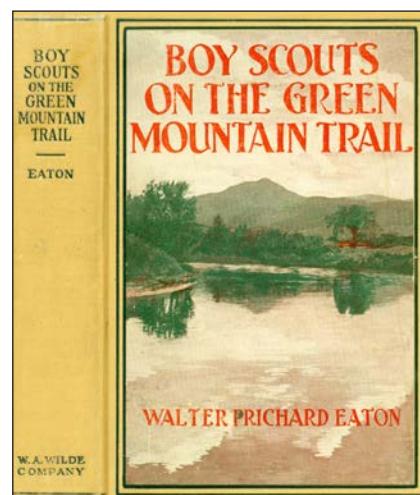
Life and death of a used bookstore

-- See Page 7

Walter P. Eaton:

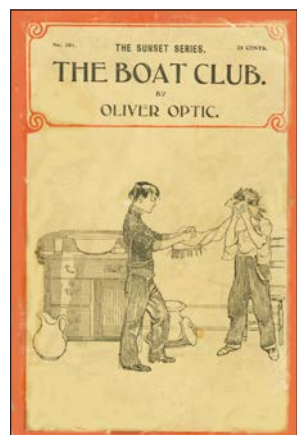
*Drama critic, essayist
and author of books for boys*

-- See Page 10



President's column

Super Bowl XLVI is over, Indianapolis is back to normal, and winter has finally arrived in Indiana. Weather below 20 degrees Fahrenheit and snow on the ground has brought my world back into balance. I cannot speak for anyone else, but I feel like 2012 started with my being dropped into an Indy 500 race car at full speed and it has yet to slow down. I realize that two growing children play a part in this, but also is my seeming inability to say "No" to opportunities to over-commit my available time. That said, life is good and I am looking forward to spring and the H.A.S. convention at Northern Illinois University (NIU) located in DeKalb, Illinois. I always enjoy visiting the Horatio Alger, Jr. Repository located in the Rare Books library at NIU, and I am sure you will also enjoy perusing its books and Alger-related material. Read Lynne Thomas's article in this issue and begin planning your trip to DeKalb. I look forward to seeing each of you.



Every Alger collector has searched long and hard for a copy of J. S. Ogilvie's Sunset Series, No. 181, titled *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, and sadly, I have not found a copy of *Silas*. I have; however, located a volume in this series that I did not know existed. It is *The Boat Club* by Oliver Optic. It was published as No. 301 in The Sunset Series and is pictured at left. This volume is not dated and does not contain any advertisements for other titles in The Sunset Series, but it does list the first five titles of The Boat Club Series by Oliver Optic as available in paper wraps for 25 cents apiece. I have to assume these additional titles are also part of The Sunset Series. I have a J. S. Ogilvie catalogue that lists titles from The Sunset Series, including *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, but it does not include later titles such as those by Oliver Optic. Dolores Jones in her Optic bibliography, *An 'Oliver Optic' Checklist*, does list J. S. Ogilvie as the author of five titles in The Boat Club Series (*Try Again* is not listed in the ads in my book or in Jones' book), but the series is unknown. It is well known that J. S. Ogilvie repub-

(Continued on Page 9)

HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. and to encourage the spirit of *Strive & Succeed* that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes. Our members conduct research and provide scholarship on the life of Horatio Alger, Jr., his works and influence on the culture of America. The Horatio Alger Society embraces collectors and enthusiasts of all juvenile literature, including boys' and girls' series, pulps and dime novels.

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

Membership applications, renewals, changes of address and other correspondence should be sent to **Horatio Alger Society, 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.horatioalgersociety.net

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

'Dash to DeKalb III'

NIU welcomes Horatio Alger Society

By Lynne M. Thomas

Head, Rare Books and Special Collections
Northern Illinois University

Dash to DeKalb III: The Details!

Scheduled for May 3-6, 2012 in beautiful DeKalb, Illinois, the Horatio Alger Society's annual convention, returns once more to the home of the Horatio Alger Society Collections, for good times, good friends and great books.

Registration will cost \$100. (Please inquire about prorated rates if you cannot attend the entire convention.) That cost includes Friday and Saturday lunches, and a Saturday dinner banquet. For our Friday dinner at Nat's on Maple in nearby Sycamore, we have a group reservation where everyone pays for their own meal rather than setting a specific menu, thus Friday night dinner is NOT included in the cost.

Our hotel room block is in the newly renovated Holmes Student Center hotel in the center of campus, with a nightly rate of \$65 for attendees. To reserve your room, call (815) 753-1444 and ask for the Horatio Alger Conference rate. Parking in the campus Visitor Lot next to the hotel is included in your room rate.

Our Saturday evening banquet Speaker is Daniel Shealy, Professor of English at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, and the premier expert on Louisa May Alcott's work. His talk is titled "'Such is Fame!': Louisa May Alcott and the Real *Little Women*." This talk is sponsored by the Friends of the NIU Libraries, and Friends members have been invited to join our dinner banquet. We will also be awarding the **Strive and Succeed Award** scholarship to a local high school student at the banquet.

The Saturday evening banquet buffet will feature Grilled Chicken de Provence, Oven Poached Filet of Salmon, and Savory Beef Sirloin, in addition to vegetarian options, sides, salads, and desserts. On Friday and Saturday, we will have box lunches.

We will also be featuring conference talks and the annual auction. Brad Chase will be launching his new book on the Hurst Algers, Bill Gowen will discuss the boys' books of A. Hyatt Verrill, and Nathaniel Williams, a 2011 NIU Alger Fellowship recipient, will discuss the results of his fellowship-funded research.

The convention souvenir will be a flash drive with digital versions of Alger-related materials for each attendee.



The Holmes Student Center hotel will be the site of the 2012 Horatio Alger Society convention at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb.

Photo by Bill Gowen

We haven't determined *everything* that will go onto it, but I'm certain that at least a portion of the contents of the Alger Digital Repository will make an appearance.

The bulk of our meetings will be in the newly renovated Diversions Lounge of the Holmes Student Center, on the lower level. Fear not, however. There will be plenty of time built into the schedule to explore the H.A.S. Alger repository and other collections in the library, just a short walk away.

