

Version, August 5, 2002

**An Historical Review of Reviews: Chronicling A Century of Magazines for the Pipe-Smoking Maven
by Ben Rapaport**

At the start of this millennium, I began to reflect on the innumerable commercially sold – and occasionally free – American magazines, journals and periodicals, often financed and promoted by the tobacco industry, that came and went in the last 100 years.¹ None lasted very long, and the reasons for their disappearance are, no doubt, many and varied. In a few instances herein, I offer my own observations as to what may have contributed to their brief existence.

Strong evidence exists (see Footnote 2) that the idea for a consumer-oriented journal targeted on pipe smokers in America was influenced in very great measure by at least one, if not two, late nineteenth century British journals. The first, considered a premier example of late Victorian journalism was *Cope's Tobacco Plant, A Monthly Periodical Interesting to the Manufacturer, The Dealer, and The Smoker*, a folio-size tabloid published for Cope Brothers & Company, Liverpool, England, from March 30, 1870 through January 1881.² Much praise has been heaped on this periodical:

...A Liverpool tobacco firm's trade- and customers'-organ which was a very respectable literary review...The *Tobacco Plant* thus was devoted to a cause – that of encouraging class feeling among smokers by reminding them not only of the mellow delights of the habit they shared but also of the way in which tobacco permeated history...In sum, the publishing activities of the firm of Cope form an honorable little chapter in the history of Victorian journalism...The Tobacco plant did its substantial bit to maintain a lively interest in literary topics among ordinary middle-class readers. Seldom, before or since, could an Englishman get as much good reading matter for his twopence.³

¹ Other than the brief mention of early Lorillard and Bull Durham, this article excludes discussion of U.S. and foreign tobacco company-sponsored newsletters and publications, such as *The Fellowship of The White Spot*, *Peterson's Smoker's Guild*, and others that are available by subscription to American pipe smokers.

² A.V. Seaton, in "Cope's and the Promotion of Tobacco in Victorian England," *Journal of Advertising History*, September 1986, states that Cope's Tobacco Plant "...crossed the Atlantic through a distribution agency in Clarksville, Tennessee," and it is fact that, with frequency, the editor of *Tobacco Leaf*, a New York magazine, and other American newspapers furnished news, anecdotes, and tobacco humor to the editor of *Cope's Tobacco Plant*.

³Richard D. Altick, "Cope's Tobacco Plant: An Episode in Victorian Journalism," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Volume 45, 4th Quarter, 1951, 333, 339, and 350.

Version, August 5, 2002

Printing of the first issue of *Cope's Tobacco Plant* is believed to have exceeded 10,000 copies, a remarkable circulation for a periodical of that day. The second publication, much far less known is *The Smoker. A 'Bacca-nalian Journal for the Wise and Otherwise*, also a folio-size tabloid, a delightfully illustrated comedic weekly independently orchestrated by Dr. P.H. Davis, F.R.G.S., F.R.H.S., M.S.A., M.S.C.I., released on Saturdays beginning on January 9, 1892 and published for at least the next six months. Sadly, I have no further information on its eventual demise sometime after Volume I, Number 19, May 14, 1892.

Some may believe that magazines of this ilk in the United States, aimed at a limited audience, were few and far between. In fact, the opposite is more accurate: they have appeared in just about every decade during the 1900s. For example, in my files is Volume 1, No. 2 of *The Pipe* (undated), published in New York City, costing a mere 5 cents, which I believe was released sometime around 1920. Interestingly, it contained a few brief stories about pipe smoking, yet all the advertisements were from a single plug tobacco manufacturer, Marburg Brothers of Baltimore, Maryland (American Tobacco Company, successor). I cannot find a record of how long this magazine ran, and the masthead does not indicate the frequency of publication. Though I am not totally sanguine about the following, I believe that the inspiration for such consumer-oriented magazines were at least three precursors: (1) *Durham Whiffs*, published by Blackwell's Durham Tobacco Company, Durham, North Carolina; (2) *Puffs of Wisdom*, P. Lorillard Company's monthly house organ, introduced in 1882, containing anecdotes, proverbs, and "homely wisdom, interesting facts, tips of etiquette..." that was mass-distributed to every retail tobacconist; and (3) *Lorillards Magazine*, a P. Lorillard national magazine published for its customers from 1913-1915 that contained feature articles and stories from prominent writers and cartoonists, among them O. Henry, Ring Lardner and Booth Tarkington.⁴

⁴Maxwell Fox, *The Lorillard Story*, 1947, 31-32. Although Lorillard started as a snuff producer in 1760 and, today, is recognized as a cigarette company, its product line once included many pipe tobaccos, such as Stag, Buzz, Comet, Friends, Eureka, Magdalen, Yacht Club, Alligator, Mechanics Delight, and many others.

