

A History of the Haldeman-Julius Pocket Books

The founder of the Little Blue Books claimed the idea for an inexpensive series of paperbacks came to him when he was a teenager, after reading Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* on a Philadelphia park bench. Over a decade later, this child of Jewish-Russian immigrants, Emanuel Julius, was a writer for the largest circulation socialist weekly in the United States, the venerable *Appeal to Reason* published in Girard, Kansas. In 1916, he married a local banker, Marcet Haldeman. When they married, they joined their names: Haldeman-Julius. In early 1919, with Marcet's money, Emanuel partnered with Louis Kopelin, editor of the *Appeal*, and they bought the company.¹

In February 1919, Haldeman-Julius had his chief printer layout editions of the Wilde poem that had enthralled him, as well as *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* in 3.5" x 5" stapled paperbacks in 8-point type.² The 32-page *Ballad*, which also contained Edwin Markham's poem *The Man with the Hoe*, carried a price of 25 cents and was advertised in the *New Appeal* on February 22³. The following week an ad for a 16-page, 15-cent *Rubaiyat* appeared. Thus began the *Appeal's* Pocket Series which, after six name changes over four years, was institutionalized as The Little Blue Books in 1923. The owners retained that name until the demise of the series in 1980.

The first impressions of the initial two titles were not numbered. When *The Original Documents of the German Revolution* appeared, in March, it had the number 3 printed on it. Second and later printings of the earliest two titles designated *The Rubaiyat* as No. 1 and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* as No. 2. All subsequent additions to the series bore numbers.

Two titles dealing with the Soviet Union came out in early May and eight more titles on May 24, bringing the total to thirteen. These titles well reflect the general scope of the series in its early years. There were short stories by Guy De Maupassant and Edgar Allan Poe that are without overt political message, stories by H. G. Wells and Haldeman-Julius that are clearly pro-socialist, poetry by Thomas Gray, Robert Burns and Oliver Goldsmith, and a free thought tract by "The Great Agnostic" Robert Ingersoll.

By the end of September, the number of titles had grown to 23, but with only 22 numbers in the series. From the beginning, Haldeman-Julius did not hesitate to replace titles. The original No. 10, a poetry anthology *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, was replaced by a collection of essays by Clarence Darrow and Bolton Hall, *Crime and Criminals, The Crime of Charity*.

¹ Haldeman-Julius was clearly the dominant partner in the venture. His name was listed as editor on the pocket series early on. The name of the *Appeal to Reason* was changed to the *Haldeman-Julius Weekly* and other periodicals carried his name as well. In 1925, Kopelin sold his shares to Haldeman-Julius.

² E. Haldeman-Julius, *My First 25 Years: Instead of a Footnote, an Autobiography* (Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1949), 12-3.

³ The *Appeal to Reason* had been changed to the *New Appeal* after the U. S. entered World War I. When the *Appeal's* Pocket Series started in late February 1919 it was still called the *New Appeal*, but the original name was shortly after restored.

Another trend that persisted throughout the life of the Haldeman-Julius pocket book enterprise was not always issuing the books in strict numerical order. Numbers three through 16 did appear in the order advertised, but after that, and for the life of the series, the book number does not give a clear idea of its place in the series chronologically. An early example: No. 24 was advertised on July 26, 1919 but No. 22 was not advertised until September 6, and No. 21 was announced on November 22. A later example: No. 1848 was published in 1946, but No. 1882 came out much earlier, in 1944.

The Appeal's Pocket Series was short-lived; numbers 1-16 (including the two No. 10's), 22, 24, 32, 33, 34, 36 likely constitute the entire series.⁴ Titles introduced in late September carried a new series title, The People's Pocket Series, though the advertising continued to call it The Appeal's Pocket Series many months thereafter. The first time an ad in the *Appeal to Reason* referred to the People's Pocket Series was June 19, 1920. For several months after that, ads occasionally appeared for the Appeal's Pocket Series.⁵ A catalog of the books, issued about two years after the start of publication still referred to the works as The Appeal's Pocket Series.⁶

Soon after the name change to People's Pocket Series, Haldeman-Julius began to expand the series in earnest. On November 29, 1919, the *Appeal* announced the preparation of 50 new titles, to be issued at a rate of five per week. The *Appeal* for March 13, 1920, announced plans for yet another 50 titles. Not long after that, Haldeman-Julius wrote a short piece, "The Big Idea," explaining the rationale for the series and touting its success.⁷ At that point, 130 titles were in print, with the total number of books sold at more than 1.25 million. The editor portrayed the series as an extension of the uplift mission of the founder of the *Appeal*, J. A. Wayland. Wayland, Haldeman-Julius wrote, "published the *Appeal* so that the ignorant might be rescued from the oblivious darkness of muddled thinking. He knew that education opened the gates to a better world of peace, harmony, and prosperity for all." Haldeman-Julius accused capitalist book publishers of refraining from publishing much of what appeared in his series because they did not like its content. Those titles they did print were "fancy...and waste a lot of paper, and then charge you a dollar and a half." Over the next few years to accomplish this uplift mission, Haldeman-Julius published a flood of titles and lowered the price of the books.

⁴ Two titles, numbers 17 and 22 advertised in early September were possibly issued as Appeal's Pocket Series but no copies have been located. If those two were issued as Appeal's Pocket Series, it would bring the number to 25 titles. There exist copies of No.30 with Appeal Pocket Series title page, issued in 1922 with an Appeal's Pocket Series wrapper. However, since No.30 was not advertised until September 27 it does not seem likely that the book came out in the initial series.

⁵ This continued use of the original series name in advertising accounts for why an earlier estimate of Appeal's Pocket Series titles put the total titles at over 200. See: Richard Colles Johnson and G. Thomas Tanselle, "The Haldeman-Julius Little Blue Books as a Bibliographical Problem," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Vol. 64 (First Quarter, 1970): 35.

⁶ The highest number listed in the catalog was 175, which was first advertised in the *Appeal* on February 12, 1921.

⁷ "The Big Idea," appeared in a catalog that internal evidence shows was issued around November 1920, but Haldeman-Julius claimed to be writing just a year after the start of the series, i.e., around March 1920. It is assumed, then, that the piece appeared earlier elsewhere but I was not able to locate it in the *Appeal to Reason*.

And the public responded. As of September 1921, after only 30 months, total sales were estimated at three million books.⁸ Two years later, Haldeman-Julius claimed total sales at 40 million books.⁹ As the titles expanded, Haldeman-Julius struggled to find the “right” name for his pocket book endeavor. In late 1921 or very early 1922 the name of the series changed from People’s Pocket Series to Appeal Pocket Series. The number of titles was then at 236. During the few months of the Appeal Pocket Series only three titles were added -- 237, 238, and 239. However, sales were such that almost all previous numbers were reprinted as Appeal Pocket Series. The Ten Cent Pocket Series took over in Spring 1922 and it ran until Fall 1923, when it was replaced by Five Cent Pocket Series. Within a month or so the Five Cent Pocket Series gave way to the Pocket Series which lasted only two months, October-November 1923. Finally, in December 1923, Little Blue Books was settled on and permanently retained.¹⁰

Most titles in The Appeal’s Pocket Series, People’s Pocket Series, and Appeal Pocket Series retailed for 25 cents each, though frequent special sale prices offered discounts, at first 20 cents and eventually as low as 10 cents.¹¹ With the introduction of the Ten Cent Pocket Series, the price obviously dropped to a dime. The nickel price was achieved in late 1923 with the Five Cent Pocket Series and it mostly stayed at that level until the late 1940s when it climbed back to a dime.¹²

During the flurry of name changes over a year and a half, from Ten Cent Pocket Series to Little Blue Books, around 250 titles were issued. From No. 240, the first printed as Ten Cent Pocket Series, to No. 487, the highest number printed as anything other than a Little Blue Book, the numbers clearly were not released in anything resembling chronological order. In that range of 240-487, all Nos. 240 to 333 were first issued as Ten Cent Pocket Series, as were another 85 books between Nos. 333 and 453. The 25 books issued as Five Cent Pocket Series ranged widely from 334 to 461. The 45 books with Pocket Series title pages ranged from 335 to 487. And, while the Little Blue Books, as noted above, took over for good at No. 488, there are 12 books of that series with numbers lower than 488, the lowest being No. 406.

⁸ *Appeal to Reason* September 10, 1921.

⁹ *Appeal to Reason*, October 6, 1923.

¹⁰ The transition in series names was not tidy. Ads in the *Appeal to Reason* listed newly released titles. Examining the title pages of these books for the series name grants one the view of how of the enterprise unfolded. An ad in the October 6, 1923 *Appeal* listed 15 new titles. Of those, six were issued with Ten Cent Pocket Series title pages, seven with Five Cent Pocket Series and two with Pocket Series. The next week, October 13 listed nine new titles, none came out as Ten Cent Pocket Series, two were Five Cent Pocket Series and seven Pocket Series. In issues of the *Appeal* from October 20 to November 10, a total of 23 new books were advertised, all of them Pocket Series. No new books were listed in the November 17 and 24 issues. However, in the December there was a clear shift to Little Blue Books, five of six new books have the new series name. The next ad ran on December 29 and only one of 24 new titles did not have a Little Blue Book title page.

¹¹ An ad in the *Appeal to Reason* of December 27, 1919 offered five books for \$1. The May 22, 1920 issue had books for 12.5 cents each, with a minimum order of eight books. On October 15, 1921 books were offered at 10 cents each.

¹² As will be seen below, in the 1930s, Haldeman-Julius experimented with charging more some books based on the number of pages.

There was a wide array of combinations of series titles on the title page and wrapper (paperback cover) during this time of transition. Apparently, the norm was to print the book before the wrapper. Series name changes were so rapid that often by the time a book was laid out and printed the name of the series had already changed in the advertising, so the new series name was printed on the wrapper. Therefore, there are many books with Ten Cent Pocket Series on the title page but the earliest known wrapper is either Five Cent Pocket Series or Pocket Series. No known book has Five Cent Pocket Series on both the title page and wrapper. Of the 25 Five Cent Pocket Series title pages, 24 have Pocket Series wrappers and one bears a Little Blue Book wrapper.¹³

By late 1923, when Haldeman-Julius settled on the name Little Blue Books, the number of titles was close to 500 and set to continue to increase rapidly. By 1924 the numbers went into the 700s. The 800s were filled out in 1925. During this period of rapid expansion, Haldeman-Julius stuck to a considerable degree with his uplift mission. However, there were lapses. As early as 1920 a series of six books, Nos. 107-12, promised personal improvement, for example, *How to Develop a Strong Will*, and *How to Develop a Magnetic Personality*. Early catalogs listed these books under the heading “Mental Perfection.” Such titles led H. L. Mencken, who generally respected the content of the series, to quip that there was an “admixture of unutterable drivel.”¹⁴

Even during these early years, Haldeman-Julius replaced titles that sold slowly and assigned the number to a new title. From 1921 until 1926, an average of about 15 titles were replaced per year. It was during this period that the plant switched from linotype slugs to electrotyped plates. The plates were longer lasting, much lighter and therefore easier to handle and store. All books originally printed before late 1921 were reset and electroplated.¹⁵ Likely, the editor took the opportunity to replace slow sellers as stocks ran low, rather than incur the cost of switching from linotype to plates. Socialist titles, especially took a hit. Of the titles published in the Appeal’s Pocket Series and People’s Pocket Series, i.e., up to No. 236, 18 addressed Socialism in some way. All but four of those were purged in 1921-1922.¹⁶ Free thought was also a favored topic of Haldeman-Julius yet many titles in that genre disappeared. However, replacements in the period

¹³ The series name on the title page is considered the series name of the book. The wrapper is a separate entity. The series name on the wrapper may be the same as on the title page, but frequently the series noted on the title page and wrapper do not match. In a great many cases, the earliest known and subsequent wrappers have a later series title than the title page. In only a few cases is there a wrapper series name that predates the series name on the title page. That is the case of No.30 cited in note #2, above.