The enclosed registration form and your payment (checks made payable to NIU or Northern Illinois University) can be mailed to Kathy Sherman, Founders Memorial

(Continued on Page 4)

Editor's notebook

Each year I attend the Popular Culture Association's annual conference, which this year is taking place April 11-14 in at Boston's Marriott Copley Place Hotel. I will make a talk on the three boys' adventure series (a total of 11 books) by Alpheus Hyatt Verrill (1871-1954), a true Renaissance man who not only wrote around 115 fiction and nonfiction books on myriad subjects, but was an explorer, natural historian, archeologist and inventor.

I am also presenting this talk at "Dash to DeKalb III," the H.A.S. convention previewed by Lynne Thomas in these pages. I do hope you attend, because the nightly room rate is very reasonable at \$65 (multiple occupancy), and DeKalb is centrally located, about an hour's drive west of Chicago.

I bring this up because my 2010 H.A.S. convention and Popular Culture Association presentation on New England author Walter Prichard Eaton is in this issue, starting on Page 10. I didn't have room to list acknowledgements at the end, so I want to express my gratitude to former **Newsboy** editor Jack Bales (PF-258) for providing most of the bibliographic source material listed on Page 14. This includes the Verrill obituary in **The New York Times** and the 1935 article in the same publication concerning Verrill's harsh criticism of the Hollywood movie industry.

Bales, for more than 30 years the Reference and Humanities Librarian at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia (formerly Mary Washington College), has been most generous in helping me out with research of this type. He has the knowledge of and access to these references, and his help has been critical to many of my projects.

James D. Keeline (PF-898) has been equally helpful in digging up information, in particular Census Bureau background on authors' and artists' families. My upcoming presentation on A. Hyatt Verrill was stuck in neutral until James told me of fellow researcher and Verrill fan Doug Frizzle, who not only has been able to get Verrill's fascinating autobiography into print, but has published several of his hard-to-find boys' books, along with collections of Verrill science fiction pieces written for **Amazing Stories** magazine.

In the March-April **Newsboy** we'll offer a little of what downtown Chicago has to offer to those Partic'lar Friends arriving early for "Dash to DeKalb III" or remaining afterward to visit this great city.



Nat's on Maple in historic downtown Sycamore, Illinois, will be the site of the H.A.S. convention's Friday night group dinner.

Photo by Bill Gowen

'Dash to DeKalb III'

(Continued from Page 3)

Library Administration, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115.

Traveling to DeKalb

DeKalb is served by both O'Hare and Midway Airports in Chicago. Direct airport limo service from either airport costs about \$85-\$100 each way, and is available via DeKalb-O'Hare Airport Limousine. Website: www.dekalboharelimo.com/ Phone: (815) 758-0631.

If you prefer a free ride from the airport, a fellow Horatio Alger Society member may be available to pick you up provided arrangements (including flight information) are made directly with him in advance.



Lynne M. Thomas, Head of Rare Books and Special Collections at NIU, is the host for "Dash to DeKalb III."

Train travel to DeKalb is a bit complicated. Amtrak goes to Union Station in Chicago. You can then transfer to METRA (regional rail) which will get you as far as Elgin, and catch a ride from there. If you plan to travel by train, please ask for further details.

If you are planning to drive from home or are renting a car at the airport, highway directions to DeKalb will be given in the March-April **Newsboy**.

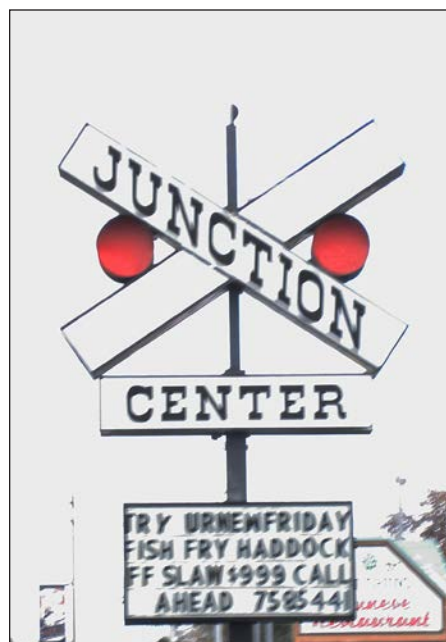
NIU, DeKalb get ready for 2012 H.A.S. convention



The NIU Holmes Student Center, site of most of the scheduled H.A.S. convention activities, has recently renovated its hotel guest rooms (below).



Founders Memorial Library, adjacent to the Holmes Center, is the home of the Horatio Alger Society repository, which along with the library's other rare book collections will be open to convention attendees during the weekend.



The Junction Eating Place diner, at 816 W. Lincoln Highway, is just a short walk from the NIU campus.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

January 13, 2012

Dear Bill:

Please find enclosed a copy of my new book, *Thomas Hurst and His Publication of Horatio Alger Books*, for your review in an upcoming issue of **Newsboy**. As you know, it covers only full-size Hurst/Alger books; I plan a companion volume on Hurst Miniatures next. Copies of this book will not be generally available until after it is introduced at the Horatio Alger Society convention at Northern Illinois University in May.

The seeds for this book were sown by Bob Routhier and others at the 2008 convention in Carson City, Nevada. Since then, it has been a truly collaborative effort of more than 30 H.A.S. members and others who loaned me rare Hurst/Alger books and other Hurst material so I could organize, document and write about them.

I am particularly indebted to Ken and Kay Broadie, who let me have full access to Ken's extensive Hurst/Alger Library where, for days, Ann, my son Scott and I recorded titles and took pictures of formats and dust jackets. Also, Cary Sternick, Art Young, Bernie Biberdorf, Carol Nackenoff, Milt Ehlert, Rob Kasper, Scott Chase and Bob Sipes provided me with rare Hurst items and information which otherwise might not have been included.

Many H.A.S. members initially filled out forms for me, documenting their Hurst titles, formats and dust jackets, making my facts about what Hurst produced much more complete. And how could I not mention Jim Towe's computer wizardry and publishing expertise, which enabled me to produce a credible product? In addition, there are many individuals, H.A.S. members and others, who helped me immensely as well, and who are acknowledged in the book. Without the help, advice and counsel of all these people there would be no new Hurst reference book.

I would be totally remiss if I didn't mention Thomas Hurst's two great-granddaughters, who have been involved with Hurst genealogy for many years. They made themselves available to me from the start, provided extensive material and graciously answered all my questions. My son Scott found this treasured resource using his own genealogical skills and paved the way for me to interact with them.