Version, August 5, 2002

Sometime in 1934 *Smoke* appeared, issued under the aegis of the Corn Cob Pipe Club of Virginia and sponsored by the Edgeworth Tobacco Station (the Station was probably a research subsidiary of the Edgeworth Tobacco Company). What is noteworthy and is that the magazine claimed 710 affiliate, or branch, clubs in 39 states and the District of Columbia, and 97 clubs in several foreign countries. I have only one issue of *Smoke* – Volume II, July-August 1935, Numbers 7-8 – so I do not know the duration of its run.

Next, in chronological order, were a few magazines whose target audience and duration remain a mystery to me. These were *Smoker's Companion, A National Monthly for Hearth and Home*, Companion Publishing Company, New York; it debuted with Volume 1, Issue 1 in March 1927 and, thereafter, left no trace. Then, 10 years later, two periodicals were in the pipeline (no pun intended) whose headquarters were also in New York City: *Pipe & Pouch, The Monthly Catalogue-Magazine of the Pipe and Tobacco Guild, Ltd.*, 79 Madison Avenue, issued in 1937, and *Puffs, Smokers' Guild*, 527 Fifth Avenue, issued in the Summer of 1938. I have one copy of *Pipe & Pouch*, and on the masthead of this free charter issue was its vision statement: “dedicated to the universal fellowship of pipe smokers.” Once again, I do not know how long either of these magazines ran.

The next magazine should be familiar to just about anyone who has ever owned a pipe. *Pipe Lovers*, the brainchild of George W. Cushman of Long Beach, California. The masthead of this 25-cent monthly that ran from January 1946 through April 1950, read: “The National Pipe Magazine, dedicated to the interests of over 20,000,000 pipe smokers.” When I met Mr. Cushman in 1980, officially identified as the publisher and editor, he confessed that he was also the magazine’s ghostwriter, part-time art editor, mailman and advertising agent. The magazine offered a wealth of eclectic information on all kinds of pipes, tobacco blends and blending, tips on pipe smoking, and pipe repairs and maintenance, and interviews with collectors. Although color was absent (except for the covers), and it lacked today’s tabloid pizzazz, this standard-sized black and white magazine, in its day, was extremely popular and, among a number of today’s pipe devotees, it is still in great demand. Unexpectedly, in the editor’s column of the April 1950 issue, Mr. “did-it-all-myself” Cushman announced: “So we ring down the curtain on more

Version, August 5, 2002

than four years of publishing this monthly magazine, and ring it up again in a new size, new format, and new price”; later in this same issue was the formal announcement: “The New Pipe Lovers comes to you next month under its brand new title – The American Smoker.” George Cushman sold the rights to the magazine to Leon Cutler – a personality who appeared often in a number of issues of *Pipe Lovers* as a pipe smoker and collector – who assumed the role of publisher and business manager. For whatever reason, there was a complete and clean break from the past because, beginning in May 1950, *The American Smoker, Formerly Pipe Lovers*, appeared as a pocket-sized version of *Pipe Lovers* selling at only 10 cents, and issued from new editorial offices in Great Neck, New York, not Long Beach, California. This abbreviated-size journal also had an abbreviated life: the last issue of this streamlined format that promised to retain “all its old features...” and offer “the writings of some of America’s most outstanding authors” was January 1951 and, on this occasion, offered nary a hint on its fate.

Filling the void left by *The American Smoker* was another short-lived monthly magazine. *Pipe Smokers Review*, marketed from Des Plaines, Illinois as “A Book for Pipe Lovers,” “dedicated to men who enjoy Pipe Smoking” that sold at a nominal price of 15 cents. The first issue was released in May 1952, and it abruptly ended with the August 1952 issue. An interesting anecdote contained in this magazine was that only 18 clubs were “official registered Pipe Clubs in the United States with twenty-five or more members”; if accurate, then this represented a marked downturn in the number of pipe clubs that were active in the mid-1930s, as *Smoke* had reported.

