

The History of THE ADVERTISING CLUB OF GREATER ST. LOUIS

by Mary Kimbrough

It all began with a chance remark as the seven men stood up to leave their luncheon table at the Lindell Hotel at Sixth and Washington.

The year was 1901. The seven were St. Louis advertising men. They had been discussing a new trade magazine proposed by Capt. Robert E. Lee, the general's descendant and namesake. The hour had been productive...far more, perhaps, than any of them could have dreamed. When it was ending, one of them asked, "Why can't we do this more often?... This business of having lunch together is a great idea." The others agreed.

And so the Advertising Men's League of St. Louis, now known as the Advertising Club of Greater St. Louis (The Ad Club) was born.

It was the first organization of its kind in the United States. Like St. Louis in the early 1900's, it was innovative, daring and its members believed in making a difference. 100 years later, we will celebrate a centennial of achievement by all members of The Ad Club from 1901 to today.

Those seven friends recognized as the club's founders include Harry Meyer, Capt. Lee, Max Koenigsberg, Charley Staudinger, Frank Osborne, William Fensick and John Riley. Harry Meyer became the first president and Capt. Lee, the second.

As a club historian wrote in '75, others at the luncheon "grabbed the remaining offices." At the second meeting, several members of the recently defunct Asbestos Club appeared and by

St. Louisans agreed. Marketing professionals reveled in the time, selecting type, creating layouts and writing copy to sell corsets for 98 cents; women's high top shoes for \$1.25; cast iron ranges for \$14.95;

horse-drawn buggies for \$34.95; and derby hats for \$1.50. Captain Lee, a colorful and happy go lucky ad man, epitomized what has later been called the "wild side" of turn of the century advertising.

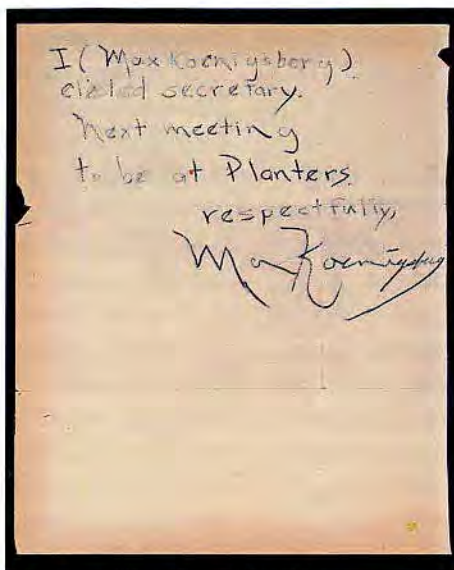
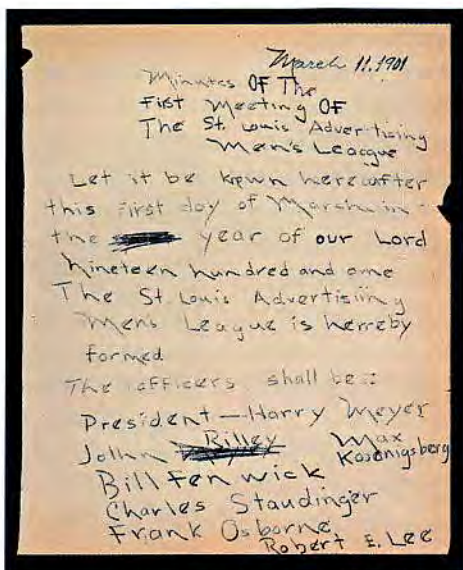
Just as today's 'Ad Clubbers' cannot predict the look of advertising in 2101, none of these professionals could have foreseen marketing today. They could not have imagined

that within two decades products would be marketed through radio and by mid-century, through television. As the world moved toward the space age and digital communication, advertising rode along with it. Perhaps only the biggest dreamers and doomsayers could have imagined the dynamic successes and the tough



1901-03 - Harry Meyer

challenges advertising would face. St. Louis' agencies would start small and grow worldly with hundreds of employees representing international corporations. Then, with mergers and



The original minutes of the first meeting are still in the club's archives.

the third, more than 30 businessmen showed up. December of '02 By-Laws were adopted and the Ad Club of St. Louis was on its way.

This was a time in American history which spawned ideas and creativity. It was the dawn of a new century, a time in American history called the Age of Optimism, the Age of Confidence, the Age of Innocence and even the Cocksure Era.

"It was a splendid time, a wonderful country," reported the editors of the Fabulous Century (Time-Life Books). "Most Americans felt that way as they welcomed the 20th century and many of them said so with great animation and grandiose references to Peace, Prosperity and Progress."

buy-outs and a new global economy made more uncertain with technological invention, which forever changed communication, ad agencies had to again redefine themselves. Some disappeared altogether, but many reformed, developed anew, or redefined their marketing platforms.



