

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The Core Literary Community of Chicago in the 1920s & 1930s:

The Chicagoan and the Lost Legacy of Print Magazine

Journalism

By

Urooj Naveed

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Writer's Note

I shall not die
henceforth I am alive forever
for I have scattered far and wide
the seeds of speech
- Firdausi

Researching and writing this work has allowed me to time-travel to the early twentieth-century journalistic world. It is a world much different than what is shown in the movies and novels about the era, especially when one focuses on a single city. *The Chicagoan*, especially, is a unique text to work on for a master's thesis: it's fun, lighthearted, and somehow did not feel like academic work at all even though I worked on it at a university most famous for its academic rigor. I hope that the readers can learn similar lessons from the magazine as I did, this above all others: print journalism and literary cultures are some of the best ways to preserve cultural/political/economic/artistic history for the future and encourage community creativity in the present. *The Chicagoan* is just one example of how local talent can be nurtured, with a few editors and publishers deciding that their city needs a local magazine.

As I will be noting plenty of times in this thesis, *The Chicagoan* is a magazine that was lost to history, thus finding it was a true matter of luck. The idea for this project came about as many academic ventures do: by a recommendation from an excellent librarian (Elizabeth Frengel) who works for the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago. She recommended a magazine titled "The Chicagoan" when I told her about my interests in early twentieth-century literary/print history in Chicago. I was immediately interested and ran up to the third floor of the Regenstein to check out Neil Harris' *The Chicagoan: A Lost Magazine of the Jazz Age* (2008). After skimming the gigantic book, I checked it out and took it around campus with me to read in between classes. As more and more people asked me what I was carrying and I explained the

contents of the book to them, I knew that I had finalized my thesis topic. Harris's work has become the anchor of my thesis, being just as important as the magazine itself. My research would not be possible without that initial discovery (also in the Regenstein Library) and pivotal research by Neil Harris.

My thesis builds upon the work of and recommendation of two core members of the UChicago community—Neil Harris and Elizabeth Frengel. Thank you, both, for laying the groundwork for this thesis.

In this project, I am writing many figures, especially female literary figures, back into history. While this is a tremendously honoring task, I acknowledge that it is not comprehensive by any means. I barely scratch the surface in this project and years more of research is needed to truly bring the lost literary community of Chicago back to light.

As for referring to the literary figures in this work, especially the women, I stick to their names used most prominently. Sometimes pseudonyms, last name changes due to marriages(s), and the use of initials tend to make identification unclear, especially if the figure is not well-known. For this matter, I have done my best to verify and only include those figures to whom I am sure I can attribute their works. Historical integrity leads me to not make assumptions about any figures, yet I would encourage readers to use some imagination to deduce that if a certain amount of literary works have survived by a specific figure, it is very likely that they had written much more or that if a writer seemed involved in social issues, that person may have been part of a dedicated movement towards bettering their society, traces of which might not have survived to this day. This historical imagination can allow readers to truly understand the significance of the magazine and the community that produced it.

This project is limited to a specific time, essentially that of *The Chicagoan's* publication which spans the 1920s and 1930s. Hence, anytime “The Chicagoan’s era” or “the city at that time” is mentioned, it should be assumed that the 1920s and 1930s Chicago is being referred to here. Any other time or location will otherwise be specified, which is often used for the sake of comparison or context.

This thesis is written in a professional format, one that emulates what a long-form journalism serial piece for a magazine would look like. This is partly to stick with the theme of *The Chicagoan's* writing and partly to train myself on a new writing style as a historian.

The thesis, in its entirety, is dedicated to the writers, artists, journalists, and creatives whose work has been lost to history. I hope this thesis serves as an inspiration to dig out those pieces in a library closest to you.

Lastly, but most notably, I would like to thank my family for making the entire research and writing process bearable. Thank you my parents and siblings for supporting me in my silliest of adventures and providing support when I insist on taking the path less traveled.

Introduction

The 1920s and 1930s were probably the best time to be a Chicago journalist or writer. There was bustling immigration increasing the city's population by the day, "[The Great Migration](#)" brought hundreds of thousands of African Americans looking for better working and living conditions, women gained more space in the public and professional sphere, and the jazz industry was unlike any other. The cherry on top: Chicago had just won the [1933 World's Fair](#) after having successfully hosted the [1893 World's Fair](#), effectively beating New York for the hosting privileges (twice) right in time for the city's centennial. Amidst all this, Chicago was a city fighting crime, poverty, the mafia, an epidemic, an economic depression, and racism. "[Chicago was what journalists called good copy](#)" (11).

THE WORLD'S FAIR

HORSE SHOW!

OCTOBER 21
TO
OCTOBER 29
INCLUSIVE

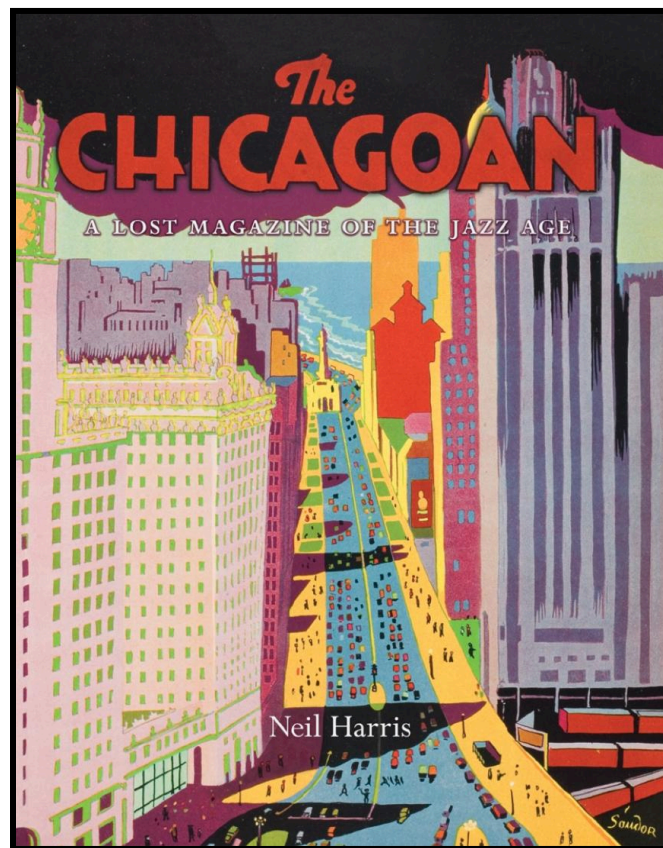
1933
A CENTURY OF PROGRESS
CHICAGO

124th. FIELD ARTILLERY ARMORY
52nd and Cottage Grove Avenue

FOR FULL INFORMATION CALL
Dearborn 2919
General Offices 39 So. La Salle St., Chicago, Ill.

[Vol. 14, No. 2, September 1, 1933](#), inside cover

Chicago excelled at journalism in the early twentieth century, arguably being the one of the best in the country. This community consisted of [Ben Hecht](#) (journalist, screenwriter, author), [Joseph Medill](#) (*Tribune* publisher, politician), and [William Randolph Hearst](#) (owner of *American*, *Examiner*, *Herald*). This was the era where the newspapers effectively created the news and the journalistic wonders of the city made it popular worldwide. So it is not surprising that the literary heritage of the city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was so strong that historians today are tasked with the responsibility of finding and bringing the lesser-known works to light. One such attempt has been made in this project, to bring a magazine back to the attention of Chicagoans that attempted to wholly represent them, which praised and criticized the city, and highlighted some of the best literary talent of its time.



[*The Chicagoan: A Lost Magazine of the Jazz Age*](#)

[*The Chicagoan*](#), a magazine that ran from 1926 to 1935, published writing, poetry, news, reviews, and artwork by some of the most prominent Chicagoans of the time. Despite the magazine running for almost a decade, it was lost to history. The only comprehensive analysis or academic historical study that exists of the magazine is [*The Chicagoan: A Lost Magazine of the Jazz Age*](#). In this 2008 publication, the University of Chicago Professor Emeritus Neil Harris re-introduces *The Chicagoan* to the world, almost eight decades after it went out of business and disappeared into the historical void. The book contains an informational introduction to the magazine, a full-color reprinting of one issue, cover pages, selected editorials, cartoons, advertisements, and a list of contributors with brief descriptions.

Chicago journalism has its well-known celebrities—the Pulitzers and the Hearsts and the Medills—*The Chicagoan* was not owned by them and neither does this project attempt to connect it to the same legacies. These journalistic giants’ influence is certainly felt and mentioned in *The Chicagoan*, but the story of the magazine is the story of the rest of the journalists, the “[girl reporters](#),” the artists in training at the Art Institute, and those who never published anything beyond an article in the magazine. Many had been educated in local institutions such as Northwestern, the University of Chicago, and/or the Art Institute of Chicago. They had worked for at least one other daily newspaper or journal such as the *Tribune*, *Daily News*, *Evening Post*, *Herald*, etc. Ultimately, many ended up in New York, Washington D.C., California, or Paris to make their livings in the flourishing publishing, political, and entertainment industries, leaving behind the rich literary and journalistic culture they had contributed to in the “second city.”

The Chicagoan provides a lens less used when looking at the history of the early twentieth century—a lens of the magazine world, a lens of the creatives, and the lens of a

generation that was dealing with the legacy of a devastating World War, changing societal values, rapidly advancing technology, all the while trying to make sense of their own identities in an urban environment.

The Chicagoan was published at a time of great competition for magazines. Even [Time](#) magazine, which was founded a few years earlier in 1923, had an incredibly difficult time staying afloat in the beginning. It struggled with circulation, writers, sales, and receiving praise. This was a common struggle for new magazines in the 1920s since they were competing with talented new creatives publishing nationally and internationally at previously unprecedented rates.



