“The Story of Greenwich Village:

Compiled from the most original sources and written comprehensible to both morons & other artistic folk.”

By Robertus Edouardus B.P.L.

In *The Quill*, Februrary 1923

“*From the earliest signs of culture to the Golden Age of Art, Literature and Batik—including the lives of Eugene and Rose O’Neill, Nave Ben De Casseres, Lucien Carey, Sinclair Lewis, Harold de Polo, Hendrick Willem Van Loon, Mary Heaton Vorse, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Nancy Boyd, Floyd Dell, Harry Kemp, Max Bodenheim, Thomas Edgelow, Nina Wilcox Putnam, Bobby and Marjorie Jones, Will Zorach, Zoltan Hecht, Tom Phelan, Tommy Hunt, Jig Cook, Piet Mijer, Eddie Ward, Clara Tice, Mark Toby, C. Fornaro, Hugh Ferris, Ethel Plummer, Norman Jacobsen, Mary Carolyn Davies, Wynn Holcomb, Dougie Macdougal, John Sloan, Art Young, Bobby Locher, Ira Remsen, Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos, Orric Johns, Susan Glaspell, Don Corley, not to mention many of Frank Shay’s near celebrities.” p. 1*

“Many writers who refused to write in the style of the Elsie and Rollo books had been rudely expurgated from Boston and Lynn.” p 6

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It was the golden age of Bohemia. Nobody, not even the participants, were aware of it. Only now, when they are old men and women, do

they look back and say sadly (to use the vernacular or the literary) “Ah, them were the happy days!”— and happy indeed they were, with wine and dinner for 55 cents.

What changed all this was the advent of one Guido Bruno and the appearance of a strange sect who called themselves radicals. Bruno brought publicity—he introduced the Village to the world. The radicals brought shame, psychoanalysis, and contubernal family relationships into our hitherto unblemished midst. 3-4

we will say something about a picturesque vagabond who for a short time ruled Bohemia with a stern hand. This person established himself as a sort of François Villon, though his verse was far inferior, and one of the first things the newspapers did when they discovered Bohemia was to proclaim this itinerant minstrel, king. Now in justice to this quaint character, we must state that on several occa- sions when he was approached by the police, he modestly refused to be crowned—he merely admit- ted his dictatorship.

The history of this absurd troubadouring person would fill a book, so we must perforce give

him a little space, though modesty constrains us. When he first appeared in the Washington Square district Bohemia had gone to seed. Jack Tucker had founded the Pleiades Club, which was a live affair until conventional people horned their way in, after the mysterious manner of such as are tired of home life. Oliver Herford had gone away somewhere. Rose O’Neill had gone back to the Ozarks, and Eugene was still in swaddling clothes. Nina Putram was in high school, while Red Lewis and Kid Steel were running about after Mary Vorse, trying to get her to teach them how to write. 4-5 Harry Kemp?

This indigent monarch we have spoken of went to Paul Paglieri and Enrico Fassani’s very modest pension on Eleventh Street and suggested that by the formation of an association of Bohemians he would be able to make them and their house prosper greatly. Accordingly the Circolo Gatti Matti degli Stati Uniti was founded. The insti- gator had elected himself president and all that was necessary was to elect the members. In spite of the incredulity of Signors Enrico and Paglieri, a large body of members were produced. Every Tuesday

night thereafter merry youngsters came to dance the turkey-trot and chatter of the higher things of life. Jack Reed and Witter Bynner cast off the theological training they had absorbed at Harvard to frolic with those who have not as yet developed into fame and are still holding back the fruits of their mature genius. Ira Remsen, Mary Pickford, Nina Putnam, Renee Lacoste, Sarah MacConnell, and countless other celebrities visited this merry club. Everyone did exactly as they pleased, but anyone who did not do the right thing was ignominiously ejected. 5-6

“Radicals” and the Liberal Club:

These strange people opened a club house on Macdougal Street on the present site of the T.N.T. restaurant. Under it Polly opened her famous rendezvous for the old Villagers. 6-7

The Village was a lovely place until Guido Bruno spoiled it.

One morning, so rumor says, after a succession of monthly movings, the adven- turous Bruno landed in his garret on South Washington Square, where Grace Godwin’s is now (at present run by Chuckles and Nell). As he looked out he saw radical peo- ple, exalted by the joy of life, splashing wildly and gayly in the fountain—at least, so we were told by one of the Arcadian bathers. We asked her about the cops and she said the police looked upon their crowd as harmless nuts. Well, Guido started a magazine and got after the newspapers. Through his advertising droves of sight seers came to look at the new Bohemia, the Republic of Vincent Pepe. 8

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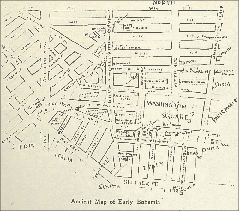
The (new) Liberal Club

Meanwhile, the president of the Gatti Matti, who was then wont to play upon a strange painted instrument, took an intense dislike to these intrud- ers who never stopped talking long enough to hear what he had to sing. Vagabond though he was, he did not approve of them. He ruthlessly fired them out of his Club, and would have fired them out of the Village if he had been strong enough. 4

Robert Edwards?

ites that “Polly” started her famous restau- rant, where it is generally conceded that the Village of today had its inception. Polly did not stay there long, however. It was somehow taken for granted that her restaurant was started as a convenience for the club members. But they complained that her prices were too expensive. That was absurd on the face of it, as the Radical’s idea of an inexpensive restaurant, like that of the Bohemians, is a place where payment can be indefinitely and pleasantly deferred. Shortly after Polly moved out, Norah Von Lingen started the “Dutch Oven” with Ray Rosenbaum. This thrived on a patronage mostly of kindly visitors, but that was years later. 6