Original AAF Charter, 1905

St. Louis changed, too. None of these advertising execs could have guessed that by 2001 our city would grow far west, past the Missouri River. Farmland became corporate and luxury home sites, reached only by autos on clogged streets and highways.

Nor could they have known that their club, organized so informally, would grow into a vital civic organization with hundreds of members. Even so, they seemed prepared...

"The meeting content in 1901 ranged from superficial, trendy issues to lofty civic challenges. The energy

they generated during each meeting built a can-do spirit and they envisioned a better St. Louis for purposes of commerce as well as family life."

"Their collective vision and confidence gave birth to projects that put St. Louis under the world's magnifying glass."

Thus the founders and early Ad Club members set the pattern for the future. They were not only advertising men. They helped mold our community. In the process, they made St. Louis a renowned national advertising and creative center-giving rise to major campaigns famous around the world.

In 100 years, that nucleus of 7 has grown to more than 700. Five generations of officers, in turn, have led the membership from the dawn of the 20th century through war and depression, burgeoning technology and changes in American lifestyle into the dawn of the 21st century. Throughout the way the path has been two-lane, including concern for professional and civic betterment.

It has been an exciting journey and it is far from over.

Although many of those active in the mid-20th century recall those days as the 'golden' era of St. Louis advertising, each decade has had its glory days.

Just two years after that significant luncheon at the Lindell Hotel, the 'fun loving clan with a serious purpose' established the 'Christmas Party,' still one of St. Louis' most popular holiday fetes.

Four years later, civic-minded and insightful Ad Club members were among the most supportive of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, better known as the St. Louis World's Fair.

They also helped plan a national convention at which the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World was founded. Participation in this association required attendance at a meeting in Louisville (1908) ...the drive over to Kentucky took 8 tire casings and 15 spare inner tubes...then Philadelphia (1916)...during which St. Louisans

made a flamboyant and successful bid for the following year's meeting.

Hosting the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World meeting required significant organization and planning, including entertainment. The Ad Club members wanted to 'wow' the world.

Capitalizing on the tremendous success of a Shakespearean production held earlier that year (1916) on a grassy, temporary site in Forest Park, Ad Club officers suggested that the stage be made into a full facility, out of concrete, used to present a grand opera for the worldly visitors. St. Louis' Mayor Kiel supported the idea and construction began within the next 24 hours.



42 days later, the Amphitheater was completed. The Ad Club pledged \$5,000 in tickets and contributed \$25,000 of its convention budget to the city. The opera, "Aida," produced by Guy Golterman, was a rousing success as was the convention. The Mundy became a permanent summertime attraction enjoyed by thousands.

However, members' primary responsibility remained selling products and services. As conscientious marketers, they were also concerned with integrity. President Orville Goerger said, "At the time of the club's founding, advertising was very cut-throat, unregulated, not very ethical. Just a step above the medicine show or the street-corner pitchman. Creativity was by the seat of the pants."

National
6 CYLINDER CARS

This new twelve-cylinder National Sedan is a performing closed car. Its competent and spirited motor assumes the additional weight of the convertible body without effort, and to its security and shelter adds the range and activity of an open car.

The Six Sedan #2820 • The Twelve Sedan #3420

NATIONAL MOTOR CAR & VEHICLE CORP., INDIANAPOLIS
Incorporated August 1st, 1907



Weber Implement & Auto Co.
19th and Locust Streets





This concern sparked the crusade for truth in advertising. At the 1917 'World' meeting, vigilance committees were appointed to keep sharp eyes on phony promises. The newly created American Association of Advertising Agencies helped launch the "Truth in Advertising" formal movement. Pivotal in this evolution was St. Louis' William C. D'Arcy, president of the 'World' organization. D'Arcy was on a committee which formulated and signed a Declaration of Principles and according to Advertising Age, he was "active in his efforts to help raise agency standards and he was most emphatic in expressing the need for cleaning up advertising copy." On the St. Louis vigilance committee were Sidney R. Baer of Stix, Baer & Fuller; Claude L. Brittain of Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney; Max Koenigsburg of Famous-Barr; George M. Burbach of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch; W.P. Crisler of Aeolian Company; M.E. Holderness of First National Bank and John Ring Jr., Mercantile Trust Co. Their work gave birth to a new committee in the Ad Club, known as The Better Business Bureau. St. Louis may have been the site of the first BBB in the nation.

