



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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MARCH-APRIL 2024

NUMBER 2

Letters from Horatio – Part 5;

or, Alger writes to his godson

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Clayton Alger Fairbanks, at age two in 1892.
Godson of Horatio Alger, Jr.

‘The Fredericksburg Fourth’

- *Registration form*
- *Updated schedule of events*
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The American Union: Summer 1852 to Spring 1854

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President's column

By the time you receive this issue of **Newsboy**, the 2024 convention will be only a few weeks away. I do hope as many of you as possible will plan to be there! Jack Bales has put together what looks like a spectacular program. We even expect that the interesting book panel will include Michael Dirda, author, essayist, and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the **Washington Post**, where he writes for Book World. Mike Hill, about whom Jack wrote in the January-February issue of **Newsboy**, will be with us. I look forward to greeting a University of Mary Washington History and American Studies professor who I once taught at Swarthmore; he is also giving a talk. And there is even a new restaurant for Friday night that several devoted H.A.S. members from Virginia vetted alongside Jack — it promises some *serious* southern cooking (yum).

I loved visiting Belmont, home and studio to the late 19th and early 20th century artist Gari Melchers in 2022, even though it was my first introduction to Melchers' work. The 2023 downtown trolley ride was also lots of fun, with a driver who was quite a history buff. There are still plenty of interesting places in the Fredericksburg area to explore. I look forward to the Chatham Manor tour Jack has arranged. Civil War buffs can also visit several important battlefields nearby, and Stonewall Jackson's place of death (Guinea, Va.). As an aside: most schools in Virginia named after Stonewall Jackson have been renamed; I found one elementary school under that name still in existence in Bristol, where the Virginia/Tennessee border runs down the central street. I grew up with Stonewall Jackson Elementary School nearby, but it closed many years ago.

For those of you who booked the hotel early, before the Hampton Inn Fredericksburg-South was sold, you may want to confirm your reservations (the confirmation number I got when I booked is no longer recognized, but I have been assured my reservation is valid). The phone number there is (540) 898-5000, and Chris Jones is still our contact.

Since returning from a great nature-oriented trip to Costa Rica, I presented a paper on "The Evanescent Institutions of Popular Constitutionalism" at a small law conference in Baltimore (I took three Swarthmore students with me), and I have conferences in Chicago and in Newport, Rhode Island, coming up in April; each involves writing a separate presentation. It also looks

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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 books, pulps and dime novels.

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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," to **Newsboy** editor William R. Gowen (PF-706) at 23726 N. Overhill Dr., Lake Zurich, IL 60047.

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 those free "Alger for sale" ads to the editor at the above address, where you can also send "Letters to the Editor" by regular mail or by e-mail to hasnewsboy@aol.com.

Letters from Horatio – Part 5;

or, Alger writes to his godson

By Robert E. Kasper (PF-327)

It has been estimated that Horatio Alger, Jr. wrote approximately 30 letters every week during his literary career, although fewer than 200 are known today.¹ For the most part, Alger's letters fall neatly into two categories: responding to young readers for an autograph or pleading with his publishers for a royalty advance. There are, however, a few extant letters where Alger discusses family issues regarding himself and others. This article will focus on three of them addressed to the same person.

* * *

Horatio Alger, Jr., the oldest of five children, was born on January 13, 1832, in the town of Chelsea, Massachusetts (the town was later renamed Revere in 1871 after Revolutionary War patriot Paul Revere). At the time, Horatio Alger, Sr. was just two years into his first ministry at the First Congregational Church and Society in Chelsea, having been ordained on September 2, 1829.²

After having four more children with his wife, Olive Augusta Fenno, Alger, Sr. dutifully toiled away at his ministerial responsibilities, but found it increasingly difficult to support his large family on his salary alone. In order to supplement his income during this period, he tried various other vocations, including farming, land speculation, state assembly legislator and serving as the first postmaster for Chelsea. But, in the spring of 1844, everything came crashing down when Alger, Sr. was forced into bankruptcy after failing to keep his debtors at bay. On April 3, 1844, he tendered his resignation to the First Congregational Church and it was accepted the next day.³

A few months later, Alger, Sr. moved his family to Marlborough, Massachusetts, where he was accepted as supply-minister at the Second Congregational

Society of Marlborough. His unremarkable tenure at this church lasted 14 years until his resignation in April 1859.⁴

After a few months of supplying neighboring vacant pulpits, Alger moved his family once again to his third, and final church, the First Unitarian Parish, located in South Natick, Massachusetts, also known as the Eliot Church. At this point in time, his financial situation appeared to stabilize. A small inheritance from his father, James Alger, allowed him

to purchase a home in South Natick, and his two eldest sons (Horatio, Jr. and James) were on their own, thereby reducing his household expenditures.

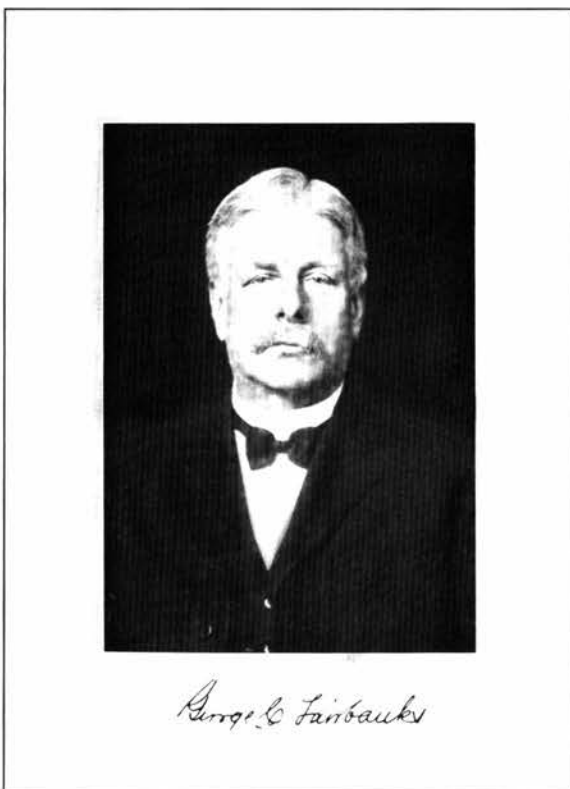
During his time in South Natick, Alger, Sr. was one of the founders of the South Natick Historical and Natural History Society and served as its president from its formation in 1870 until his death in 1881. He was also a corresponding member of the New England Historic Genealogical Society.⁵ He taught Sunday school and sat on various school committees even after he resigned from his final ministry in April 1874.

Another prominent local resident, George Chandler Fairbanks (see Example 1, page 3), lived and worked a few miles away in the town of Natick. Born in 1852 to John

Brooks Fairbanks and Caroline Cummings, George was educated locally and at the age of 13 was appointed an assistant to his father, then postmaster, and continued in that capacity for five years. Later, John Fairbanks founded J. B. Fairbanks & Son in 1865, a successful bookseller, stationer and news dealer located at 16 Main Street in Natick.