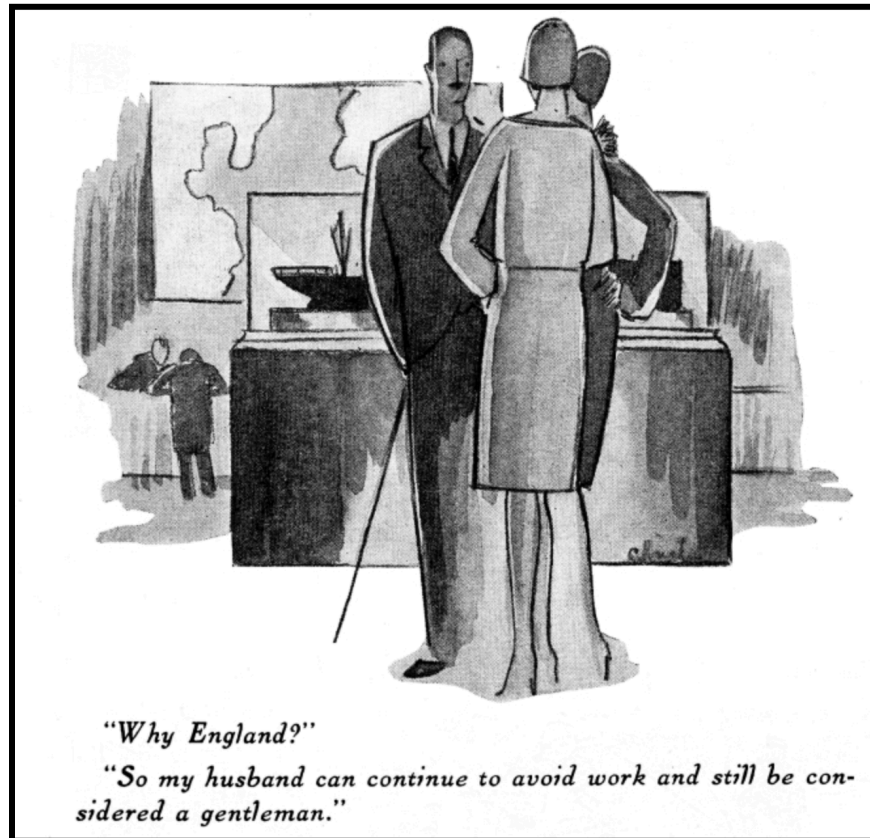
[The New Yorker February 21, 1925](#)

The Chicagoan was entirely based on, or rather plagiarized structure and style from [The New Yorker](#), a magazine they envied and took inspiration from for being focused on the city it was produced in. *The New Yorker* initially started as a humorous venture known for its cartoons/artwork and focused heavily on the city's entertainment sources, featuring its own artists and celebrities. It was also a magazine initially troubled by the [frequent reorganization of staff with editors being fired left and right](#), but it eventually found its footing as loyal readership grew and WW2 and the Vietnam War gave it a more political stance. *The New Yorker* magazine has lasted to this day and has had its successes in both affecting the mainstream culture and fashion—notice the amount of *New Yorker* tote bags you see on college campuses around the country. When looking at the success of *The New Yorker* in this capacity, one cannot help but question why *The Chicagoan*, being of the same style and quality, was not able to survive even a decade. The purpose of this thesis is not to answer that question but to re-discover the talent that produced this magazine. With the magazine itself and the currently available secondary sources from this era, there is no concrete answer for why *The Chicagoan* went out of business. Based on Neil Harris's analyses, one can blame the ["painfully modest rise in circulation,"](#) which might have existed because Chicago could not provide the literary audience and market needed for this magazine to flourish, as New York did for *The New Yorker*. Further, the magazine catered to a remarkably specific white-elite audience, claiming to represent the entire city yet ignoring the growing African American and immigrant populations.

Starting a magazine, based entirely on *The New Yorker* at this time, was a conscious choice by the editing and publishing team, who wanted to highlight the greatness of Chicago and provide it with a literary magazine as the centennial grew closer. Martin Quigley, the publisher and editor who took over the magazine in 1927 after it went out of print for four months, made

clear that *The Chicagoan* was to fill a void of literary representation that the city suffered from.

Harris emphasizes this commitment by Quigley: “[Whatever Chicago was and was to be *The Chicagoan* must be and become](#)” (7).



The English are so very tolerant of free speech one becomes suspicious. After all, may it not be that this tolerance is based on the invincible stupidity of a people whom no reason could move to action?

[Vol. 3, No. 1, March 26, 1927](#), pages 22 & 17

Suffice it to say, *The Chicagoan*’s contributors wrote their opinions clearly. No matter how controversial, racist, sexist, or critical, these journalists, writers, and reviewers were unafraid to be biased. This might come as a surprise to those who expect journalists to be

objective, allowing the audiences to make up their own minds. But that is mostly a contemporary understanding of journalism, for journalists in the nineteenth and early twentieth century wrote in a prose-like manner, employing literary devices in their journalistic writings. *The Chicagoan* operated in this manner too, the writers' personalities and opinions shone through in their writings. Whether it be through satire or plain insults, a reader could understand which people/places the contributors disliked. Whether it be through exaggeration or praise, a reader could understand which people/places the contributors liked. In this way, the magazine serves as a great source to also study the individuals—and by extension—the community that created it.



[Vol. 1, No. 1, June 14, 1926](#), page 9

The initial team that brought *The Chicagoan* to life was small: [Marie Armstrong Hecht/Essipoff](#) was the founding editor and author, [Clarence Joseph \(C.J.\) Bulliet](#) was an art critic, [Samuel Putnam](#) was a journalist and translator, [Robert Pollak](#) was a UChicago alumni and music critic, Boris Reidel was the illustrator, [Anthony Angarola](#) was a painter who taught at the Art Institute of Chicago, and Albert Carreno was a caricature artist.

In the second issue, the editor changed to [Harry Segall](#), who eventually migrated to Hollywood to become a screenwriter and playwright. When the first editor switch happened, in a typical *Chicagoan* satirical style, the magazine dismissed concerns about its own death: [“We hasten to explain that recently a collection of Chicago literary lights rushed pell mell to their Coronas, and through the columns of their respective newspapers proclaimed to their public that we have died at birth and that our editors had fled en masse from so harrowing a sight.”](#) Two issues later, writer John McGrath took over the editorship, and after that art director and cover designer Dean Patty, and then artist [Arthur Ruddy](#). At one point, writer Ruth Bergman was the editor. Many others passed through the editor position at this magazine even into the 1930s.

The magazine was highly unstable in the beginning as evident from the editor changes. There must have been financial issues as well since the publishers also changed from L.M. Rosen and L.R. Rosen to the Quigley Publishers (Quigley was also an editor of the magazine). The instability of publication was also evidence of financial turbulence. Although the regular schedule was bi-weekly publications, eventually there was only one issue a month.

Barring the irregularities of publication schedules and editors, the magazine’s themes and topics remained the same. A significant chunk of the magazine focused on reviewing art, theater, music, books, and everything the editors considered to be “civilized” about the city. Some columns/features were regular, for example: Samuel Putnam wrote celebrity profiles, Robert Pollak critiqued music and opera, Charles C. Collins covered drama, and Susan Wilbur Jones did the book reviews. Other columns were more transitive, but the magazine was consistent in its coverage of the city’s art, happenings around town, and people they considered to be important. They stated their intention in the first issue: [“It is not our desire to be a Literary Index, nor a waste-basket. Our purpose, if any, is to give expression to Chicagoans’ thoughts, to assure the](#)

[amusement and diversion of Our Public](#) (5).” Whether they achieved this or not is certainly up to the readers to decide, but they did produce an entertaining and witty product.

The CHICAGOAN

knows this town and likes it. To report it gleefully is our business. And our readers, who know and do something or other about the place, include:

 <p>MRS. EDITH ROCKEFELLER McCORMICK</p> <p>MR. WALTER BREWSTER</p> <p>MR. JAMES HOUGHTELING</p> <p>MR. STANLEY FIELD</p> <p>MR. IKE BLOOM</p> <p>MR. PAUL ASH</p> <p>MR. PARKER BLAIR</p> <p>MR. GEORGE E. BRENNAN</p>	<p>COL. H. B. HACKETT</p> <p>MR. JAMES R. FORGAN</p> <p>MR. HOLMES FORSYTHE</p> <p>MR. JOHN V. FARWELL</p> <p>MR. EDWARD KHOLSAAT</p> <p>MR. MAX BALABAN</p> <p>MR. WILLIAM HALE THOMPSON</p> <p>MR. GEORGE REYNOLDS</p>
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The Chicagoan
407 So. Dearborn St.
Chicago, Ill.

Send "The Chicagoan" one year \$3.00—two years \$5.00.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Somewhere, somehow your tastes coincide with those of one or more of our cash customers. To your right—the dotted line!

[The Chicagoan, August 27, 1927](#), page 1

When it comes to the audience, the magazine aligned itself with the upper echelons of society. This was a wealthy and white audience who was more interested in the entertainment life, some gossip, caricatures of politicians, and travel recommendations rather than the latest on [Al Capone](#) (but there was plenty about Al Capone in the magazine nonetheless). They advertised themselves as an “urban,” “civilized,” “sophisticated,” and an “educated” magazine. They mentioned these values among their contributors and readers in almost every issue, so they were rather desperate to create this image for themselves, especially in the beginning years.

1. Chicago from the eyes of *The Chicagoan*

Chi-CA-go: It's a crescent-shaped town, 26 miles by 15, along a great lake that's begun to weaken and recede. No wonder. An unchallenged murder record—a splendid university—hobo capital of the country—railroad ruler, corn baron, liquor king—and the finest of grand opera.

Altogether the most zestful spectacle on the sphere.

[*The Chicagoan*, August 27, 1927](#), page 1

[Mrs. O'Leary's fiery cow](#), [Janet Ayer Fairbank](#), [bootlegging](#)—some of Chicago's most famous myths, celebrities, phenomena, and even rumors are usually the most noticeable, and still understandable references to the city in *The Chicagoan's* writings. Other publications at the time, whether it be *The Chicago Tribune*, *Examiner*, *Defender*, *Daily News*, etc., portrayed a certain vision of the city, one in which politics, crime, corruption, the hustle and bustle of city life and the misery of poverty took center stage. *The Chicagoan*, on the other hand, a magazine with all intentions to portray Chicago in its entirety as a city, often did not discuss mainstream politics or anything that the newspapers were already covering. They frequently responded sarcastically to the way a newspaper covered a certain story. Or in this example, made fun of certain government actions: “[A farmer down in Gallipolis, Ohio, complains to the prohibition authorities that his bees shirk their task of gathering honey, loiter about stills in the neighborhood and return to the hives at night staggering drunk. Our next Congress, undoubtedly, will pass a bill limiting the alcoholic content of honey](#)” (23). The Prohibition, in particular, was a topic the magazine discussed plenty of times, poking fun at the government authorities without fear. The magazine was almost publishing parallel to journalistic understandings of Chicago. Thus, in this way, they created an image of the city one cannot extrapolate from just the newspaper archives, or even from the novels of that era (see the *Ode to Chicago Renaissance* article for more details).

If you can afford luxurious vacation comfort—read this

YOU'LL be pleasantly surprised to find all this at Breezy Point Lodge in the very heart of Minnesota's cool North Woods: private tiled baths...a French chef...valet service... beauty shop...in fact, all the luxurious comforts of the most exclusive city hotel.

Do you prefer the seclusion of an individual vacation home? Then choose among the fifty private cottages equipped with modern conveniences, electric lights, bell-boy and maid service.

DIVERTING AS DEANVILLE

There's Big Pelican Lake for the swimmers... superb golfing for the Bobby Joneses...sail-boats for the Jack Tars... bowling and billiards for the Indoor Athletes... fishing for the Izaak Walton's... complete recreation facilities you'd ordinarily find only in Deanville and other Spas.

Make this year's vacation something to be remembered! Spend it at America's smartest summering place... Breezy Point Lodge. Write for complete information on Breezy Point Lodge, now.

BEAUTIFUL BOOKLET SENT ON REQUEST

Farrington's Breezy Point LODGE
on big Pelican Lake
PEQUOT - MINN.

The Manager, Breezy Point Lodge, Dept. A986
Big Pelican Lake, Pequot, Minn.
Please send me beautiful booklet giving complete information on Breezy Point Lodge.

Name: _____
Address: _____

[Vol. 9, No. 7, June 21, 1930](#), inside cover

The Chicagoan focused on promoting metropolitan, or urban, life which included music, art, theater, sport, socializing, and books. Unsurprisingly, a good chunk of the magazine, often 4-5 pages out of the 32-40 (the pages varied widely, sometimes the magazine would be 80 pages in the 1930s) it would publish, were entirely dedicated to advertisements. These advertisements were not for daily use items, but rather extravagant gowns, fancy cars, trips on cruises, and overall expensive commodities that a common person in Chicago would not have been able to afford. This focus of the advertisements indicated the magazine's focus as well, one that catered to privilege and a life of pleasure and leisure, rather than the hustle.

