

Early History of the Ad Club From the 1956-57 Ad Club Directory

The Advertising Club of Toledo, in 1956 completed its 17th year since reorganizing in 1939, following the depression gap of 1934-38. The recent passing of Edwin A. Machen, one of the original Advertising Club's early presidents, merits mention here because his files furnished most of the information on the Toledo Advertising Club's early history, that follows:

The idea for an advertising club here originated with L.G. Medbury, manager of the Peninsular Engraving Co., and William Bayless, advertising manager of the Conklin Pen Co., one afternoon in 1909. The first club had as its first speaker E. St. Elmo Lewis of the Burroughs Adding Machine Co., Detroit. Presidents in order for the next 14 years were Maj. Harley Porter, Charles F. Dowd, L. H. Clement, Blacque Wilson, Edwin A. Machen, Manuel R. Cohn, H. C. Van Sickle, Ward M. Canaday, H.L. Corey, Karl P. Ashbacher, William K. Stewart, John O. Munn, Harry B. Kirtland and Ted Sewell.

One early achievement was organization and financial support of the Better Business Bureau. The Advertising Club of Toledo gave \$500 of \$10,475 pledged by 74 local business firms toward the Vigilance Committee which preceded the bureau. The club helped push the "Printer's Ink Statute," calling for truth in advertising, through the Legislature in 1913.

Perhaps the club's most famous member was Theodore MacManus, Kobacker's advertising manager, whose masterly Cadillac advertisement, "The Penalty of Leadership," later made him one of the all-time greats. He originated the "You'll do better at Kobacker's" slogan which later became "You'll Do Better in Toledo." The club won national acclaim in publicizing Liberty Loans during World War I. Toledo was first in the country more than once in reaching its quota. The club won a huge trophy at New Orleans in 1919 for work with the War Chest, predecessor of today's Community Chest.

In the famed street car strike of 1919, the club at its own expense ran large display advertisements and circulated a questionnaire seeking to solve the disagreement. Formation of the Community Traction Co. and the stabilization fund for fare regulation resulted.

Once, in 1912, the club went into troublesome debt over an elaborate souvenir booklet published in connection with a regional convention. Again, in 1923, a so-called “carnival” cost the club \$2,500. The “carnival” was a lily-white let-down after previous affairs, and games of chance had been eliminated. Customers came money-in-hand, and couldn’t spend it. Club members subscribed to \$100 bonds to make up the deficit, and “yellow dog parties” (this was Prohibition, remember!) were staged. Even here the profits were hi-jacked one night when surplus refreshments were left unguarded. (Nor was there recourse to local authorities.)

Club membership averaged 200 until 1929, then it dwindled as the depression deepened. Other presidents prior to 1934 were Charles von Beseler, Glenn H. Campbell, Willard M. Cannan, Fern L. Kettel and Frank D. Boone. The club expired in 1934, and was not reformed until 1939, when it began again as an independent organization on August 6. Smither B. Merrill was the first president. After his death a fund was set up in his name for the purchase of books on marketing and advertising for the University of Toledo library. Succeeding presidents have been Richard E. Gillham, Allen Saunders, Theodore Reeves, Lester S. Crowl, Herbert Bissell, J. Harold Ryan, Franklyn R. Hawkins, Thomas C. Downs, Marshall Pickett, Karl Nelson, Kenneth R. Orwig and John I. Carr. The club rejoined the Advertising Federation of America in 0000 (sic).

For the last 25 years the University of Toledo has offered courses in the basic principles of advertising, in retail, direct mail, media and copy writing, courses based on recommendations made by an Advertising Club of Toledo committee in 1929.

In 1931 the club published a remarkable advertising register containing an analysis based on a questionnaire of the profession in Toledo. Of 160 who replied to the quiz, 38 originally planned to enter advertising, 50 changed from other work, and 62 “drifted in.” Incomes ranged from an average of \$2,500 for high school graduates in the 20-30 year age group, to \$6,000 in the 31-40 age group. College-educated advertising personnel of all ages ranged from \$2,700 to \$6,500.

---- Ralph L. Sisson
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