A business publication wrote of the establishment that "the stock carried is very large and well varied. It embraces all the standard works of literature, popular and recent works of fiction, current periodicals, and newspapers, plain and fancy stationery of every

(Continued on Page 7)



Example 1: George Chandler Fairbanks

Editor's notebook

We are in the home stretch, with "The Fredericksburg Fourth" just a few weeks away, so it's time to make a final few reminders for those planning to attend — and please show up — you won't be disappointed!

- At the top of the to-do list is your hotel reservation. The Hampton Inn & Suites – South is again offering the unbelievably low nightly room rate of \$89 (plus tax). However, the deadline is **April 16** to ensure this special rate. Just phone the Hampton Inn's front desk with credit card at the ready at (540) 898-5000. State you are with the Horatio Alger Society for their annual convention May 2 (Thursday) through May 5 (our Sunday morning departure). If you want to arrive a day or so early, just let them know and the rate will be honored.

I will be checking in on Wednesday afternoon (May 1) so as to attend host Jack Bales' informal get-together at his home that evening, with great refreshments included.

- If you haven't mailed in your registration form (enclosed), do it today, along with your check for \$130. Also on the form, there is a place to select your choice of box lunch for Friday's session at the hotel. If you have any questions, just contact Jack — his email address and phone are listed on the form.

- In an important, related topic, H.A.S. Treasurer Rob Kasper has requested that if you find a dues renewal envelope with this issue (or were notified in recent issues) please send in your money

immediately, so it reaches him prior to the end of the month. The Horatio Alger Society's fiscal year wraps up on April 30, and Rob needs to close out the books for his annual financial report, presented to the Board of Directors and membership in attendance for ratification. The report will be published in the May-June **Newsboy**.

As I have emphasized in recent **Newsboy** issues, our annual auction is our major fundraiser aside from



H.A.S. President Carol Nackenoff walks on a hanging bridge during her recent vacation to Costa Rica.

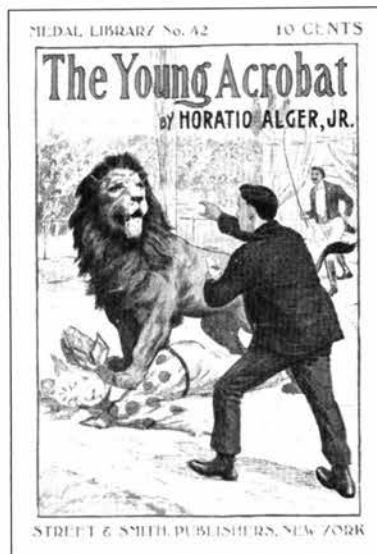
President's column

(Continued from Page 2)

increasingly as if I will be teaching an elections course or two this fall, one being a Swarthmore Lifelong Learning class on Zoom, so I have a lot of new Political Science scholarship on parties, elections, polling, public opinion, public policy, polarization, and the fate of American democracy to digest.

My latest Alger acquisition is something I can take no credit for finding myself. Rob Kasper knew I was interested in finding one, and he delivered. It is a first edition (March 1888) paperback *Young Acrobat* from Munsey's Popular Series for Boys and Girls, No. 8. I'm not sure what gems and other surprises the 2024 convention auction will hold, but for me, seeing you again is a gem in itself.

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



membership dues. Please bring books with you or mail or UPS them to Jack Bales right away, so they reach him in time. The image on this page of a nice copy of the **Medal Library** edition of *The Young Acrobat* is one of my donations for the auction. This cover image is stunning in color; you would be proud to add it to your collection. You can consign or donate as you wish. Obviously, the latter is of greater benefit to the Society.

See you in Fredericksburg!

'The Fredericksburg Fourth'

Book collecting panel set for Friday morning

By Jack Bales, PF-258
Convention Host

Last fall I was emailing Carol Nackenoff and Scott Chase about a proposed panel discussion on book collecting for the 2024 convention. In one of his thoughtful emails, Scott proposed the excellent title, "Book Collecting: Then (Before the Internet), Now, and in the Future." The participants in this event will be Porter Blakemore, Michael Dirda, Keith Thompson, and Peter Walther. It will be moderated by Jeff Looney.

Porter Blakemore is a retired professor of history at the University of Mary Washington. He taught classes in military history, European diplomatic history, the history of Germany, and two seminars, "Nazi Germany" and "The Great War." Porter took students to Europe on 22 occasions, with 21 of them for his popular class, "European Capitals." He and I have talked about books and book collecting for many years, and I have seen his extensive library. Besides his fine assortment of classic history volumes, I recall his books by John D. MacDonald (author of the Travis McGee series), C. S. Forester and a rare signed 1948 book by Ansel Adams, with nice dust jacket, which he found for a nominal cost in a used bookstore.

Past Horatio Alger Society President Jeff Looney is editor of *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*. An article in the **Washington Post**, published in 2013, observes that "from his office down the hill from Monticello, Jefferson's estate near Charlottesville, Virginia, Looney wrestles with letters full of wit, hypocrisy and humanity.... When Looney is done, he wants readers hundreds of years from now to have 'pretty close to the ultimate tool kit' for understanding Jefferson." I've had several opportunities to view Jeff's fine collection of series

books—many with gorgeous dust jackets. His Ralph Henry Barbour collection is indeed staggering, as are his books by Stephen W. Meader and Percy Keese Fitzhugh.

During one of the conventions I hosted, Keith Thompson showed me some of his early correspondence with Alger book collectors, some of which dated back to the 1950s. He told me recently that he started reading the author's books when he was about 10 years old, selecting volumes from a box of New York Book Company editions that had belonged to his father's brother. In 1948, Keith enrolled in the University of California at Davis. He walked into his first book store in San Francisco, where

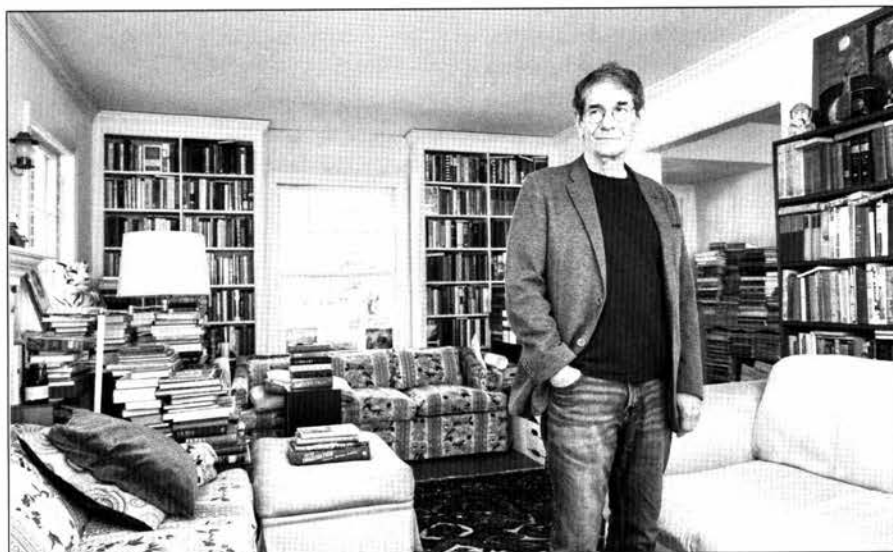
he bought Alger from a shelf of Donohues, Burts, and other editions. "I've been collecting ever since," Keith said, "almost entirely in brick-and-mortar shops."