The very first cover of the magazine, that of the June 14, 1926 issue was perhaps the first time the magazine attempted to fit their version of what the city was all on one sheet.



[Vol. 1, No.1, June 14, 1926](#)

Pictured above, the cover designed by [Boris Riedel](#) has an image of a police officer on the top left, buildings and the title in red (perhaps indicating blood from crimes), the *Daily Tribune & Examiner* (possibly an ode to the journalistic wonders of the city), the gunmen (referring to the violence in the city), a typewriter, music, cabaret, men and women. It would be unfair to reduce the magazine's understanding of the city to just this cover page, but it is

fascinating that the image of Chicago painted in the first cover art is the same as one would understand from a newspaper of the time even though the magazine makes clear how it does not wish to become like those sources of news for the city. And for the most part, the magazine achieves this goal. Take, for example, the difference between the contents of the Chicago Daily Tribune and The Chicagoan in July of 1927:



Chicago Daily Tribune, 02 July 1927



The
CHICAGOAN

SURVEYS

Music Merchants
—
Strike Mania
—
The War Show
—
Urban Gardening
—
Oak Park
—
Gas
—
The Right Word
—
Loop Parking
—
The Constant Gift
—
The Recondite Few
—
The 4th
—
Mencken
—

of good to see the loop, festive for a day at least, without a single lip-red street car on the tracks.

Sales Talk

It was truly an unusual sunset—a soured-to-the-cowlick color spree which was not without a suggestion of Volsteadian improvisation and the consequent but unconsoling irregularity which usually follows.

And it was with the sweeping abandon of a wide-eyed (if a bit wall-eyed) celebrant just before his head is pulled out of the fireplace that the sky showed uninhibitedly and without regrets its wildest and wittiest colors. A brave display changing from the pale

tint of two-cent stamps to orange sberbert, then to ripe squash, and, as a final achievement, to a splashy but certainly unstable effect of a grandstand during the first touchdown of a college football game. That it ended finally on a hue not dissimilar to the present complexion of the Art Institute has nothing to do with this incident.

It was while the sky was still on its feet, liquidly speaking, and its head out of the fireplace that a young man standing on the corner of North Avenue and Astor Street said to his companion: "Isn't it slick to walk on a night like this, with a bright canopy over you," he continued pointing toward the awninged Heavens. "It's like going into a night club."

"Or," put in his companion, who was just a few jumps ahead of him, "Or going to a wedding," she added, picking up a flower and looking as naive as Milwaukee as she did so.

Jesture

SOME time the city council is to take definite action on an ordinance introduced by Alderman Prignano requiring women to wear paper shields when they try on dresses in Chicago shops and stores.

The proposition puts the women of the city on the front line of defense against what will probably be an avalanche of similar "sanitary" legislation in case the city fathers approve of this one, i. e., donning fresh cotton gloves before inspecting silks; wearing gauze masks before addressing sales women; dropping coins in paper containers before paying for purchases, etc.

Or, on the other hand, women may retaliate by sponsoring a number of ordinances of their own, such as one to compel the submission of proposed ordinances to a committee known to have a sense of humor.

Plain Voter

THE hardy perennial, the street car strike rumor, has blossomed again. A mooth and mournful outlook.

Now there is in our fluorescent make-up, questioned as it may be at times, rather an insured hunch that the chances are about ten to one for a compromise.

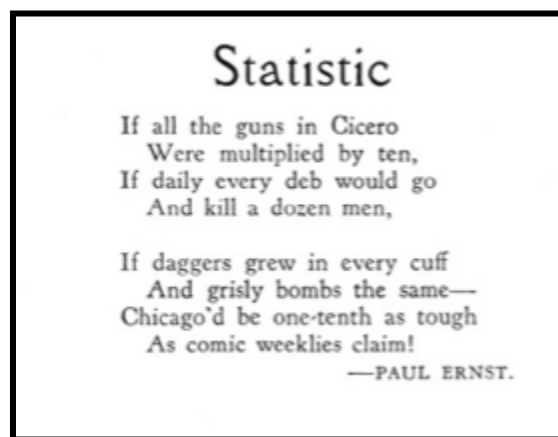
And with no intention in mind to sidestep the convenience of the plain but insistent voter, we do wish that the street car boys, just for one blasting democratic blowup, would become real mad and actually quit. It would do our mid-western hearts no small gutta

[Vol. 3, No. 8, July 2, 1927, page 7](#)

Between the two examples, the level of seriousness concerning the news of the time and the style of writing vary widely. That is the difference *The Chicagoan* itself wanted to employ in the magazine, writing about Chicago in a way that was "gleeful." Of course, journalistic manipulation, political corruption, and rampant crime are common topics in the magazine's

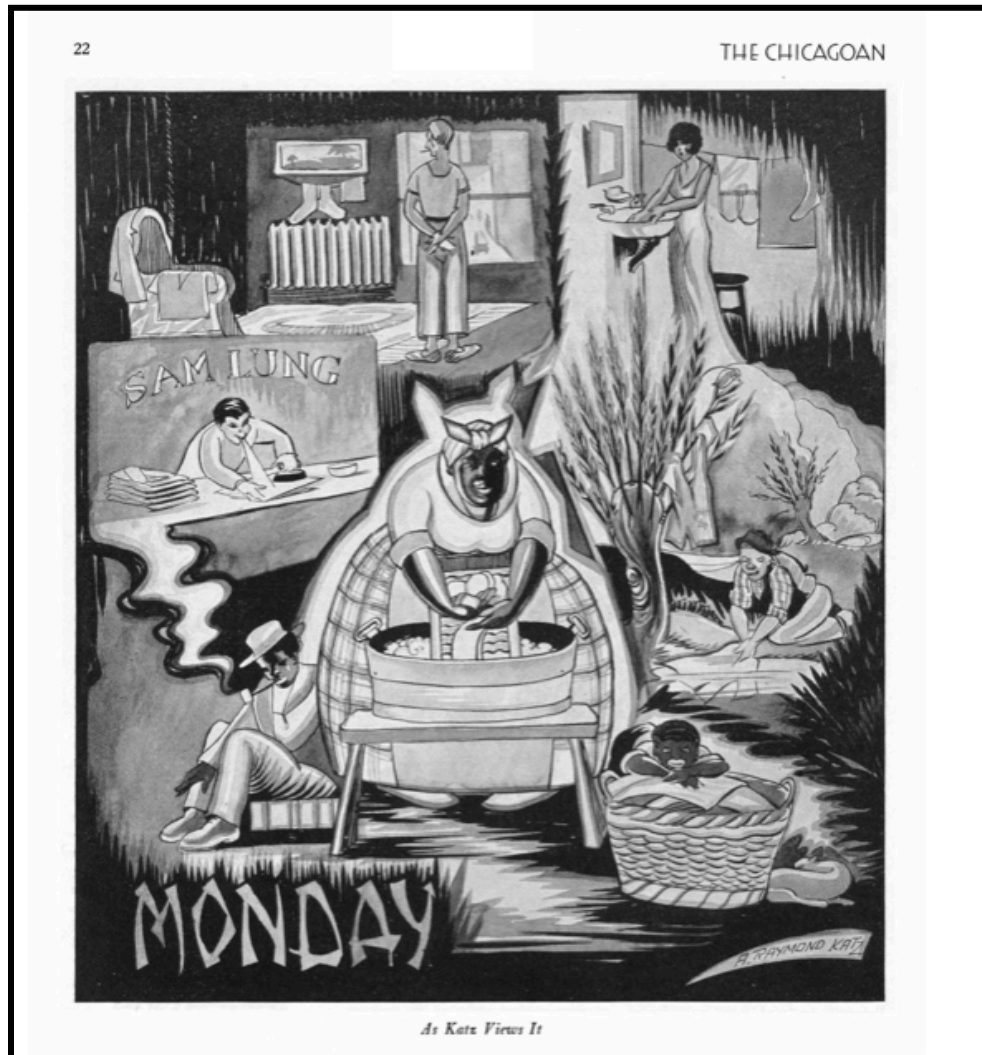
issues. But the core difference would be in the priorities of coverage. The artistic and literary circles remain the core focus of the magazine's coverage, instead of the day-to-day happenings of the city which they only cover humorously. For the entertainment coverage, they devoted multiple pages in the beginning (just like *The New Yorker*) to events happening in the city. Everything from lectures at the University of Chicago to vaudeville shows to the Art Institute's new exhibitions were included in these pages, followed by reviewers' critiques and praises for entertainment in the rest of the issue. The magazine took these sections seriously. Marie Armstrong Hecht/Essipoff did the theater reviews for some months until she presumably left for New York (see *The Female Gaze: Chicago and The Chicagoan from Female Perspectives* article for more on her life story). She was the first editor of the magazine and though her editorship was short—the magazine went through quite a few editors in the first few years—her impact on the magazine and her influence in the field overall is still felt.

The Chicagoan has a complicated understanding of the city, to be sure. There are moments where it entirely rejects the popular understanding of the city which links it to crime and corruption, on another note, it almost brushes these characteristics off as background facts not to be festered upon.



Statistic by Paul Ernst

At points, the magazine spouts out racist remarks and features rather shocking images that display caricatures of people of color. Despite this blatant racism, the magazine included vaudeville and jazz shows regularly as part of its' entertainment recommendations.



[Vol. 1, No. 2, July 15, 1926](#), page 22

Fascinatingly enough, during the Prohibition period (1920-1933) which coincided with the majority of the magazine's lifespan, *The Chicagoan* was unafraid of criticizing the amendment and actively teaching its readers how to make liquor at home or the conditions in which it was found outside. Chicago was, after all, the capital of large-scale bootlegging, or at

least the magazine claimed it to be so. It was the distribution center for the rest of the Midwest. Everything from bribing officials to get alcohol transported to the violence in the Chicago alleys that took place because of this business, the magazine discussed it all pretty openly from the very first issue:

The Chicagoan—An Entertainment—we are striving for nothing better—a personality—not a crusade for any particular Shibolet; not a graceful gesture in the direction of Mrs. O’Leary’s cow; nor, an attempt to corrupt the morals of the Prohibition Agents. The dear old law does not prevent anyone’s having a good time. Favoring, Law Enforcement generally, we naturally endorse prohibition specifically—not only that, we will give a prize to anyone who can find it.

[Vol. 1, No. 1, June 14, 1926](#), page 5

The magazine in later issues alluded to receiving criticism for their openness in discussing prohibition specifically, though that did not stop them from talking about bootlegging and prohibition in general well into the 1930s.