Ann and I literally spent days walking where Mr. Hurst and his family walked in Brooklyn near his homes; in Manhattan at the doorway of his businesses; at the top of a Shawangunk Mountain in Eastern New York, where he owned an entire lake and summer home; in Kearny, N.J. (where several of his children were born); and among gravestones at the Hurst burial plots in the New Jersey Bayview New York Bay Cemetery. Such research has enabled me to not only gently touch Mr. Hurst's life, but also tie it to his activities of over two decades of Horatio Alger book production. I've tried to interrelate his personal and business lives and expand considerably on what was previously known about him.

I hope when the book is released in May, members will take pride that their Society was the forum which provided me an opportunity to obtain more than enough information to create a book which documents the publication pattern of the Hurst/Alger books we collect today.

Perhaps this book will make searching for Alger books a little more interesting and fun for collectors. That is what I think Bob Routhier and others of us envisioned several years ago in Carson City.

Sincerely,
Brad Chase (PF-412)
6 Sandpiper Road
Enfield, CT 06082

Editor's note: The book, including an image of the dust jacket, will be reviewed in the March-April Newsboy.

MEMBERSHIP

New member

Frances Rodgers (PF-1119)

475 N. Main St., #2

Ashland, OR 97520

(541) 708-

0501

E-mail: pepperdust@me.com

Francis is the designer of the Horatio Alger Society's new website, which was launched last August, and she is continuing to provide enhancements

and updates. Frances, formerly a resident of Grass Valley, Calif., has moved to Ashland, Oregon with her husband, Matt, where she attends Southern Oregon University.

Change of address

Chris DeHaan (PF-773)

3915 9th St.

Wayland, MI 49348

E-mail: chris.dehaan@yahoo.com

Life and death of a used bookstore

By Mary Ann Nyberg (PF-861)

It seems all book collectors, at one time or another, have thought "I'd love to have a used bookstore."

When the insurance company I worked for closed the Omaha office, and a used bookstore was for sale, I decided to make the dream a reality.

Ten years ago, when I purchased the store, there were 10 used bookstores scattered through this town and its bedroom communities. No one got rich, but everyone made a living. Today, there is only one used bookstore in town.

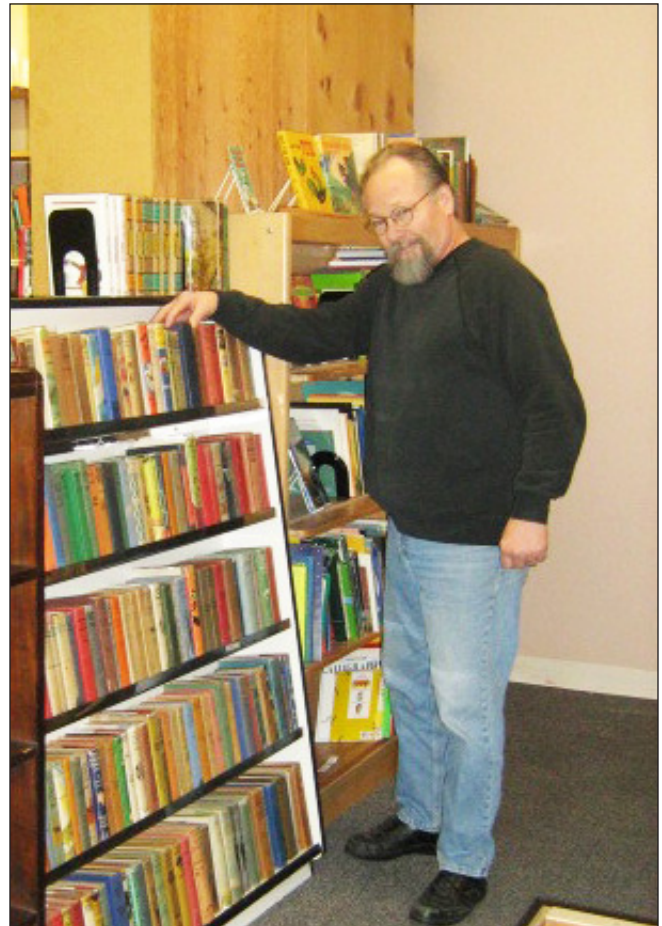
Ten years ago, every day was an adventure, with people bringing in books for sale; a lot of junk was brought in and turned away, but there were also some wonderful rare items, books from the 1700s, a medieval emblem book, signed books, juvenile books in dust jackets (hooray!). People came and went all day long, selling, buying, trading, visiting, joking, and talking books. There were still several regular book scouts who scoured the town and came in several times a month with the books they found. One found the original first edition of the full Bible in Lakota Sioux — he found it at a yard sale for \$5.00.

Bart and I looked forward to going to work — it wasn't work, it was play! On our days off, we visited the other used bookstores in town. We relocated our store, Friendly Used Books, from the far west side of Omaha closer to downtown and nearer to our home.

Then, times began to change. I can't remember the last time I saw a book scout come in — it's been several years. Customers began to become fewer, and fewer "good books," or any books for that matter, were brought in for sale. The few folks who did bring in books had looked them up on the Internet (frequently getting the editions and conditions wrong) and wanted 100 percent of the retail price.

Our sales dropped and then dropped more. Any good books we had sold on the Internet, not in the store. The Internet went from 30 percent to over 50 percent of the business. Also, we noticed that many of our higher-priced items were selling overseas. A 23-volume set of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, all first editions in dust wrapper, sold to Japan. The buyer paid over \$200 in postage, and still was very happy.

Last year I saw a long-time regular customer on the street, who had normally purchased whole bags of



Bart Nyberg (PF-879) stands next to a case of series books during this winter's closing sale at Friendly Used Books, which he and his wife Mary Ann owned in Omaha, Nebraska.

Photo by Mary Ann Nyberg

books, and who I had not seen in a long time. "Chris!" I said, "where have you been?" "Oh," he said, "I bought a Kindle."

Two months ago a lady who appeared to be in her late 80s came in with her daughter. The elderly lady was too old to drive, so she was along for the ride. The daughter spent 50 cents on a paperback and asked her mother if she wanted to look for any books. "Oh, no" said the little white-haired lady in a quavering voice. "I've got my Kindle."

It was time to quit.

We had a series of sales, 50 percent off, then 75 percent off, then a bag sale for \$10, then two bags for \$10. People flocked in. The last few days, we simply put up a sign "Free books to good homes." Our hope was that we could empty the store in a few weeks. Only 72 hours later, the store was empty of books, as the hordes came streaming in with boxes and bags. One woman

(Continued on Page 8)



Mary Ann Nyberg relaxes next to her Horatio Alger collection after recently closing her used bookstore in Omaha, Nebraska.

