

Bulletin of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association
1957-1959

From fall 1957 to spring 1959, the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association (CMVASA)—predecessor organization to the Midcontinent American Studies Association (MASA) and, later, the Mid-America American Studies Association (MAASA)—circulated a mimeographed publication called the *Bulletin of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association*. This publication included brief news items on CMVASA and regional activities as well as short academic essays. After the CMVASA started its own journal in 1960, association news updates began to be printed in the journal, in a column entitled “CMVASA Bulletin” (later “MASA Bulletin”).

Included in this PDF are CMVASA news items printed in the four published issues of the *Bulletin of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association*. The academic essays also printed in these issues of the *Bulletin* are not reproduced here, but a full contents listing for each *Bulletin* issue is given at the end of this PDF.

A FOOTNOTE FOR THE OCCASION

Wayne Wheeler

This is an era of launchings. Atomic-powered submarines find their way under polar icecaps. Gas-filled plastic balloons move upward with gondolas attached. Rockets and missiles are propelled to varying heights and distances in efforts to cause them to fall as their designers see fit or to set human-made satellites orbiting around the earth. In the nature of things, some of the items launched are, by one standard or another, more important than others, some more successful than others.

Hardly, in terms of cultural values and financial underpinning, of an order which includes the atom and earth satellites is the launching, with this issue, of its Bulletin by the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association. Still, as a footnote to the age, the Bulletin may have its place. It represents, as it were, an addition, a qualification, a documentation, an insight, and an imaginative flight to a society which seems bent upon exercising itself of its diversity and freedom of spirit. It seems singularly appropriate, then, that those in the social sciences and the humanities should band together in their own way to examine, among other things, the causes of and possible consequences to American civilization of emergency programs in the natural and the physical sciences--programs themselves ironically addressed to the spirit and supported by the prestige of national political leadership. Possibly the very need for such frenzy today stems from the widely-recognized pragmatism permeating American value and institutional structures. In other contexts, Professor Bestor has noted varying consequences which emanate from such aspects of the American sociocultural configuration. Elsewhere in this issue, he points out that European scholars interested in American society may have perspectives which we ourselves can have only with great difficulty.

And so it is that America, a relatively recent development in the Atlantic community, finds itself value-bound at a time when it needs to see itself as data. Those whom it would have as allies have themselves begun to examine these data for their influence on international relations.

American Studies is a discipline designed to give special insight into processes and values, among other matters, from which a peculiar pragmatism stems. Is it possible that the discipline will find itself withering in an atmosphere that is truncated by the very value system which it proposes to study? Could it be that there is need for basic social scientific and humanistic research into American civilization to accompany the efforts of the physical and natural scientists?

In the spirit of penetrating the fundamental secrets of American society and culture, the Bulletin is launched, neither as an atomic submarine nor as an entirely guided missile but as a paper-and-ink epistle. Let us hope that it rises not by virtue of its being wholly gas-filled.

ARTHUR E. BESTOR writes:

With this first issue of its Bulletin, the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association adds another to the growing list of publications evidencing a scholarly interest in the interrelationships that exist among the various aspects of American civilization.

A misgiving I have sometimes felt--that American studies might become an excuse for provinciality of outlook--has been happily dispelled by a year abroad. During 1946-47, I was privileged to appear on the programs of four European societies engaged in the study of the civilization of the United States from precisely the same interdisciplinary point of view that our Association has adopted. These were the British Association for American Studies, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Amerikastudien, the European Association of American Studies, and (a general association that sponsors academic enterprises as part of a more comprehensive program) the Congress of European American Associations.

It should be self-evident that the interdisciplinary approach is even more valuable to Europeans seeking to understand the history and present civilization of the United States than to our own citizens. The assumptions and presuppositions underlying American action in any field can be clarified for Americans by the kind of deliberate analysis and comparison for which we stand. One who lives and studies within the American tradition, however, can hardly remain unaware of the more obvious of these interconnections. A European, on the other hand, must formally examine such assumptions and presuppositions, not to clarify impressions he has inevitably absorbed, but actually to supply him with essential clues to understanding that do not and can not come to him through direct experience.

We have much to learn from the conclusions that European scholars reach concerning combinations of ideas which are so familiar to us that their significance eludes our attention. By reason of the greater wealth of source materials available to us, the members of this association and of its sisters will, I am confident, contribute insights of equal value--insights that are indispensable if the meaning of our national experience is to be grasped by mankind in general.

Arthur Bestor, President
Central Mississippi Valley
American Studies Association

Department of History
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois
13 November 1957

HENNIG COHEN writes:

I appreciate the opportunity given me to inform members of the Central Mississippi Valley Chapter about the history and present status of American Quarterly.