Interestingly, "(it) was born in righteous indignation and swaddled in a strange concept called self-regulation of advertising. There was almost a religious revival about truth in advertising..."

"...the scenes changed with regularity, (yet) the characters remained the same...the antagonists, a group of predators feeding off society; and the protagonists, a band of people striving to create a business climate in which all would prosper. Whether Americans were

marching off to war, looking under their beds for communists or marveling at new wonders like television, natural gas and automobiles, scammers were always there. And so was the Better Business Bureau with its warnings to the public and its assistance to law enforcement authorities, helping to jail or stop fraudulent operators or simply run them out of town."

World War I brought dramatic change, leaving behind optimism and innocence and entering, as Walter Weir wrote in *The New Democracy*, "a period of clamor...or an almost tremulous unrest."

Members put many Liberty Loan drives over the top. They campaigned hard for the Red Cross, and, at WW I's end, installed a bronze plaque in the former DeSoto Hotel honoring 46 members who had died in action.

They produced a "Made in St. Louis" carnival, out of which grew the American Retailers' Association.

In the early 20's, members developed educational courses in advertising and merchandising which later became part of the Washington University curriculum. They also helped organize a Junior Advertising Club for younger men in the industry.



During the mid-1920's, the club formed its social arm, The Haymakers, a fun group which helped St. Louis laugh, even during bad times. (Ironically, its proper name is the Ancient and Agricultural Order of Haymakers; although no one can recall the basis of the "Agricultural.")

"When we speak of Haymakers," wrote a member in a 1928 issue of the *Advertising Club Weekly*, we do not refer to such sporadic socks as those which won renown for that famous Thespian, Mr. William Harrison Dempsey (nee Jack), neither do we have reference to that type of agriculturist whose perennial Maud Mullerizing has won them a literal right to the title. To be sure, it has been said of our Haymakers that they pack a powerful punch and it is undeniably true that no sunbrowned sons of the soil ever worked any harder than these boys do when they get behind an Ad Club social event."

By the late 20's, the Ad Club's membership roster grew to include civic and business leaders as well as government officials. In 1930, the Ad Club president was called upon by area newspapers to voice the role advertising would play in boosting the country's economic health.

"What part has advertising played to keep the wheels of commerce moving...?" Hubert J. Echele, then president, answered optimistically, "Large business organizations recognizing the power of advertising have not decreased their budgets to any considerable extent...More thought has been devoted to preparation since more is expected of the advertising dollar..."

"In the business revival that is predicted by bankers, economists and business leaders...advertising, well planned and well prepared...will be one of the outstanding forces in again bringing back universal prosperity."

The business climate did not deter the spirited Haymakers and in the early '30's, they put on the first Ad Club Gridiron, fashioned after the

famed press show in Washington, to roast politicians and others in the news. The event, though impacted by 8" of new fallen snow became the precursor to sellout crowds each year till it ceased decades later.

Clearly, the Depression and a World War failed to dampen Ad Club members' spirits. In 1941, they added another important project to their list of civic improvements when they raised funds to save historic Campbell House and establish the Campbell House Museum.

Advertising was called upon again in 1942 to influence 'America.' Franklin D. Roosevelt, during a speech at the 38th annual convention of the Advertising Federation of America, said, "There are many messages which should be given the public through the use of advertising space (during the war). The desire for liberty and freedom can be strengthened by reiteration of their benefits."

Once business returned to normal after WWII, Ad Clubbers tackled a problem they described as St. Louis' civic inferiority complex. They teamed with the Regional Commerce and Growth Association and the Broadcasters Association to develop an "A to Z" advertising campaign "designed to give the region an introspective look at itself."

"It was a don't-knock-it-till-you've-tried-it sort of thing that is part of the...economic development program for the bistate region. The plan is to increase job opportunities by attracting new businesses while maintaining local businesses."

In 1956, they established the "Honorary Coaches" program and the "Memorial Advertising Perpetual Libraries," located at Washington and St. Louis Universities. As 'Honorary Coaches,' members served the role of local chaperones for out-of-town visiting teams.

Then in 1970, the club created its "Institute of Advertising" as an educational event for students of all ages. The younger members of the Ad Club were



*Gridiron Committee, Circa 1970
Back Row, L to R-Tom Ryan,
Hube Echele, John Lamoureux,
Jerry Connors, John O'Brien
Front Row, L to R-Sam Langsdorf,
Rich Desselman, Ralph Hansen,
Pete Nikolaisen, Don Hamel*

*Gridiron Dinner Conversation, Circa 1970
L to R-Ralph Hansen, Kit Bond,
Joe Badaracco, Larry Roos
and Jack Danforth*



designated "Lamplighters" benefiting through special programs with affordable entry fees.