Photo by Bart Nyberg

Life and death of a used bookstore

(Continued from Page 7)

thanked us with tears in her eyes for doing this, rather than throwing the books away. Folks asked us repeatedly where they could go now to find the used books they liked to read — we had no answer. (The remaining store in Omaha is mostly rare and antiquarian scholarly books).

“But what will we do?” one woman asked.

Good question.

We did bring our more unusual books home, along with several bookcases. We will continue our online sales, listing books on ABEbooks and Biblio. Our time is now free to search for books at flea markets and estate sales, places where we have been successful in the past.

We are looking forward to our retirement!

Meanwhile ... in Illinois, it's the same story

By William R. Gowen (PF-706)

To say the retail book business is ailing — in particular the used-book business — is an understatement.

Borders recently closed its doors nationwide, and Barnes & Noble is surviving mainly because it has embraced the digital world with its Nook e-reader. Used bookstores, as typified by Mary Ann and Bart Nyberg recently closing their storefront operation, are a vanishing breed. The Nybergs will continue as Internet dealers, as are numerous owners of former walk-in stores.

The Chicago area has not in recent years been a good place for used bookstores. Most of the remaining ones are academically oriented, such as Powell's large store adjacent to the University of Chicago. Once, the near-north suburb of Evanston, home to Northwestern University, had eight or ten very good used bookstores offering regular hours. Now, most are gone.

One of the final holdouts was **Bookman's Alley**, located, as its name implies, in a back alley just off Evanston's main commercial street (Sherman Avenue). But now, the store's 83-year-old owner, Roger Carlson, has decided at his wife's urging to retire. He plans to vacate his store by the end of March.

“It was just time,” said Carlson, who started selling used books in the late 1970s from his Deerfield home in the north suburbs, then opened Bookman's Alley in late 1979. Now, due to health issues (he suffered a broken leg a little over a year ago and missed additional time in the store last summer), the former magazine advertis-



Legendary Bookman's Alley in Evanston, Illinois, is about to end its 32-year run.

Photo

ing salesman (he commuted to Chicago every day for decades) is calling a halt to his second career.

The store is one of the most unique this collector has ever visited. All on one floor, it consists of five or six inter-connected rooms which take the browser on a winding path through bibliophilic history.

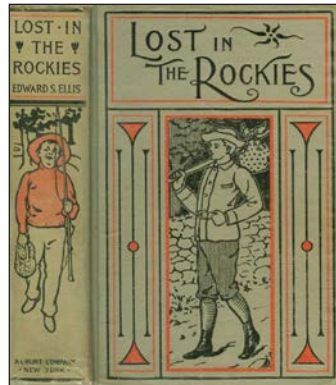
Instead of just setting up a series of bookshelves, Carlson displayed vintage memorabilia throughout the store, related by subject to his books — a miniature saluting cannon in the military section, a baseball glove tucked among the sports books, an inflated airship model in the aviation section, and so forth. There are easy chairs and couches here and there where you can sit and read, and

President's column

(Continued from Page 2)

lished well-known authors, but this was an interesting acquisition. Now, if I could only find *Silas*.

I also recently acquired a special format of *Lost in the Rockies* by Edward Ellis. The format is listed as the Fisher Boy Hybrid format in Brad Chase's *Horatio Alger Books Published by A. L. Burt*. It combines the cover of the



Red Triangle format with the spine of the Fisher Boy format (shown at right). Both Brad Chase and Denis Rogers, Ellis researcher and bibliographer, make reference to this format. Rogers references *Lost in the Rockies*, while Chase references *Bernard Brook's Adventures* by Alger. I know of one other title in this format. It is *The Train Boy* and it was part of the Debbie Wiggins consignment auction in 2007. I was not able to purchase it, but I can confirm that it exists. The binding seems deluxe when compared to the Red Triangle and Fisher Boy formats and is similar in quality to the Wait and Win format. There are no first editions by Alger or Ellis in this format, but it is rather unique and quite scarce.

I have had a couple of e-mails from members regarding the Horatio Alger Society website. Due to hosting issues that we were only partially able to overcome, we had to change the URL of the website. The new URL is www.horatioalgersociety.net. At this time, we are unable to redirect the old URL to the new one. We regret the angst this may have caused, but hope you will check out the new website as we continue to add new content.

I have now authored the President's Column for three years and the next issue will be my last hurrah for quite a while. I have tried to make these columns interesting, informational, and personal without being chatty. I have

discussed topics related to Alger and his contemporaries and also current issues related to books and book collecting. I have had somewhat frequent dialogue from a couple of you who read the column and it has led to good discussion and exchange of ideas. However, we do not seem to receive many communiqués regarding any of the content in **Newsboy**. We have updated our website and now have a Facebook page. Please let us know your thoughts regarding our various media channels; what do you like and what can we change? Also, I am sure many of you have acquired special items for your library. Why not send us an image and some details so we can publish it in **Newsboy**? Or, you can post it to the Horatio Alger Society Facebook page. I am not aware of any surveys being performed by the H.A.S.. However, I am involved with a few additional organizations and we regularly perform surveys. I am not really going to send out a survey, but I would like to challenge you to provide us feedback on the following questions.

▫ What articles have you found the most and the least interesting over the past year?

▫ What additional topics would you like to see in **Newsboy**?

▫ What additional content would make the H.A.S. website more attractive to you?

▫ What would you see as the best use of the H.A.S. Facebook page?

While I do not expect a deluge of communiqués, I look forward to your comments regarding the above questions or any other related topic.

January 13 was the 180th anniversary of Horatio Alger's birth. Can you imagine what he would think of the world today? Happy Birthday, Horatio! Wendy, Sofia, Channing, and I are looking forward to "Dash to DeKalb III." We have thoroughly enjoyed ourselves at previous conventions and we hope to see you there.

Your Partic'lar Friend,
Bob Sipes (PF-1067)
1004 School St.
Shelbyville, IN 46176
Phone: (317) 398-0754
E-mail: doogie@lightbound.

one room even houses a 19th-century cast iron printing press and typesets.

Carlson always displayed a nice selection of about 150 to 200 late 19th and early 20th century children's series books, like the rest of his inventory reasonably priced. Recently, I purchased a Berkeley Series edition of *From Farm Boy to Senator* for \$12, and over the years bought some nice Stratmeyers and Optics.