THE CURE FOR PROHIBITION

A Forthright Discussion of the National Embarrassment

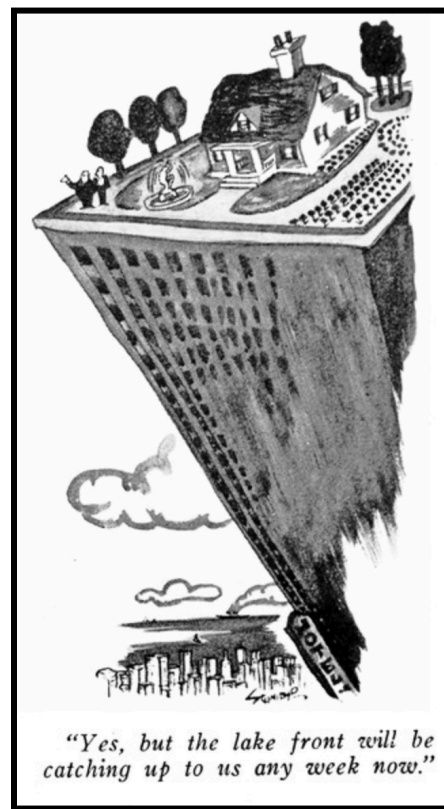
By COL. IRA L. REEVES

An article in [Vol. 12, No. 1, August 1931](#) issue, page 17

Samuel Putnam, a frequent contributor to the magazine and a competent journalist and author in his own right, wrote about his own journalism experience during this time in his autobiographical piece [Paris Was Our Mistress: Memoirs of a Lost and Found Generation](#) (1947). In this book, he mentions the biggest journalistic topics of the time being “prohibition,” “the speakeasy,” “Al Capone,” “the flapper,” “bobbed hair,” and “flaming youth.” *The Chicagoan* happens to somewhat overlap with these topics as well, though very little they wrote

about them was written in a socially constructive or praiseful manner, they happened to stay on the side of sarcasm or criticism for the most part.

Chicago is a city of neighborhoods, and *The Chicagoan* reflected this fact. Thus, the magazine often covered different neighborhoods or referred to them with their reputations. In a 1928 issue, Ruth G. Bergman, a frequent contributor and editor to the magazine, wrote about Hyde Park.



[Vol. 4, No. 11, February 25, 1928](#), page 11

In typical *Chicagoan* sarcastic style, she started off the article with: "[Hyde Park is a curious place. One of its most curious features is that nobody knows exactly where it is](#)" (11).

This is because the village of [Hyde Park](#) was only annexed by the city in 1889 and the University of Chicago's emergence there in the 1890s, soon followed by the World Columbian Exposition in 1893 in Jackson Park, led to the prominence of Hyde Park but the actual borders of this former

township were still confusing. Hyde Park was an influential place from the early twentieth century also because [Carl Sandburg](#), Ben Hecht, [Clarence Darrow](#), and [Vachel Lindsay](#), among many other literary and musical figures, made this place their home. Bergman also alluded to the “[filling in](#)” of Hyde Park to the point that it would eventually collude with Indiana, referring to the filling of the Michigan Lake with the fire debris of the Great Chicago Fire in 1871 which also continued to prepare the “land” for the World Exposition in 1893. In this way, the magazine articles can teach an audience a lot about the city’s history. Hiding behind the jokes and the sarcasm are deep contexts, understood only when one tries to figure out how Chicago came to be and learn the little-known histories of its individual and highly influential neighborhoods.

The Chicagoan defended its reputation with rigor, responding aptly to critiques of the city from foreigners, especially from New Yorkers (see *The Second City Complex: How The Chicagoan Viewed New York* article). Chicago was a city that was criticized frequently. From the stockyards to the pollution to the rapid industrialization, there was much about the aesthetics and environment of the city that both Chicagoans and foreigners loathed. However, the magazine rarely criticized its own city in such harsh terms. In one instance in 1927, the magazine defended its beloved city by acknowledging all of its faults, which it did not take too seriously:

We shall, certainly, make no attempt to prove that Chicago is the cleanest, the safest or the most moral spot on the new hemisphere; the newspapers won’t stand for it: nor, it may be said, shall we insist that it is the dirtiest, the most wicked, or the most uncultured city in the country all that we shall leave to the virgin opus of each budding eastern journalist.

And as for us, we shall try to content ourselves with the knowledge that Chicago, even before the lions were praised, was tolerated for its indifference, for its quick manner of thumbing noses at the gibes of foreigners, and then, in a mood of contrition, of smiling unforgivably. What if Chicago is, as our reviewers rejoice in insisting, a youth with uncombed hair. Let his hair be uncombed. Let the wind blow through it. Or even if he had a bit of loam in his pocket. It’s good, clean glacial deposit. And should there be a little murder occasionally, a spit of excitement on the west side, well—

[April 9, 1927, Vol. 3, No. 2, Page 6](#)

The Chicagoan took their city's identity seriously, so much so that it frequently published self-advertisements claiming to be the only publication that truly understood what Chicago was.

The CHICAGOAN

presents this city through the medium of artists and writers wise in the beauty and gusto of a tremendous civic spectacle. It presents, too, sprightly and knowing comment on the Chicago scene. And it catches up and translates for you the things in and of Chicago which merit the attention of an aware, discriminating, and intelligent spectator interested in his city and alive to its significance.

THE CHICAGOAN we propose as a Christmas reminder. The town in its pages. All the year 'round.

There's nothing to prevent you sending an excellent Christmas gift to yourself. In fact it's the smart thing. The dotted line forms on the right.

The Chicagoan
407 South Dearborn St.
Chicago, Illinois

Send the Chicagoan together with a card announcing it as the Christmas gift of.....to the recipient named below, for which I enclose \$3 for one year. The recipient is:

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Note: Two Christmas subscriptions, \$5. One two-year subscription the same.

[Vol. 4, No. 7, December 31, 1927](#)

Sometimes, they even included tests! Try one out for yourself:

Certificate of Awareness

I **AM** a Chicagoan.

I **DO** know my Chicago.

I **HAVE** been to the Art Institute.

I have **NOT** seen the Union Stock Yards.

I **WILL** stick with Chicago if Illinois secedes.

I **MUST** have my fortnightly copy of *The aware Chicagoan* delivered to me regularly by mail, at your absurdly democratic price of \$3 for 26 issues, and my name **IS**:

.....

(Address).....

[Vol. 3, No. 8, July 2, 1927, page 29](#)

Any native Chicagoan will be able to recognize the joke here, even in 2024. Every city has its well-loved and well-hated places, *The Chicagoan* manages to make art, as always, a core part of the Chicagoan's identity, and the meatpacking industry—well, they do not want to talk about it. Placing the Art Institute above all other locations in Chicago to visit, the certificate of awareness allows people to feel like they belong to Chicago and must subscribe to this magazine which is as much of a priority as seeing the [Art Institute](#) and NOT seeing the [Stock Yards](#) is.

2. The Female Gaze: Chicago and *The Chicagoan* from Female Perspectives

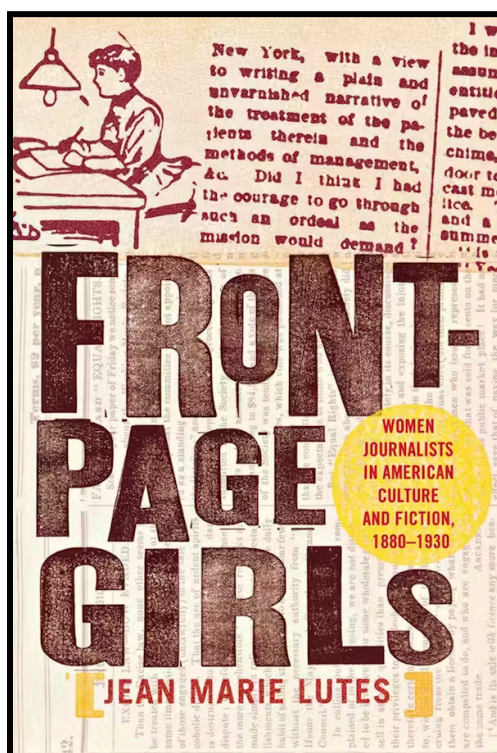
Just 150 years ago (a fairly short timeline in the great span of history), women in journalism were not accepted the same way they are today. The stories of [Nellie Bly](#), [Ida Tarbell](#), and [Ida B. Wells](#) are well-known, but there are a plethora of female journalists in every major American hub that have been deliberately excluded from the history of journalism, literary/print cultures, and overall American history. While this article does not include a comprehensive list or overview by any means, it re-introduces some of the main female figures in journalism and literary society in *The Chicagoan*'s inner and outer circles. Most of the women mentioned in this article will not come up on Google searches. And if they do, there will be scant information even though many of them have entire books published in their names. Hence, it is important to think about the systematic erasure of women from practically every arena of history, even the one that is considered to be the "first draft of history."

Even in one of the most comprehensive examinations of Chicago journalism in the late nineteenth and a good chunk of the twentieth century, Wayne Klatt's [Chicago Journalism: A History](#), the coverage of female reporters and writers is curiously missing, hovering over some of the most active female reporters of the time, only mentioning them due to the "girl reporter" phenomenon or if they were married to other journalists.

So how does one go about understanding properly the journalistic environment of that time when a proportion of the reporters are not included in the histories? The answer may lay in doing more research and re-discovering the works written by women. Thankfully, many researchers have already started working on this.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both white and black women were already a prominent part of the newspaper and magazine industry. However, as a result of blatant

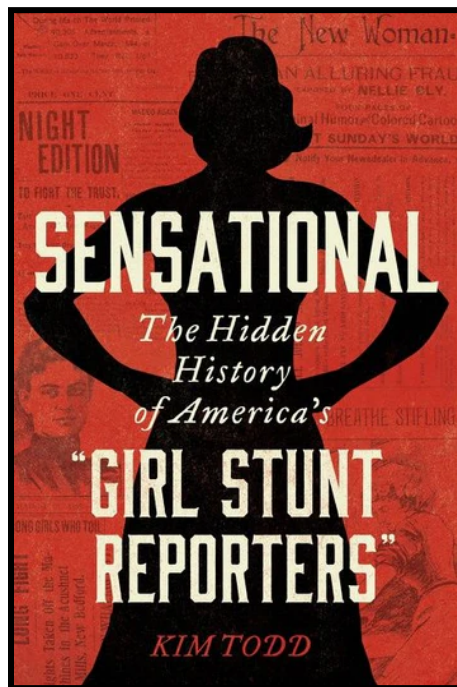
sexism in American society and especially in the male-dominated journalism field, they had to fight the battle to cover the stories they wanted to cover, report from the field, and have their name on the bylines they wrote. In the midst of fighting these battles, many classifications for female reporters emerged, some derogatory, others descriptive. Jean Marie Lutes, in her book [*Front Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880-1930*](#) explains all of these classifications in great detail and the lives and struggles of many of the forgotten American female journalists.



[*Front Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880-1930*](#)

There were three main titles Lutes focuses on that come up often when studying female journalists: girl-stunt reporters, sob sisters, and reporter heroines. These are not just titles created by historians, they were used actively during the era and referred to in publications like *The Chicagoan* to refer to women journalists' work.

The “[girl-stunt reporters](#)” were the journalists who would embed themselves in difficult and/or dangerous situations to report. Girl reporters were used by editors for their “advantages,” for example going to a victim’s house to gather their story or using their female attributes to get a woman to talk in a way a male reporter would be unable to do so. John J. McPhaul, in his book [Deadlines & Monkeyshines: The Fabled World of Chicago Journalism](#) discusses the prejudice female reporters had to fight as they would be assigned to roles and stories the editors deemed appropriate for a girl to cover. Coming from an insider’s account which also tends to air on the side of sexism every once in a while, McPhaul’s book shows no matter how hard women fought these roles assigned to them, the industry’s understanding of a female journalists’ work remained restricted and unappreciative. Hence, women journalists at the time probably felt the need to put themselves in incredibly dangerous situations, going on international trips, and risking their lives to prove that their reporting was also valuable.