Peter Walther is recognized as a leading authority on William T. Adams, who wrote numerous books for boys under the pseudonym of

Oliver Optic. Peter was the keynote speaker at the 2014 convention in Annapolis, in which he discussed the working relationship between Alger and Adams. He writes that "classical music has always defined me. As a practicing musician and lover of opera, I have seen and done much in those respective fields. Also literature of course, especially popular literature. I also love mysteries (especially Golden Age mysteries and Historical Whodunnits) as well as the works of James Fenimore Cooper." He adds that "the first Alger I ever read was *Try and Trust*, a New York Book Company edition I picked up on August 18, 1962, and probably read it that next week on a family vacation to Maine."

Michael Dirda is the well-known weekly book columnist for the **Washington Post**, as well as a

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Washington Post columnist Michael Dirda is one of the panelists for Friday's panel discussion on book collecting.

Photo by Louis Tinsley

Series book museum may foster research

By James D. Keeline (PF-898)

After more than 35 years of researching and sharing about the history of series books and similar literature, I routinely find there are more people who are aware of the books and don't know very much about them, including how they were produced, published, and promoted.

Discussed briefly by President Carol Nackenoff in her column in the previous issue of **Newsboy**, the idea of a Series Book Museum first came up at one of Jennifer Fisher's first "Sleuth Con" conventions near Phoenix, Arizona, in 2012. She has been organizing Nancy Drew conventions for many years, but this one had a broader scope with all types of juvenile series represented.

A conversation with David Farah and Garrett K. Lothe, then editor of **Susabella Passengers and Friends**, was begun about the need for a Series Book Museum to share information about these books and provide research opportunities. Many of us own materials beyond having the books themselves. Those new to the field don't have ready access to what has been written before.

Garrett expressed a dream of buying some home that had been owned by Margaret Sutton or Mildred Wirt Benson, to convert into a museum. But that concept has challenges of both expense and geography.

A physical museum needs to be in a place that people would travel to and where there are people to run it. A

museum is not merely things on display but people and expertise who help to provide context for the objects.

Few would visit a physical museum. Many in our field are aging and traveling less. Even if they did, it is hard to see how income from visitors would support the operating costs, let alone an endowment to help support its future.

A "virtual museum" has benefits of being less expensive to produce and can draw on materials from collections around the world. Scholars and collectors have made exhibits in display cases in libraries and museums on several topics. Each time, we have shown items from our collections. Similar opportunities exist for a potential online Series Book Museum.

The two main offerings are educational exhibits and research resources.

The first educational exhibit planned is "Building a Series Book." This is inspired by a book called *Building a Book* (1906, 1929). This book contains essays by leaders in the fields concerned with publishing a book. For this exhibit, production is represented by outlining, writing, editing, and illustrating. Publishing includes methods of typesetting, printing, and binding. Promotion is marketing and retailing of these books.

This provides an opportunity to show artifacts of stages of the process. This includes outlines, manuscripts, and

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'The Fredericksburg Fourth'

(Continued from Page 5)

contributor to numerous other periodicals. His books include a memoir, five collections of essays, and a volume about Arthur Conan Doyle. In 1993 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for criticism. In one of his recent articles, he writes that "Books don't just furnish a room. A personal library is a reflection of who you are and who you want to be, of what you value and what you desire, of how much you know and how much more you'd like to know. ... Digital texts are all well and good, but books on shelves are a presence in your life. As such, they become a part of your day-to-day existence, reminding you, chastising you, calling to you. Plus, book collecting is, hands down, the greatest pastime in the world."

I couldn't agree more, and I'm sure all convention attendees will enjoy this lively panel discussion on Friday morning during "The Fredericksburg Fourth," in Fredericksburg, Virginia, from Thursday, May 2 to Sunday, May 5, 2024.

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Blake Brezeale (PF-1160)

P.O. Box 729

Midlothian, TX 76065

Matthew Short (PF-1161)

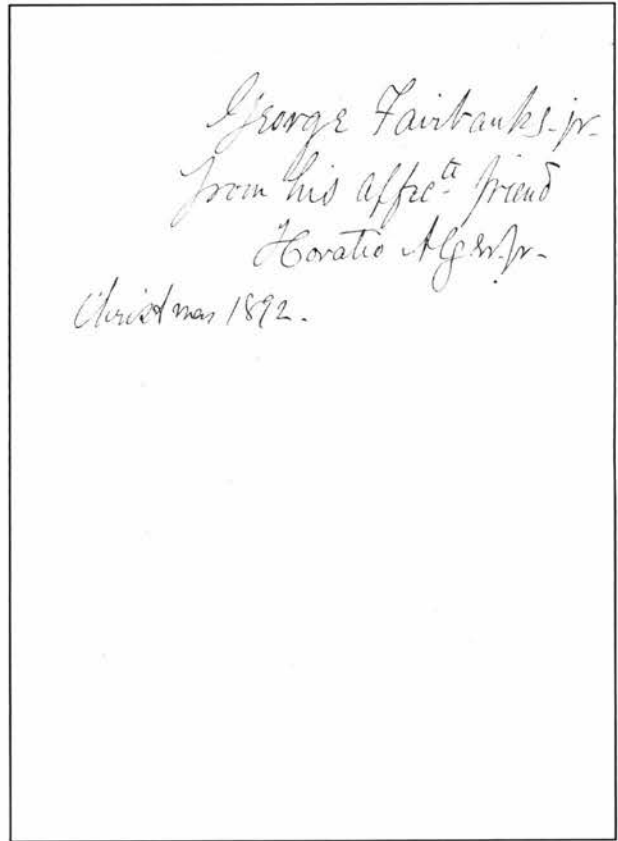
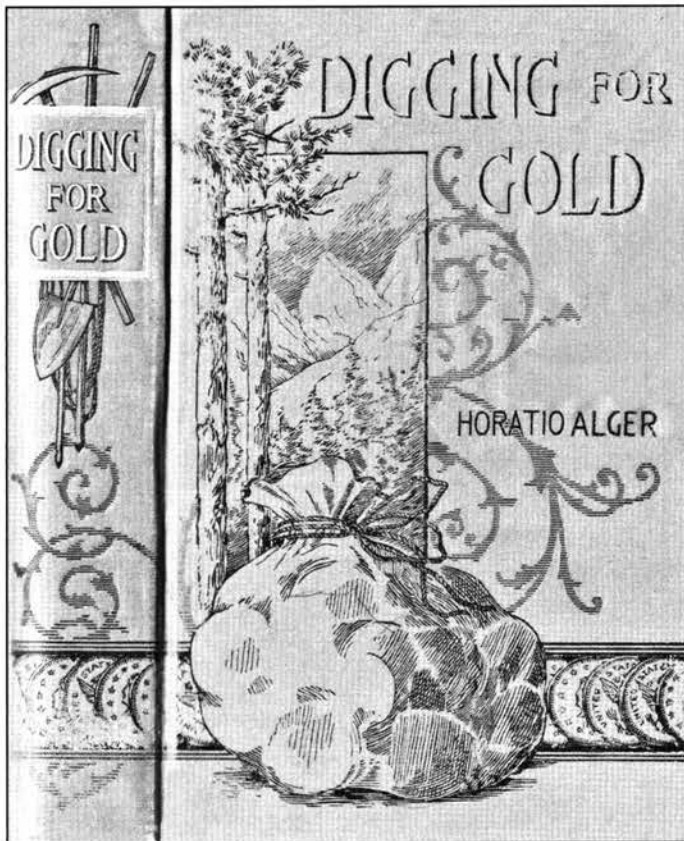
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Matthew is Associate Professor and Head of Technical Services at Northern Illinois University. He currently serves as co-chair of the Children's/Young Adult Series Books and Dime Novels area of the Popular Culture Association.