"Once you walk in the door, you're hooked," Northwestern University history professor Harry Binford told

the **Chicago Tribune** in a recent article about the pending demise of Bookman's Alley. "The store just goes on and on, and it's all different. Every room is visually and sensually something different."

You can sense that Carlson really doesn't want to retire, but deep down, knows it is the right decision.

"I'm satisfied that some of the arguments used by my spouse and other family members are probably pretty legit," he said in the **Chicago Tribune** article. "They have a point stronger than mine."

Walter P. Eaton:

Drama critic, essayist and author of books for boys

By William R. Gowen (PF-706)

Born Aug. 24, 1878, in Malden, Massachusetts, Walter Prichard Eaton enjoyed multiple careers as a theater critic and teacher of the dramatic arts, and as an author of nearly three dozen books and numerous additional essays and magazine articles.

Among collectors of boys' books, he is best known as the author of the 11-volume **Boy Scout Series**, published between 1912 and 1939, a series that took stories with a Boys Scouts of America theme in interesting new directions.

Before we delve into the **Boy Scout Series** in more detail, let's take a look at Eaton the man.

He was the son of Warren Everett Eaton, a schoolmaster, and Mary Goodwin

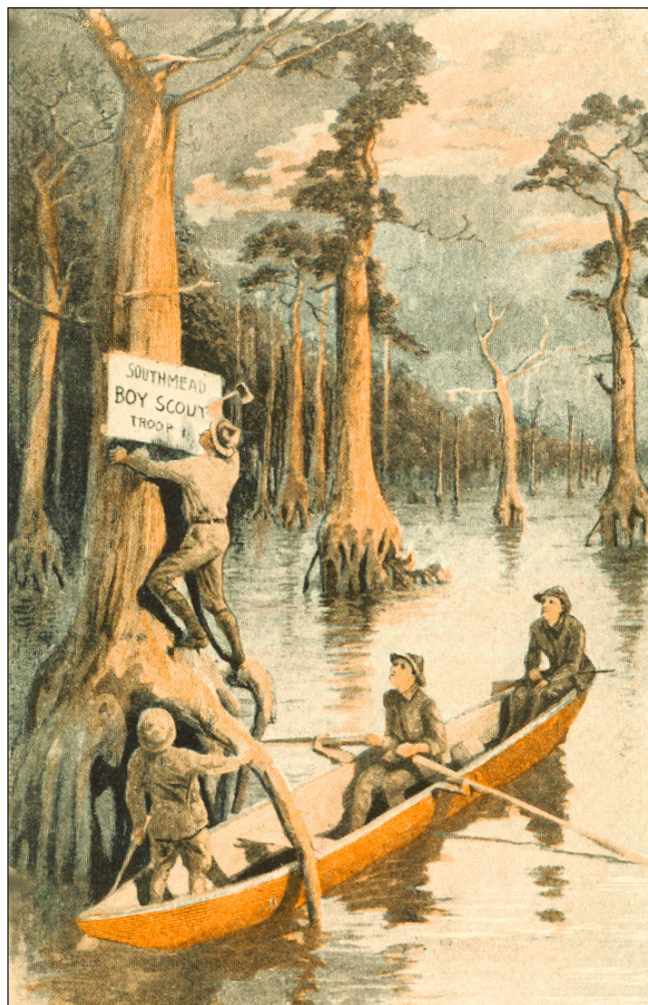
(Prichard) Eaton. His interest and abiding love of the theater were kindled during his youth when he attended performances by such noted actors of the day as Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, and Richard Mansfield. While living in Reading, Massachusetts, the young Eaton first displayed his interest in writing by printing his own newspaper (shades of Edward Stratemeyer!) when he was thirteen. He



**Walter Prichard Eaton
(1878-1957)**

enjoyed English (and journalism, in particular), attending prep school at Phillips Andover Academy before entering Harvard College in 1896 and graduated in 1900 with an A.B. degree (he later received his Master's of Fine Arts from Yale). While at Harvard, Eaton began working as a newspaper reporter with the **Boston Journal** in 1900. In 1902, the **New York Tribune** hired him as an assistant drama critic. He left the **Tribune** in 1907 to take a job as drama critic of the **New York Sun**, also syndicating his Broadway reviews to other papers around the country as a correspondent.

This article was presented as a paper at the 40th annual Popular Culture Association conference in St. Louis, Missouri on April 3, 2010, and at the 2010 Horatio Alger Society convention in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.



Boy Scouts in the Dismal Swamp — frontispiece

Illustration by Charles Copeland

At this point, Eaton's integrity as a journalist was made readily clear when the **Sun** let him go barely a year later. What happened? It appears Eaton was not afraid to write a negative review when he felt a performance was not worthy, and pressure upon the newspaper's management from such theater impresarios as the Shubert family, along with such Broadway producers Marc Klaw and Abraham Erlanger led to his firing.

In those days, newspaper reporters earned a pittance in salary, and arts critics, in particular, had a habit of being "in the pockets," so to speak, of the institutions about which they wrote, in order to preserve their jobs. The history of the Broadway theater is littered with stories of shows closing within a week or a month after being panned by the press (it still happens today). With that much at stake, producers, right up to the era of David Merrick and beyond, depend on good notices in order for a show to survive with the public.

Eaton's firing from the **Sun** wasn't for lack of ability.

According to legendary **New York Times** drama critic Brooks Atkinson, "Walter Eaton knew more about the art of the theater than most playwrights, actors and producers."

Eaton kept his hand in theater journalism by serving as associate editor of the periodical **The Drama** from 1919 until 1931, and throughout the 1920s he contributed articles on the theater to many other periodicals.

Early on, Eaton turned to writing books and essays. His first book, an adult story titled *The Runaway Place*, was issued by Henry Holt in 1909. Co-authored with Elise Morris Underhill (whom he married in 1910), it signaled the beginning of a literary career spanning over three decades. In addition to theater books such as *The Actor's Heritage* (1924, a theatrical history) and *The Theatre Guild: The First Ten Years* (1929), he wrote several plays, along with nonfiction books on nature and natural history subjects and adult fiction, including *The Idyl of Twin Fires* (1915).