¹⁴ Smart Set, LXVIII (Aug. 1922): 140-142. Possibly Haldeman-Julius was stung by the criticism. While these books were reprinted enough to demonstrate good sales, they were withdrawn from the series in 1922-1923. In *The First Hundred Million*, 1928, 191, Haldeman-Julius admitted that those books were “bunk.”

¹⁵ No. 238, originally printed in late 1921, is the lowest number to span the life of the enterprise as a single setting of type. “Edition” is defined here to mean any number of printings from a single setting of type, no matter over how long a period.

¹⁶ In an effort to clear out soon to be discontinued titles, 13 of those 14 discontinued socialist titles were included in an ad in the *Appeal to Reason* August 6, 1921 offering 27 books for \$1.95, about seven cents each.

1921-1926 were generally of good quality. For example, Tom Paine's *Common Sense* replaced *The Soviet Constitution*, while Henry James's play *Daisy Miller* took over for *Steps Toward Socialism*. In some cases, a title was retained but with a new book written by a different author. For instance, the original No. 126 was *History of Rome*, by A. F. Giles. This 1920 addition to the series had 128 pages. In 1924, a book of the same title, written by Clement Wood, appeared. It had only 64 pages. These sorts of replacements were quite different from those of the "purge" of 1927-1928 when there was a distinct turn toward popular culture.

By late 1926, there were over 900 titles in the Little Blue Books and, despite some titles of questionable value, the series was quite remarkable in scope and quality. Socialist and free thought works, while diminished in number, were still present, reflecting Haldeman-Julius's core political and religious views. In addition, early on he showed an interest in feminist and sex education titles. Margaret Sanger's 1911 classic birth control tract, *What Every Girl Should Know*, was added to the series in 1920, and several works by sexologists Havelock Ellis and William J. Fielding followed.

The selection of literature was broad and much of it very good quality. French authors were well represented: Victor Hugo, Honore Balzac, and Guy De Maupassant together account for 29 titles. When it came to British authors, Haldeman-Julius had a soft spot for Oscar Wilde who was the author of 17 of the books. Robert Louis Stevenson and John Cowper Powys each had 10 books containing their works. Maxim Gorky, Leo Tolstoy, and a smattering of Turgenev and Dostoevsky comprised most of the Russian contribution. Goethe and Heinrich Heine are the rather predictable Germans. Americans include Washington Irving, Edgar Allen Poe, Emerson, and Thoreau.

Haldeman-Julius also included literature from countries that were not well known in the United States, including collections of short stories by Spanish, Italian, Costa Rican, and Brazilian authors. There are works of literary criticism, including titles devoted to Cervantes and Dante. For those serious about uplift there are guides to August Strindberg and Georg Brandes, as well as a volume titled *Literary Stars of the Scandinavian Firmament*.

Plays and operas were plentiful. Twenty-four Shakespeare works appeared in 1922. Sixteen Ancient Greek and nine Latin plays were included, as well as contributions by Moliere and Ibsen. Many books on opera appeared as well, all 11 written by Theodore M. R. Von Keler.

The series included a great deal of contemporary or near contemporary literature. H. G. Wells, Jack London, and Upton Sinclair (The entire muckraking classic *The Jungle* took six 96-page volumes), were all socialists and unsurprisingly their titles were many. Wilbur Daniel Steele, Sherwood Anderson, Henry James, Rudyard Kipling and Theodore Dreiser also appeared.

Poetry had a prominent place in the series. There were volumes by Walt Whitman, Tennyson, Kipling, Keats, and Wordsworth. Collections of German, Yiddish, and

Mexican poets are included. No. 298, *Today's Poetry*, first printed in 1923 contains the works of E. E. Cummings, T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, and William Butler Yeats, to name just a few. That anthology received high praise from *The Dial*, as “superior to many full-grown anthologies in discrimination and taste.”¹⁷ No. 71, *Poems of Evolution* is perhaps the most unusual entry among the poetry titles.

There is only a smattering of female authors. A few titles by George Eliot, George Sand, Ouida (Maria Louise Ramé) and a collection of short stories by South African author Olive Schreiner pretty well sums up the feminine contribution.

In the early years, Haldeman-Julius published many works of philosophy, for example, Oxford Professor Gilbert Murray's 1915 lecture, *The Stoic Philosophy*, as well as works by Plato and Schopenhauer. Especially notable is the appearance of Will Durant in the series. Durant used the Little Blue Books to launch his career as one of the best-selling nonfiction writers in American history. In 1924-1925, Haldeman-Julius published 11 Little Blue Books on the history of philosophy, which ultimately became the core of Durant's 1926 bestseller *The Story of Philosophy*.

The greatest trial lawyer of the era, Clarence Darrow, was a frequent contributor to the series. From 1919 until 1931, he was sole author or contributor to 37 titles. Darrow's works covered free thought, immigration, labor unions, as well as his famous examination of William Jennings Bryan at the 1925 “Scopes Monkey Trial.” Darrow frequently participated in debates and a dozen of those were reproduced the series. The debates addressed prohibition, capital punishment, free will and other topics close to Darrow's heart. He almost always took the negative side in debates. Even when ill-prepared for a debate he was known to say, “Trust me, I can debate any question in the negative.”¹⁸

In addition to what may normally be considered uplifting material -- literature, poetry, etc. -- Haldeman-Julius included a plethora of titles, most written specifically for the series, that could be useful, especially to readers who did not have the benefit of extensive formal education. *Grammar Self Taught*, *Punctuation Self Taught*, and *How to Improve Your Vocabulary* are just a few related to the use of language. The several foreign language dictionaries were surely of use to many. Science titles are abundant, especially biology, with an emphasis on evolution, but there are books on ants, dragonflies and bees, as well.

The categories above are not a full accounting of the series in 1926. There are also works of history and biography, mathematics, psychology, sociology, health, humor, and more. Haldeman-Julius even marketed a selection of 60 books he claimed constituted the equivalent of a high school education – for just \$2.98.

What Haldeman-Julius accomplished was unique. Inexpensive paperbacks offering previously published literature was not a new idea. In Germany, the Reclam Universal-

¹⁷ *The Dial* (January 1924): 93.

¹⁸ Arthur and Lila Weinberg, *Clarence Darrow: A Sentimental Rebel* (New York: Putnam, 1980), 25

Bibliothek started issuing reprints in the mid-19th-century, and the concern continues today. Starting in 1841 and continuing until 1955, the Tauchnitz Company published paperback reprints of American and British works in English for a German audience. They had already issued around 4,500 titles before Haldeman-Julius launched his enterprise. In the United States, The Seaside Library of George Munro reprinted a great many full-length books for under 25 cents, and many similar examples could be cited. And there were earlier efforts to cheaply disseminate socialist tracts. The Chicago publisher Charles H. Kerr issued many socialist titles in a format similar to the Little Blue Books, and Gaylord Wilshire, publisher of *Wilshire's Magazine* in California, did the same. However, Haldeman-Julius reprinted great literature and issued Socialist titles, but did so much more – and much of that written specifically for the series. He was also unique in his marketing. None of the other series cited reached the mass audience touched by Haldeman-Julius.

As the number of titles grew, Haldeman-Julius pushed hard to cut costs, reduce prices and increase sales and profits. Large investments in mechanical efficiencies enabled him to lower production costs. Early books in the series required printing four sheets for a 64-page book. Before long, he installed two flatbed presses that could each produce two 64-page books on a single 29" x 42" sheet. These flatbed presses required a separate impression on each side of the sheet. In 1923 or 1924, the introduction of a large new press, a Miehle Prefector cylinder press was crucial to increased production. This machine, which was paid for, at least in part, by loans from readers, was capable of printing a 29" x 42" sheet on both sides with a single impression, producing two 64-page books, ready to be folded, cut and stitched.¹⁹ This new press increased the plant's capacity by 40,000 books in an eight hour day, to a total of 80,000, if all presses were employed.²⁰

Advertising to increase sales was vital to the expanding operation. Haldeman-Julius's early advertising strategy relied on ads in the *Appeal to Reason*, along with the insertion of a catalog with each order shipped. During the first half-decade of the enterprise, he built the mailing list to 500,000 households and used direct mail to drive sales. Soon, he embarked on large display ads in mainstream publications including *The New York Times Book Review*, *New York Daily News*, *Smart Set*, *Life*, *Harper's Monthly*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *The Nation*. So aggressive was his advertising strategy that he was willing to spend two and a half cents to sell a five-cent book.²¹ Sometimes he utilized deceitful, "date-line" advertising to boost sales. For example, in early Spring 1925 he issued catalogs claiming Little Blue Books would go out of business on June 30. One version of the catalog featured in bold letters, "I Quit," while another claimed "Last Chance."

¹⁹ Haldeman-Julius several times asked to borrow the \$17,500 needed for the press from readers of the *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*, paying 6% interest. It is not known how much was raised in this manner. See for example: *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*, January 28, 1922.

²⁰ E. Haldeman-Julius, *The First Hundred Million* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1928), Chapter XII, "How the Little Blue Books are Produced: The Facts About Mass Production, 222-239. Haldeman-Julius noted that if operated 3-8 hour shifts he could produce up to 240,000 books per day but there is no evidence that he ever did so.

²¹ For advertising techniques, see Haldeman-Julius, *The First Hundred Million*, Chapter XV, "An Editor Turns to Advertising," 263-289.

Haldeman-Julius defended this technique, “I am sorry if the date-line sales have displeased some of the readers of Little Blue Books. I had to risk displeasing the few in order to reach the many -- and thereby keep the Little Blue Books moving ever ahead toward the ultimate goal.”²²

Haldeman-Julius’s aggressive advertising successfully built his mail order business. In 1928 he estimated around 95% of sales were via mail.²³ But he was always on the lookout for additional ways to market his books. A piece that appeared in several numbers of the *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*²⁴ during the summer of 1923 listed dozens of stores throughout the country that carried Little Blue Books. Haldeman-Julius urged his readers to “patronize these stores whenever possible” and if their local bookstore did not stock Little Blue Books to request that they start.²⁵

Not content to rely on other bookstores to carry his products, Haldeman-Julius launched a program to establish Little Blue Book Shops. He announced the venture in August 1923. A \$1,000 fee purchased a franchise with exclusive rights to a city with a minimum population of 100,000. Each franchisee received 33,333 Little Blue Books, 5,000 circulars, and free advertising in the *Weekly* and other Haldeman-Julius publications. The agreement restricted the franchisee to selling only Little Blue Books and other Haldeman-Julius publications.²⁶ The first grand opening was in Cincinnati on October 20, 1923 and Haldeman-Julius himself was on hand.²⁷ Before long there were five stores in New York City, as well as outlets in Atlanta, Birmingham, Chattanooga, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Nashville, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Antonio, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C. By March 1924, Haldeman-Julius reported operations in 15 American cities, plus Montreal.²⁸ Things went so well at first that Haldeman-Julius decided to expand into smaller markets. For those he offered half the merchandise for one-half of the franchise fee. Eventually there were about 60 Little Blue Book Shops in the U. S. and Canada.²⁹

In an attempt to reduce costs Haldeman-Julius cut the number of pages in many books. The editor regarded 15,000 words and 64 pages as the “standard book.”³⁰ In reality, the situation was much more complicated. Early on, the books tended to be much larger. While several of the earliest numbers had only 16 or 24 pages, it was common for books to be quite large. Of the first one hundred titles, nearly one-half had 96, 128 or 160 pages. The original No. 47, *Press-titution*, by Upton Sinclair was a whopping 192 pages. While

²² E. Haldeman-Julius, *First Hundred Million*, 340.