Letters from Horatio — Part 5; *or, Alger writes to his godson*



Ex. 2: First edition of *Digging for Gold* (Porter & Coates, 1892). This copy is inscribed to George C. Fairbanks, Jr.

(Continued from Page 3)

description, all kinds of games and toys, a full assortment of jewelry, fine confectionery, and an exhaustive variety of fancy goods of all forms. The spacious premises occupied comprise a store having dimensions of 25x80 feet, and this commodious salesroom is fitted up and arranged in the most approved manner with every convenience to facilitate the operations of trade. Three competent salespeople are employed and all customers have their orders attended to promptly and satisfactorily. A large country trade is enjoyed, and the establishment has an extensive list of permanent customers."⁶

In 1875, John admitted George into the business as his partner. The same publication described George as "a young business man possessed of much energy and executive ability. He has hosts of friends who hold him in popular regard, and he is regarded as a most valuable member of the community."⁷

In 1882, George became the owner and publisher of the **Natick Bulletin**, which had been experiencing financial difficulties for several years. His business

acumen and vast knowledge of the publishing industry saved the newspaper and "within a year the paper was on a paying basis and today it is one of the leading papers in the vicinity."⁸

In addition to operating the stationer and news dealer establishment and publishing the **Natick Bulletin**, George was involved in many town activities, including serving as the town's first auditor, Park Commission member, delegate to the Republican State conventions, president of the Natick Commercial Club and the Natick Building Association.

His professional affiliations included serving as president of the Suburban Press Association and later the Massachusetts Press Association in the same capacity. He also served as executive committeeman of the National Editorial Association. His fraternal memberships are too numerous to list.

George's marriage to Ella Louise Hobbs on April 4, 1872, produced five children: Carrie Louise, born on Nov. 9, 1872; George Chandler, Jr., born on Oct. 14, 1873; Ella Hattie, born on May 23, 1875; Clayton Alger,

(Continued on Page 8)

223 West 34th St. New York
May 31st 1891

My dear little namesake,

I should like to be present at your birth-day party tomorrow, but I couldn't walk so far without getting tired.

I have written to Mrs.

Cheney to buy you a present.

I hope it will be appropriate -

I presume you would like a

revolver, but you might accidentally shoot George, or one of Carrie's or Hattie's beaux, which would be unfortunate. Still if you think of going out West to kill Indians I will send you one. I should expect to see some such item as this in the Sioux Daily Tomahawk.

Indian circles are much excited over the arrival of a young white warrior, Mr. Clayton A. Fairbanks, better known as the "Young Man who bosses his mother." He

Example 3: My dear little namesake: I should like to be present at your birth-day party tomorrow, but I couldn't walk so far without getting tired. I have written to Mrs. Cheney to buy you a present. I hope it will be appropriate. I presume you would like a revolver, but you might accidentally shoot George, or one of Carrie's or Hattie's beaux, which would be unfortunate. Still if you think of going out West to kill Indians I will send you one. I should expect to see some such item as this in the Sioux Daily Tomahawk. "Indian circles are much excited over the arrival of a young white warrior, Mr. Clayton A. Fairbanks, better known as the "Young Man who bosses his mother." He ...

Letters from Horatio — Part 5; or, Alger writes to his godson

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born on June 1, 1890; and Harold Wilbert, on Nov. 28, 1892. All five children were born and raised in Natick.

The circumstances regarding the first meeting of George C. Fairbanks and Horatio Alger, Sr. are unknown, but it's not too difficult to imagine familiarity between the area's leading merchant and publisher and the well-known and respected local minister.

Alger's eldest daughter, Olive Augusta Cheney, lived in Natick and wrote many articles for the **Natick Bulletin**. She edited several regular columns for the paper, including one called "The Woman's Interest" on suffrage topics and another called "The Woman's Voice"

on temperance issues. She also submitted accounts of her 1873 European trip taken with her parents, brothers Horatio and Frank and her husband, Amos P. Cheney, to the paper.

One can envision Horatio Alger, Jr., on his many trips to South Natick, visiting the Fairbanks bookstore and news dealer checking on sales or perhaps touting his latest book. If one were present during one of Alger's visits, a lucky recipient might even get an autographed copy (see Example 2, page 7).

The closeness between the two families, however, can be confirmed with the recent discovery that George C. Fairbanks named Horatio Alger, Jr. as godfather to his

is a well built and muscular youth of 2½ feet in height, and weighs 25 lbs. It is said that when only 6 months old he could give a war-whoop that could be heard from Harvard Street to Pegan Hill. Should war break out with the Choctaws he has promised to lead the Sioux to victory. He and Baby Mc Ree are undoubtedly the two most famous young warriors in the United States.

I hope you will have a nice time, and that your speech

may be published in the Bulletin.
Your affectionate friend
Horatio Alger, Jr.

...is a well built and muscular youth of 2½ feet in height, and weighs 25 lbs. It is said that when only 6 months old he could give a war-whoop that could be heard from Harvard Street to Pegan Hill. Should war break out with the Choctaws he has promised to lead the Sioux to victory. He and Baby Mc Ree are undoubtedly the two most famous young warriors in the United States." I hope you will have a nice time, and that your speech may be published in the [Natick] Bulletin. Your affectionate friend, Horatio Alger, Jr.

fourth child and second son, Clayton Alger Fairbanks (see front cover). As noted above, Clayton was born on June 1, 1890, when Alger was 58 years old.

Clayton was educated at Dean Academy, a college prep school located in Franklin, Massachusetts, before entering Dartmouth College in 1909. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree and was a member of the Sigma Chi Fraternity. After graduating in 1913, he worked for the United States Army as a plant inspector until after World War I. Just after the war, he joined a Cleveland bank in the investment department and lived in that city until the early 1930s.