Eaton also wrote a collection of verse, *Echoes and Realities*, in 1918. Late in his career, W.A. Wilde of Boston, one of his main publishers, came out with a pair of books that were collections of essays on nature and the outdoors which Eaton had written for such magazines as **Atlantic Monthly**, **Harper's Magazine** and **The American Mercury**. They were titled *New England Vista* (1930) and *On Yankee Hilltops* (1933).

One of Eaton's most unique books was *The Man Who Found Christmas*, copyrighted by McBride, Nast and Company in 1913 and published by Wilde in 1927. It is a brief, 62-page story of a family's newfound faith, written with a Dickensian touch. It could almost serve as a script for a one-act play.

Incidentally, the previously mentioned *The Idyl of Twin Fires* was named after Twin Fires, Eaton's country home in Sheffield, Massachusetts, in his beloved Berkshire Mountains on the Housatonic River. His other books collecting essays on New England scenic and nature topics included *Barn Doors and Byways* (1913), *Green Trails and Upland Pastures* (1917), *Skyline Camps* (1922) and *Wild Gardens of New England* (1936).

In addition to the **Boy Scout Series**, he authored

several fiction books for younger children, including *The Adventures of the Duck Family* (1932) and *The Cow that Lived in a House* (1934). As noted, he retained his love for the theater by co-writing in 1922 a full-length play titled "Queen Victoria." He also wrote several one-act plays, including "Grandfather's Chair" (1930), "Grandma — Old Style" (1932) and "The Purple Doorknob" (1934).

By 1920, Eaton, like most authors, realized he needed a "real job," so he took up a teaching position at Columbia University in New York, staying until 1923. He then moved on to teach at the Cambridge (Mass.) School of Drama and was a lecturer on drama at the University of Miami in Florida.

His longest tenure as a teacher came at the George Pierce Baker School of the Fine Arts at Yale University, where he joined the faculty in 1933, and he held a professorship there from 1936 until retiring in 1947 and becoming Professor Emeritus. In 1934, Eaton resigned his position on the jury for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama in protest over its restrictive ground rules that limited the jury's recommendations to plays about American life.

During his latter teaching career, Eaton also held a very strong view of the Hollywood film industry and what he perceived as its negative impact on American legitimate theater. We'll look at this topic later.

Following retirement, Eaton kept his hand in education, and from 1948 to 1950 served as a lecturer on drama at the University of North Carolina.

He also taught drama at Florida's Rollins College in 1952, as well as a stint as a summer lecturer at Middlebury College in Vermont. He set up a winter home near the North Carolina campus in Chapel Hill, and it was there that he suddenly died of a suspected brain hemorrhage on February 26, 1957 at age 78.

The Boy Scout Series (W.A. Wilde, 1912-1939)

It is interesting to note that the eleven titles in the **Boy Scout Series** appear over a 28-year span, from 1912 to 1939, covering the heart of Eaton's writing career. The first five titles appeared annually, then at two or longer-year intervals until the final title, *Boy Scouts in Death Valley*,

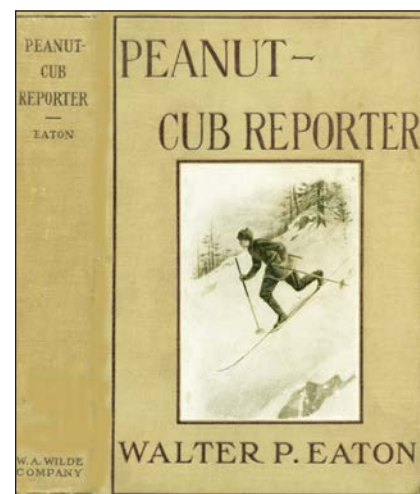
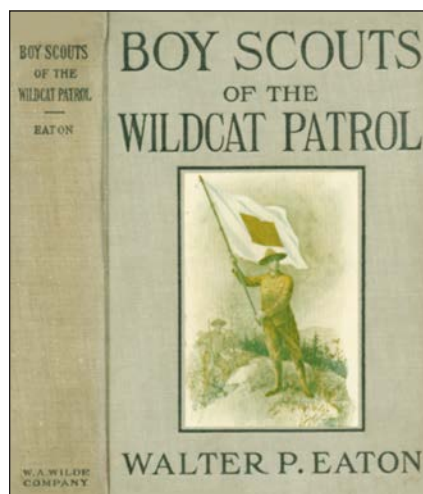
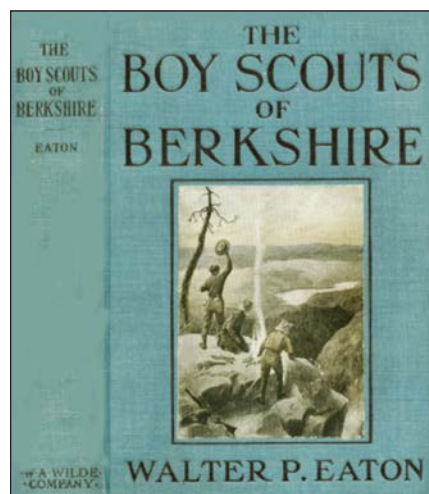
(Continued on Page 12)

Walter Prichard Eaton

**Author
Naturalist
Playwright**

is known the country over for the sincerity of his authorship. He paints nature in all its truth and beauty. His criticisms of the stage always ring true and forceful and, good scout that he is, his Boy Scout stories are based on a deep and abiding interest in and knowledge of the *real* boy. He has mingled with boys in their work and their play. He has been their teacher and guide and, best of all, their friend when true friendship meant everything. A lover of the manly boy, he himself is beloved by thousands.

W. A. WILDE COMPANY
BOSTON
CHICAGO



Walter P. Eaton

(Continued from Page 11)

came following a seven-year pause from the previous title, *Boy Scouts at the Grand Canyon*.

Appropriately, the first title is *The Boy Scouts of Berkshire*, obviously a familiar locale to Eaton. In his foreword, Eaton sets the tone for the entire series:

This is a book for scouts, and for boys who want to be scouts. It is not a tale of thrilling adventure in strange lands, because it is the story of a scout patrol right at home, in the kind of an American town you and I live in. But these scouts of the Chipmunk Patrol had a pretty good time just the same, and sometimes a pretty exciting one. If you would like to know how they had it, if you would like to hear what boy scouting meant to them, what they learned in camp and on the long hike, what games they played, what adventures befell them, from the days when, as tenderfeet of twelve, in short trousers, they joined the troop, till they grew to football size and merit badges, then the author hopes you'll read his book. If you are a scout already, he is willing to wager there aren't so many first-class scouts in your patrol as there are in this story; but that is not because you aren't so smart as the scouts of Berkshire, but because you haven't tried so hard, or paid so much attention to business. You can do everything the boys in this book did, if you take a hitch in your belt and get down to the job.