Kim Todd’s [Sensational: The Hidden History of America’s “Girl Stunt Reporters”](#) covers the topic effectively by highlighting the most daring and famous women journalists of the Gilded

Age. [Nellie Bly](#)'s work obviously takes the front stage, since she admittedly started the whole genre of stunt reporting. Bly's successes led to girl-stunt reporters emerging all over the nation and Chicago had an impressive roster of its very own girl-stunt reporters.

In the late nineteenth century, a schoolteacher named Helen Cusack writing under the pseudonym [Nell Nelson](#) exposed child labor exploitation, sexual assault, and horrible working conditions in Chicago's factories. Her work was published in *The Chicago Times* in 1880, long before [Jacob Riis](#) or [Upton Sinclair](#) wrote their respective exposes of the exploitative factory working conditions, yet there exists a great discrepancy in remembrance of these muckrakers. Cusack kept her writing's focus on the impossibility of earning a living wage, no matter how hard a person worked. She was a journalist-activist, which was common for the journalists and muckrakers of the Gilded Age. Similar to other journalistic and literary figures (See *The Second City Complex: How The Chicagoan Viewed New York* for more details on the intellectual exodus from Chicago) Cusack left eventually to work in New York, conducting investigations into factory work for *The World*. *The Chicago Times* started using "girl-stunt reporters" more after Cusack's success covering a host of controversial societal issues from abortion to mental asylums.

[Genevieve Forbes-Herrick](#) (1894-1962), Chicago's Nellie Bly if you will, attended [McPherson grammar and Lake View high schools](#) and graduated from Northwestern University in 1916. She then went on to get an M.A. in English from the University of Chicago. She was a "girl reporter" at the *Chicago Tribune*, who had to fight to cover local and/or political stories and later became a regular contributor to *The Chicagoan*.

In 1921, Forbes-Herrick convinced the newspaper editors and went to Ireland to embark on the immigration journey to the United States posing as an Irish girl. She wrote a 13-part series

on the inadequacies and cruelties of this journey to Ellis Island in a vivid style, achieving journalistic success after three years of being on the sidelines in the *Tribune*. In one of the articles, Forbes-Herrick writes about the treatment women and children receive at Ellis Island:

'All women and children ashore.' Down the narrow stairs we stumble, an emotionless, hesitant, frightened mass. And always the raucous voices of our two guards, hurling brusque ruthless, often profane commands at us. Even the women who have been most self-possessed are shaking. 'if my husband were here,' whispers one of the women, ' he'd punch that man, even if he had to go to jail for it.'

[“Women Herded As Are Cattle At Ellis Island”](#) - *Chicago Daily Tribune* (10/24/1921)

The profanity and yelling was not the worst of it, women especially were also subjected to integrity checks, examinations, intelligence tests, and physical “health checks” in Ireland and daily on the ship, which required the women to either strip all the way or down to their waist.

This investigation appalled readers of the *Tribune* and was so successful that Forbes-Herrick was called to Washington to testify at a congressional hearing which led to immigration reforms through law amendments. [Within 10 days of the last article’s publication, the Ellis Island commissioner was fired and other officials dismissed.](#) The [series of articles](#), spanning the year of 1921, are written in a clear and vivid style, launching her to the front-page of the *Chicago Tribune*. A year later, she interviewed a group of immigrants at Ellis Island who reported of a grueling, difficult process, but no reports of abuse this time. The treatment of immigrants had to face in the 1920s was particularly gruesome, detailed well in Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi’s [Ugly Prey: An Innocent Woman and the Death Sentence that Scandalized Jazz Age Chicago](#) (2017).

She was then onwards assigned many crime stories, leading her to interview Al-Capone in 1930. Ishbel Ross, in her book [Ladies of the Press](#) (1936), details this encounter writing that

Al-Capone brought his wife and sister to this interview attempting to impress Forbes-Herrick.

Al-Capone said to Forbes-Herrick, which she ended up reporting:

You know, lady, I'd rather the newspapers wouldn't print a line about me. That's the way I feel. No brass band for me. There's a lot of grief attached to the limelight. Say, if I was just plain Izzy Polatski, living in Chicago, I'd not stand out in the gutter trying to get a peek at Capone. I'd attend to my business and let him attend to his; no use making a laughing stock of the city... All I ever did was supply a demand that was pretty popular. Why, the very guys that make my trade good are the ones that yell the loudest at me... They talk about me not being on the legitimate. Why, lady, nobody's on the legit, when it comes down to cases; you know that.

[*Ladies of the Press*](#) (1936), page 541

Ross writes that this portrayal of Capone was enjoyed by Chicagoans the next morning.

Forbes-Herrick was not just limited to crime assignments, she also covered science, politics, arts, fashion, and all others types of news.

For *The Chicagoan*, Forbes-Herrick did profiles of important figures in the city, often covering some very important male and female celebrities/community members of Chicago.



[Vol. 4, No. 8, January 14, 1928, page 17](#)

To sample a few stories she did, in a 1928 issue, she did a column in place of what Samuel Putnam usually wrote, covering the “[prima donna](#)” of Chicago opera, Mary Garden, who worked in Chicago from the 1910s to the early 1930s.

In this article, similar to the typical *Chicagoan* style, Forbes-Herrick claimed Garden as one of Chicago’s own since she made her debut and her fame all in this city. Originally from Scotland, Garden’s parents settled down in Kenwood, Chicago and she was discovered to have a talent in opera in her girlhood. Garden, according to Forbes-Herrick’s conversation with her, lived a resilient life. She worked eight months of the year and relaxes for four. She only focused on opera and has perhaps one friend’s home that she visits. Alcohol and cigarettes were also limited to her four month break, during work none of that is on the table. Alongside praise and her fame, Forbes-Herrick wrote a well-rounded profile of her, focusing on her personality and work ethic rather than more superficial aspects like physical appearance or how much money she makes.



In the next issue, she did a similar piece on Mrs. Samuel Insull, the wife of a [business magnate](#) in Chicago, but more importantly, a theater actress before this wedding and an imperative figure in the theater industry after. Mrs. Samuel Insull's real name was Margaret A. Bird, her stage name was Gladys Wallis and this is what she was known by. She was a successful stage actress for seven years before this marriage and returned a few times after the wedding as well. The Insull couple was well known, they were covered in *The Chicagoan* other times and even in [The New Yorker](#). Their frequent travels to Europe, divorce rumors, war work, and appearances were of interest to people, making them a celebrity couple of their time.



[Vol. 4, No. 11, February 25, 1928 issue](#), page 17

In a 1928 issue, Forbes-Herrick did a profile of [Mabel Gilmore Reinecke](#), whose history was made into a [movie](#) in 2015. Mabel Gilmore Reinecke was elected to the board of the Suffrage Association against her will more or less, at a very young age too. In the 1916 Hughes campaign, Gilmore Reinecke was assistant of the western directors of the Progressives and in 1917, she was the first woman to be appointed in taxing bodies of Cook county. In 1918, she

founded Illinois women on behalf of the late Senator Medill McCormick. Then in 1919, she was appointed the secretary of the executive committee of nine women with the Republican National Committee. In 1921, Gilmore Reinecke became the chief deputy collector of Internal Revenue in the Chicago district and then the appointed collector by President Harding, later to be reappointed by President Coolidge. Forbes-Herrick writes that she was said to be the highest salaried woman in federal service.

Despite her high salary and huge achievements in life, Gilmore Reinecke was a humble woman who lived with her husband in a co-op apartment at 7370 South Shore Drive. She was an athletic woman and a great speaker.

Aside from newspaper and magazine articles, Forbes-Herrick was also an accomplished published author. Her book [*The Life of William Jennings Bryan*](#), published in 1925 by the Buxton Publishing House in Chicago was a biography of “[the perpetual candidate](#),” popular for being an excellent orator and advocate of common man’s rights. Forbes-Herrick co-wrote this book with her husband, John Origen Herrick. McPhaul, in his book [*Deadlines & Monkeyshines*](#), writes that the Herrick couple met while working for the *Chicago Tribune*. Eventually, Forbes-Herrick moved to the Washington bureau of the *Chicago Tribune*, where she worked together with her husband, John Herrick, whom she has married in 1924.

When looking at the journalistic work Forbes-Herrick did, one can easily deduce that not only did she put a spotlight on successful women around her, but she also wrote about them in a manner no one else would at that time. She gave their professional lives the coverage that they deserved. Women like Mary Garden, Gladys Wallis/Mrs. Samuel Insull, and Mabel Gilmore Reinecke have been incredibly important to Chicago history and penned into the first draft of history by another significant reporter, yet all of them together have been written out of our

histories. Forbes-Herrick was much more than just a “girl stunt reporter,” she was a social justice reporter, an investigative journalist who cared deeply about her work, a published author, and someone who had an impact on her communities through her work in Chicago and later in Washington as well.

Aside from the “girl stunt reporter” phenomenon, Marie explains more labels that female reporters dealt with in the [Front Page Girls](#). Female reporters who wrote about emotions and sentiments in their stories were the “sob sisters.” They would use sentimentality in their reporting. This was more of a derogatory term for female novelists too and included spectacle-based reporting.

Lastly, female journalists were fictionalized in fiction novels and movies pretty early on in Hollywood, creating a new classification: “reporter heroines.” These labels are not the end of it, there are also the “gush girls,” “the pity platoon.” The term “sensational” too was used.

This type of reporting was also the precursor to nonfiction narrative writing, one that is often done by journalists and investigative reporters specifically today, to tell the story of a crime or a scandal in a story-like narrative form. Often this includes dialogue, sensory details, tension-filled scenarios, and a narrator that the reader can relate to. This style of writing, without girl reporters, probably would not be where it is today. Robert S. Boyton’s [The New New Journalism: Conversations with America’s Best Nonfiction Writers on Their Craft](#) (2005) covers this type of reporting and writing precisely, which essentially contradicts the title, since it is not all that “new” to embed oneself as a reporter/writer into the situation being written about for an elongated period of time, and then write about that experience as both an inside and an outsider, including characters, dialogues, locations, and other details as if a reader was there themselves. Ted Conover working a year as a prison guard to report as an “insider” in his book [Newjack](#):

[Guarding Sing Sing](#) (2000) is now described as “participatory” journalism, what was just a century ago known as stunt reporting by brave reporters mentioned above.

When looking at the female reporting community outside of the girl stunt reporters and sob sisters labels, one finds that this was a group of women who were successful journalists, writers, reviewers, editors, publishers, investors, and artists in the literary community.

One of the most important women involved with *The Chicagoan* was Marie Armstrong Hecht/Essipoff (Hecht from her first marriage, Essipoff from the second), the first editor of the magazine. She was only the editor for a short while, later writing excellent theater critiques and reviews. Although known only as the first wife of Ben Hecht in the literary histories of Chicago, Marie Armstrong had a commendable writing career of her own. Her book, [My First Husband/by His First Wife](#) (1932), published in New York (yes, she eventually left Chicago too), is an autobiography that stunningly details her life in journalism, her first marriage with Ben Hecht, and how she moved on in life after that.