At the beginning of the Depression, Clayton returned to Massachusetts and founded the **Needham Times** during a period when most businesses were failing. He remained as editor and publisher of the weekly

newspaper until his death in 1965. Like his father, Clayton was active in numerous professional associations including serving as president of the Needham Rotary Club and the Massachusetts Press Association. He also was instrumental in forming the New England Press Association.⁹

The first letter Alger wrote to Clayton, on the occasion of his first birthday, can be seen in Example 3 on pages 8-9. Of course, a one-year-old cannot read so the playful and whimsical contents were for the benefit of the parents, George and Ella. The reference in the third paragraph to Harvard Street was the boy's residence and Pegan Hill (elev. 410 feet) is the highest point in Natick.

An image of Clayton's boyhood home can be seen in Example 4 on page 10. The prominent house, situated

(Continued on Page 10)

Letters from Horatio — Part 5; *or, Alger writes to his godson*

(Continued from Page 9)

at the intersection of Harvard and Washington Streets, is still standing.

The second letter (see Example 5, page 11), dated December 27, 1891, was sent just after Christmas and noted that Alger had asked his sister, Olive Augusta Cheney, to purchase some picture books before the end of the year (perhaps bought at the Fairbanks book store?). Alger continues with his satirical retorts by offering to purchase a razor for an 18-month-old boy.

A third letter, dated May 31, 1892, on the occasion of Clayton's second birthday, is transcribed here as it is too deteriorated to reproduce:



Example 4: The boyhood home of Clayton Alger Fairbanks in Natick, Mass. This house is still standing.

Reproduced from vintage postcard

My dear little namesake:

I am sorry I cannot be present at your birth-day party, now that you have attained the venerable age of two. You know a good deal more than you did twenty-four month's since, and you have no doubt given valuable advice to your brother and sisters. I presume your sisters needed it most.

I mail you two picture books which I hope you will receive in time. As I suppose you don't read frivolous books I have selected two that are instructive.

I hope that you will have a pleasant party and receive your guests with your usual dignity.

With much love, Your affectionate friend.

Horatio Alger, Jr.

Alger references only one brother in this letter, as Clayton's youngest sibling, Harold Wilbert Fairbanks, was born six months later on November 28, 1892.

Clayton Fairbanks married Lena Frances Sherman on June 17, 1916 in Natick. The marriage produced one daughter, Elois (Loy) and four grandchildren (Philip Lord, David Clayton, Steven Dean and Katherine Mae).

As the owner and publisher of the **Needham Times**, Clayton and Lena were socially active and entertained often at their Needham home.

When Clayton died in 1965, Lena received numerous condolence letters from state senators, business leaders and newspaper associates from across the United States.

His Dartmouth classmates remembered him as "a

warm and witty man – outspoken and frank – but always ready with an understanding word of encouragement. All through the years, Clayt and Lena were always at reunions, adding to everyone's good time. As a citizen of Needham [Mass.] he gave of himself outstandingly to that community, using his editorial column to great advantage in furthering worthwhile civic and charitable causes."¹⁰

The **Needham Times** continued as a weekly after Clayton's death and merged with the **Needham Tab** in 2001. The newspapers were subsequently acquired by the mass media conglomerate, Gannett Company, Inc. In 2022, Gannett shifted its Needham weekly newspapers (and many others) to online formats only.

Afterword

Printer's ink must have flowed through the Fairbanks family veins. George C. Fairbanks' youngest sibling, Wilson Lincoln Fairbanks, and Clayton's uncle, was also a renowned newspaperman. Born in 1865, he spent more than 60 years as a reporter and editor at the **Philadelphia Record**, **Philadelphia Press** and the **New York Herald**.

His final assignment was as a telegraph editor (later known as a wire-service editor) at the **New York Times**, where he retired in 1946 after nearly 35 years' service to the paper. He died in February 1953, at the age of 88, in Newfane, Vermont. Our own Ralph D. Gardner knew him in 1942 when Ralph was a copyboy at the paper and just starting his career in journalism.

More can be read about Ralph's portrayal of Wilson

223 West 34th St. New York

Dec 27. 1891

Dear Clayton,

I send you a picture representing the unhappy experience of a baby taking a bath - I think the baby looks some like you -

I have asked Mrs. Cheney to bring you some picture

books some time before New Year's. I thought at first of sending you the Encyclopaedia Britannica or Ruskin's Works, but decided in favor of the picture books as George and your sisters might enjoy them also, while they couldn't understand the others - Then again I thought of a razor, but probably George will let you use his. If he won't I can send you one on your birthday -

I suppose you are quite a big boy now. I shouldn't

Example 5: Dear Clayton: I send you a picture representing the unhappy experience of a baby taking a bath. I think the baby looks some like you. I have asked Mrs. Cheney to bring you some picture ... books some time before New Year's. I thought at first of sending you the Encyclopaedia Britannica or [John] Ruskin's Works, but decided in favor of the picture books as George and your sisters might enjoy them also, while they couldn't understand the others. Then again I thought of a razor, but probably George will let you use his. If he won't I can send you one on your birthday. I suppose you are quite a big boy now. I shouldn't ... wonder if you'd be a man before Carrie or Hattie. When you are in New York on business, call and see me. Your affectionate friend, Horatio Alger, Jr.

Fairbanks in the Spring 1987 issue of Manuscripts, published by the Manuscript Society.

* * *

Acknowledgements: the author wishes to thank David and Patricia Caldwell of Sequim, Washington, for their support and encouragement. David is one of the grandsons of Clayton Fairbanks and he graciously made available items from the family archives for this article, including the letters, personal reminiscences and several images of his grandfather. Some years ago, Dave and Pat were living in Nevada City, California, and connected with Barry Schoenborn (PF-1087), who was living there also at the time. They met, and Barry

(Continued on Page 12)

wonder if you'd be a man before Carrie or Hattie -

When you are in New York on business, call and see me.

Your affectionate friend
Horatio Alger, Jr.

Letters from Horatio — Part 5; or, Alger writes to his godson

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made scans of many items from the family collection.

The familial tradition continues as Dave and Pat named their daughter Lauren Alger Caldwell (now Lauren Tierney)! A special thanks to Barry and Bob Sipes (PF-1067) and Jack Bales (PF-258) for their computer proficiency and literary expertise.

Next: Letters from Horatio – Part 6; or, Alger writes to the minister's son

NOTES

1. Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales. *Horatio Alger, Jr., An Annotated Bibliography of Comment and Criticism*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. (1981), p. 3.

2. Gary Scharnhorst, with Jack Bales. *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University



Clayton Alger Fairbanks, date unknown, but circa late 1950s. His close friends and family called him "Clayt."

Press (1985), p. 6.

3. Scharnhorst, with Bales, p. 10.

4. Scharnhorst, with Bales, p. 40.

5. Arthur M. Alger. *A Genealogical History of That Branch of the Alger Family Which Springs From Thomas Alger of Taunton and Bridgewater, in Massachusetts*. Boston: Press of David Clapp & Son (1876), p. 28.

