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"Emanuel Haldeman-Julius: The Paper Giant"

Sharon Neet

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Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture Tenth Annual - October 9th, 2007

"Emanuel Haldeman-Julius: The Paper Giant"

Sharon Neet, speaker

Special Collections Department, Axe Library

7:00 p.m

On October 9, 2007, the Friends of the Leonard H. Axe Library will host the tenth annual Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture. Dr. Sharon Neet, professor of History at the University of Minnesota-Crookston, and a colleague and friend of Gene DeGruson, will be the keynote speaker. At 7:00 p.m. in Axe Library Dr. Neet will speak on the topic of Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, the controversial editor and publisher who resided in Girard, Kansas, from 1915 to 1951. The public is invited to attend her lecture titled "E. Haldeman-Julius: The Paper Giant," and a reception which will follow the program.

Gene DeGruson, the curator of the Special Collections Department for Pittsburg State University for more than 30 years, was an expert on the life of Emanuel Haldeman-Julius and compiled the most complete collection of the editor's papers and publications available. Dr. Neet, a leading scholar on the history of southeast Kansas, will honor DeGruson's foundational work and bring to light new information and insights on the life of Haldeman-Julius.

When Emanuel Julius came to Girard, Kansas, in the fall of 1915 he little expected the town of 3,000 inhabitants to become his permanent home. As an ambitious, 26-year-old, Socialist journalist, he viewed this move as climbing another rung of the ladder of a career that had already taken him from his native Philadelphia to writing for the leading Socialist newspapers of New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Los Angeles.

What attracted Emanuel Julius to Girard was *The Appeal to Reason*, the most prestigious and widely circulated Socialist newspaper in America. Too, the Appeal paid higher salaries than the metropolitan dailies for which he had worked. It was thus money and prestige that drew Julius to Kansas. Little did he know that within a year he would marry a Girard banker and within five years he would become the owner of the Appeal Publishing Company. Although Julius had dreamed of some day becoming an influential writer, he did not know he would become instead one of the most significant publishers of the first half of the 20th century and that he would print books that would change the reading habits of America.

Eight months after his arrival in Girard, Emanuel Julius married Anna Marcet Haldeman, the only child of a prominent and wealthy family, the vice president of the Girard State Bank, and the niece of the famous Chicago social worker, Jane Addams. Marcet, as she preferred to be called, had returned to Girard from a New York stage career just months earlier when her mother had died. The adoption of the hyphenated Haldeman-Julius name after the marriage in 1916 was indicative of their early collaboration in writing, publishing, and business.

In 1919 the Haldeman-Julius Publishing Company began to produce pocket-sized books at a reasonable cost. The first two titles, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, appeared in February. Advertisements for the booklets in the *Appeal* brought in orders and the series expanded. By May there were thirteen titles. The emphasis in the beginning was on socialism titles, but there were also literary works by Guy deMaupassant, Robert Burns, Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, and Edgar Allen Poe. In the fall of 1921 the name of the series became "People's Pocket Series." It was soon changed to "Appeal Pocket Series." Many of the early socialism titles were replaced with additional literary works, a number of "free thought" works, and several on sex, such as the writings of Margaret Sanger. In 1922 the series was once again altered to "Ten Cent Pocket Series" and the first catalogue of 239 titles was issued. In 1923 the series title changed rapidly from "Ten Cent Pocket Series" to "Pocket Series," "Five Cent Pocket Series," and, finally, to "Little Blue Books." Over 500 titles had been issued by 1923 and the "Little Blue Books" were selling thousands of copies annually by mail order throughout the nation.

At the time of Emanuel Haldeman-Julius's death in 1951 the "Little Blue Book" series included just over 2,200 titles. Many of the titles were controversial at the time they were published and remain so. Included were books of skepticism and criticism of religion, government, and numerous other topics. Just as significant, however, is the record of important works Haldeman-Julius commissioned or supported. A series of philosophical essays first published as "Little Blue Books" later became Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy*. Works by Anton Chekov, Leo Tolstoy, and other foreign writers were translated into the English language for the first time for the "Little Blue Book" series. And many Americans were introduced to such important authors as Margaret Sanger, Clarence Darrow, H. G. Wells, Havelock Ellis, and Bertrand Russell through the Haldeman-Julius publications.