A form of dancing known as the Turkey Trot and Bunny Hug spread simultaneously all over the known world, including Oberlin College and Staten Island. Musically speaking, it was a sort of Semite corruption of Ethiopian rhythms and melodies which had long been buried in sentiment and min- strel traditions. This form of shaking the body occurred at the Gatti Mati and at the great balls at Webster Hall, but it remained for Charley Reed to introduce it to the tea rooms. He stared a place called the “Purple Pup,” but he was called away to the Great War. 7

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[journalists finding there was more hype than reality about GV life] they would invent side-splitting slander about the Coke in the Coffee or Bare Babies at the Bohemian Revel. 9

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2-4 In the last two installments of this history we spoke of the Liberal Club and, perhaps brutally, of the quaintness of some of its members. We did not say how it slowly disintegrated into a tea room and restaurant called the T.N.T. One Louis Weitzenkorn has written of this sad dissolution.  
The original members were Lincoln Steffins, Robert Hunter, Charles Edward Russell, John Spargo, J.G. Phelps Stokes, Robt. W. Bruere, Ernest Poole, Arthur Bullard, Wm. English Walling, Franklin H. Giddings, Charlotte Tellar and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. And, as Mr. Weitzenkorn says in the *New York World*: “The history of the world can’t be writ- ten in detail without mentioning some of these names. Later, when the club had moved to 137 Macdougal Street (still we quote from Weitzenkorn) here came Floyd Dell, whose ‘Moon Calf’ was only in his heart then; here came Emma Goldman, to talk, not anarchic revolution but Shakespeare! Here came Alexander Berkman with the pallor of a Pennsylvania prison on his cheeks, and John Reed, hot with the fire of young dreams, full of the adven- ture that ended in his death for the newborn child of the newest liberty—the Soviet Republic. Here came Margaret Sanger when birth control meant jail on Blackwell’s Island, teeth knocked loose by the gentle guards and forcible feeding. A row of por- traits is in this ghostly gallery. Arthur Caesar, attor- ney for lost causes, friend of the East Side gangster, soldier, dramatist, dreamer; Justus Sheffield, lawyer, the man who, with Caesar, defended Frank Tannenbaum and the hobo horde who invaded the Church of St. Alphonsus in the bitter winter of 1915—defended the downest-and-outest looking gang that ever saw the effigy of Christ on a cross— and defended them in the shining shirts of evening dress! There in the old Liberal Club were Renee Lacoste, the most beautiful woman that ever graced the poker tables of the Village—let Murger write her story—there was Barney Gallant, press agent of Mexican revolutionists; there were the painters John Sloan, Arthur Davies, George Bellows—and there were the nameless girls of Bohemia, who shared the heatless nights, the foodless days when poverty stricken art was the never deserting Herbert Hoover—“

Postwar:

Bohemia, when what was left of the thirty came home in 1918 and 1919, had changed. They were serving soft drinks there—or furtively drinking bootleg. The Liberal Club was a dance hall. A mechanical piano sawed off tunes and funny little women who couldn’t tell the difference between a brewery calendar and a Burne-Jones were dancing to ‘Tell meee, pretty Gypseee.’ What women! What phantoms they evoked!” 5

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**THE TEA ROOM ERA**

We are now reaching the Tea Room Era of the Village, which incepted during the decay of the Radical period. The Jazz period was due to the deterioration of the Tea Room into a dancing parlor.

**THE BIRTH OF “THE MAD HATTER”**

Quietly, with no publicity, for some reason we have never been able to analyze, Miss Edith Unger opened a place in a cellar which she called “The Mad Hatter” with a supplementary title “Down the Rabbit Hole.” Somehow the embryonic gangsters of the neighborhood failed to regard the “Mad Hatter” with proper solemnity. They came to derive constant joy in shouting “Down the Rabbit Hole” and casting defunct domestic animals down the “Hatter’s” doorway. They also told their moth- ers that they saw ladies smoking, which had direct historical bearing on the persecution of the Village. For the first weeks Miss Unger was not only visited by stray missiles of deceased fauna, but also every manner of petty inspector from every city depart- ment, including the Department of Parks, came snooping around, inventing most absurd cavil. Miss Unger, in despair, sold the “Hatter” to Miss

Jimmy Criswell, who was of sterner stuff. She had the gift of making even the chief of police seem hopelessly beside himself. The “Hatter” prospered immediately under a patronage of the saner people of the Village, to the exclusion of the intelligentsia intellectuals and the gas inspectors. 6-7

Tea Room->dancing hall/jazz venue

The Tea Room offers a place where the inti- mate confidences of youth can be harmlessly exchanged in accordance with the laws of nature and civilization. (basically a cheap hangout, not fronts for liquor or drugs) 8

Probably the electric piano of the Liberal Club gave Charley Reed the idea of permit- ting a phonograph to operate in “The Purple Pup,” the first of the Dance-and-Tea Rooms. Thereafter terpsichore ran riot all over on Sheridan Square. Then the Village became “the Coney Island of the Soul.” Then Don Dickerman introduced the Pirate Jazz Band into his hitherto quiet emporium. That was the last straw. 9

Some nameless gang of reformers burnt up the “Vermillion Hound” and the “Pirates Den,” Also “Purple Pup” 9-10

Arts and Crafts: Meanwhile Pete Mijer was experimenting with Batik … Lin and Joan had opened the “Jo-Lin Shop,” where the ”Pepper Pot” is now. They began to decorate objects of wood and tin. 10-11.

Pepper Pot, with pics : <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/2012/10/the-pepper-pot-inn-no-146-west-4th.html> Great menu design: http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\_OQAiMcEXtec/S2bmRxrSOBI/AAAAAAAACuY/ySKetU2pAFc/s1600-h/image0.jpg