

AMATEUR JOURNALISM.

In preparing this historical sketch on the subject of amateur journalism, I have largely taken into consideration that the paper is supplemental to the able compilation of professional publications submitted and read before this Society, May 2, 1902, by your worthy Secretary and newspaper scribe, Mr. Diffenderffer. These additional facts and historic notes, therefore, will dwell particularly on the "maiden efforts" of the young people of three decades ago, besides giving some reminiscences more or less relevant to the general subject matter.

In outlining the rise and progress of these amateurs, you will permit me to draw from my own personal experience along youthful journalistic fields. This course seems necessary, to give in detail the local side of this story; otherwise not a little could have been left unwritten.

Amateur journalism grew up mushroom-like, and became a fad of the first water among boys and girls, during the Centennial era. Every State in the Union sheltered some of these embryo editors and publishers; in certain quarters they were numbered by many hundreds; while foreign countries contributed their full quota of youthful writers and printers.

The Meaning of Amateur.

Probably it would be well to define the word amateur as it relates to the present topic. Webster puts it: "A person attached to a particular pursuit, study or science, as in music or painting. More particularly one who

cultivates any study or art from taste or attachment, without pursuing it professionally." Outside of the word amateurish, the dictionary has little to add to our vocabulary in this direction. It remained for the ingenious young journalists themselves to coin and use extensively the word amateurdom, as deftly describing their busy field or body, in the seventies of the last century. Even this word was too large for frequent use in narrow limits of tiny papers, and columns of notes were oftentimes bluntly headed, "Doings in 'Dom," meaning amateurdom, of course! "The 'dom," as a phrase, came into much use and abuse among the many bright boy editors.

The defining of "amateur journalism" and that which constituted an amateur paper was entered into with vigor by not a few young writers; and I quote the following editorial extract from *The Monthly Budget*, of Lancaster, for January, 1878:

"Some have said, and we think they are partially correct, that the production of an amateur paper is to be made merely for sport, and the promotion of the taste of encouraging others to take a step toward cultivating the latent genius very often hidden, and unable to show itself in its true light, simply on account of no opportunity happening in which to present itself. Many hold out that as soon as it is devoted to the object of making money it can no longer go under the head of an amateur paper. Why can't boys as well as men try to make money, provided they earn it in a legitimate manner? Should the publishers of an amateur paper be excluded from the role of amateurdom, simply because they are trying to make a little money?" etc.

The discussions, pro and con, on

this and similar subjects added interest to these little papers, of which I had, at one time, more than eight hundred copies; not all of them separate publications, but several hundred being such, at least. To-day I possess less than half of my original collection, through the thoughtlessness of a teamster using handfuls of these tiny papers as so much (or little) packing material around my personal belongings, while removing in 1886; yet from the assorted lot left it pleases me to give this history:

Amateur Papers of Lancaster County.

A son of Judge Lewis edited and published the first amateur paper printed in Lancaster, so far as I have been able to trace. This was in the year 1849.

In 1855 another paper was started by John H. Carmany, and continued for about a year. The office of publication was in a small house back of the old Collector's office, at the corner of Duke and Chestnut streets, Mr. Carmany being at that time clerk in the office of his father, who was Collector of Tolls on the Pennsylvania railroad at this point. This paper was issued at short intervals and distributed free to the friends of the publisher. Mr. Carmany went to California in 1858, and there carried on a large printing plant.

One of the first small papers of the Centennial year, issued in this county, was *The Philomath*, a semi-monthly journal devoted to the collecting of coins, stamps, etc. This was published by James Galen, and printed at Rawlinsville, in 1876 and 1877. It consisted of four pages, the size of each being $5\frac{1}{2}$ by $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches. At least fifteen numbers were issued.

The second paper of that period to be established was *The Keystone*

Amateur, in March, 1877, at Landisville, by the writer, when at the age of fifteen, and while attending the Independence school. The size of each page during its first volume was $4\frac{3}{4}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches; enlarged with the second volume to $6\frac{1}{2}$ by 9 inches; and issued monthly. The name of this paper was changed to The Amateur, Junior, in April, 1878, and printed on same size sheet as the initial number. In August of the same year the journal was enlarged to a sixteen-page magazine, including covers, under the original name. In October it ceased publication, the amateur printer entering the professional arena by connecting himself with the Inquirer Printing and Publishing Company, of Lancaster.