6. *Leading Manufacturers and Merchants of Eastern Massachusetts*. New York: International Publishing Company (1887), p. 296.

7. Ibid.

8. "Invites All to Celebration; Natick Man Marking Three Anniversaries," unknown newspaper, Jan., 6, 1927.

9. *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth Secretaries Association (1965), p. 49.

10. Ibid.

Series book museum

(Continued from Page 6)

original artwork. Industrial films of the 1920s show the publishing methods. Advertising and order forms give insights into the promotion.

My wife, Kim, and I have purchased many items because they would be "good for the museum." We also have a nascent website (seriesbookmuseum.org).

In February 2022 I saw photos of a library exhibit with famous authors, their books, and examples of their typewriters. It made for a powerful display. It is one thing to think of an author working at a typewriter but to see one like it creates a stronger image of the author at work. Edward Stratemeyer did his personal writing on an unusual typewriter with a double keyboard, I sought out a similar example — a Smith Premier No. 4.

Stratemeyer's assistant, Harriet Otis Smith, and early Syndicate ghostwriters like Mildred Wirt and Leslie McFarlane used an Underwood No. 5. Mildred's typewriter is in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

We have also purchased original artwork used to illustrate series books from about 1900 to 2005. Most are gouache on illustration board but some are acrylic. It is common for the painting to be much larger. The larger size and quality before processing allows more detail to be revealed. A painting represents hours or

days of work by an artist.

Manuscripts with corrections provide research opportunities to show how a work evolved as it made its way to a published form. We have some original manuscripts for series like Trixie Belden, but in other cases we have images of the pages from other sources.

Research resources can come in many forms. Published versions of series books are often not available in libraries, even special collections. Physical books and dust jackets can offer opportunities, especially when there are multiple copies and insight may be gained about why they were changed. Some books can be made available in PDF.

Some of the best information about series books has been gathered in magazines for the field from the past century. Some focused on related materials such as dime novels and story papers. But these publications, often seen as amateur fanzines, are not generally available online or in libraries. If one must use a special collection, it is essential to know that a given article of interest exists. Better indexing across many publications — a few thousand issues — is needed to let a researcher know where to look. **Newsboy** issues dating to the 1960s are available to view at www.horatioalgersociety.net.

It is possible that if the Series Book Museum is seen to be a valuable resource with an online presence and occasional library exhibits, it may attract donors who can increase not only its holdings but also its financial resources.

*In which W. T. A. writes for a Boston weekly,
Warren T. Ashton appears and then disappears*

The American Union: Summer 1852 to Spring 1854

By Peter C. Walther (PF-548)

(First of two parts)

Some few months before he commenced his association with the *Star Spangled Banner* in November 1852, William T. Adams also had begun a fruitful collaboration with the editors of another Boston weekly, the *American Union*. He supplied a steady stream of fiction, mostly sketches and short tales, for Editors R. B. Fitts and William E. Graves,¹ at the same time maintaining his weekly editorial duties for the *Banner*. Over a period of many weeks the general reading public, in scanning the columns of both newspapers of any given date, would have been treated simultaneously to Adams' fiction under the guise of various *noms-de-plume*. A brief epitome of the *American Union* follows:

R. B. Fitts, as its publisher and proprietor dated his premiere number on Saturday, Nov. 4, 1848;² later issues would indicate that the *Union* was established on Nov. 1, 1848. The first three and a half years survive wondrously intact at the American Antiquarian Society. Although these early issues³ (some 175 in all) do not seem to offer at this time any traceable examples of W. T. Adams' work, they do, however, contain much of "Paul Creyton" (John Townsend Trowbridge), who wrote extensively for many Boston weeklies during this period.

Now and again, Publisher Fitts⁴ added something of select *vitae*: a rather newsy obituary, for instance, noted the death of one Cephas Grozier Fitts of Putney, Vt., on March 3, 1851, aged 15 years, 7 months, the son of Rev. Rufus Fitts. R. B. Fitts' address was given as "Somerville, Mass., corner of Kirkland and Union Streets,"⁵ in those days when public privacy was less a matter of restrictive protocol than today.

Later that summer, a severe fire occurred at his residence when two servant girls were seriously burned by camphene, and Fitts himself "put out the conflagration and saved the lives of the domestics."⁶ Doubtless the incident was also written up in other Boston papers. Apparently, his business prospects allowed him to take a Southern and Western Tour, with or without his family the *Union*'s correspondent doesn't say.⁷ The Grim Reaper struck the Fitts family again about a year later as the

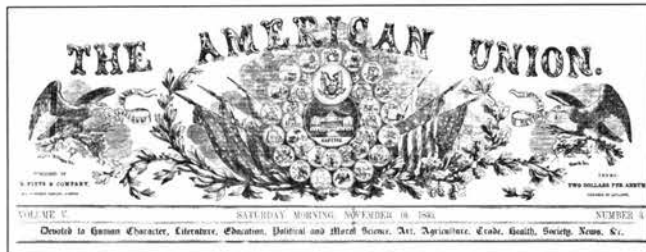


poem "The Faded Flower" by Louise J. Cutter attests. It was "Respectfully Inscribed To Mr. And Mrs. R. B. Fitts, Of Somerville, Mass., On The Death Of Their Eldest Son, Robert Berkley [sic], Aged 2 Years, 1 Month, 14 Days."⁸ At this time, Fitts belonged to the "Ancient And Honorable Artillery Company Of Massachusetts," as were many of Boston's blue bloods.⁹ William T. Adams was also an erstwhile member.

The handy internet suggests something more personal. He was born in Leverett, Mass., on July 7, 1822, the third of seven children and the eldest male. He was Adams' senior by a mere 23 days. He stood 5 feet, 10 inches, had dark gray eyes, a large mouth (however that should be interpreted), a pointed chin, brown hair, a sallow complexion and an elongated face. He married Harriet Allen Marsters on Jan. 1, 1847 (also seen Dec. 31, 1846). At that time, he was a newspaper agent and proprietor. She died in Philadelphia aged 33, as reported in the *True Flag* issue March 31, 1860. R. B. Fitts died, also in Philadelphia, on Oct. 2, 1871, where he is interred. Thanks to Didi Johnson for uncovering these statistics.

These few examples serve to highlight something of the life of Publisher Fitts and his family. By 1853 he was riding the crest of popularity as reported in the *Boston Herald*: "Get this week's *American Union*, a magnificent number of the best weekly we know of. Sold everywhere—for four cents" (July 26). It would seem however that by the following spring (May 1854) he had decided to withdraw from the *American Union* venture altogether and disposed of his business interests; see Endnote 14 for some clarification. His "Valedictory" duly appeared at that time,¹⁰ and we also note that this date coincided with the departure of Oliver Optic and

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Warren T. Ashton from the fold. At this juncture, I have observed that forthcoming issues were characterized by: 1) more sketches appearing anonymously, 2) more women writers, and 3) some obviously English stories. And the redoubtable William Henry Thomes was also added to its corps of contributors.¹¹ He would be an active partner in the running of the **Union** during the following decade. A biography by George R. Stewart published in 1939, *Take Your Bible in One Hand*, has not been seen.