1980 saw the introduction of its College Scholarship program, on behalf of children and relatives of Ad Club members and "Medal of Valor" as well as "St. Louis Congressional Awards."

A highlight of the club's evolution occurred June 1, 1988. The Women's Advertising Club (which had changed its name to the Advertising Federation of St. Louis, admitting men to its membership) merged with the Advertising Club of Greater St. Louis.

Prior to this event, the women's group pioneered a niche for female advertising professionals. Their club also dedicated itself to civic and social betterment and, of course, fun. Under the chairmanship of famed ad exec Bea Adams back in 1930, the members had created their own Gridiron, ultimately contributing well over \$1million to Barnes Hospital for cancer research. They also instituted the annual Flair Awards competition, honoring advertising from the Ninth District Federation.

As the Federation of St. Louis had opened its doors to men, the Advertising Club of St. Louis had opened its membership to women. In 1986, Mary Lou Hess became the first woman president of the Ad Club.

The long list of Ad Club presidents is an interesting read, (see page 12). It includes a direct descent of Robert E. Lee, whose signature appears on the 1901 board meeting minutes and Vincent Price, father of the famous actor. Broadcast leader Ralph Hansen and his daughter Merrell became the only father/daughter team to lead the club. Corporate presidents, television executives, Outdoor advertising leaders, Graphic Arts Executives and Agency CEO's have led the organization during the 100 years of its existence.

Early in its history the club won its share of honors, setting a pattern of achievement for its later years. In 1924, the International Advertising Convention in London honored the St. Louis club for having done "the best and most constructive work for advertising of any ad club in the world."

Winston Churchill added to the praise.*

"St. Louis is to be congratulated because it is so far ahead of other cities in advertising manpower."

There were a few mistakes along the way.

President Echele told a reporter, "That ...in February, 1927, when Harry Bussmann, president of the club back then, appointed a committee to look into the feasibility of giving \$25,000 to some

fellow who wanted to fly the Atlantic nonstop....”

“The committee turned thumbs down with a report that this fellow, Lindbergh, had a foolish idea.”

A 2001 survey, however, revealed far more great ideas than foolish have emanated from local creative workshops. Among those cited for notoriety included, “This Bud’s for You” (Anheuser Busch), “I’m a meat man and a meat man knows” (Mayrose), and “All You Add is Love” (Purina).

Back in mid-century, St. Louis’ contributions helped build radio. Adventure, cooking and educational shows such as “Tom Mix” (Ralston Purina) and the “Mary Lee Taylor Show” (Pet Milk) and “The Land We Live In” (Union Electric) were among the many popular additions to straight product and service salesmanship.

New technology and the public’s access to multiple sources of entertainment have dramatically changed broadcast programming and advertising has followed suit.

As one retiree recalled:

“The most significant events in the past 100 years in advertising include the advent of television and now, the Internet.”

“Most local commercials were produced live,” he continued. “Then along came 2-inch video tape edited by hand with a razor blade. (Times have changed.)”

He recalled the day when Gardner Advertising introduced Busch Bavarian Beer. “When Gussie Busch heard the concept, he ordered their brewery to produce a beer to complement the concept. Within two months, he appeared as spokesman in the very first commercial.”

The 2001 survey respondents celebrated other outstanding St. Louis-produced creative work...D’Arcy’s Coke Santa Claus; Stolz’s introduction of McDonald’s Happy Meal; Hunting Dog ads for Ralston-Purina; “Schnuckendorf” campaign to advertise Schnucks acquisi-

tion of Bettendorf’s Supermarkets; Volkswagen Beetle, old and new; “Baseball Like It Oughta Be;” “Nothing Runs Like a Deere” (John Deere); the Bud Eagle sign on Highway 40; the jingle, “For a Hole in Your Roof or a Whole New Roof”; Sid Savan’s “Community Federal Savings and Loan” jingles; Chuckwagon spots for Ralston-Purina; introduction of the Clydesdales; the first live nation-wide network production of the Grand Old Opry by Gardner from the stage of the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. The list continues and is very long and very proud.

Others went beyond the ads to cite “the most significant St. Louis advertising events/activities in the last 100 years...”

The many “Sports Salute” meetings were always well attended.



Salute to the Cardinals, 1982 L to R, Jay Randolph, Jack Buck, Norm Stewart, Mike Shannon, Whitey Herzog

...the annual Gridiron shows: the successful rise of new agencies, small but efficient, operated by local people; the Christmas Party and golf tournaments; the purchase of Gardner by Wells-Rich-Greene; the Ad Club’s salute to The Globe Democrat on the occasion of its closing...