The third local amateur paper was established in Lancaster, in October, 1877, and called The Monthly Budget, in the interest of the Boys' High School. H. M. D. Erisman and H. D. Gast were the editors and publishers. They also printed their paper. The size of its pages was $5\frac{1}{4}$ by $7\frac{1}{4}$; afterward enlarged to 6x9 inches. Mr. Erisman has since then been connected, professionally, with The New Era for many years, and Mr. Gast is prominently engaged in railroad work in West Virginia.

Rivalry no doubt brought forth the High School Journal, a neatly printed paper, at Lancaster, in November, 1877. The size of it was $5\frac{3}{4}$ by $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, which afterward was increased to $8\frac{1}{2}$ by $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Harry H. Cooper, C. A. Westhaeffer and E. E. Steigerwalt were at various times its editors. The fifth issue appearing late, I cull their explanation: "What trouble editors have! What sleepless nights, and such anxiety and agony of mind! Well, brother editors only can appreciate our feeling."

The Blade was the only amateur personal paper printed in Lancaster. It was evidently issued weekly, at one cent per copy, and established about December, 1877. No name appears as its publisher.

The Star was issued from Prince street, Lancaster, at this time, and succumbed with its first number. Our Friend was another shining amateur example of short duration, from the same city.

The Wide Awake was launched from Lancaster, in February, 1878, being the largest local amateur paper then in the field, each page measuring 8½ by 12 inches. George W. Markley and Grant E. Carpenter were its editors.

The first number of The Coin Journal appeared in Lancaster, April, 1878. Charles Steigerwalt was its sponsor and publisher. Editorially, this statement is made therein: "We intend to give our readers only interesting knowledge in regard to coins, and admit no nonsense in these columns." Size of paper, 6 by 9 inches, monthly.

At this same time, April, 1878, The Amateur World was to have been born from near East Petersburg, issued and printed by Amos H. Horting, then learning the art of Gutenberg at the Inquirer Printing and Publishing Company, Lancaster, and now of Philadelphia. The first number was planned for twelve pages, on fine tinted paper, only five of which ever saw the light, and these handsome pieces of work are in the writer's possession.

The Columbian was also issued at this booming period, from Elizabethtown, the first number being dated March 29, 1878, and edited by Seitz and Lewis; and the Literary Review had a short existence at Lancaster, Pa.

The second volume of the Literary Ledger, a monthly, was printed at

Landisville, by the writer, during the latter part of 1880. Size of each page, 6 by 9 inches. "Mon Myrtle," of Providence, R. I., was the editor. One year later, in November, 1881, M. C. Walsh (Mon Myrtle) abandoned the former paper and issued in its stead, from Taunton, Mass., The Argosy, printed by me at Landisville. These two journals were probably the best printed amateur papers ever put forth from Lancaster county. The articles and general matter therein were all of a high order of originality, Mr. Walsh being a fluent and pleasing young writer. It was his opinion that Nathaniel Hawthorne, the eminent American author, edited and published the first amateur paper known to have been issued. Mr. Walsh also thought the New Atheneum the best amateur publication from England, in 1881.

Local Directory of Amateurs.

To complete the above list of papers, I append a directory of Lancaster county amateurs for 1878, alphabetically arranged:

Brown, Geo. W., Jr., Lancaster.
Carpenter, Grant E., Lancaster.
Carpenter, F. H., Lancaster.
Cooper, Harry H., Lancaster.
Diller, W. Stehman, Lancaster.
Engle, H. M., Marietta.
Erisman, H. M. D., Lancaster.
Frailey, Wm. O., Lancaster.
Galen, James, Rawlinsville.
Gast, H. D., Lancaster.
Geisenberger, L. W., Lancaster.
Gorrecht, W. F., Lancaster.
Horting, A. H., East Petersburg.
Koehler, L., Washington Borough.
Landis, D. B., Landisville.
Leonard, Geo. W., Lancaster.
Lewis, H. C., Elizabethtown.
Markley, Geo. W., Lancaster.
McIlvaine, J. P., Belmont.

Musselman, A. C., Lancaster.
Newcomer, M. M., Landisville.
Rowe, Felix B., Strasburg.
Roy, Frank, Lancaster.
Seitz, Mr., Elizabethtown.
Steigerwalt, Chas., Lancaster.
Steigerwalt, E. E., Lancaster.
Warfel, John, Lancaster.
Westhaeffer, C. A., Lancaster.

Other Monthly Publications.