Her marriage to Ben Hecht lasted ten years until he cheated on her with another woman, who also wrote a book about this whole situation. Fascinatingly enough, this book is classified as fiction, but Essipoff included real people, details, relationships, and stories. Other than using an alias ‘Eric Mayer’ for Ben Hecht, everything else seems to be reality. For example, her mention of her interactions with Carl Sandburg, [Gertrude Emerson](#), Agatha Merling, [Floyd Gibbons](#), etc., were real because all these people, their titles, and their personalities are real. These details are easily corroborated when one studies Chicago journalism at this time, and it’s also rather disappointing to see her voice missing from these narratives because she was a major part of the industry. This book provides a female gaze which is simply not available in other mainstream works of the time. Essipoff’s voice is incredibly strong and her personality shines through the

text, allowing the reader to understand the female perspective of the reporting arena. Furthermore, the writing style that Essipoff employs here mimics deeply that of the girl stunt reporters, it is an engaging text that reads like fiction with its full-of-life characters, scenes, pacing, and dialogues. Yet, at closer look one realizes that it is a non-fiction work.

There is also a small mention of *The Chicagoan* in this book, though not by name, and in passing only. This is another curious detail since most of the works I surveyed associated with major contributors of this magazine do not mention *The Chicagoan* in any capacity.

Marie Armstrong Hecht/Essipoff also wrote a poetry collection, [Morte](#), highlighting how diverse her writing abilities were. Interestingly, she notes in the beginning that this will be her last publication, yet she went on to publish more.

Marie Armstrong Hecht/Essipoff was not just a writer and a poet, but also an investigative journalist. [Anne Diebel](#), former professor at Columbia and current private investigator with QRI, writes about Marie Armstrong Hecht/Essipoff's attempts to figure out why [women were so bad at murder](#). At the end of the article, Diebel pens Armstrong's legacy as someone talented yet unpraised: "Essipoff spent much of her life in a secondary position: wife to famous writer, editor of a magazine that never quite formed its own identity, and informal assistant to another famous writer. But as the breezy, bitey wit in her writing shows, though she may have been secondary she was never second-rate."

There was an eventual transition of these women from news arenas (Marie Armstrong used to work for a newspaper as well, that is where she met Ben Hecht) to literary circles, which blurs the lines between newspaper, magazine, and book people's worlds. There is plenty of crossover between these circles.

Another example of an all-rounder writer was [Vera Caspary](#) (1899-1987), a contributor to *The Chicagoan*, novel writer, and screenwriter. Her autobiography, [The Secrets of Grown-Ups: An Autobiography](#) (1979), provides a peek into her life and the “female gaze” into the writing community that is missing from mainstream narratives. Born to a bourgeois Jewish family in Chicago, Caspary did not finish her schooling or attend college. Instead, she started writing at a young age and did so until she died. She was a very productive writer, with successful suspense and mystery novels, but there is a lack of existing literature about her life and standing in the literary community. Vera Caspary’s importance as a journalist and a writer is perhaps only done justice to in this short [New Yorker](#) article by Michelle Dean. She writes “Caspary’s first novel, called “The White Girl,” tells the story of a black woman passing as white in Chicago. It was praised by a number of African-American newspapers, even as white papers mostly ignored the book.” Caspary later moved to California for a successful career in the film industry, which is the career she is remembered for. Caspary’s written works include the rather famous [Laura](#) (1943), [Bedelia](#) (1945), [The Man Who Loved His Wife](#) (1966), and [many more](#).

[Irene Castle McLaughlin](#) (1893-1969) was another multi-talented woman in the community. Better known as “America’s Original Flapper” and the “Best Dressed Woman,” she maintained a successful career in silent movies and dancing. Her lesser-known writing, contributions to the magazine, and animal activism are a forgotten part of literary history. She wrote *My Husband and My Memories of Vernon Castle*, which was eventually adapted into a movie [The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle](#).

Women weren’t just getting their start in the journalism field in the early twentieth century, they were well-established reporters by then. They had been an official part of it at least since the [Civil War](#), and unofficially, well, long before that. In the 1920s and 1930s, women were

writing entire books instructing other women on how to enter the field and succeed in it. Two good examples of such books are Genevieve Jackson Boughner's [*Women in Journalism: A Guide to the Opportunities and a Manual of the Technique of Women's Work for Newspapers and Magazines*](#) (1926) and Ethel Maude Colson's [*Writing and Editing for Women: A Bird's-eye View of the Widening Opportunities for Women in Newspaper, Magazine and Other Writing Work*](#) (1927). Both books are textbooks written by female journalism professors, Brazelton having taught at Northwestern University in Chicago. They make clear that journalism is a great profession for women and provide practical advice on how to go about finding a job. They explain every type of reporting gig, give examples of female journalists' work (some prominent Chicago ones including Margaret Sullivan, Mary Abbott, Nora Marx, Miss Fanny Butcher, Virginia Dale), include Q&As at the end of the chapters, and write openly about the treatment women have to face in the field because of sexism.

Colson, in the beginning of her book, writes about why female journalists are necessary:

Women, now full citizens, with 'woman's place wherever she wants it,' are Highly important factors of civilization, of commerce. They no longer are to be satisfied with a 'woman's page' devoted exclusively to household hints, fashion articles, "beauty features," and directions as to the rearing of children. They may have their own pages, as separate pages are devoted to sports, automobiles, radio developments and so forth, but they read most of the other pages into the bargain. Interested in all the news of all the world, they are interested as women no less than as citizens, which means that they want the news presented, interpreted, at least in part, by citizens who can think and feel as women.

[*Writing and Editing for Women: A Bird's-eye View of the Widening Opportunities for Women in Newspaper, Magazine and Other Writing Work*](#), page 5.

The women at the time were concerned about the lack of public representation and these textbooks by Colson and Brazelton, among others, are one way that women encouraged others to

start their careers in journalism and be visible participants in society by taking control of their narratives.

However, Colson emphasizes that gender/sex alone does not dictate how reporting/writing should be done:

The fact of sex, the “woman’s angle,” is the woman writer’s tool, but it must never be her weapon. No self-respecting woman writer would exploit sex in writing any more than she would in personal living. She will not, as a writer, think about being a woman. But being a woman, she is possessed of a real advantage in the business of doing, recording, interpreting women’s interests, ways and work.

[Writing and Editing for Women: A Bird's-eye View of the Widening Opportunities for Women in Newspaper, Magazine and Other Writing Work](#), page 8.

Here, Colson makes clear that a “woman’s angle,” or what I call the female gaze in this piece, is the female perspective on this world, something important we need in our journalistic and literary circles. It is this perspective exactly that the girl stunt reporters employ, for example, Forbes-Herrick uses her benefit of being a woman and reports on the treatment women have to face in the immigration process from Dublin to Ellis Island. She does not exploit her sex, simply uses her own perspective to report on her gender. She did balanced reporting of famous female Chicagoans in the same way for the magazine, covering female celebrities by focusing on their life stories/careers instead of their relationships or physical appearances.

Beyond the strong female literary community *The Chicagoan* featured, it also provided a platform for appreciating women in other spaces. Take, for example, the publication of a photograph with a list of women’s names below. These were women who helped *The Chicagoan* in increasing subscriptions. These women were presumably also readers of the magazine. Similar lists were published throughout the issues to thank the contributors, readers, and to highlight the famous Chicagoans.

These Charming Harbingers of *The Chicagoan*

THE CHICAGOAN is the happy beneficiary of an extraordinary mode of introduction to a vast group of leading men and women of Chicago.

Under the captaincy of Miss Jane Scriven, a notable list of young women have organized and carried to distinctive victory a circulation drive in behalf of *The Chicagoan*.

From a Drive Headquarters in the Wrigley Building these young women have caused "the story of *The Chicagoan*" to re-echo throughout those regions of urban and suburban Chicago where soundest judgment abounds; where a magazine truly representative of smart, sophisticated and intelligent Chicago has been anxiously awaited—and the advent of such a one in *The Chicagoan* is enthusiastically hailed.

The Chicagoan is grateful indeed for this auspicious introduction it has thus received to a long list of foremost Chicagoans.



Seriously at Work at THE CHICAGOAN Drive Headquarters—Mrs. Charles Fargo, Miss Jane Scriven, captain, Miss Beatrice Burnet and Miss Dorothy Rend.

Among those participating in the Drive are the following:

Mesdames

Robert McCormick Adams
Charles Anderton
Gerald Bigelow
L. P. Bull
Dunlap Clark
Darwin Curtis
Jack Dean
Michael Dearth
Charles Fargo
Charles Le Forgee
John Martineau
Ralph Otis, Jr.
Lyell Ritchie
Robert Sturgis
Ewing Webb
Lawrence Wilson

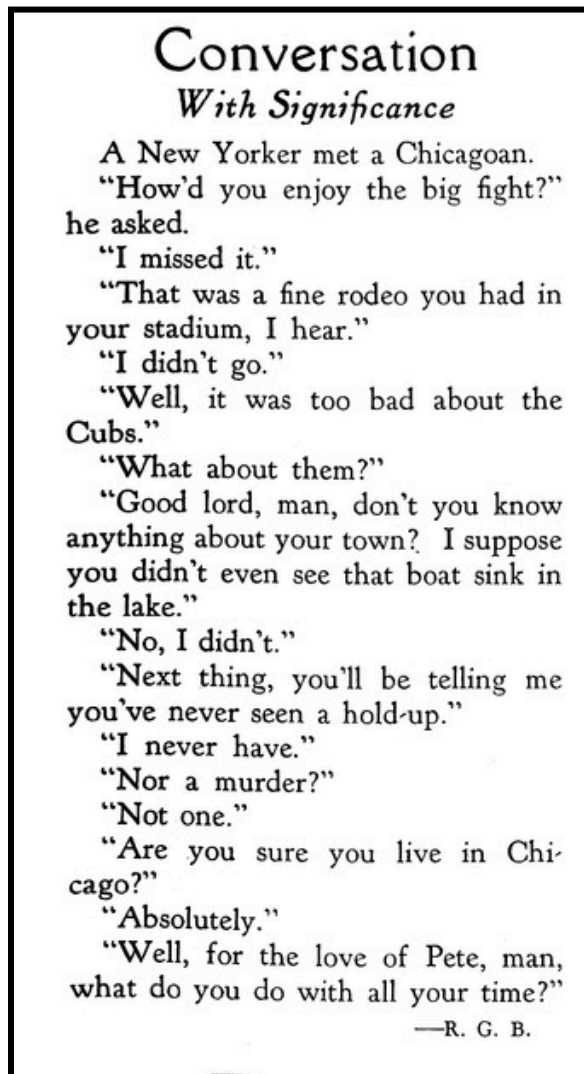
The Misses

Norvell Allen
Elaine Blackman
Beatrice Burnet
Rosamond Coffin
Elizabeth Comstock
Jane Condon
Josephine Dickey
Elizabeth Drake
Ruth Elting
Rosemary Gallery
Eileen Lawlor
Gertrude Lucey
Eileen McGuire
Nancy McNulty

Corinne McVoy
Emily Otis
Sarane Otis
Jane Naugle
Barbara Neff
Dorothy Rend
Bluford Richardson
Cornelia Richardson
Frances Richardson
Elizabeth Ricker
Jane Schutler
Jane Scriven
Winifred Smith
Betty Sturges
Glee Viles
Edith Walker
Carter Williams

Lastly, it is crucial to note *The Chicagoan* included no publications by Black female reporters, at least none that can be recognized or traced by name. It was a white magazine, written by and for white audiences. There were frequent sexist representations of Black women in the magazine, and these were the norm of this community that enjoys vaudeville and opera and jazz, yet refused to recognize the humanity of the Black community they were exploiting for entertainment, profit, and all other means. Additionally, the magazine and newspaper world were still segregated at this time, with separate white and black newspapers. White and black women journalists' fights for equality were also separate, running almost parallel to each other with different priorities. None of this was adequately addressed in *The Chicagoan*, yet it is important to keep in mind that Black female journalists existed at this time and were doing their work dealing with even more difficulties than the women mentioned above.