²³ E. Haldeman-Julius, *First Hundred Million*, 265.

²⁴ The name of the *The Appeal to Reason* was changed to *The Haldeman-Julius Weekly* in November 1922.

²⁵ *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*, July 28, 1923

²⁶ *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*, September 8, 1923.

²⁷ *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*, October 27, 1923

²⁸ *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*, March 8, 1924, see also Dale Herder, *Education for the Masses: The Haldeman-Julius Little Blue Books as Popular Culture during the Nineteen-Twenties*, Unpublished Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1975, 102 and Andrew Cothran, *The Little Blue Book Man and His Big American Parade: A Biography of Emanuel Haldeman-Julius*, Unpublished Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1966, 194-200.

²⁹ Melanie Brown, “A Chain Store Does Not Have to Be Painted Red: Little Blue Book Shops,” *Big Blue Newsletter*, no. 9 (Summer 2007): 13-17.

³⁰ E. Haldeman-Julius, *First Hundred Million*, 223.

some 96-page volumes appeared as late as 1925, no 160-page books came out after 1921 and the last 128-page book was issued in 1924.³¹

Very often, large books were replaced by new titles with fewer pages. Occasionally this was done by producing a new, shorter work of a title by a new author, as in the case of No. 126, *The History of Rome*, noted above. More commonly, replacement works were entirely different works, much smaller in size. No. 66, *Kate O'Hare's Prison Letters*, was 128 pages. The work that took its place, Alexander Dumas's *Crimes of the Borgias*, was one-half that size.

Many titles that were retained were reduced in size with loss of content. Some titles were cut down several times. For example, No. 103 Voltaire's *Pocket Theology*, was whittled down over the years. The first edition in 1920 was 160 pages. The second edition in 1921 was cut to 128 pages and the third and last edition, published sometime before mid-1927, had only 64 pages. In the case of No. 103, which is a glossary, the number of pages was reduced by simply truncating the work. The first edition lists terms from "Aaron" to "Zeal." The second addition simply ends at "Sorceries" and readers interested in terms alphabetically after that were just out of luck.

Sometimes the books were reduced by removing selected content, not simple truncation. In wholly new editions, No. 44, *Aesop's Fables* was significantly reduced. The first edition contained 206 fables over 128 pages. The third edition was down to 194 fables on 96 pages, while the fourth and final version related only 119 fables in 64 pages. Similarly, No. 125, *The War Speeches and Addresses of Woodrow Wilson*, was cut over three editions from 160 pages to 128 and finally 64.

In 1925, some books were added that had just 32 pages. Each year the percentage of that size book increased. By 1931, more than half the books published that year had just 32 pages. After that date the vast majority of new titles were half the standard size.

Another key to keeping prices down was to pay as little as possible for the works published. Many older titles were in the public domain and Haldeman-Julius made extensive use of them. Some recent books published without copyright protection were fair game and he made use of these, as well. For example, Haldeman-Julius raided The People's Books Series for material. This was a series of around 135 cheaply made hardcovers published by the British firm T.C. and E. C. Jack and distributed in the U.S. by the Dodge Publishing Company. I have examined many examples and found no copyright notices. Haldeman-Julius reprinted at least 12 books from the series, sometimes altering the title. For example, The People's Book *Hypnotism and Self-Education*, by A. M. Hutchinson, became No. 92 of the People's Pocket Series with the title *Hypnotism Made Plain*. Haldeman-Julius also published *Bismarck and the Origin of the German Empire*, by F. M. Powicke, first issued by The People's Books. However, he misspelled

³¹ No. 901, *Oedipus at Colonus*, by Sophocles copyright 1925 contained 96 pages. However, it was replaced by a 64-page title, William Fielding's *Woman: The Eternal Primitive* in 1927.

the author's name, rendering it Bowicke. Whether this was done inadvertently, or as an attempt to hide the source of the book, is unknown.

Some of the practices the publisher used as he built his publishing empire could be construed as ethically suspect. He was not afraid of borrowing the ideas of others and was happy to do it without giving credit. For example, the circular logo of a cowled man that appears on the front of the wrapper of most People's Pocket Series is an exact replica from the cover on The People's Books. It is likely he used that series title for inspiration in calling his books the People's Pocket Series.

Another example of "lifting" comes from a series of national proverb books originally issued as part of the Ten Cent Pocket Series in 1922. Nos. 113-121 contained proverbs of nine countries or regions around the world. No information as to the source of the proverbs but Haldeman-Julius claimed, "In order to compile [these books] it was necessary to go through many volumes, many of them rare, and to conduct long correspondences with authorities on Proverbs (sic) in order that there be no misstatement as to the exact source of each gem."³² Despite this assertion, these books are edited versions of the National Proverbs series published in England by Frank Palmer, in the mid-teens. These were copyrighted and it appears Haldeman-Julius made an effort to hide the origin of his books. Take the case of No. 118 of the People's Pocket Series, *Proverbs of Russia*, it contains no publication information. However, the contents are clearly from the National Proverbs title, *Russia*. Frank Palmer's edition contains 369 proverbs. The Haldeman-Julius edition contains 368 of them verbatim, but not in the same order. Haldeman-Julius omitted the particularly offensive proverb, "When you baptize a Jew, keep him underwater."³³

As far as can be determined in these cases of reprinting works, Haldeman-Julius escaped notice. In some instances, though, he must have suffered some embarrassment.³⁴ One such case is the publication of No. 298 *Today's Poetry* which first appeared in the Ten Cent Pocket Series in early 1923. The second printing of the book has blank spaces on pages 19 and 20 where, in the first printing, poems had appeared by Grace Hazard Conkling and Hilda Conkling, and on page 63, which originally had Joyce Kilmer's "Trees." The Conklings had threatened a lawsuit if not paid substantial royalties. Kilmer's estate demanded deletion of the poem.³⁵ It is reasonable to assume at least some, if not all, of the other poets in the anthology received no payment for their work.

³² *Appeal to Reason*, July 24, 1920.

³³ I was first made aware of Haldeman-Julius' use of the National Proverbs by Oliver B. Pollak, "Intellectual Piracy, Proverbs and Anti-Semitism in Little Blue Books," *Big Blue Newsletter*, no. 9 (Summer 2007): 5-12.

³⁴ Haldeman-Julius' tendency to "lift" the works of others did cause him embarrassment in the political realm. In 1932, he ran for a U.S. Senate seat for Kansas on the Socialist Party ticket. In the course of the campaign, he ran an article in his *American Freeman* detailing what the Socialists stood for. Much of the article came directly from a speech of Communist Party presidential candidate, William Z. Foster. The Communists discovered the plagiarism and used it to embarrass Haldeman-Julius and the Socialists. See Tim Davenport, "Exposed! 1932 Campaign Plagiarism!" *Big Blue Newsletter*, no. 6 (2006): 23-29.

³⁵ Randy Roberts "The Elusive Complete Collection of Little Blue Books," unpublished paper, presented at Missouri Valley History Conference, March 2, 2007.

By the mid-1920s, there was a shift in the selection of both new titles and replacements as Haldeman-Julius began to rely less on works in the public domain, or otherwise free, and more on titles produced by what he referred to as his stable of hack writers. Haldeman-Julius made clear he did not mean this term in a derogatory manner. He defined “hack” as “a regular, steady, reliable producer of manuscripts. I use the same word about myself.”³⁶ The works produced by these “hacks” varied widely in seriousness of topic, as well as quality of the research and writing. A trend toward less serious topics was especially pronounced in the latter part of the 1920s.

Unquestionably, the chief hack was Joseph McCabe. An Englishman of Irish descent, McCabe went into a Catholic religious order at age 15. He emerged at 27 an atheist. McCabe had two titles in the pocket series before 1926. After that date through 1947 Haldeman-Julius published 114 McCabe authored works as Little Blue Books, and he contributed to eleven more -- not to mention a great many other books published by Haldeman-Julius, and in 1930-1931 *Joseph McCabe's Magazine*. Haldeman-Julius billed McCabe as “The World’s Greatest Scholar.” Likely, few would agree, but he did write on a wide variety of topics: history, philosophy, current events, but mostly religion. The religion titles were all negative in tone, with special venom for Catholicism.

The biggest selling author in the series was William J. Fielding. He wrote psychology titles for Haldeman-Julius as early as 1921. In 1924, he published a series of works building off Margaret Sanger’s *What Every Girl Should Know* with titles like *What Every Boy Should Know* and *What Every Married Woman Should Know*. By 1949, Fielding’s 29 titles sold 4,491,700 copies.³⁷

Charles Finger, an English transplant to Fayetteville, Arkansas, was an early member of the Haldeman-Julius hack corps. He edited, authored or contributed to 37 volumes, from 1922 to 1925. Since he was contributing before the series turned increasingly toward popular culture, most of his contributions fit reasonably well with the uplift mission of the early years. He authored biographies of Napoleon, Theodore Roosevelt and Thoreau, among others, and books on how to write plays and short stories.

Maynard Shipley, a largely self-taught author who worked for many years as a popular science lecturer, wrote or contributed to 36 titles, mostly science, but with a sprinkling of free thought and other topics. Shipley was married to Miriam deFord, another member of the Haldeman-Julius stable, who had expertise in Latin authors.

Several well-respected academics published titles, including historians Louis Gottschalk and Harry Elmer Barnes. Gottschalk wrote seven books, all on 18th and early 19th-century French History.³⁸ Carroll Lane Fenton who taught geology and paleontology at

³⁶E. Haldeman-Julius, *My Second 25 Years: Instead of a Footnote, an Autobiography* (Girard, KS, Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1949), 77.

³⁷ E. Haldeman-Julius, *My Second 25 Years*, 86.

³⁸ No. 433 *The Life of Jean Paul Marat*, by Louis R. Gottschalk, published in 1923 served as the basis of his famous biography of the same subject, *Jean Paul Marat: A Study in Radicalism* published in 1927. In another instance of dishonesty, a catalog of 1930 lists No. 433 by the title of the 1927 full biography of 221 pages, rather than the true title of the Little Blue Book.

several major universities, including University of Michigan and Rutgers, authored 26 books and contributed to two others. Morris Fishbein M.D. was a physician and editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* from 1924 to 1950. He wrote six Little Blue Books -- five titles concerning health issues and a biography of Louis Pasteur. In the 1940s, John Burma, professor of sociology and anthropology at Grinnell College, contributed 11 titles.

Methodist, and later Unitarian minister, L. M. Birkhead, authored eight books and contributed to six more. He was a close friend of Sinclair Lewis and advised him on aspects of Elmer Gantry. One of his essays which appeared in No.1265 was, "The Writing of 'Elmer Gantry.'" In the late 1930s he served as director of an anti-Nazi organization Friends of Democracy.