William E. Graves and Samuel E. Weston of Boston went into co-partnership on May 1, 1854 and became the adoptive parents of the **American Union** enterprise. They "purchased the Subscription List and Good Will of the American Union newspaper" ... having "associated themselves together under the firm of Graves & Weston, as joint partners, in the business of editing, printing and publishing said newspaper, from and after date hereof."¹² This buyout did not, of course, escape the attention of the competition. "Messrs. Graves & Weston have purchased the **American Union** of its late proprietors, R. B. Fitts & Co., and will continue it as heretofore, Mr. Graves presiding in the editorial chair. Mr. Graves is an agreeable, learned and industrious writer, with great tact in the conduct of a literary paper. His amiability of disposition endears him to all his acquaintances."¹³ Graves was no stranger to the *habitués* of the **American Union**, having occupied the editorial chair since Sept. 4, 1852.¹⁴ He merely regrouped.

S. E. Weston remained somewhat in the background, a figure of shadow and suggestion. Did he bankroll the operation? Possibly an office manager? Or were his duties somewhat more exacting? He was attending to the business of running the **Star Spangled Banner**, a sister publication, as he had assumed control of it by 1856. His **Boston Masonic** record indicated that he joined St. John's Lodge in 1855.

William E. Graves, on the other hand, maintained a somewhat higher profile. He, too, was a member of Boston's Masonic Fraternity, having been raised in St. John's Lodge on March 5, 1855.¹⁵ He was also a charter member of the new Joseph Warren Lodge and served as its first Master from October 1857 to December 1858, receiving his demit from there in 1860.¹⁶ Graves' address

during this period was 40 Crescent Place; Weston boarded at 23 Hudson St.¹⁷

Dodge's **Literary Museum** noted that "William E. Graves, Esq., the adroit and gentlemanly editor of the *American Union*, lately delivered a lecture before the Cambridge and Somerville Lyceum."¹⁸

The egregious Graves, however, finally retired his pen as his predecessor had done before him. Although at his desk somewhat longer than Fitts had been, it would appear that a five- to seven-year tenure seemed *de rigueur* for the editorial corner of the **American Union** establishment during its initial decade.

J. R. Elliott and William H. Thomes assumed the editorial and proprietary reins of the newspaper just weeks before the outbreak of the American Civil War. A Co-Partnership Notice, dated Boston, Feb. 25, 1861 and signed by both gentlemen, announced that "The undersigned have this day entered into co-partnership, for the purpose of printing and publishing the 'American Union' newspaper under the name and style of 'Elliott and Thomes.'"¹⁹ By March 14, 1863, Newton Talbot had been appointed as a third partner, creating the publishing triumvirate of Elliott, Thomes and Talbot.²⁰ Talbot had been listed in the *Boston City Directory for 1856* as a cashier, and may possibly have joined the **Union** to be placed as a financial/business manager. However, by 1870 a duality once again prevailed as the editor made it known in the **Union's** columns:

"A WORD WITH OUR READERS — Mr. James R. Elliott, for many years the senior member of our firm, has retired, and hereafter all of our publications will be conducted by Messrs. William H. Thomes and Newton Talbot, ... who hope to conduct their business in the future as satisfactorily as it has been conducted during the past ten years."²¹ The "Dissolution of Co-Partnership" went public: Elliott, Thomes & Talbot became Thomes & Talbot in Boston on April 20, 1870.²² Both gentlemen then settled in for the final period of the **Union's** existence until it finally gave up and gave out probably by the end of 1875.²³ William H. Thomes had effected a 20-year association with this newspaper, initially as contributor then in management. He was a durable and a motivating force in its operation. After all, the **American Union** had survived the great Boston fire of 1872 when some publications like the **Student** and **Schoolmate**, for example, had succumbed.

During the run of this literary weekly, the editors might often have served as the publishers as well, their names appearing separately on the editorial page. During the firm's initial four months (November 1848 to February 1849), Fitts no doubt labored in some editorial/publishing capacity. George P. Burnham became the first official in-house editor, serving from the initial issue in November

1848 through to the last August number of 1852.²⁴ Fitts' name for a period was appended to that of Burnham's until April 26, 1851.²⁵ One Col. R. W. Keyes was brought in for a time, consigning the editorial duties at that point to three separate individuals,²⁶ but, by Jan. 17, 1852 the **Union** had once again reverted back to the doughty duo of Burnham and Fitts.

The **True Flag** for Jan. 24, 1852, p. 3, announced the retirement of this third party. In part: "As a genial and versatile writer, an accomplished German scholar and a good musical critic, his loss will be deeply felt. The Colonel has a wide circle of friends ..." Thus, Mr. Burnham and Mr. Fitts kept the editorial department running regularly until the advent of William E. Graves.²⁷ It would seem that Graves became sole Editor on Sept. 1, 1852 and would remain as such for a term of some three years.²⁸ Unfortunately, there exists a lamentable *lacunae* of **American Unions** from the summer of 1852, a frustrating roadblock, as issues relating to a significant pair of William T. Adams sketches, his very earliest for this weekly, cannot be addressed. We lack four key issues.²⁹

It was noted at a later date that both Mr. Graves and Mr. Weston shared the editorial desk³⁰ and continued to do so for some months. During this period, the editors thoughtfully took the opportunity to remind their readers of the whereabouts and whatabouts of their former *quondam* editor George P. Burnham, now "a partner in the well-known book and periodical publishing house, and newspaper depot of Messrs. Federhen & Co., of this city."³¹ For a time, Mr. Graves handled the editorial duties himself but many more issues would clearly denote both Wm. E. Graves and S. E. Weston as joint editors of the **American Union**. During the final phase of this paper as stated earlier first Elliott & Thomes, then Elliott, Thomes & Talbot and finally Thomes & Talbot were its editors as well as its proprietors.

Begging the reader's patience for a short time longer, this brief canvassing of the **American Union** enables us to highlight some further items of general interest. Documenting all the address changes kept us pleasantly occupied: at various times, we find 37 Court Square, 154 Washington St., 26 Washington St., 36 Washington St., 102 Washington St., 118 Washington St. and finally 63 Congress St. A predilection of even numbered Washington Street addresses is certainly worthy of comment but significant of probably whatever. On at least two separate occasions,³² the proprietors puffed that the **Union** was decked out in "new dress: new type, materials and layout." Other weeklies reported this as well: "The American Union, published by R. B. Fitts & Co., Boston, has recently commenced a new volume with new headings and a complete suit of new type throughout. This paper is elegantly printed, and exceedingly well 'made up,' its peculiar features being the

publication of short domestic stories, and a great variety of contents, making it especially a choice national family newspaper. It is ably edited by our esteemed friend, William E. Graves, Esq., and, under the good business management of its publishers, cannot fail to maintain its present wide and constantly increasing popularity. Terms, \$2.00 a year, in advance."³³

The fact that such improvements inaugurated at least two new volumes (5 and 17) should come as no surprise. A diminutive cut of the somewhat imposing structure denoting the publishing operation of the **American Union** appeared with regularity in many of its issues during the 1856-57 period.³⁴ We will probably never know the exact weekly sales figures; Ossian Dodge reported 2,000 copies, but the figures seem rather inflated.³⁵

(To be concluded in the May-June issue)

NOTES

1. For an annotated checklist of all this material see my William T. Adams bibliography for the **American Union**. Most of Adams' contributions to this weekly have survived. We are lacking only two brief sketches: "The Traveling Trunk" and "The Forged Check." Oliver Optic first started writing for this weekly in July 1852. Unfortunately we are still lacking four key issues during these summer months.