3. The Second City Complex: How *The Chicagoan* Viewed New York



[Vol. 4, No. 3, October 22, 1927](#), page 13

[The Second City](#) was a title given to Chicago among many others: "The Windy City," "The Mud City," "The City of Big Shoulders," etc. While each of them has their own fascinating background stories, "The Second City" is usually interpreted two ways: Chicago became the second city because it was the second-most populous city for almost a century and because it was considered to be second to New York when it comes to the best cities of the country. Chicago history tends to credit this title, or at least the popularity of it, to A.J. Liebling who published a

series of articles first in *The New Yorker* and as a [book](#) later on to essentially belittle the city. [The Second City improv theatre](#) was a way for some Chicago artists to reclaim this title.

However, as *The Chicagoan* will show, this title was in regular use during the 1920s and 1930s as well. Albeit derogatory, the city's creatives and writers took the title and made it its own throughout the twentieth century. So much so that *The Chicagoan* often referred to Chicago simply as the "Second City," sometimes sarcastically, other times not. The hate for New York, however, and I mean hate, not just dislike, was visible anytime the city was mentioned in the magazine. The magazine often published articles that responded to New Yorkers' critiques of Chicago, or sometimes those that compared the two cities. What was consistent in these articles was pure disdain for all that was New York.

The biggest regret expressed concerning New York was the "literary exodus" from Chicago. There was no one reason for this happening, as in a post-World War One society, writers and artists constantly moved around. Starting in the teens and highly prominent in the 1920s was the exodus outward from Chicago to other literary centers. If not for New York, then writers/artists left for Paris (discussed at length in the "Lost Generation of Chicagoans in Paris" article). After those decades, as the film industry started growing, many moved to Hollywood, California.

For many reasons, *The Chicagoan*, as a magazine, was hell-bent on critiquing those who abandoned Chicago for New York. As Neil Harris makes clear in his writing on this matter, New York was particularly condescending towards Chicago writers and poets. From big newspapers like the *New York Times* to smaller publications in the city, everyone had something negative to say about Chicago's diminishing literary scene and population gains by annexation. To be fair, *The Chicagoan* understood the reasons for this exodus, after all all the major publishing houses

were located in New York and so was Wall Street. And writers, poets, and artists need to make a living.

Perhaps the specific disdain for New York was also because the first editor of the magazine—Marie Armstrong Hecht/Essipoff—was Ben Hecht’s first wife and Ben had left Chicago for New York. At the risk of sounding like a gossip bearer, the story of Ben and Marie is quite the popular one in the literary circles of the time and one that played out in the journalistic world (read *The Female Gaze: Chicago and The Chicagoan from Female Perspectives* for the full story).

Eventually though, Ben Hecht expressed regret for having left Chicago: “[We were all fools to have left Chicago. It was a town to play in; a town where you could stay yourself, and where the hoots of the critics couldn’t frighten your style or drain your soul.](#)” This confession in his autobiographical memoir, *A Child of the Century* (1954), comes as expected since Chicago was the city where he surely felt like himself. Judging from this confession and the way the city is described by the magazine’s contributors, it seems that the general literary community in Chicago too was unique and valuable, especially because of the mix of journalism and literature it provided. And those that did not leave, like the novelist Henry Kitchell Webster, were praised for their unfeathering loyalty to Chicago.

Unfortunately, it wasn’t just writers or journalists who made the journey to the East Coast. Entire publications were also part of this exodus. For example, the *Dial* magazine founded by Francis F. Browne was published for forty years in Chicago until 1919 when it was transferred to New York. Putnam praises the magazine to be the most influential at its time among intellectuals, having a profound influence on young Americans.

The fascination with New York and a deep desire to not lose in any regard—especially in the literary scene—was also the entire motivation behind starting *The Chicagoan* magazine. Everything from the name of the magazine to the actual format is a direct copy of *The New Yorker*. If done today, this type of plagiarism would lead to many lawsuits that *The New Yorker* would easily win. When *The New Yorker* was founded in February of 1925 by the editor-journalist couple Harold Ross and Jane Grant, Chicagoans felt the need to have a similar magazine focused on just the city, hence “The Chicagoan” was on the stands in June of 1926.

Whether the magazine was an attempt to financially sustain the literary community or to ensure that Chicago remains the literary center, it was not able to see these goals through to even a decade. But it left behind a footprint, a significant one at that.

4. The Lost Generation of Chicagoans in Paris



[Vol. 4, No. 9, January 28, 1928 Issue](#)

It is impossible to talk about the 1920s literary scene and not mention the lost generation. This was a generation of writers who felt disillusioned by the greed, violence, hypocrisy, loneliness, and lost values during World War One and decided to immigrate to Paris, which in their perspective was a much better literary center than anywhere in North America. There, these literary legends, like F. Scott Fitzgerald, made a home for themselves for a few years, wrote successful pieces, and eventually came back to move on in their lives. Whether this lost generation was ever found, is a question Samuel Putnam tackles in his book, [Paris Was Our Mistress: Memoirs of a Lost and Found Generation](#) (1947).

Putnam, who himself studied at the University of Chicago, writes a part autobiographical, part literary history of the Lost Generation that fled to Paris. He writes from an insider perspective since he was part of this Lost Generation, making clear his preferences and favorites in the circles, while also making constructive critiques of what could be better with certain publication/author's work. It is a shame that Putnam's literary works, like many other authors mentioned in this thesis, have been lost to history despite having so much information about important literary movements and historical events.

Aside from this book, Putnam wrote extensively about Paris and this generation in *The Chicagoan*. Almost every issue in the 1920s at least has an article by Putnam mentioning Paris in one way or another. The level of seriousness and consistency with which Paris was treated in his works truly shows his expertise and the audience's interest in reading about the city. Whether it was romanticized out of proportion or truly a city of wonder is up to one's own interpretation and experience, but Putnam manages to paint a rather realistic picture of what Paris was: it was a social literary circle for the lost generation that did not exist in Chicago or New York or any other American city. It was found only in Paris, only during the 1920s, and after that never again. It was not created by anyone nor dispersed by another, it simply existed by the combination of the right people at the right time.

The connection between Chicago and Paris was a fascinating one. Putnam, in an article titled "Paris Editions: The Chicago Dailies Overseas" in a 1928 issue questions what Paris would be without Chicagoans, for clearly Chicagoans had been instrumental in the development of the Paris literary scene, at least from their own perspective: "[No, Paris is not Chicago; but an observant resident of the former city, hailing from the latter, sometimes cannot help wondering](#)

[what Paris would be without Chicago—and ex-Chicagoans... What would Paris do without us?](#)

(9)

In another article, “Yes, It’s Paris: A Series in Which an Aware Chicagoan Anticipates the Legionnaires,” he emphasizes just how “American” Paris has become: “[“If you want to see Paris once more, better hurry over. It is becoming so Americanized it is hard to realize here that one is living in a foreign country”](#)” (13). This testimony, from Putnam’s friend represents a small group of people in Paris, but nonetheless a reality they had created for themselves. The repatriation of many intellectual Americans to Paris emulated a small New York, D.C., or Chicago community in Paris, one that was detached from the actual city of Paris. This community existed on cafe terraces and discussed art and writing, lost in their own way of thinking and creating art. Yet, the American immigrants to Paris were not all affluent, as much of the Lost Generation specifically struggled to make ends meet and did many odd jobs to support a living in Paris. Despite the romanticization, it is clear through Putnam’s works and the lives of many he highlights, that financial stability was difficult to attain as a writer or a journalist, barring the few extraordinarily successful names. Hence this paradoxical community forms a fascinating group to study, much of which is often limited by literary historians to 5-8 big names (the Steins and Hemingways and Fitzgeralds). But it was a movement much bigger than them, encompassing a mass migration of writers, from many parts of the United States to Paris or Italy or Hollywood.

After this exile was over, most of the American writers came back, but many of them stayed in France either because of financial shortcomings or because they preferred that life. The ones who did come back, including Putnam as he explains in his book, became shocked by the politics of home. They certainly returned to the literary world, becoming editors and reviewers

and producers, and so did Putnam, returning to write for *The Chicagoan* and other journalistic and literary publications.

Despite the skepticism about the United States and in a rare show of patriotism, Putnam writes in the conclusion of his book: “It is to one’s own America, wherever it may be, that one always does come back.” (254)

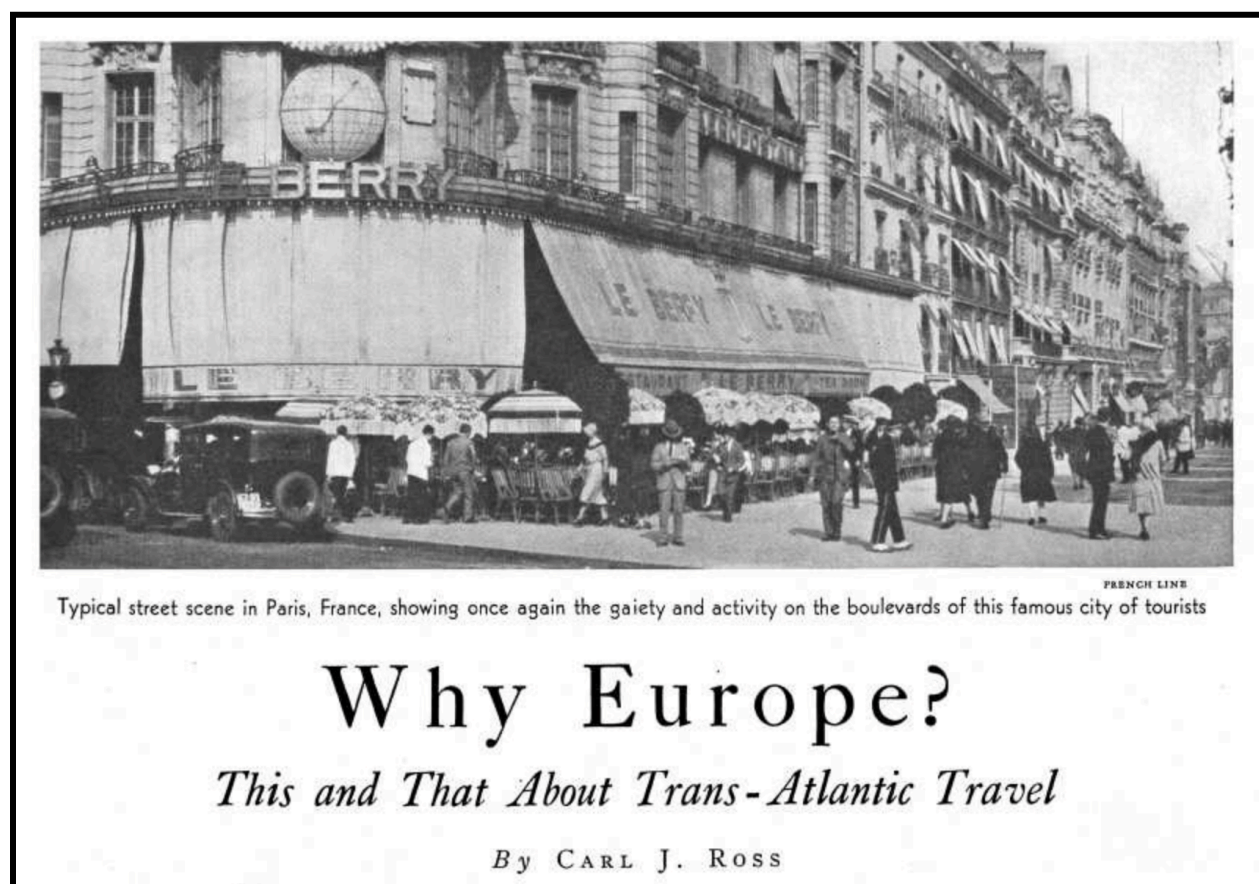
Putnam also highlights the many different magazines this specific generation started: *Broom*, *Succession*, *This Quarter*, *Transition and Transition*, *the Little Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Morada*, *the Exile*, *the New Review*, *Tambour*, etc. Clearly, this was a time of innovation when it came to magazine publishing, especially in Chicago. Hence, *The Chicagoan* was operating at a time of intense competition, both locally and nationally.