Vance Randolph, the famed folklorist of the Ozarks, contributed 32 titles to the series. At first, biology and religious history were his fields and the books were submitted under his own name. In the 1930s and 1940s he wrote several books on Ozarks humor and outlaws of the American West. Most of these later titles carried pseudonyms.³⁹

Not surprisingly, many Haldeman-Julius hacks displayed leftist leanings. Several were involved in the radical education experiment at Commonwealth College near Mena, Arkansas. One of the founders of the institution was Kate Richards O' Hare. While not part of the "stable of hack writers" she did contribute two socialist titles to the People's Pocket Series. Clay Fulks, Clarice and William Cunningham taught there. Vance Randolph and Charles J. Finger were guest lecturers.⁴⁰ Fulks's contributions to Haldeman-Julius publications were largely political but one would not guess a radical affiliation for the Cunninghams. Clarice edited joke books and wrote titles on domestic issues. William contributed, among others, such drivel as *Are Petting Parties Dangerous?*

Clement Wood was perhaps the most versatile of these writers. He wrote, contributed to or edited 65 Little Blue Books. His Haldeman-Julius career, from 1924 to 1929, well reflects a shift from mostly serious books toward popular culture. Wood's early works for the series in 1924-1925 were largely on historical and sociological topics. By 1926, he was writing joke and limerick books, as well as *The Art of Kissing*. By 1929, he was turning out books with interesting titles, but of questionable value, like, *Clement Wood and His Loves* and *How to Psycho-Analyze Your Neighbors*.

Leo Markun was another wide-ranging writer. Between 1926 and his death in 1931, he authored 69 Little Blue Books on statistics, marriage, masturbation, the history of

³⁹ After authoring over a dozen Little Blue Books in the mid-1920s, Randolph wrote nothing for Haldeman-Julius from 1928-1935, a period when his career was flourishing. But by the late 30's he was cranking out copy for Haldeman-Julius, much of it using pseudonyms. In 1936 he wrote to a friend "I've done four blue books recently for Haldeman-Julius, and am now working on a Big Blue Book to be called *The Autobiography of a Pimp*. Some sixty thousand words. God Help us all!" Robert Cochran, *Vance Randolph: An Ozark Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 145.

⁴⁰ William H. Cobb, *Radical Education in the Rural South: Commonwealth College, 1922-1940* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

prostitution, gambling, and banking, *How to Conquer Stupidity*, and much more. By 1949, his books had sold close to five million copies.⁴¹

Some humor appeared in the early years, for example, 19th-century essays by Petroleum V. Nasby (pseudonym for David R. Locke) and Jerome K. Jerome. By 1926, Haldeman-Julius published a great many joke books. Books were devoted to jokes about the Irish, Negroes, Jews, yokels, doctors, lawyers, hobos, Ford flivvers, and more. The majority were by George Milburn or Clarice Cunningham. Also plentiful were books that concentrated on the home. In 1927, Clement Wood's wife, Gloria Goddard, published, *How to Make Your Own Cosmetics* and *The Charming Hostess*. While these titles and others of the sort may have been useful, they are far from the cultural uplift earlier advocated by Haldeman-Julius.⁴²

The editor's wife should also be noted for her contributions. Marcet Haldeman-Julius was a well-educated and accomplished woman. The famous progressive activist, Jane Addams, was her mother's sister, and Marcet was close to Ms. Addams. Educated away from Girard, where her family lived, she went to boarding schools. She then spent three years at Bryn Mawr College, and studied acting in New York. She worked as an actress for several years before returning to Girard to manage the family bank. She wrote or contributed to 11 Little Blue Books.⁴³ Several of her contributions were short stories, co-authored with her husband, some of which had been published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. She was also drawn to liberal social issues. She authored a book condemning the lynching of African-Americans and several advocating for Companionate Marriage."⁴⁴

Writing Little Blue Books was an important source of income for many writers in the 1920s and 30s. When he first started buying manuscripts, Haldeman-Julius paid relatively well, and in some cases, offered royalties. He paid Frank Harris a flat \$500 for the rights to *Shakespeare the Man* published in four volumes.⁴⁵ The literary critic Isaac Goldberg received \$100 each for 25 titles.⁴⁶ Will Durant got \$150 in advance for his first contribution to the series.⁴⁷ William Fielding claims that for his first title in the series, *Psychoanalysis – The Key to Human Behavior*, he was at first paid a 10% royalty. He had accumulated \$75 in payments when Haldeman-Julius offered him \$100 for all future rights.⁴⁸

⁴¹ E. Haldeman-Julius, *My Second 25 Years*, 106.

⁴² Clarice Cunningham's husband, Bill, wrote a few books Little Blue Books. Along with Wood and Goddard, and Shipley and deFord, that made three married couples working in the Haldeman-Julius stable.

⁴³ Marcet co-authored, with her husband, two full length novels. published by mainstream publishers, *Dust* (Brentano's, 1921) and *Violence* (Simon and Schuster, 1929). She also wrote at least five Big Blue Books.

⁴⁴ Companionate Marriage is a sort of trial marriage. In it a couple commits to the use of birth control, at least at first. If a childless couple decides to divorce by mutual consent neither party would have any financial or economic claim on the other. Marcet and Emanuel's adopted daughter, Josephine, entered into a highly publicized Companionate Marriage.

⁴⁵ E. Haldeman-Julius, *My Second 25 Years*, 83.

⁴⁶ E. Haldeman-Julius, *My Second 25 Years*, 87.

⁴⁷ Will and Ariel Durant, *A Dual Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 95-96.

⁴⁸ William J. Fielding, *All the Lives I have Lived* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1972), 149.

However, after experimenting with such payment methods Haldeman-Julius settled on a formula: when he purchased a manuscript, he paid a flat fee and gained all rights. He paid \$50 for a 15,000-word manuscript which filled a 64-page book. In, at least some cases he gave copies to the author to sell on their own and keep the receipts.⁴⁹

Haldeman-Julius often used an author's works more than once. He paid small sums for articles placed in *The Haldeman-Julius Monthly*, or *The Haldeman-Julius Quarterly*. Since the author released all rights with payment, the publisher could use the pieces to fill Little Blue Books. For example, Clay Fulks received anywhere from \$5-\$25 for pieces used in Haldeman-Julius periodicals, and most were later used in Little Blue Books.⁵⁰

While the payments were welcomed, and Haldeman-Julius did pay quickly, there were mixed and, in some cases, bitter feelings toward the publisher. Miriam deFord's biography of her husband, Maynard Shipley, notes that Haldeman-Julius "paid promptly and unflinchingly." However, she felt the authors were not given fair compensation as "it was of purely academic interest to the writer how large a sale his books had, except as a talking point for future orders, for fifty dollars was all he ever got, even if the book should sell half a million [copies]"⁵¹ George Milburn expressed similar sentiments. He remembered, "I worked for a couple of years in Chicago hashing up joke books and gelded classics for Haldeman-Julius. That was one thing about the old boy, say what you will (and I can contribute a bit of vituperation, if we ever get on the subject), he did pay promptly. I used to mail a MS from Chicago early one morning, wait a day, and the next day a check would be back from Girard."⁵² Louis Adamic who authored, edited or otherwise contributed to a total of eight Little Blue Books in the 1920s, later complained about compensation. Adamic accused Haldeman-Julius of running a "literary sweatshop."⁵³

Whether or not these writers were pleased with their compensation, they cranked out titles that expanded the list and replaced slow-selling earlier works, especially those with more than 64 pages. As sales increased, Haldeman-Julius, while not completely abandoning the uplift mission articulated in his 1920 essay "The Big Idea," was surely publishing more popular culture titles to boost sales. And it was working. So famous were the books by 1927 that Richard Simon, of Simon and Schuster, convinced

⁴⁹ Miriam deFord claims both she and her husband, Maynard Shipley, received books to sell on their lecture tours. See: Miriam deFord, *Up-Hill All the Way: The Life of Maynard Shipley* (Antioch Press: Yellow Springs Ohio, 1956), 205. In *The First Hundred Million*, 245, Haldeman-Julius wrote that authors received 50 copies of their books.

⁵⁰ See receipts in Clay Fulks Papers, University of Arkansas, MC 1473, Box 1, Folder 6. Haldeman-Julius used a great many articles from *The Haldeman-Julius Monthly* and *The Haldeman-Julius Quarterly* to fill Little Blue Books. For example, *The Haldeman-Julius Monthly* for July 1927 contained 18 articles, nine of which later appeared in Little Blue Books. One article, "My Twelve Years in a Monastery," by Joseph McCabe became an entire Little Blue Book. Eight of the 19 articles in the February 1928 issue helped to fill Little Blue Books. Similarly, much from the *Haldeman-Julius Quarterly* made a second appearance in the books. The *Quarterly* for July, August and September 1927, Volume I, Number 4 contained 29 articles, 18 of them later appearing in the Little Blue Books, five of them as complete volumes.

⁵¹ deFord, *Up-Hill All the Way*, 205.

⁵² Quoted in Cochran, *Vance Randolph: An Ozark Life*, 144.

⁵³ Louis Adamic, "Voltaire from Kansas" *Outlook and Independent* (June 25, 1930): 316.

Haldeman-Julius to “tell the whole story, to omit no details.” The result was the 1928 book *The First Hundred Million*, published by Simon and Schuster. Here Haldeman-Julius articulated his amended philosophy of publishing – essentially, give the people what they want. They vote with their nickels, and if the nickels were not forthcoming for a title he replaced it with another that he hoped would pay off.⁵⁴

The publication of *The First Hundred Million* marks the apogee of Haldeman-Julius’s career. In it, as Richard Simon requested, he goes deep. It is obvious that he is doing it with pride, maybe even hubris. By this time, he was selling over 20 million Little Blue Books a year. Not long before, in 1925, he launched the Big Blue Books that would ultimately grow to approximately 900 titles. In addition to the *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*, he issued the *Haldeman-Julius Monthly*, and the *Haldeman-Julius Quarterly*. He and Marcet by then had moved from an apartment in Girard to a large house just outside of town. The home had many amenities, including entertainment rooms where plays and other events were staged, a large library and, eventually, an in-ground swimming pool.⁵⁵ The house had plenty of room for guests. Plenty of guests came, including Will Durant, Clarence Darrow, and Upton Sinclair⁵⁶

In *The First Hundred Million*, Haldeman-Julius devoted much space to his acumen in changing the titles of books to boost sales, and choosing new titles to replace slow selling books. As noted above, from the very beginning he replaced titles, averaging about 15 a year, from 1921-1926. It was more aggressive tactics shown in the replacements of 1927 and 1928 that he described in *The First Hundred Million*. This later period was a “bloodbath,” with 92 and 34 titles replaced, respectively.

The shift from the sort of earlier replacements of 1921-1926, when he still adhered largely to an uplift philosophy, to the more lowbrow/popular culture genre is evidenced in the example of No. 194. The original socialist title -- Daniel De Leon’s *Socialism vs. Catholicism* -- was replaced in 1924 by *Letters of Lord Chesterfield*. But Lord Chesterfield did not meet his sales quota and in 1928 he was replaced by comic writer E. W. Howe’s *When a Woman Enjoys Herself*. One of the starkest shifts was in No. 768. The 1924 title, *A Guide to the Philosophy of the German Idealists* was abandoned for *Best Jokes about Lawyers*. One expects Carl Sandburg was offended when No. 814, *Carl Sandburg, the Man and His Poetry* was dropped in favor of *How to Train Cats and Dogs*.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ E. Haldeman-Julius, *The First Hundred Million*. Simon’s account of the genesis of the book is in the preface. Haldeman-Julius’s “philosophy” is contained in Chapter I, “What America Wants to Read.”

⁵⁵In 1941, Haldeman-Julius installed an in-ground steel swimming pool. He drowned in that pool in 1951.

⁵⁶ Marcet Haldeman-Julius, *Famous and Interesting Guests at a Kansas Farm: Impressions of Upton Sinclair, Lawrence Tibbett, Mrs. Martin Johnson, Clarence Darrow, Will Durant, E.W. Howe, Alfred Kreyborg and Anna Louise Strong* (Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1936). Also, Will and Ariel Durant, *A Dual Autobiography*, 127.