It would be another 20 years before a new consumer magazine would serve the American pipe-smoking public. European Publishers Representatives, New York, introduced *Pipe World, the International Magazine for Smokers and Clubs*, an English-language edition of a popular Italian pipe-smoking magazine of that day, *Il Club delle Pipa*, a quarterly that began in 1965. As best I know, only three discrete issues of *Pipe World* were sold here: a U.S.A. edition, August 1969; a North American edition, No. 1, May 1970; and a North American edition, No. 2, March 1971. Then, this magazine disappeared, while the original Italian counterpart continued until 1973.

Version, August 5, 2002

Just about the time that *Pipe World* folded, and with almost perfect synchronicity, in 1970 Rutledge Books, New York, released Volume 1, Number 1 of *Wonderful World of Pipes*, a glossy magazine with a face price of \$1.00! In its statement of policy, the magazine asked: “Why another pipe publication?”, and offered the following explanation: “There is no magazine to date that has published comprehensive material on pipes, tobacco and men, not in the depth and fascinating detail in which they appear here—literally covering the pipe smoker’s world.” Using the very same statistic cited by George Cushman more than 20 years earlier – 20,000,000 pipe smokers – the editor found 20,000,000 reasons to launch “a fresh, meaningful, new pipe publication.” One year later, issue Number 2 was on the newsstands, and on the editor’s page appeared the words: “There. Number two. We’re trying harder...Being number three will probably be sheer hell.” Sheer hell, it must have been, because Number Three was never to be released. In my opinion, one good reason for the demise of this magazine can be found by perusing either of the two issues: a bizarre and wholly inaccurate story about meerschaum “...apparently formed by the action of eons of time upon millions of seashells on the ocean floor, fusing them together into a claylike substance,” and black & white photographs of Rudy Vallee, George M. Cohan, Lionel Barrymore and Babe Ruth. Were these the stories and pictures appropriate for a magazine in 1972? I think not!

After a brief dry spell, another brave and independent-minded soul who knew fully the checkered history of prior publications followed in the footsteps of George Cushman. Mark T. Irwin offered pipe-smoking aficionados an offprint tabloid called the *Pipeman's Quarterly*; Mark composed, edited, printed and sold it by subscription from his Charlottesville, Virginia home. It ran from winter 1980 to February 1987. At the mid-point of Mark’s noble aim to meet the assumed information needs of pipe smokers, a man who claimed to have “organized” America’s knife collectors by publishing a magazine for those enthusiasts, stepped into the briar limelight. C. Bruce Spencer set up shop in Chattanooga, Tennessee with the singular goal of “bringing together all of America’s pipe smokers,” the man who gave the knife-collecting community the word machairology (those who collect knives), was now ready to assign the descriptive appellation, kapnismologists (from the

Version, August 5, 2002

Greek, kapnismology, the science or study of smoking) to pipe smokers. He founded Pipe Collectors International (PCI), and its quarterly magazine, *Pipe Smoker*, the “official publication of Pipe Collectors International,” commencing with the spring 1983 issue. PCI sponsored many events, developed a PCI pipe of the year, and appeared to be on the verge of accomplishing what Bruce Spencer had intended. The glossy magazine ran without interruption until spring 1988; when it changed its format to a quarterly tabloid, *Pipe Smoker and Tobacciana Trader*, with the May/June 1988 issue, it signaled, to me, the beginning of the end. PCI, with C. Bruce Spencer as its president, and *Pipe Smoker* magazine, with C. Bruce Spencer as its publisher and editor, could not function in harmonious synchronicity. The last issue of *Pipe Smoker and Tobacciana Trader* was July/August/September 1989 and, soon after, Spencer found a buyer to whom he sold the subscriber database, and another consumer magazine faded away.