Fascinatingly enough, Putnam never names *The Chicagoan* in his book and this is a coincidence that repeats itself in Marie Armstrong Hecht/Essipoff’s work as well (see *The Female Gaze: Chicago and The Chicagoan from Female Perspectives* for more details). It is a curious exception, since he writes about many other “little” and “young” magazines of Chicago, yet manages to entirely overlook a magazine he so frequently contributed to.

And history also overlooked this lost generation—save for a few of the big names like Pound and Stein—everyone else who returned found a bitter and disillusioned country that was not kind to them, and neither was there a literary community for them to return to. The American literary loneliness they so wanted to escape stood in front of them, now even more loaded with political rife. Europe, too, was not the same anymore. After all, the damage of World War One was the worst there.

This obsession with Paris was not limited to the “Lost Generation” or just the writings of Samuel Putnam. Books about the city were prominent during the time—Cecilia Hill’s *Fifty Miles*

[Round Paris](#) (1927) and John Chancellor's [How to be Happy in Paris without being Ruined](#) (1926) are just two examples of a wide arena of literature focusing on traveling and adjusting to Paris. These books were covered by Susan Wilbur (Jones), one of the regular contributors to *The Chicagoan* who wrote book reviews and recommendation lists for the magazine. These books, like the city itself, were recommended in high regard almost as a necessity for the modern literate society. This indicates that visiting Paris regularly was an accessible part of life, clearly something their audience could afford or looked forward to, since many advertisements were also for traveling, even as the depression started roaring.



[Vol. 15, No. 7, March 1, 1935](#), page 27

Perhaps this was part of a larger movement, one in which people wanted to travel and migrate from America. Susan Wilbur Jones wrote in a 1927 issue that seems like the bulk of new

travel books are about Paris. She was not exaggerating, her recommendation list was filled with Paris traveling books. If not to Paris, then to London or Greece, for there were book recommendations for these cities as well. The interests of the elite traveling community at the time and the general immigration/emigration trends of the lost generation were reflected in the magazine. Escapism was top priority for the elite, for Chicago's political and social environment must not have been bearable anymore.

5. An Ode to the Chicago Renaissance & the Fourth Estate

JOURNALISTIC JOURNEYS

"I Always Look Upon Chicago as My Home"

[Vol. 4, No. 8, January 14, 1928](#), page 27

Chicago held the throne for the [literary capital](#) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, serving as a flourishing hub of writers, poets, journalists, and artists. In the 1910s and 1920s, the Chicago Renaissance produced poetry, "little magazines," and novel culture that still exists.



HARRIET MONROE: Editor and founder of *Poetry*, foremost magazine of verse in the country, and author of many poems and books of verse, who has always befriended striving young writers; Vachel Lindsay's *General Booth Enters Into Heaven*, Joyce Kilmer's *Trees* and Rupert Brooke's war sonnets being some of the famous first poems printed in *Poetry*. Her *Hotel*, written in 1908, some five years before the start of the free verse school, is one of the many pieces that make her a great poet.

[Vol. 10, No. 8, January 3, 1931](#)

For example, Harriet Monroe started the *Poetry Magazine* in 1912 to promote the art of poetry and sustain poets economically. This magazine changed the poetry arena in two ways: first, it provided economic sustainability to poets who could write for a living and second, it had an open-door policy, allowing poets to write in whatever form they wished to do so. The flexibility and support the magazine provided poets was the exact encouragement needed for them to rise to prominence. The magazine has published the big names of the literary world: T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Carl Sandburg, and more. That venture was so successful in Chicago that it not only produced some of the best poets of that era and ours but also resulted in the Poetry Foundation building, unveiled almost a century later in 2011. The Poetry Foundation building is one of the few in the entire world that is dedicated entirely to poetry, located in the River North neighborhood of Chicago, further reaffirming the status of the city as a literary hub.

The “young magazine” movement in Chicago, which one can argue *The Chicagoan* was a part of, gave birth to many magazines/journals such as “The Little Review,” which eventually made their way to New York and Europe. Chicago was a city that gave a beginning platform to writers, artists, poets, and journalists who then developed their careers elsewhere. For example, the *Chicago Tribune* alone became the training ground for many excellent female journalists. Ishbel Ross, in her book [*Ladies of the Press*](#) (1936), mentions Mary King, Antoinette Donnelley, Kathleen McLaughlin, Maureen McKernan, and of course, Genevieve Forbes-Herrick as some of the finest journalists that the *Chicago Tribune* published.

The Chicago Renaissance did not just create new avenues for poetry and magazine publishing, but the Midwest is also where the American public started seeing its own stories in the novel form. Works such as Sherwood Anderson’s [*Windy McPherson’s Son*](#) (1916), a novel about an Iowa newsboy who sets out to make his fortune in Chicago, and Frank Norris’s [*The Pit*](#):

[*A Story of Chicago*](#) (1903), a story about the wheat market trading in Chicago. Works of this nature and many others turned the country's attention to the city in a way unknown before: the unchecked greed of capitalism fully visible in the stockyards and the trading markets, the unfeathering competition of the journalistic forces hoping to create the news, and a rapidly changing racial and gender landscape were topics all touched upon in the most successful works of the time. People were interested in learning more about the city, and the city wanted to learn more about itself too. Hence, the venture of *The Chicagoan*, in this context, made complete sense.



Chicago's journalistic prowess is no news to anyone, but the intersection between the journalistic and writing circles in the city was pondered upon by the writing community of the time. Putnam, having written plenty about the writing community of Chicago and Paris of the time, also discussed this in his book *Paris Was Our Mistress*. Apparently, the difference between a writer and a journalist is that of environment, the former writes outside of their environment while the latter writes within it. Brazelton, in her book, *Writing and Editing for Women*, further bridges the gap between a writer and a journalist by saying that a good writer is naturally a good reporter and a writer can be expected to work in the field as a good reporter as well. Hence, the differences between the two were not nearly as distinct as the present day, allowing the two to easily switch careers and often do both reporting and writing at the same time.



[Vol. 6, No. 13, March 16, 1929](#), page 37

Chicago was also a city that read and published consistently, evidence of which are the book reviews that were a major part of the magazine, regularly written by Susan Wilbur Jones. She got her Masters of Arts from the University of Chicago and contributed to the magazine in various ways, writing articles and book review columns. She was an editor and a translator, certainly a well-read and informed reviewer who covered the literary trends and new releases of the time with great rigor and confidence. Wilbur-Jones especially emphasized the prominence of Chicago writers and publishers, writing that no two weeks can go by without a Chicago author publishing a worthwhile book.

And In The Next Issue—

SUSAN WILBUR, the Town's smartest book critic, assays Chicago writers and readers and settles that little matter for 1929.

CLARENCE BIERS, whose Christmas cover on *THE CHICAGOAN* added immeasurably to the merriment of the season, charmingly interprets the local Easter.

ARCYE WILL, abandoning for the moment her ceaseless shopping, tells exactly how much money may be disposed of in a day's round of the Town's best stores if one really wishes to spend money.

HERBERT RUBEL, a newcomer among *CHICAGOAN* wordsmen, inquires pleasantly into the life fraternal as lived at the Standard Club.

MAUREEN MCKERNAN escorts readers to a pleasant visit with that highly mysterious personage, "The Who of 'Who's Who'."

FRANCIS C. COUGHLIN, may his girth increase, carries bravely on in his march "Through Chicago with Knife and Napkin."

MARTIN J. QUIGLEY'S Editorials and *THE CHICAGOAN*'S Town Talk, Charles Collins' play reviews and Robert Pollak's report of the musical fortnight, of course. An adult consideration of the Town and its agenda.

NEWSTANDS, March 23. By mail, March 22. By 'phone, Harrison 0036.

[Vol. 6, No. 13, March 16, 1929](#), back cover

The Chicagoan not only features some of the best literary talent of their times, but it also highlights other literary talent around the nation and in Chicago whom they may not have featured, but are producing good works nonetheless. In this way, the magazine becomes both a directory of writers lost to history and written works lost as well.

Conclusion

The main question on every reader's mind must be why the magazine suddenly halted publication in 1935. That is the question I started this entire project with too, and it remains unanswered even after a year of research. Partly because there is rarely any mention of the magazine outside of its covers and partly because the magazine itself gave no warning even though it was obsessed with mentioning itself, it is difficult to give a clear answer to why the magazine had to halt production. One theoretical answer seems to be financial difficulties to the extent of having to disappear, but you could also question why the magazine could not issue a few warnings or be a bit more aggressive in their self-advertisements in the last few issues. Another possible answer might be the lack of people power needed to keep the operation going combined with financial difficulties. With the exodus and a general breaking of structure, it makes sense that the people left might not want to continue, even if it meant leaving a loyal readers' base with more questions than we have.

Should any readers feel compelled to find these answers for themselves, the magazine and other sources might have some hints I have missed. This research was aided by an almost complete magazine collection of *The Chicagoan* at the Regenstein Special Collections and the vast collections of papers, novels, newspapers, and magazines produced by the contributors at the Newberry Library and the Regenstein Library in Chicago.

Research can also be done for specific journalists/writers re-introduced by the magazine to us. For example, many notable women connected to the magazine have rarely any historiographies written about them. Even this thesis was not able to them justice. Take for example, Magda Glatter (artist), Edna Asmus (journalist), Alicia Patterson (newspaper owner), Dorothy Aldis (children's book author), Janet A. Fairbank (socialist and novelist), Mrs. John

Borden (society leader), and the many more who contributed to the magazine—and by extension to the Chicago literary scene—in significant ways.

The magazine is not entirely lost to history, since Harris's book has brought renewed attention. New magazines, such as [*The Chicagoan*](#) and [*The New Chicagoan*](#), inspired by *The Chicagoan's* style have been published. While the former is not easy to find now and the latter is now that well-known, the magazine has slowly re-entered the literary scene and inspired people to continue its legacy. Even [Etsy](#) is selling *The Chicagoan* covers online and the [Chicago History Museum](#) houses the covers of the magazine. The art and the literature style have made a comeback, making this thesis part of this larger trend.

Finally, this long-form journalism piece is a tribute to *The Chicagoan* itself. The editors, contributors, and artists worked incredibly hard to create a well-loved literary magazine for their community. Recognition and praise are long overdue in Chicago.