⁵⁷The Sandburg volume received praise in the *New York Times*: “For the price of a subway ride one can get a really comprehensive introduction to the work of a poet who stands certainly in the first rank of his American contemporaries.” *New York Times*, June 21, 1925.

Certain categories of uplift took serious hits. Ranging from No. 418 published in 1923 to No. 906 in 1925, Haldeman-Julius printed 16 Ancient Greek plays and nine Latin plays. In 1927-1928, one-half of the Greek and all of the Latin plays were purged. One wonders if Aristophanes would have thought it funny to have his play *The Wasps* replaced by *Best Jokes of 1925*. Similarly, opera titles suffered. Only five of 11 books on that topic survived.

In *The First Hundred Million*, Haldeman-Julius claimed he would replace any book that did not approach 10,000 in sales per year. Actually, he was not as cutthroat as that. Many books that never came close to that figure, yet they remained. He almost completely pardoned Shakespeare for the crime of slow sales. Of 24 of the Bard's plays in the series, only *Pericles* disappeared.⁵⁸ Another category for which he was willing to accept low sales figures was books he had written. Altogether Haldeman-Julius, by himself, or coauthored with his first wife, Marcet, wrote 48 books for the series. However, most came in 1929 or after and by then Haldeman-Julius had stopped removing titles. Of the nine that were published before 1925 all had low sales totals but only one was dropped – the original No. 8, *A Trip to Plutopia*, a truly execrable attempt at pro-socialist allegory. One imagines he was happy to bury it.⁵⁹

In many cases, Haldeman-Julius altered the titles of books to increase sales. He referred this process as a trip to “The Hospital,” in an effort to avoid ending up in “The Morgue,” i.e., replaced by another title. He described his method in Chapter VIII of *The First Hundred Million*, “The Hospital: How Little Blue Books Are Given New Zest by New Titles.” One of the first titles he altered was No. 199, Guy Maupassant's *The Tallow Ball*, which replaced a socialist title in 1922. Since the title did not clearly communicate the content of the story, in which a French prostitute offers herself to a Prussian army officer in order to help her travelling companions, Haldeman-Julius renamed the story, *A French Prostitute's Sacrifice*, resulting in a tripling of annual sales.⁶⁰

Haldeman-Julius gave other examples of how clever renaming, especially by bringing sex into the title, could boost sales. He admitted he received criticism for the practice but defended himself because the end -- getting good literature into the hands of the people -- justified the means. Moreover, he did establish some limits to the practice. For example, he vowed never to alter a Shakespeare title.⁶¹ Perhaps that promise saved us from a play about young lovers from feuding families titled, *Scorn, Sex and Suicide*.

⁵⁸While most of the company's records have not survived, a ledger with vital information still exists. It is in the Axe Library of Pittsburg State University. “1933” is handwritten at the top. Listed is each number and title up to number 1733. There are columns for the number of pages, a count of “editions” (i.e., the number of times reprinted), the years of the first and last “editions,” and the total number of books printed. Of the Shakespeare titles *Hamlet* did best with 143,000 copies printed from 1922-1933. Most never topped 100,000 in this period and *Much Ado about Nothing* only hit 40,000, an average of less than 4,000 a year. No figures are available for *Pericles*, as only books still in the series in 1933 appear on the ledger, but likely its sales were abysmal.

⁵⁹ The publisher's ledger shows the best any Haldeman-Julius authored book did was around 3,000 copies a year, some likely sold less than 2,000 per year, on average. For example, No. 461 was first printed in 1923. By 1933, only 20,000 had been printed and likely some of those were still in stock.

⁶⁰ E. Haldeman-Julius, *The First Hundred Million*, 134

⁶¹ E. Haldeman-Julius, *The First Hundred Million*, 136

When Haldeman-Julius said he changed the title of the book he usually did not mean that literally. What usually changed was simply the title in the advertising material. A good example is No. 384, August Strinberg's, *Four One-Act Plays*. In catalogs its revised title was *Prostitute's Motherly Love, etc.*, but no change was ever made to the wrapper or the title page. In the case of *The Tallow Ball*, which Haldeman-Julius viewed as a major success, the new title was used in catalogs and as a subtitle to the original title on wrappers printed after 1924. The title page was not altered. In fact, the title page was rarely altered to reflect the new title. A rare example of the change reaching the title page is No. 230, *The Fleece of Gold*, by Theophile Gauthier. It was retitled *The Quest for a Blonde Mistress* in the catalogs, and the new title was the subtitle on both wrapper and title page in future printings.

The First Hundred Million was a celebration of the success of the Haldeman-Julius pocket books. The following year, 1929, saw the country begin to descend into the Great Depression. The Little Blue Books would suffer but survive the economic downturn. However, the series would never return to the glory years of the mid-1920s.

There was a significant slowdown in 1930 with only 65 new titles added to the list. It was not just a slowdown in issuing titles. Sales must have declined as the workforce at the Girard plant was nearly cut in half, from close to 100 down to 50.⁶² Little Blue Book Shops began to close and none would survive the economic downturn.

In 1931, Haldeman-Julius was determined to rejuvenate the Little Blue Books. That year he issued 152 new titles. These books showed the usual range of topics, with an especially large dose of late 19th and early 20th-century British and European literature. Perhaps most interestingly, the 1931 crop of titles included 20 works, Nos. 1689-1708, on socialism. Since the period of the People's Pocket Series Haldeman-Julius had replaced most of his socialist titles. Likely, because of the economic decline beginning in late 1929, which some interpreted to be the collapse of capitalism, he decided to try socialism again.

In 1930, he made arrangements with Morris Hillquit of the Socialist Party of America to publish a series of 20 books. Hillquit chose the authors and assigned the topics.⁶³ The authors received \$50 for a manuscript of between 7400 and 7600 words -- 32 pages in a Little Blue Book. The Socialist Party would be able to purchase them at a price of \$24 per 1,000.⁶⁴ The list of authors in this series was impressive, including Hillquit, Upton Sinclair, Norman Thomas and Heywood Broun. The Socialist Party advertised the set to its members for \$1 and for an extra 40 cents "two handsome 'Gene Debs' book-ends."⁶⁵ The books were printed in runs of 5,000. Unfortunately, the new Socialist titles did not do much better than their 1932 presidential candidate, Norman Thomas, who received about

⁶² E. Haldeman-Julius to his daughter Alice, July 31, 1930, folder 113, E. Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, KS.

⁶³ E. Haldeman-Julius, *My Second 25 Years*, 67.

⁶⁴ Socialist Party Records, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI, Box 10, Folder 1.

⁶⁵ Socialist Party Records, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI, Box 1, Folder 7.

2% of the vote. By 1933, 17 had been reprinted once, three of them had not been reprinted at all.⁶⁶ It's impossible to tell how many of these were reissued from 1934-1940 but once wrapper designs were changed in the early 1940s printings can be tracked. And the results are unimpressive. Only six of the 20 titles were reprinted in the 1940's, only one of them, No. 1694 *Socialism and Communism*, more than once. None were reissued in the 1950s-1970s.

The number of titles stood at 1,722 at the end of 1931. By then the Depression was taking a serious toll on the addition of titles and sales. Haldeman-Julius added only four titles in 1932 and nine in 1933. He added 21 in 1934, mostly health related and "How-to" books. Some of these titles are rather odd picks. For example, No.1755, *How to be a Fur Trapper* was surely one of the most limited-appeal books in the series. The single book with a 1938 copyright is by the only New York governor ever impeached, William Sulzer. His *Sayings of a Sourdough* was No. 1757.

Haldeman-Julius hoped to ease the crisis by raising revenue through price increases. An undated catalog of 1,617 books, likely from early 1931, introduced a two-tiered structure. Most books were still five cents but 107 "double-sized" books -- 96 or more pages -- cost 10 cents each. Catalogs of "almost 1750 Titles" for 1933 and 1934, showed an even more complicated three-tier arrangement. This left only 350, 32-page books, at the five-cent price. A new definition of double-sized, 64 pages and costing 10 cents, comprised the bulk of the catalog with 1,275 books fitting that description. The 107 formerly double-sized were reclassified "triple-sized" and went for 15 cents. Apparently, the three-tiered system negatively affected sales volume because at some point he returned to the original arrangement of all books at five cents.⁶⁷

Slow sales and attention to Big Blue Books surely played major roles in the decline in new titles. However, Haldeman-Julius and his wife were in the midst of a divorce, and that probably provided a significant distraction. Estranged for some time throughout the early 1930s, they continued to occupy the house just outside of Girard, though they lived separately. Apparently, they had a legal arrangement about household expenses. Marcet complained to her adopted daughter, Josephine, that things were so tense that they "locked horns" over payment of the heat bill of about 10 dollars a week. She wrote that he "has not been able to pay me more than fifty in a week on his contract and now owes me something like sixteen hundred dollars on same. But he is really having a hard struggle himself so I do my best and peg along...I could attach his Lincoln...or get possession of the plant...but it isn't my idea of being a good sport." It irked her, though, that despite his financial troubles, he still smoked 10 cigars a day and went out to eat on Saturday and Sunday nights.⁶⁸ In December 1933, the New York Times reported that Marcet had filed for divorce on the grounds of her husband's cruelty and refusal to pay

⁶⁶ 1933 publisher's ledger.

⁶⁷ The return to a single price was established no later than early 1941. The earliest evidence of this is in a catalog of 1761 books. Internal evidence suggests the catalog was printed in either late 1940 or early 1941. The catalog was included in a box of books in the original shipping carton, postmarked March 1, 1941.

⁶⁸ Marcet Haldeman-Julius to Josephine Haldeman-Julius, October 19, 1933, box 20, folder 222, Haldeman Family Papers, Daley Library, University of Illinois at Chicago.

household expenses. She asked for \$120,000 - the amount she claims she had “turned over” to him during their marriage. In her suit, she claimed Haldeman-Julius had left their home on November 13, 1933 and had not returned.⁶⁹

The divorce never became final, as there was a reconciliation of sorts. In a letter to Isaac Goldberg in late 1935 Haldeman-Julius wrote: “The marriage stands OK. There was a little trouble two years ago...In addition to money trouble there was woman trouble, too, for, as perhaps you know, I am given to wandering in the perfumed garden.”⁷⁰ Despite the wandering, the marriage survived, on paper anyway, until Marcet’s death due to cancer in February 1941. Not long after, Haldeman-Julius married his former secretary, Sue Haney.

As the economy gained strength in the late 1930s and early 40s Haldeman-Julius did little to add new titles. In the years, 1939-1942 only four new titles were issued. The only one with a copyright date was No. 1761, *America’s Little Hitlers*, by Ray Tozier. However, he began to issue more titles in the Big Blue Book Series, which had started back in 1925. From 1939 to 1942, he published around 35 books every year in that series. This trend would continue. From 1943 to 1951, the year of his death, approximately 400 Big Blue Books were issued while only about 75 Little Blue Books added to the list.⁷¹ Of the 75, 61 came out in 1943-1944 -- 50 books by Joseph McCabe, in the “The Self Educator” series, and another 11 by Professor John Burma, in the “The How-To Series.”