Like most traditional series of the period, these stories follow the same central cast, with new characters entering

here and there as the boys age and the series progresses. Included at the start are Robert Everts, an older boy of 14 in the eight-man Chipmunk Patrol of the Southmead Boy Scouts. The scoutmaster is Mr. Roberts, and the younger group, called the "Crow Patrol," was comprised of the members 11 or 12 years of age.

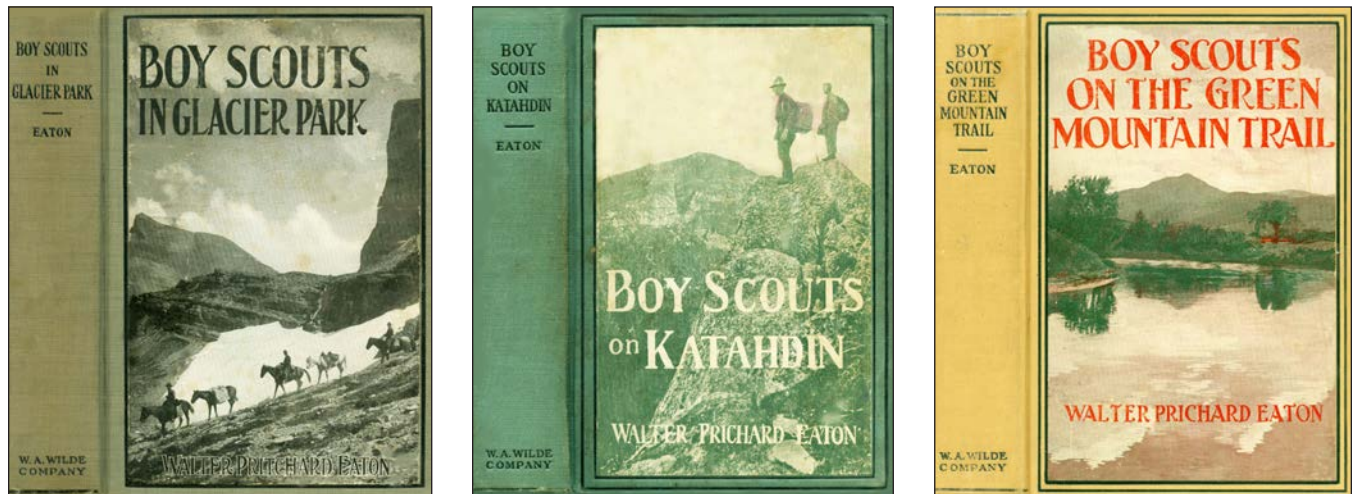
Bobbie Morrison, the patrol's smallest member in terms of stature, is appropriately nicknamed "Peanut," a possible take on P.K. Fitzhugh's Pee-Wee Harris. Other patrol mates include Arthur Bruce ("slow of speech"), blond-haired Willie Walker (nicknamed "Willie Talker"), Dennis O'Brien and Lou Merritt (heavy-set, sloppily dressed).

The story covers the founding of the Chipmunk Patrol, and the various scouting activities, including working toward merit badges in swimming, hiking and first aid, the latter in rescuing victims from a train crash and fire, and finally, as they go to work in a "sanitary crusade," where they clean up the "filthy beyond words" Southmead River, long a repository for sewage deposited by some half dozen Western Massachusetts towns.

Anyway, this lively story sets the reader on to 10 more adventures, and Eaton, banking on his love of nature, takes his young heroes throughout New England as well as to national and state parks throughout the United States.

In Volume 2, they travel to the Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia and, in Volume 3, to the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Then as members of the Wildcat Patrol in Volume 4, we find that Everts is already at Harvard and other members of the patrol are getting ready for college as well. "Peanut" Morrison has ascended to the role of scoutmaster.

In the next volume, "Peanut" Morrison tries his hand at journalism as a reporter for the **Hampton Herald**. Eaton dedicates the book "To the members



of The Fourth Estate who labor with an often under-appreciated devotion to give us the news to keep our Institutions Free."

"Peanut" even gets to work as a reporter in New York City and uncovers a major human-interest story.

Two years later, two of the scouts visit Glacier Park in the Rocky Mountains, which Eaton describes as "one of the most beautiful of our national parks." Four years later, they go to the Cascade Mountains and Crater Lake National Park. In these later books in the series with their trips to national and state parks, the stories are now illustrated with actual photographs of the locations. Also in these later stories, new characters are introduced to Mr. Rogers' Southmead boy scout troop.

It's back to New England in Volumes 8 and 9 in the series, when the troop scales Maine's highest peak, Mount Katahdin, and then they go to Vermont to hike the Green Mountain Trail, a key link in the historic Appalachian Trail. Stops include Smuggler's Notch, Mount Mansfield, Breadloaf Mountain and Camel's Hump.

The final two books take the boys back to the Far West, where they hike the trails in the Grand Canyon and Death Valley. Again, new patrol members are introduced, as these books were published in the 1930s. For collectors, *Boy Scouts in Death Valley*, the final title, is particularly scarce, common for most series nearing the end of the trail, so to speak. The Great Depression had obviously taken its toll on Eaton's **Boy Scout Series** by 1939.

I have no evidence that Eaton traveled to the Grand Canyon or Death Valley to research those books as he had for the various New England locales. But the stories show no less realism, and the series continues its high quality right to the end. Eaton was in his early 60s when the final book was published by W.A. Wilde.