The Weaponless Watchman was printed and edited in both English and German, about 1871 to 1873, by Rev. Ernst, at either Bird-in-Hand or Gap.

The Linden Hall Echo was established at Lititz in 1877, and continues its existence, as a fine monthly magazine, conducted by young Moravian students.

Weishampel's Torch of Truth began its existence in 1879, at Lancaster. It was edited and printed by Elder J. F. Weishampel. In the issue for March, 1883, he tersely states a truth: "We find by looking over the last volume (volume 2) that by some sort of miscalculation we printed thirteen instead of twelve of the Torch. No wonder that we are in debt for paper." Further on he adds, "As we are in tolerably good health for a man of seventy-five years of age, and can still handle types and pull the old press-bar, and serve as editor, publisher and carrier besides, we are minded to start in on the fourth volume by the 1st of April."

The Church Journal was established at Lancaster in 1879, and published in the interest of St. John's Lutheran Church. Rev. Sylvanus Stall, A.M., edited this neat, eight-page monthly in 1882.

The Criterion was put forth by Herman E. Hoch, its editor of this city, every two weeks, for a period of months, in 1886. It was the literary

paper or organ of the Hyperion Society at that time. Some of Mr. Hoch's first poetical effusions appeared in it. I may be pardoned to here state that Mr. Hoch, as also Hon. Chester W. Cummings and five other young men, including myself, all began our printing apprenticeship on the same day, in 1878, at the Inquirer Printing and Publishing Company's offices.

Our Young Men was issued by the Lancaster Y. M. C. A., April, 1889. It consisted of six pages, and was printed by the writer.

The F. and M. Weekly was established at Lancaster in 1890. It is the newspaper of our local college, and edited by young students; as is also the College Student, a monthly from the same institution.

St. Paul's Record was an eight-page monthly distributed in this city, October, 1891, by Rev. J. W. Meminger and John N. Hetrick.

The High School News began its career in Lancaster, in 1896, as a small monthly magazine. It is now published annually.

Our Message, published by the W. C. T. U. of Lancaster, began its monthly in December, 1901. It has been printed continuously by the writer, for them.

The Temple, of this city, was first issued in January, 1902, as an occasional magazine, with Warren S. Rehm as its editor. No numbers have recently been issued.

Features of the Real Amateur Press.

As boys, ranging in age from twelve to twenty-one years, edited the bona fide amateur journals, the scope of contents and make-up were widely divergent. There were no small number of well-edited, cleanly-printed papers, a credit to the age and ambition of their managers. Such papers

were original in literary features, with bright bits of poetry, editorials, puzzles, wit and humor, etc.

Great ingenuity was resorted to in printing these papers, and many were struck off from small lever or hand presses, one page at a time. I well remember doing some of these "stunts" in my own experience, branching out later on with a self-inking press and new type and material.

There were quite a number of amateur papers devoted to special fancies and recreation, like stamp and coin collecting, botany, exchanges, etc. These papers were usually well filled with all sorts of curious advertisements.

The size and general get-up of amateur papers three decades since make them a most quaint collection, indeed. There were some as small as $2\frac{1}{4}$ by $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches, while others had pages of 12 by 18 inches in dimensions—a fair average being 6 by 9 inches; and there were single leaflets to twenty-four pages and covers per issue. In circulation they ranged from about 100 to 2,500 copies.

The monthly paper prevailed, yet there were a number of semi-monthlies, weeklies, and even a few quarterlies and dailies, one of the latter being *The Daily Amateur*, started at Boston, July 2, 1877, by an Amateur Stock Company. Its subscription price was fifteen cents per month. Boston then had two weekly amateur papers.

One of the favorite things for ventilation among amateurs was to expose frauds in the columns of their watchful sheets. Tricksters in crooked deals were freely and promptly pounced upon without hesitation. Personals and brief items were also indulged in liberally. Old-time amateurs, or "fossils," came in for their due share of editorial comment.

Among the girl or young lady amateurs, there were some clever writers in prose and poetry. Miss Libbie Adams edited and actually printed the Elmira Enterprise in 1878. Miss Delle E. Knapp, of Port Clinton, Ohio, contributed considerable matter in prose; while Miss Gertie E. Leland, of Chicago, wrote verses of no uncertain order. These lady amateurs, and others, were a means of refinement among the boys. Even in this year of 1905 I notice Leola White Nixon, of Crowley, Louisiana, sending special sketches of merit to the Stars and Stripes of that place.