Despite the dearth of new Little Blue Book titles, the series started to see major changes in the late 1930s and through the 1940s. There had been no significant alteration in the design of the books since 1924, and no marketing innovations since the demise of the Little Blue Book Shops. With the Great Depression fading, Haldeman-Julius was ready for change. The first innovation was the introduction of the Automatic Libraries editions in 1938. St. Louis businessmen, Milton W. Greenwald and William Hartman, approached Haldeman-Julius with the idea of vending machine sales. He granted distribution rights to their Vend-A-Book Company of St. Louis. They started with 10 machines stocked with four to 18 titles each, located at the airport and other locations around the city. They expected to move on to national distribution.⁷²

But it didn’t happen. Correspondence in March 1939 between Haldeman-Julius and O. D. Jennings, President of O. D. Jennings and Company of Chicago, indicates that Jennings displaced the St. Louis group. What transpired is not clear. Jennings visited Haldeman-Julius, presumably in Girard, and came away with the right to distribute books by vending machine. Apparently, Greenwald and Hartman were upset. Jennings wrote to Haldeman-Julius, “I cannot feel that these gentlemen have any defense to offer at all and will be compelled to yield and allow another contract to be substituted for the one they

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, December 5, 1933, 48.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Cothran, *The Little Blue Book Man and His Big American Parade*, 375.

⁷¹ There is no comprehensive list of Big Blue Books. The numbers of books published here is an educated guess. My personal collection contains about one-half of the approximately 900 Big Blue Books. Using my list, I projected the estimate contained here.

⁷² *Questions and Answers*, no. 15, Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1939.

now have with you.” Haldeman-Julius agreed to sell Jennings 500,000 Little Blue Books at two cents each.⁷³

Haldeman-Julius created a special wrapper design for the Jennings books. They have a rectangle on the lower half of the wrapper saying “Published for Automatic Libraries” followed by the name and address of the distribution company. Below the rectangle is an 11-milimeter-wide “union made” label. This union label had been used on some Appeal’s Pocket Series and People’s Pocket Series in the late 1910s and early 1920s, but did not appear again until the debut of the Automatic Libraries. At least 29 titles were issued with this wrapper design.

Haldeman-Julius informed the readers of *The American Freeman* that eventually every city in the country would soon have “Automatic Libraries.”⁷⁴ He told a *Newsweek* reporter that the program was a “sensational” success and he would likely suspend the mail order operation in favor of the vending machines.⁷⁵ The experiment was short-lived, however, ending in 1941. Haldeman-Julius blamed the failure on the cost of the machines, which at \$149.50 each, made it difficult for a distributor to realize a profit.⁷⁶

Shortly after the Automatic Libraries experiment, Haldeman-Julius started on a series of wrapper design changes. Around 1940, books came out in a variety of colors, the first time since the People’s Pocket Series of the early 1920s. While never completely dispensing with blue wrappers, he first added light green, peach and white. Soon books appeared in yellow, orange, and cream. The “union bug” continued to be displayed, sometimes on the front but usually on the back. Another innovation was the removal of the copyright date from the verso of the title page. Apparently, this was done to disguise the fact that the vast majority had been copyrighted at least a decade earlier.

Throughout the 1940s Haldeman-Julius frequently altered the wrapper design. He used various combinations of a seven-millimeter-wide union bug, in addition to the 11-millimeter version, a circular “University in Print” logo,” and a portrait of himself that appeared in 37, 46 and 51-millimeter high versions. By 1946 books were being issued in red, violet and other colors, and some had eye-catching illustrated wrappers. The illustrated wrappers often had shortened, more titillating titles than the one on title page. One suspects the new and colorful designs were the result of expanding sales to various retail outlets.

Haldeman-Julius also tried various marketing innovations. In some cases, he printed special wrappers on demand. Companies distributed books with their advertising to clients. For example, there are two known copies of No. 1727, *Fifty Famous Sauces* that have advertising material printed on them for “Hackney’s Manhattan and New England

⁷³O. D. Jennings to E. Haldeman-Julius, March 13, 1939; Casper W. Ooms (attorney for O.D. Jennings) to E. Haldeman-Julius, March 23, 1939, E. Haldeman-Julius Collection, folder 167, Axe Library.

⁷⁴*American Freeman*, October 1939, 2. The *American Freeman* replaced the *Haldeman-Julius Weekly* in April 1929.

⁷⁵“Books via Slot Machines,” *Newsweek*, Dec. 11, 1939, 51-2.

⁷⁶*American Freeman*, May 1941, 12.

Clam Chowder” of Atlantic City. A letter from the Continental Coffee Company of Chicago inquired about having the company’s logo printed on 20,000 copies of No. 1555, *Rules for Success in Business*. Haldeman-Julius offered to complete the work for four cents per copy.⁷⁷

With the price inflation following the end of the war Haldeman-Julius raised the price of the Little Blue Books to 10 cents each, regardless of size. The exact date is difficult to pinpoint but clearly it was in the period 1947-1949.⁷⁸ However, occasional special nickel offers continued.⁷⁹

In 1941, Haldeman-Julius again ran into trouble for “borrowing.” He received a letter from Harper & Brothers Publishers asking how it was possible that Little Blue Book No. 1631, *Life’s Little Ironies* by Thomas Hardy had a Haldeman-Julius copyright of 1931, since Harpers published the book in 1894 and Hardy renewed the copyright in 1922. Haldeman-Julius apologized by writing, probably disingenuously, that the copyright notice was a mistake and he had thought the book in the public domain. Harper responded that Haldeman-Julius’s response was “entirely unsatisfactory, and you must realize it is.” Apparently, Harper was led to examine the Little Blue Book series more closely because they notified Haldeman-Julius of another problem with a Hardy title. While the title of No. 232, which appeared in 1924, is simply that of the short story “The Three Strangers,” several of Hardy’s poems appeared in the volume without permission.⁸⁰

Harper demanded to know how many copies of Nos. 232 and 1631 were on hand and how many had been sold so they could calculate their due. What follows gives insights into Haldeman-Julius’s method of doing business. He sent Harper a check for \$25, writing that he figured the payment would take care of the matter and get him “out of the dog house.” They replied that it did not and, again, demanded numbers. When Haldeman-Julius did provide numbers he clearly lied. He claimed, “Most of the 2,000 copies of each of the Hardy items are still on hand, because we never pushed these items.” But both books appear in catalogs and other advertising. The publisher’s ledger from 1933 shows that No. 1631 had a run of 5,000 in 1931 and it is quite possible there were other printings before Harper complained. The edition of No. 232 containing the poems was

⁷⁷ E. Haldeman-Julius to the Continental Coffee Company, April 30, 1950, Folder 212. E. Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library. No copies of this proposed wrapper have been located, so possibly the deal never closed.

⁷⁸ A catalog of 1,843 books contains several books copyrighted 1947 with all books priced at 5 cents. A catalog of 1,845 books with one book copyrighted in 1948 lists all books at 10 cents. *The Critic and Guide*, a Haldeman-Julius periodical, for November 1949 carries an ad for the catalog of 1845, so late 1949 is the latest date possible for the change.

⁷⁹ A catalog listing 1845 books is identical to the one cited in note #77, except that it the front has stamped in red: “PRICE REDUCED! TAKE YOUR PICK AT 5c EACH.” In addition, a mailed advertisement in my possession postmarked August 8, 1949 offered all books at 5 cents until August 31.

⁸⁰ The first Haldeman-Julius edition of “The Three Strangers” was printed in The People’s Pocket Series, Appeal Pocket Series, Ten Cent Pocket Series and Little Blue Books. That edition, other than advertising, contained nothing but the short story. The 1924 edition added the poems in question.

printed at least twice between 1924 and 1934.⁸¹ The final disposition of the dispute is unclear as the preserved correspondence ends without a resolution. The seven poems in question were deleted from subsequent printings of No. 232. No. 1621 was reprinted at some point in the early 1940's without a copyright notice, so presumably some accommodation was made.

Haldeman-Julius's time in the "doghouse" during his dispute with Harper was nothing compared with his troubles with the F. B. I. The publisher had long been in the sights of the Bureau. A Freedom of Information Act request returned over 300 pages concerning the F.B.I.'s interest in the publisher, but there is obviously material missing.⁸² The files contain many intra-bureau letters concerning the publisher and several citizen complaints. There is also much Haldeman-Julius advertising material, which show, presumably, what the F.B.I. found to be potentially dangerous: ads for sex books from the *American Freeman*, cartoons by free thinking artist Harry Fowler whose work often appeared in the *Freeman*, ads for Upton Sinclair works and *The Black International* -- a 19-volume attack on the Catholic Church by Joseph McCabe.

From the existing documents, it appears Haldeman-Julius first attracted attention in 1931 for articles in the *American Freeman* that discussed conditions in Russia and "apparent unjustified attacks" on President Herbert Hoover, who was the subject of several uncomplimentary Little Blue Books. An investigation was made about the possibility of transmitting seditious materials through the mail but no action was taken.⁸³ In 1936, the Little Blue Books again attracted documented attention. In August, employees of the Bureau placed orders for delivery of four Big Blue Books with titles related to sexual matters, and 15 Little Blue Books covering sex and divorce. Some of the titles were *Facts You Should Know about Masturbation*, *The Venereal Disease Problem*, *Confessions of a Gold Digger*, and *A Reno Lawyer Looks at Marriage and Divorce*. No evidence exists of action taken against the publisher, at that time.

Haldeman-Julius again came under scrutiny in 1941. In response to a letter from the El Paso office, on January 7, J. Edgar Hoover directed the Kansas City office to "undertake a thorough but discreet investigation concerning the activities of the Haldeman-Julius Publications of Girard, Kansas."⁸⁴ In a follow-up letter to the Kansas City office Hoover directed agents to determine if Haldeman-Julius is acting as "an Agent of a Foreign Principal in violation of the Registration Act."⁸⁵ While the investigation of Haldeman-Julius's mail, as well as questioning of some employees, found no evidence of

⁸¹ Several letters were exchanged by E. Haldeman-Julius and Henry Hoyns, chairman of Harper Brothers from April 21 to May 29, 1941, folder 173, E. Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library.

⁸² For example, one undated document with internal evidence showing it was from around 1944, starts on page 7 and goes as far as page 12 which ends in mid-sentence, and page 9 is missing.

⁸³ FBI documents: 62-25076, 7/1/31; 62-25076, 2/27/32 show concern for "possible seditious material" and attacks on President Hoover. Hoover was the subject of five Little Blue Books, all critical of the President. No. 1573, *Herbert Hoover – The Fatuous Failure in the White House*, authored by Haldeman-Julius, surely gained the attention of the F.B.I.

⁸⁴ The letter from the El Paso office is not included in the documents, just the response. J. Edgar Hoover to Special Agent in Charge, January 7, 1941, FBI document 61-7539-6.