Two years later, like a bolt-out-of-the-blue, another free spirit like Cushman and Irwin, one of our very own who is still with us, Theodore Justin “Tad” Gage of Evanston, Illinois, entered this publishing fray with *The Compleat Smoker*, a slick, classy, and erudite quarterly journal targeted to the smokers of both pipes *and cigars*. The debut issue appeared in the Summer of 1990 but, as everyone knows, magazines aimed at a narrow market can thrive only when paid advertising fills at least as many pages as are devoted to content. Soon after Volume 2, No. 1, Fall/Holiday 1991 issue of *The Compleat Smoker* (the fifth in the series) was released, the February 15, 1992 issue of *The Wine Spectator* announced that Marvin Shanken, this magazine’s editor and publisher, would be launching a magazine dedicated to cigar lovers in September 1992. Although Tad Gage may have an altogether different view, I suspect that this announcement and the anticipated loss in revenue from the advertising “heavies” of the cigar industry who could be expected to jump ship presented Tad with insurmountable odds for a one-man operation, and wisdom prevailed. The magazine came to a predictable end.

The banner year for consumer magazines was 1995! In chronological sequence, *Pipe Friendly*, a quarterly review from the brain trust of Joel Farr, Torrance, California, the editor/publisher, was introduced in May, and is now in its eighth year; it is informative,

Version, August 5, 2002

creative, and dedicated to all manner of pipe smokers. In August 1995, *Amici della Pipa*, another Italian consumer-oriented magazine that began in 1978, adopted the marketing approach of *Il Club della Pipa/Pipe World*, offering the American pipe smoker, through subscription, an English-language version of its quarterly magazine bearing the title *Pipe & Cigar Friends*. On the cover of this first issue appeared the bold-faced words: “America, here we are!” What I noticed after receiving the first few issues was that most of the stories appearing in this English-language edition had appeared in issues of *Amici della Pipa* dating back to the 1980s, a tragic strategic error, in my opinion, because old information is not the way to win new “hearts and minds”...and a subscription from any serious American pipe smoker. I have not followed closely the success of this English-language import.

Then, a friend, long-schooled in the tobacco business, Alan Schwartz, joined Lockwood Publications, Inc., New York, when *SMOKE: Cigar, Pipes, and Life's Other Burning Desires* debuted in December 1995. Alan was hired to be the Associate Publisher/Director, Editorial and Advertising for *PipeSMOKE*, a stand-alone supplement (insert) that was to be wholly, solely and totally dedicated to pipe smokers and their informational needs. *PipeSMOKE*, Volume 1, Number 1, appeared in the Summer 1997 issue of *SMOKE*, and in it the “Letter from the Editor” promised that the readership would “embark on an adventure,” but the adventure was not destined to last very long. This supplement was as professional as the Associate Publisher/Director. Anyone who knows Alan knows that he is a man of many words, and he used them well. The subject matter was always interesting and up-to-date, and the material was refreshingly presented. However, something went awry two years later, because *PipeSMOKE* was not included in *SMOKE* after its summer 1999 issue. Only Alan knows what that “something” is, but this micro-magazine, while it lasted in a printed format, gave many pipe smokers and collectors much reading and viewing pleasure. *PipeSMOKE* no longer is formally affiliated with *SMOKE* magazine, but it is alive and well as an e-zine on the Internet at www.pipesmokemag.com.

So, we should be thankful that *Pipes & Tobaccos*, bearing the subtitle “A quarterly magazine celebrating pipes of all kinds and fine tobaccos,” released its premier issue in late 1996. It has transited into the 21st Century, is healthy and thriving and, by all indications, is

Version, August 5, 2002

here to stay. It educates and entertains today's pipe smoker and collector; it keeps the reader current on his pastime, and it presents insights on pipemaking and tobacco blending. In a word, it fills just about every pipe smoker's information needs! From what I have seen to date, I, for one, certainly do not anticipate that *Pipes & Tobaccos* will follow in the footsteps of its predecessors!

A 2022 POSTSCRIPT. This article was first published in *The Pipe Smoker's Ephemeris*, Winter-Spring 2003. When I wrote that closing line, I had not anticipated or envisioned the demise of the longest-running pipe and tobacco journal ever. After an uninterrupted run of 23 years, the last issue published was Vol. 24, No. 1, Spring 2019. When might we see another magazine of equivalent quality and content? Hard to say, but given the inconsistent track record of all the previous magazines that I've described, I don't believe that it'll be anytime soon.