As previously noted, amateurs are usually afterwards found in the professional life, yet a few old-timers are clinging to their hobby, among them being J. A. Cook, of Waterloo, Iowa, who possesses more amateur papers than any one I know of. He prints at present the Philatelic Inter-Ocean. W. L. Thorndike, a former versatile amateur story-writer from Massachusetts, has since established a professional paper at Loveland, Col. John T. Nixon, President of the National Amateur Press Association in 1902, is one of the most active recent amateurs; as also John S. Kendall, of New Orleans, and Frederic Heath, of Milwaukee, Wis.

Bound Amateur Literature.

Amateur books and directories were almost as numerous as papers. As a rule they were not as good as the latter, the work of printing and binding them being frequently too much of a task for the young publishers. I had my share in printing these booklets, and possibly was the only amateur who attempted anything of the kind in Lancaster county. Prior to 1875 Wm. N. Grubb, of Norfolk, Va., was probably the best known amateur

book publisher, among many others, over the country.

Some of the best amateur papers were afterwards bound into volumes, and thus sold. Among these was the Literary World, issued in 1876, at Philadelphia, by J. C. Worthington. The Boys' Herald, of Batavia, N. Y., of the same time, was one of amateurdom's best printed eight-page papers; and The Beacon, of Philadelphia, belonged to the same class.

Peculiar Names.

As might be expected, there were many odd headings adorning some amateur papers. They were not confined to any locality, as this partial list shows, taken from my collection:

Gabriel's Horn, Terre Haute, Ind.; The Rounce, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; The Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia; The Little Rhody, Westerly, R. I.; Pen and Scissors, East Boston, Mass.; The Peanut, Paris, Ky.; The Dew Drop, Lancaster, N. Y.; The Diamond, small, but keen, West Meriden, Conn.; The Catchall, Lebanon, N. H.; The Crisis, Philadelphia; The Kaleidoscope, Norfolk, Va.; The Mammoth, in name only, Otterville, Iowa; The Club, flourished for fun, at Chicago; The Fiery Comet, Cadiz, Ohio; Boys of the Oil Regions, Franklin, Pa.; The Yankee, Lafayette, N. J.; The Censor, Philadelphia; The Chatter-Box, Charles City, Iowa; Wise and Otherwise, Marietta, Ohio; The Dart, Providence, R. I.; The Spry, Richland, Lebanon county, Pa.; The Rolling Billow, Norfolk, Va.; The Will o' the Wisp, Appleton, Wis.; Sense and Nonsense, Cuba, N. Y.; The Hub, Boston; The Amateur Fraud, Warsaw, Ind.; The Cyclone, New York; Comical Cruiser, Newcomerstown, Ohio; The Jack, Lawrence, Kansas; The Imp, in Heaven we trust, Washington, D. C.;

Our Umbrella, Terre Haute, Ind.; The Tramp, Marietta, Ohio; The Unknown, New York; Jolly Queer, Wiscoy, Minn.; Sharp Shooter, every shot counts one, Pleasant Unity, Pa.; The Little Chief, Pittsburg; The Mite, little but loud, Orlando, Florida; The Duke's Spirit, newsy and noisy, Pesotum, Ill.; The Crucible, let no guilty "am." escape, Washington, D. C.

Press Associations.

In closing this lengthening sketch, I must mention the influence of the various county, State and national press associations on the amateur politics throughout the United States. The first annual convention of the National Amateur Press Association was held in 1876. After that an official paper was issued monthly, named The National Amateur, it being the organ of its different officers, and edited by an official editor.

Nearly all the amateur papers ran tickets in advance of conventions, the same as do professionals in politics; and the keenest interest and rivalry were manifested in these yearly gatherings, which usually went in turns from the East to the West.

There was an effort made to organize an amateur press association in Lancaster county, and the subject was well ventilated in its several papers; but the project fell through, owing, in part, to slower communication in 1877 than now existing, when trolley lines can readily accommodate meetings of kindred organizations at most any part in the district.

D. B. LANDIS.

Author: Landis, David Bachman, 1862-

Title: Amateur journalism / by D. B. Landis.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Amateur journalism--Pennsylvania--Lancaster County.
Journalism--Pennsylvania--Lancaster County.
Lancaster County (Pa.)--Publishing.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society,
1904/1905

Description: [271]-282 p. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 9,
no. 9

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.9

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

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