2. Mastheads dated April 9, 1870 and May 6, 1871, for example.

3. April 25, 1852 is the first issue lacking.

4. **Union**, March 29, 1851; p. 3.

5. **Union**, June 7, 1851.

6. **Union**, Aug. 23, 1851; p. 3.

7. **Union**, Oct. 9, 1852; p. 2, in which he has "just returned."

8. **Union**, Oct. 15, 1853; p. 4. "The Bride Of The Sea! A Tale Of Venice, And The Bridge Of Sighs," Written Expressly For The American Union," by R. F. Berkeley ran serially from Feb. 14-March 27, 1852. Might Mr. Berkeley have been Fitts himself (ghostwritten is a possibility) or another family member altogether with literary pretensions? We can't say. Something of a palpable coincidence here of name (R. F. Berkeley/Robert Berkley Fitts) as well as of initial (R.F.B./R.B.F.). The death of young Fitts was also noticed in **True Flag**, Oct. 1, 1853; p. 3.

9. Roll Of Members Of The Military Company Of Massachusetts. Now called *The Ancient And Honorable Artillery Company Of Massachusetts* (Boston: 1895).

10. **Union**, May 20, 1854; p. 3.

11. His first appearance as seen in these issues is dated April 29, 1854. My colleague Daniel A. Cohen, in his monograph "Making Hero Strong" (**Journal of the Early Republic** 30, Spring 2010), observed that after the takeover, "the new owners gradually altered their

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paper's content, moving away from a heavy reliance on conventional domestic fiction to a more eclectic mix of genres, including comical tales, adventure stories, and thrillers. By 'varying the style of story every week,' the new proprietors explained, they hoped to avoid 'the monotony of a succession of Domestic Stories and Sketches.'" From their perspective they may have noticed a palpable alteration in readers' tastes. Whether this shift can be verified or not we can't say.

12. **Union**, May 20, 1854; p. 3: Co-Partnership notice as well as an editorial entitled "What We Intend To Do!"

13. **Dodge's Literary Museum**, May 27, 1854; p. 397.

14. R.B. Fitts announced his departure to his readers in these terms: "Owing, however, to increase and pressure of business, somewhat impaired health, and a desire to travel, we shall be compelled to submit the editorial conduct and general management of the 'Union'—more especially during our protracted absence—into other hands." William E. Graves, Esq. was then formally introduced to the readership and his appointment as editor publicly made known. "His editorial labors, therefore, will commence, with next week's number ..." (Aug. 27 [sic], 1852; p. 3). This is somewhat confusing. Apparently Fitts gave up the editorial chair, relinquishing these duties but still continued as general publisher. See also Endnote 28.

15. William E. Graves, born in Boston in 1816 and died there on Dec. 28, 1892. He is interred in Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge. His wife's name was Catherine (she died on July 20, 1869) and he had at least two children: William and Frederick. During his proprietorship of the **American Union**, the Governor of Massachusetts appointed him a Justice of the Peace for the county of Middlesex. He also was serving as Superintendent of Schools in Somerville, Mass. Samuel Edward Weston was born in Hopkinton, Mass. on Sept. 19, 1820 and died on April 12, 1862. He is interred in Evergreen Cemetery in Hopkinton. I counted 13 Weston siblings. One could surmise that his parents were wildly productive if the data on the Find A Grave website can be credited.

16. *By-Laws Of Joseph Warren Lodge With Memoir* (Boston: Nathan Sawyer & Son, 1897); pp. 61 and 71.

17. *The Boston Directory For The Year Commencing July 1, 1856* [passim].

18. **Museum**, Jan. 28, 1854; p. 121.

19. **Union**, April 6, 1861; p. 2. Scattered issues survive from February and March 1861 but have not been seen.

20. **Union**, March 14, 1863; p. 2.

21. **Union**, May 14, 1870; p. 3.

22. Ibid. Elliott's retirement was also remarked in **Ballou's Monthly Magazine** for June 1870, p. 591.

23. Last issue seen: May 3, 1873 at the New York Historical Society. Last issue noted: Sept. 18, 1875 at Brown University.

24. It was first announced as follows: "With the next number of the 'American Union' the present senior editor will retire from the chair-editorial of this paper. Mr. Burnham is about to embark in a new enterprise ... and which will occupy all this leisure time—after September," (Aug. 21, 1852; p. 2). If Burnham was a "senior editor" there must have been a "junior editor" as well. The succeeding issue offered something more: "A Word at Parting. ... With the present number, the editorial labors of the undersigned are brought to a close, in the columns of the 'American Union'— . . . We have now had control of these columns some three and a half years. [signed] George P. Burnham," (Aug. 27 [sic], 1852; p. 2). He notes in passing subscribers of up to 20 thousand in number. At a somewhat later date (April 2, 1853), Burnham remarked: "We did our prettiest on that journal, for nearly four years and 'kinder thought,' from its increasing list of subscribers in that period, that it wasn't a bad'un to take" (p. 3).

25. **Union**, *passim*.

26. **Union**, May 3, 1851; p. 3.

27. **Union**, *passim*.

28. **Union**, Oct. 23, 1852; p. 2: "To The Public ... On the first of September last, we committed the editorial management of this paper to the care of WILLIAM E. GRAVES, ESQ., a Bostonian, and a gentleman of rare tact and ability to meet the wishes of the public for a popular paper." See similarly, Footnote 14.

29. **American Union** for July 3, 24, 31 and Aug. 7, 1852.

30. **Union**, Sept. 22, 1855; p. 3.

31. **Union**, October 20, 1855; p. 3. More followed in kind. Also reported in **True Flag**, Oct. 20, 1855; p. 3.

32. Nov. 2, 1850 and Nov. 8, 1856.

33. **Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion**, Dec. 25, 1852; p. 413. It clarifies here that Fitts was the publisher and Graves the editor. Thank-you **Gleason's**. These "short domestic stories," upon which the writer makes comment, were some of Oliver Optic's specialties during these years.

34. For instance, on p. 3 of both the May 17, 1856 and Aug. 8, 1857 issues.

35. **Dodge's Literary Museum**, Sept. 3, 1853; p. 205, as submitted by the Hotchkiss Periodical Agents.