Eaton challenges Hollywood

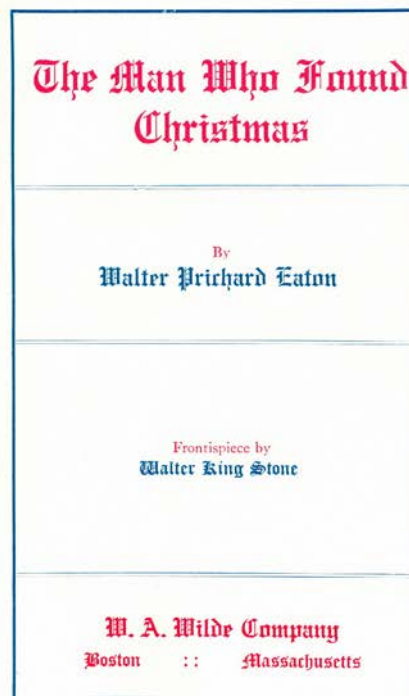
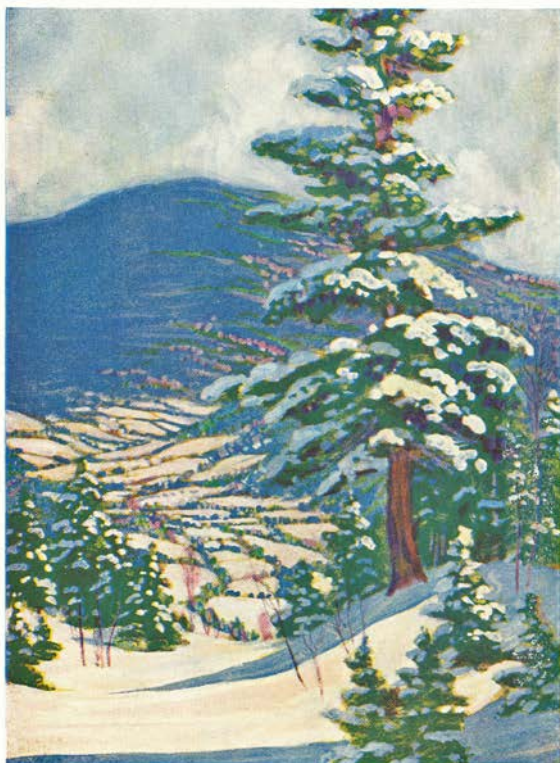
I bring this article to a close by revealing Eaton's low opinion of the American movie industry. Basically, he felt that acting belonged on the stage in front of a live audience, in which dialog lines for the full two or three hours must be memorized. In the movies, all an actor need to memorize is a particular scene, the director yells "cut!" the stage is re-set and it's on to another two- or five-minute scene or camera setup. Eaton believed this was "lazy acting." In 1935, during the fourth National Theatre Conference held at Yale, this is what Eaton said in calling movies "a parasitic art" by stealing the best working actors away from the stage and onto the Hollywood back lot:

"You cannot learn to write plays and dramatic dialog, save by long practice before audiences," he said. "You cannot learn to act by two-minute appearances before a microphone and camera, but only by long practice before audiences. Yet the movies grab off young players and young dramatists as soon as they have had just enough practice to indicate the possession of some talent. This is the end of their artistic growth in nearly all cases. Only the few who resist the lure of gold in them that Hollywood Hills develop to important stature."

So, unlike the Henry Fondas, Cary Grants and Jimmy Stewarts of yesteryear who grew up on the stage, fewer and fewer of today's leading screen actors say they get more satisfaction from returning to the theater to work before an audience. But when an actor can now demand up to \$20 million per picture, why bother to play Broadway or some summer-stock house?

In conclusion, his wide-ranging career demonstrated

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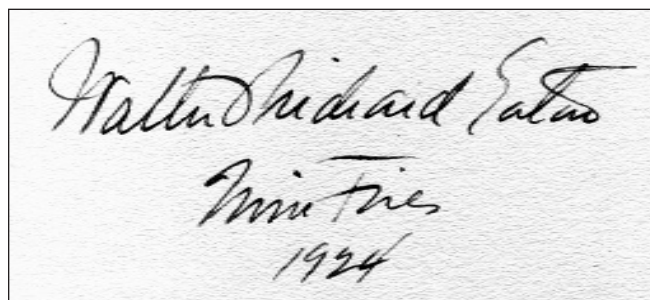


The Man Who Found Christmas, first published in 1913, is a brief story written with a Dickensian touch.

Walter P. Eaton

(Continued from Page 13)

that Walter P. Eaton was indeed a Renaissance man, well ahead of his time, and his **Boy Scout Series** stands as one small shining beacon among his accomplishments as a critic, author and educator.



This signature was written at Eaton's Twin Fires summer estate in Sheffield, Massachusetts.

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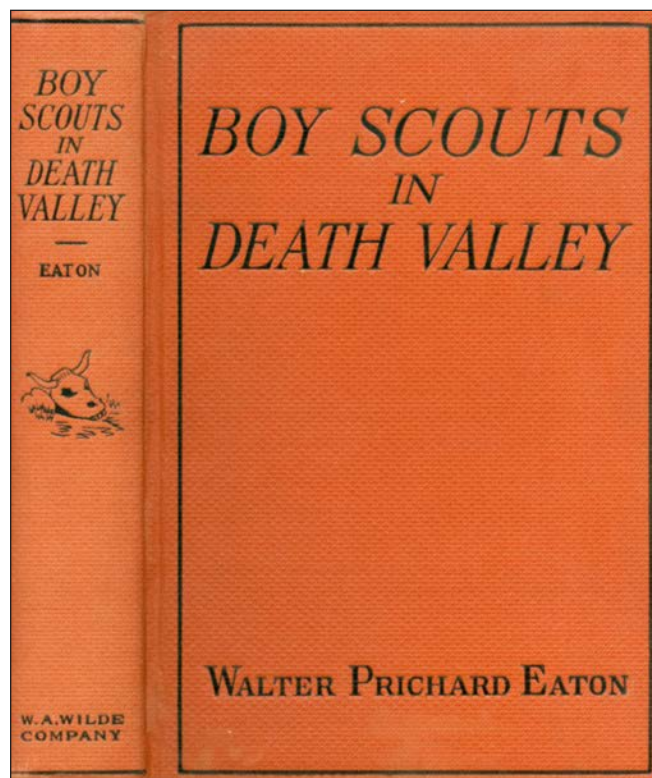
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- 2. Boy Scouts in the Dismal Swamp**
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- 4. Boy Scouts of the Wildcat Patrol**
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- 5. Peanut — Cub Reporter**
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- 7. Boy Scouts at Crater Lake**
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- 8. Boy Scouts on Katahdin**
(Illustrated with photographs)
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- 9. Boy Scouts on the Green Mountain Trail**
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- 10. Boy Scouts at the Grand Canyon**
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- 11. Boy Scouts in Death Valley**
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(Continued on Page 16)

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Editor's note: *Walter Prichard Eaton also wrote numerous articles and critical essays for magazines and newspapers throughout his career.*