Thoughts of those who created or produced the work and programs on which advertising thrived, and those who continue to do so have stayed fresh. Among those to whom survey respondents paid tribute are Bea Adams, Charles Claggett, Marv Gold, Dick Vinyard, Laney Lee, Dolan Walsh, Gene Duncan, Dan Kerlick, Bob

Hyland, Ruth Jacobson, Mike Roarty, Ralph Hansen, Wally Armbruster, Tony Amendola, Steve Kopcha, Jim Orthwein, Bill Crowel, August A. Busch Jr., II and IV, Ed Barnidge, Virginia Trent, Bob Bess, Don O.Pyke, Pat Bolling, Jerry Connors, Orville Goerger, Hub Echele, Bill McDade, Bill Miller, Don Schnuck, Mark Russell, Norm Stewart, Dave Allen, Carl Klinghammer, Glenn Jamboretz, Jim Wilson, Wilson Condict, Joe Donovan, Bob Flood, Tom Townsend, Ellie Ohrn, Bill Spencer, Larry Halenkamp, ...

Maynard Caster, Executive Director for many years and Nan Hartley, Executive Secretary (currently Executive Director) were cited for their service to the club. Duncan Bauman was highly praised as “a mainstay for the Ad Club.”

The survey included thoughts on the courses the Ad Club promoted, including “Careers in Advertising,” which prompted (a woman) to enter the advertising business she enjoyed for some 25 years. Another former member wrote, “It was a very special group of talented and dedicated people who did lots for the profession.



Brass Hat Awards were given to guest speakers Dan Kelley voice of the Blues on KMOX, receives his award from 1976 President Bob Kelly as Blues Coach Leo Bovin looks on.

It was a good combination of members from everywhere...agencies to radio and TV, manufacturing to retailing, education to service organizations. There were artists and writers, presidents of compa-

nies, executives, proofreaders and professors; but all had one common interest: Advertising. Just like the Ad Club.”

Through its history, the Ad Club evolved, improving its industry and contributing generously to its community through imaginative civic projects. Though indeed the changing world continued to extend challenges.

In 1990, “across the nation many professional and service organizations experienced dramatic changes that tested their ability to survive.”

“For a brief two year period, the Ad Club even altered its name and mission statement in an effort to grow new membership. But having weathered the storm, the Ad Club has done much more than survive.”

“The Ad Club reclaimed its brand name and underwent a resurgence of significant proportion. A new logo and web site mirrors the group’s relevance.

ADDDY participation has reached an all time high as St. Louis redefines its role in nationally acclaimed creative production.”

“Current business issues drive membership as new professionals flood our job market.... They are hungry for success. They are eager to believe that St. Louis is a great place to build a home, make a family and grow lifelong friends.”

Just as in the new 21st century, with its space travel and technology, its products undreamed of a century ago, the evolving tastes and needs of listeners, viewers and readers have undergone mighty changes. But the Advertising Club of St. Louis has kept pace.

The leadership and constituency of the St. Louis Advertising community, which succeeded the founders and those who followed through the 20th century, are alive and well and committed to tackling tomorrow.

Those seven who sat around the luncheon table and created a new organization that day in 1901 would be astonished, but proud.

And now to its second century. There’ll be another celebration in 2101.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Mary Kimbrough is a free lance writer, formerly with the Post-Dispatch, Globe-Democrat and Gardener Advertising Co. She is the author of 11 books, including histories of the Municipal Opera, St. Louis Country Club and Children’s Home Society, and co-author of Voices Set Free, relating experiences of abused women in prison, and Victory Without Violence, the story of St. Louis young people who helped open the doors of restaurants and other public accommodations to minorities. Her articles on The Globe-Democrat’s Man of the Year have been collected in Movers and Shakers. She is the former national president of Theta Sigma Phi, now Women in Communications, former president of the Women’s Advertising Club of St. Louis, and a Globe-Democrat Woman of Achievement.

ADCLICKS were a popular feature of the AD MAG PUBLICATION.



Brass Hat Ceremony – May 1976 meeting on Missouri Tourism L to R-President Bob Kelly, Kim Whaley, Worlds of Fun; Bob Kochan, Six Flags, (Bob became AdClub President in 2000); Jim Pasley, Dir., Missouri Tourism; and Shad Heller, Silver Dollar City



Advertising Club
of Greater St. Louis



Gridiron Fun – Circa 1984
L to R-Devil, Ken Griebenow, Gene McNary, Kit Bond, Mike Roarty, Prez Norm Stewart. The other two devils are not identified.