⁸⁵ J. Edgar Hoover to Special Agent in Charge, January 13, 1941, F.B.I. document 61-7539-9.

communication with or transfer of funds from foreign governments the F. B. I. remained vigilant. On April 9, Hoover instructed the Kansas City office to continue its investigation of Haldeman-Julius's finances and indicated, "It would also be extremely desirable to examine the contents of his home and office if this could be arranged."⁸⁶

From this incomplete record, it appears that the F. B. I. and Haldeman-Julius reached an agreement. Apparently, the Bureau's main concern was *The Black International*. A memo of November 17, 1942 notes that "The Bureau advised that the Department of Justice stated that it is the opinion of the Criminal Division that the facts in this case do not warrant prosecution at this time."⁸⁷ Not long after that, a memorandum from an Assistant Attorney General, Wendell Berge, noted that in August 1942 Haldeman-Julius had promised a special agent he would cease advertising *The Black International*.⁸⁸

Haldeman-Julius explained what happened to Bertrand Russell, who authored works for both the Little and Big Blue Books that could be construed as anti-religious. In August 1942, he wrote to Russell, "Today I was visited by two F. B. I. men who told me that *The Black International* is offensive to many Catholics and that its publication is causing controversy in these difficult times.... I promised to cut all advertisements of the pamphlets.... This also means that I won't be able to print the title I suggested to you the other day. Please put it aside."⁸⁹

But even after that agreement, the bureau continued to pressure Haldeman-Julius. A note from Hoover to the Kansas City office on February 26, 1943 requested all copies of the *American Freeman* since October 1942 "to ascertain if the subject has carried out his promise to Special Agent [name redacted] to cease *The Black International* series."⁹⁰

As he agreed to a truce with the F. B. I. Haldeman-Julius made a similar arrangement with another enemy -- religious forces, particularly the Catholic Church. *The Black International* and Little Blue Books had caught the attention of the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ), and the Jesuit Publication *America*.⁹¹ The resulting negative publicity surely cost him some customers but, more importantly, it slowed the lifeblood of his organization -- advertising. In the *Freeman*, April 1, 1942, Haldeman-Julius complained that the *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Post* and at least a dozen other papers had refused his ads. To solve this problem, Haldeman-Julius felt he had to placate

⁸⁶ J. Edgar Hoover to Special Agent in Charge, April 9, 1941, F.B.I. document 61-7639-19. The FBI files also contain several letters from citizens calling attention to the publisher, especially for his issuing *The Black International*. A letter from Congressman Dave E. Satterfield, Jr. of Virginia, who referred to the publishing firm as "a nest of communists and fifth columnists."

⁸⁷ Unsigned "Top Secret" memo, November 17, 1942, F.B.I. document 1461-7539-54.

⁸⁸ Wendell Berge, January 22, 1943, F.B.I. document F.B.I. document 146-28-357.

⁸⁹ E. Haldeman-Julius to Bertrand Russell, August 19, 1942, Folder 192, E. Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library.

⁹⁰ J. Edgar Hoover to unknown, February 26, 1943, FBI document 61-7539.

⁹¹ Father Clarence McAuliffe, "Anti-Catholicism in the Blue Books," *America*, March 21, 1.

the religious press. In August, he wrote the N.C.C.J. to capitulate. He promised to withdraw *The Black International* and remove “objectionable” titles from circulation.⁹²

With the end of the war, Haldeman-Julius started to issue free thought works again but Catholics kept up the pressure. In March 1946, he complained of an open letter by 22 Catholic priests to the *Dayton (OH) Daily News* criticizing the paper for carrying Haldeman-Julius ads. The title of an article in the *Catholic Universe Bulletin* for June 25, 1948 well sums up the Catholic hierarchy’s view of the Girard enterprise: “Little Blue Books (Millions of ‘em) Spew Moral Poison across America.”⁹³

Antagonism between Haldeman-Julius and the F. B. I. heated up again in the late 1940s. Big Blue Book No. 730, *The F. B. I. – The Basis of an American Police State* by Clifton Bennet, copyright 1948, got a reaction directly from the Director. On July 23, 1948, Haldeman-Julius wrote to J. Edgar Hoover agreeing to withdraw the book. Hoover not so graciously replied a week later saying this “does not entirely undo the grave injustice.”⁹⁴ Hoover continued to monitor Haldeman-Julius. On February 4, 1949 Hoover wrote the publisher to say there was evidence the book was still being distributed and he wanted to know why.⁹⁵

In the mid to late 1940s, Haldeman-Julius paid scant attention to the Little Blue Book series, other than changes in wrapper design. After the burst of 61 titles by McCabe and Burma in 1943-1944, only another 25 titles were issued in the years before the publisher’s death in 1951, none after 1948. The titles printed were unimpressive. The best of the lot were seven books by Vance Randolph. These are on either Ozark humor or biographies of iconic characters of the west, e.g., Belle Starr and Davey Crockett. Apparently, Randolph was not particularly proud of these. Only the books on the Ozarks are attributed to him, the others bear pseudonyms.⁹⁶ From Randolph’s efforts, it was downhill for the rest of the 1940s for anyone looking for edifying literature. There are a couple of cartoon joke books, a guide to veteran’s benefits, which was surely useful to some, and a book on the meaning of given names. Most of the other books are “Fillers.” This Haldeman-Julius monthly periodical of 1947-1948 was filled with seemingly random short pieces excerpted from the *American Freeman*. The numbers of the

⁹² Cothran, *The Little Blue Book Man and His Big American Parade*, 408-11. Likely, the Catholic Church and the F. B. I. were in touch about the issue of Haldeman-Julius. There was a long-standing collaboration between the two. Even after Haldeman-Julius’ death in 1951, both continued to think ill of the Girard publishing firm. In 1954 the office of Cardinal and Archbishop of New York Francis Spellman contacted the Bureau asking them to investigate a rumor that a firm in Kansas was planning to publish a book “Vilifying the Cardinal as well as the Church generally.” While there is no evidence that the book described was considered, much less published, Hoover wrote a staff member that the Haldeman-Julius firm “was capable of putting out such a work, (it) has in the past published various attacks on religion, especially the Catholic Church, as well as inaccurate, scurrilous and libelous attacks on the Bureau and myself.” Steve Rosswurm, *The FBI and the Catholic Church, 1935-1962* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 94.

⁹³ Couthran, *The Little Blue Book Man and the Big American Parade*, 425.

⁹⁴ E. Haldeman-Julius to J. Edgar Hoover, Folder 201, E. Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library.

⁹⁵ J. Edgar Hoover to E. Haldeman-Julius, Folder 204, E. Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library.

⁹⁶ Cochran, *Vance Randolph: An Ozark Life*, The index notes the many pseudonyms of Randolph.

periodical served “double-duty” as they carried numbers in the Little Blue Book series, as well as the volume and number in the periodical series.

Over the years, Haldeman-Julius gave conflicting accounts of how many pocket books he planned to publish. In 1928 he indicated he was about done. The series was at 1,260 titles and he would issue no more except for replacements for slow sellers.⁹⁷ In 1934, he claimed to have plans for thousands more.⁹⁸ By the late 1940s, the series was clearly running out of steam. There were some numbers that were never assigned to a book: 1832-1842, 1849, 1858-1876, and 1895. Haldeman-Julius probably intended at some point to publish books with these numbers. However, since no new books appeared in the last few years of his life it seems he had dropped that plan. These numbers remained unfilled after his son, Henry, took over. Henry published book numbers in the high 1800s and into the 1900s but did not bother to fill the gaps his father left in the 1800s.

Despite troubles with the F.B.I. and The Catholic Church, plus a price increase, sales volume must have remained steady for Haldeman-Julius publications. In 1949, Haldeman-Julius claimed to have about 50 employees, 75 in busy months.⁹⁹ In that year he published a two-volume autobiography, *My First 25 Years*, and *My Second 25 Years*. The tone of these was upbeat; much of this work was celebratory of the success of the Little Blue Books. But things were about to get very rough for Haldeman-Julius.

A break-in at the plant in February 1943 resulted in the theft of more than \$40,000 in cash. The large amount of cash reported stolen raised the suspicions of the I. R. S., which started to monitor the Haldeman-Julius business. In March 1950, Haldeman-Julius was indicted for evading taxes from 1944 through 1947. The IRS asserted \$65,000 in taxes were due.

Haldeman-Julius wrote to Clay Fulks in May 1950 “the trial has been set for the fourth Monday in October. As usual, the government in a tax case has a lot of technical dope, but such stuff is the merest subterfuge. The real aim is to gag me and destroy my press.”¹⁰⁰ After a delay, the trial finally took place in April 1951. After a six-day ordeal, Haldeman-Julius was found guilty of two of four counts. His lawyer immediately filed an appeal, so the judge deferred sentencing.¹⁰¹

What Haldeman-Julius considered government harassment continued even after the trial. His wife relates an incident from May 1951 when a postal inspector arrived at the plant, seemingly concerned about a small order of books that was not delivered. As the visit unfolded, it became clear the inspector wanted Haldeman-Julius to “withdraw his criticism of the Catholic Hierarchy.” His wife remembered him saying, “It’s the Freeman they’re after.”

⁹⁷ E. Haldeman-Julius, *The First Hundred Million*, 243-4.

⁹⁸ E. Haldeman-Julius, *How to Become a Writer of Little Blue Books*, Little Blue Book No. 1366.

⁹⁹ Peter H. Wyder, “Book Baron,” *Liberty Magazine* Nov. 1948, 20-1.

¹⁰⁰ U of Ark, box MC 1473, file 1: 13.

¹⁰¹ Couthran, *The Little Blue Book Man and the Big American Parade*, 428-432.

In the weeks after the trial, his wife remembered, “a brooding quality developing within him, and bitterness in his writings.” In addition, she became concerned about his alcohol intake -- “many evenings he would drink himself into a stupor.” He was supposed to have no more than two drinks a day because of a heart ailment. She relates that he was in “quiet despair” and he had significant fear of going to jail, though his lawyer assured him that if they lost the case he would be placed in good circumstances and likely not serve more than six months. Not long after the postal inspector incident, he made a major concession in hopes of aiding his appeal by appearing conciliatory toward the religious authorities. He decided to no longer publish the writings of Joseph McCabe and the free thought cartoons of Harry Fowler.¹⁰²

While anxiously awaiting his legal fate, Emanuel Haldeman-Julius died. On July 31, the day after his 62nd birthday, he drowned in his steel, in-ground pool while swimming alone. Conspiracy theorists have blamed the F. B. I. His wife’s account says that he had been drinking and went into the pool alone. She went to visit her mother a short distance away and returned to find her husband floating face down. Sue wrote that foul play appears “not impossible but highly improbable to anyone knowing the premises and his routine.” The death certificate lists the death as accidental.¹⁰³

Upon the death of E. Haldeman-Julius his son, Henry Haldeman, reluctantly took control of the company.¹⁰⁴ He had little interest in the operation when his father was alive. He preferred a career as a pilot working for Slick Airways of Chicago, a cargo carrier. That company gave him a leave of absence until October 15, but as far as can be discerned, he never returned to piloting. He and his father’s widow, Sue, decided to discontinue the *American Freeman* and concentrate on the book business. Despite his lack of enthusiasm for the business, Henry kept it going for another 27 years.

Henry did put some effort into the concern at first. Very early on, he abandoned the card stock wrappers and switched to a much lighter weight paper in a cost saving measure. He also expanded on his father’s efforts to make the books more attractive. By 1953, he was “selling a great number of our books through display racks in bus depots, drug stores, etc. We have not added any new books to our list, but have added a number of art covers.”¹⁰⁵ The company must still have had a wide reputation. For example, a letter received in 1953 from India inquired about the purchase of 40,000 books.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Sue Haldeman-Julius, unpublished MS, Kansas State University, Morse Department of Special Collections, Manhattan, KS.

¹⁰³ “Certified Copy of Death Record” issued by the Kansas State Board of Health, August 3, 1951.

¹⁰⁴ Henry at some point dropped the Julius part of his name. The reason for this is not clear.

¹⁰⁵ Henry Haldeman to Upton Sinclair, November 5, 1953, Haldeman MSS, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington. Regarding “art covers:” This is the second round or illustrated wrappers. The other, from the mid to late 1940s is noted above, likely in 1945-1946. It is clear that a different artist was used in each period. There is no evidence to identify either artist.

¹⁰⁶ A letter of October 20, 1953 was received from a Bhag Mal Saini of Punjab inquiring about the purchase of 40,000 books. Henry replied that the order could be filled \$37.50 per thousand. It is not clear if the order was placed. Haldeman MSS, Lilly Library.

