

2011

Every Week Essays: The Contents of *Every Week*

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Homestead, Melissa J., "Every Week Essays: The Contents of *Every Week*" (2011). *Faculty Publications -- Department of English*. 130.
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Every Week Essays

The Contents of *Every Week*

by Melissa Homestead

Published in a large format with colorful pictures of pretty girls by top illustrators on its front cover, *Every Week* featured an evolving mix of fiction, advice, commentary, and news items, all with a human interest focus. Advice and commentary filled about one third of the magazine, fiction another third, and photographs and very brief non-fiction items the remaining third.

Regular contributors of advice and commentary included Albert W. Atwood and Burton J. Hendrick. Atwood, who had written for the muckraking *McClure's Magazine* (where Managing Editor Edith Lewis had worked), wrote a regular financial advice column. Hendrick, who left a position as a contributing editor at *McClure's* in 1913 to become associate editor of *The World's Work*, regularly contributed articles analyzing politics, world affairs, economics, and business. Of the editorial staff, Bruce Barton, the Editor in Chief, was the most visible contributor of signed commentary. His editorials were unsigned in 1915, but when he began signing them in 1916, their provocative titles and prominent placement made Barton the public face of the magazine. Fifty of these editorials, which combined Christian moralizing with patriotism, capitalist boosterism, and self-improvement advice, were published in book form in 1917 under the title *More Power to You*. As Barton proclaimed in his editorial commemorating the magazine's first anniversary, it sought readers who "as Lincoln did, win their education through their reading. We stand with him—and them—for thrift, for a better national health, for more outdoor living, for better homes, clean amusement, for progress through self-help, for devotion to an ideal" (8 May 1916). He explicitly disavowed any connection to organized movements for reform, however, proclaiming in his editorial marking the magazine's second anniversary that it sought to "help each reader to institute his own individual millennium in his own life, by making the most of himself" (30 April 1917).

At least one, and sometimes two, lavishly illustrated serial novels ran in each issue, as well as one or more short stories. *Every Week* fiction leaned heavily towards popular genres, such as Westerns, mysteries, and romances. Most of the contributors were stalwarts of magazine fiction, now forgotten, such as Sewell Ford, Gertrude Brooke Hamilton, Grace Sartwell Mason, Holworthy Hall, Frederick Orin Bartlett, James Oliver Curwood, and Arthur Summers Roche. Ford had been a regular contributor to the Associated Sunday Magazines, and he continued as a regular contributor to *Every*

Week, with his comic tales of the adventures of working-class New York hero “Torchy” appearing in nearly every issue for three years. *Every Week* also occasionally published fiction by writers whose names continue to appear in literary history, such as Susan Glaspell, Conrad Richter, Sinclair Lewis, Edna Ferber, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Zona Gale, and Christopher Morley. Perhaps the most significant literary work published in *Every Week* was Glaspell’s story “A Jury of Her Peers” (1917), adapted from her one act play *Trifles* (1916), about an Iowa farm wife suspected of murdering her husband and the two women who come to understand her motive for the crime while male legal authorities remain baffled.

Captioned photographs and very brief articles were *Every Week*’s most innovative and popular non-fiction contents. The month-long production lag caused by national distribution (including Sunday supplement distribution with geographically disbursed newspapers) precluded coverage of breaking news. Many newspapers and locally produced Sunday supplements included pages and pages of war photographs and news well before the U.S. entered World War I. Unable to tap into this reader interest, *Every Week* turned the handicap of a lack of timeliness into a spur for innovation. As editor-in-chief Bruce Barton later recalled, “We had to close so far in advance of publication that it would be impossible for us to use current news pictures. So I invented the picture-caption article in the form of double spread (center) of pictures and long, factual, information, and (often) amusing captions. The picture-caption feature was a big success; as well as the great variety of short material.” [\[note 1\]](#)

The picture-caption section was also called the “rotogravure section” because *Every Week* used this superior technology for photographic reproduction to print the sheets appearing at the center fold of the magazine. The thematic topics of the section ranged widely. Another key feature presenting a “great variety of short material” was “The Melting Pot.” This two-page feature first appeared in October 1916 under the descriptive title “Our Own Carnegie Library on These Two Shelves—The New Books and Magazines,” before becoming “So You Have No Time to Read” in November. In April 1917, the title changed to “The Melting Pot: In Which the New Books and Magazines are Boiled Down to Give you Fifteen Minutes of Health, Efficiency, Travel, Biography and Adventure.” The feature continued under this title until *Every Week*’s demise, expanding with the magazine to encompass war news.

9 Bruce Barton to Charles H. Brower, 1953, Bruce Barton Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.