Henry also expended effort removing his father's name from the series. E. Haldeman-Julius was noted as the editor of the series on both the wrapper of the books and the title page since the late versions of the People Pocket Series in the early 1920s. Beginning in 1922 the company name, Haldeman-Julius Company and later Haldeman-Julius Publications, appeared at the bottom of all title pages. Wrappers printed during the Henry Era have no mention of the editor's name. Any reset title pages are without the founder's name. On a great many books for which the title page was not reset, all evidence of Haldeman-Julius was removed for the printing plates. By 1956, possibly earlier, the company letterhead referred to the company as "Little-Blue-Books."

It seems clear the business was in decline. In a 1955 letter to Upton Sinclair, Henry said, "We recently ran an ad in the *Chicago Tribune* with rather disappointing results, but we are still hoping the situation will improve."¹⁰⁷ Cultural forces, for example the popularity of Pocket Books and other mass market paperbacks, as well as the wide introduction of television, were operating against the business. But, also, it seems clear, Henry had little enthusiasm for the book business. Small errors show this. A notice included with orders, likely in the late 1950's or early 1960's, noted the price was increasing to 15 cents per book: "The 10-cent price for these famous books was established in 1915! And since that time, the price has risen only from 10-cents to 15-cents." Apparently, he was unaware of the 1919 start date of the series or the fact they were most famous as five-cent books. A whopper of a double typo speaks volumes to his level of knowledge and concern: a wrapper for a Bertrand Russell book in bold letters touts the book's author "Famous philosopher Bertram Russel."¹⁰⁸

Without the flamboyant E. Haldeman-Julius at the helm the series became less visible to the point that many people thought it had disappeared. In April 1957, Thelma Spear Lewishon, author of No. 1049, *How to Teach Yourself to Sing*, wrote to Henry, "I understand you have gone out of business." However, she asked if she could still order copies of her Little Blue Book published in 1926.¹⁰⁹ A 1963 book devoted to the history of publishing repeated Ms. Lewishon's error. In *Book Publishing in America*, Charles A. Madison claimed the business, "began in 1919 and in a small way was carried on by the founder's son until recently."¹¹⁰

Henry did publish new titles in the mid-1950s but they were an uninspired lot. Only five books have copyrights, one in 1954, three in 1955 another one in 1958. Books on hernias and weight loss are probably the highlights. There were a handful of copyright-free titles on topics such as how to survive an atomic attack. Joke books, and reproductions of "Pin-Ups," i.e., photos of scantily clad models and movie stars were also represented. The "Pin-Up" books had photographs on the wrappers, as did several other titles, in a further attempt to attract attention to store racks. Nos. 1913 and 1914 are identical reprints of No. 639, a vocabulary book, but they had separate titles in the advertising catalogs.

¹⁰⁷ Henry Haldeman to Upton Sinclair, February 10, 1955, Haldeman-Julius III MSS, Lily Library, Indiana University.

¹⁰⁸ See the bibliographical record for No. 1372, Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*.

¹⁰⁹ Thelma Spear Lewishon to Henry Haldeman, April 4, 1957, folder 220, E. Haldeman-Julius Collection, Axe Library.

¹¹⁰ Charles A. Madison, *Book Publishing in America* (New York, McGraw Hill, 1963), 396.

Customers who ordered both books were likely unhappy at the duplication -- and duplicity.¹¹¹ No. 1878 likely provided a few laughs. The illustrated wrapper has the title *Your Sex Life After 80*. Inside there are 32 blank pages.

Of the books published by Henry, 19 are blank books for various purposes, for example, *Memo Book*, *Address Book*, and *Diary*. Five books, Nos. 1907-11 are identical except for the titles on the wrappers. They are expense books for various purposes, e.g., travel, and housewives' expenses. One of the last books published by Henry was Nettie M. Burgan's *The Curse of a Forefather*. One wonders if this title hints at his attitude toward his inheritance.

Henry had problems beyond declining sales. The enterprise was put in jeopardy when he was indicted in 1961 for mailing obscene literature. In 1960, the Post Office received a complaint about some books sold by the company. Eight titles, all by Dr. D. O. Cauldwell, Big Blue Books Nos. 820, 848, 861, 867, 871, 872, 876, 885, published by Henry's father in 1950 and 1951, were the culprits. Titles included: *Questions and Answers on the Sex Life of Homosexuals of Both Sexes*, *Questions and Answers about Cunnilingus*, and *Questions and Answers on Sex Physique Disparity: Are males and females critically mismatched in the genital proportions? Can it be overcome?*

The business suffered as Henry stopped sales of many books. Orders shipped contained a 2"x 4" note on pink paper that stated: "No Longer Available: Any books of sex information or education. These books are in litigation and will not be shipped if ordered."¹¹² Henry claimed that some dealers discontinued his books entirely. Altogether, decline in sales may have reached 75%.¹¹³

The case went to trial in the spring of 1963, in Topeka. Henry's lawyer presented five expert witnesses who testified to the accuracy and medical value of the books. Still, the jury convicted Henry and the judge sentenced him to 18 months in federal prison. This, despite earlier court decisions that deemed works of medical value not obscene. A juror explained the decision: "Those expert witnesses just don't understand the dangers of open sex discussion. We want to get all sex off the market and we decided to start right here."¹¹⁴

Henry appealed the conviction and the case was scheduled to be heard in Denver Federal Appeals Court. However, he lacked the financial resources necessary for legal fees to carry on his fight. Laird Wilcox, editor of the *Kansas Free Press* -- a liberal newsletter with a circulation of around 1,500 -- became aware of Haldeman's conviction through an article in *The Independent* in April 1964. Wilcox devoted his next issue, April 27, 1964 entirely to Haldeman's plight and an appeal for funds to fight the conviction. Wilcox,

¹¹¹ *4,000 / Most Essential / English Words / (A Basic Literacy Test)* is the title on both title pages. But on the wrappers and in catalogs No. 1913 is given as *The Secretary's Spelling Book*, while No. 1914 is *Literacy Test*.

¹¹² An example is in the Haldeman-Julius Collection, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Kansas University, Lawrence, KS.

¹¹³ New York Times, June 14, 1964.

¹¹⁴ This quote and the account of Henry's ordeal which follows was written by Laird Wilcox and is in RH MS 116 Box 1, folders 1 and 3, Wilcox Collection, Spencer Research Library, Kansas University.

located in Lawrence, hoped the faculty of Kansas University would respond. He was much disappointed. Librarians raised almost \$35 and historians \$10, philosophers \$5, political scientists \$4. After two months, Wilcox had raised only \$161.

Disappointed that Kansans had failed to rise to the challenge, Wilcox widened the appeal. He contacted the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) which issued a statement of support but no funds. The free thought publication *The American Rationalist* ran an article on the case and *The Independent* continued its support -- including a \$250 personal donation from the publisher, Lyle Stuart. The *New York Times* published an article about the case on June 9, 1964 but without mention of Haldeman's financial difficulties.

Eventually Wilcox raised over \$1,100. Letters came in from all over the county with donations, some as small as one dollar, and many accompanied by letters of support. Typical of the letters is one from Camden, NJ that stated: "Since I was raised on Haldeman-Julius \$.05 books I feel I should assist as much as I can. So, \$10 is enclosed." Henry sold enough personal property that, together with the money Wilcox raised, he covered the legal fees. The appeal went forward. On January 13, 1965 the court ruled that the publications in question were not obscene. Henry avoided jail and the business continued.

However, the Little Blue Books would never thrive again. In 2007, I interviewed Margaret Nelson, the last employee. She went to work for Henry in 1963 or 1964 -- that puts her hiring during or slightly after the obscenity case -- and continued working for the business even after Henry sold the business in 1978. There were five employees at the beginning of Margaret's tenure. One was an older woman who served as Henry's secretary, the others worked in production and shipping. Eventually, the staff shrunk to two: Margaret and Henry's second wife, Bobbie. They operated two presses, a trimmer, a stitching machine, and doing repairs as best they could. At one point, both women were pregnant yet they kept the plant running. Margaret remembers printing almost exclusively Little Blue Books, with only an occasional run of Big Blue Books. They printed books into 1978, the year the plant was destroyed by fire.

Henry was reduced to living quarters right in the plant. His father had once bragged of a large office with attached bathroom. That was now Henry's home. Margaret described Henry as a very "easy-going" employer but tired of the business. Henry was not well liked in Girard. Margaret described the town as being "negative about Henry." Many people described the plant as that "old socialist building."¹¹⁵ Emanuel, most likely, had not charmed the townsfolk either but he gained a large measure of respect, employing many people and making a significant economic contribution to the community. He also lived in a large house on the edge of town with a swimming pool, often entertaining celebrities. By comparison, Henry's operation must have appeared rather pathetic.

By early 1978, Henry was very ready to sell. Mike Coughlin, a printer from Minnesota, heard the news from a friend, Bob Black, who lived near Girard. Coughlin visited the

¹¹⁵ Author interview with Margaret Nelson, Pittsburg, KS, June 27, 2007.

plant but decided against making an offer to buy. However, both he and Black bought vanloads of books from Henry -- all they could fit for \$100 a load. Coughlin remembers: "The plant was quiet, except for [Henry] pattering around in the office... The presses on the second floor seemed to be waiting for someone to start them again. There were boxes of books stored all over the place. Some were water damaged where the roof leaked. It was a business in serious decay with no heart for a rebirth. Time had passed it by and [Henry] was salvaging what he could from his father's once robust empire."¹¹⁶

Shortly before July 4, 1978, Henry sold the inventory to Norris Peters of Ohio. On the fourth, the plant was destroyed in a fire, likely caused by errant fireworks. Not all the inventory was destroyed in the Independence Day fire, but the production equipment was lost. The salvaged inventory was moved to a new location in Girard. Margaret Nelson continued to work for the company, now owned by Peters. From Girard she mailed orders placed with the "Little Blue Book Company" in Columbus, Ohio. The printing plates survived the fire, unharmed in the vault. Henry remained in possession of those. According to Margaret, he sold many of them as scrap. Some have survived and ended up in the hands of Haldeman-Julius collectors. The Axe Library at Pittsburg State University has many of the plates.

Peters reproduced some titles by having them photocopied. A small number of these books have been located. The quality is quite poor and they were issued without wrappers. About two years after the fire, Peters informed Margaret Nelson that the Girard operation was being terminated. He instructed her to send him the remaining inventory. A letter of August 6, 1980 asked Margaret to send whatever money was in the Girard bank account.¹¹⁷ After 61 years, the pocket books of Girard, Kansas came to the end of their run.

Little remains in Girard to remember the pocket book enterprise. The former location of the plant on Forest Avenue is vacant, a grass covered lot owned by the City of Girard. The Friends of Historic Girard have placed two plaques to commemorate the *Appeal to Reason* and Haldeman-Julius. One on the east side of the town square indicates the original Girard location of J. A. Wayland's *Appeal to Reason*. The other plaque is on a building, on the south side of the square, that once housed the Haldeman family's bank as well as living quarters upstairs. The plaque states that it was "The First Home of Emanuel and Marcet Haldeman-Julius."

¹¹⁶ Private correspondence: Mike Coughlin to Jake Gibbs, September 10, 2001. The books Coughlin bought in 1978, were sold mail order for many years. At some point in the early 2000s he sold his collection to Paul Mann who owns Run for Cover, an on-line bookseller in Brooklyn, New York.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Margaret Nelson. The letter Norris Peters to Margaret Nelson, August 6, 1980. From the private collection of Margaret Nelson. A copy is in Special Collections of the Axe Library, Pittsburg State University.