American Quarterly was founded at the University of Minnesota and first issued in the spring of 1949 under the editorship of William Van O'Conner. The purpose of the new journal was to "publish articles, of a speculative, critical, and informative nature, which will assist in giving a sense of direction to studies in the culture of America, past and present." To this policy we still adhere. In 1951, Anthony N. B. Garvan succeeded Mr. O'Conner as editor and the University of Pennsylvania assumed sponsorship which included a generous subsidy which only recently was terminated. In 1952 the American Studies Association, then beginning its initial membership campaign, officially endorsed American Quarterly as its journal. Its newsletter, "American Calendar," made its first appearance in the spring issue of that year. With the first issue of 1957 I became managing editor and upon Mr. Garvan's resignation at the beginning of the current academic year, I succeeded him as editor.

I must confess to optimism about the future. We are receiving manuscripts of excellent quality; in fact, so much material that at the moment we have a considerable backlog. This means we can improve the journal by being more selective. We now tend to reject literary articles which are not interdisciplinary or related to American society, but we are short on articles dealing with music, the fine arts, mass culture and the like. Because library subscriptions and memberships have increased, we are solvent financially. We are considering the possibility of increasing the size of the journal and assuring the permanence of the fifth issue, our bibliographical and pedagogical supplement. We are also revising our procedures of book reviewing with a view to publishing a major review-article in each issue and a number of brief but timely reviews.

The future really depends, however, upon the wishes and support of American Studies Association members. We need their suggestions, articles, assistance in obtaining new members, and particularly their specific request to the libraries of their respective institutions to subscribe to American Quarterly if they are not at present doing so.

Hennig Cohen, Editor
American Quarterly

College Hall
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia 4, Pennsylvania
29 October 1957

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association will be held on the campus of Park College, Parkville, Missouri, on Saturday, March 29, 1958. The program chairman is Alexander C. Kern, Department of English, State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa. He is being assisted by Fred W. Lorch, Department of English and Speech, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa.

NEWS AND NOTES FROM REGIONAL COLLEGES

Grinnell College. Grinnell College now offers an interdivisional concentration in American Studies. The concentration consists of approximately 48 credit hours of work: (1) 24 hours in American history and American literature; (2) three courses chosen from American Art, Government and Business, The Press as a Social Instrument, Religions in the United States, Philosophy in America, Constitutional Law and Law Administration, and The Community; (3) 12 hours in American Studies seminars.

The American Studies seminars will consist of assigned readings, supplementary readings, papers, and discussions of critical issues in American civilization, as they involve interrelated literary, philosophical, artistic, political, economic and social expression.

There are now eight majors in the program. The committee which administers the program consists of Charles G. Cleaver, English, chairman; Joseph Wall, History; and Charles H. Foster, English.

A convocation with the title "American Culture at Mid-Century" was held October 25-27. Speakers included Perry Miller, Harvard University; Edward R. Murrow, CBS news analyst; Liston Pope, Yale Divinity School; David Riesman, University of Chicago; Norbert Wiener, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Guest soloists included Todd Duncan, Theresa Greene, and Charles D. Matheson.

Joseph F. Wall, of the Department of History and a member of the Committee on American Studies, is presently in Scotland on a Fulbright, studying the Andrew Carnegie papers.

Illinois State Normal University. Lucy Lucile Tasher has been promoted Professor of American History. Theodore Sands, Associate Professor of Social Science, is the author of "Alternatives in American Foreign Policy" in the April, 1957, issue of the South Atlantic Quarterly. Frances M. Alexander, Assistant Professor in Teaching of Social Sciences, is Chairman of the Committee on American History of the Illinois Council for the Social Studies which prepared the September, 1957, issue of The Councilor, entitled "Teaching American History: Techniques and Materials." Helen E. Marshall, Professor of American History, is the author of Grandest of Enterprises. A monograph by Miss Marshall, "Jesse W. Fell: Friend of Education" was published as the September, 1957, issue of Teacher Education, a quarterly publication of the university.

State University of Iowa. Stow Persons, State University of Iowa, served as Visiting Professor of American Studies, Stetson University, the summer of 1957.

An article appearing in the Iowa English Bulletin for October, 1957, by Florence Black is entitled "Interdisciplinary Processes." It describes the participation of Don Lowe, a seventh-grade teacher in Waterloo, Iowa, in the first American Studies workshop held at the University of Wyoming at Laramie. The workshop prepared ten units of study which will be tried by the participants who will meet again next year to evaluate their use.

Iowa State College. Research in progress at the present time includes the collecting and editing of the letters of Bronson Alcott by

Richard L. Herrnstadt, "Basic Trends in Twentieth-Century American Humor" by Norris Yates, and "Mark Twain's Struggle for Gentility" by Fred W. Lorch. Professor Leonard Feinberg is Fulbright lecturer in American Literature at the University of Ceylon.

The University of Kansas. Edward F. Grier, Department of English, has returned from a year's leave of absence as Visiting Professor of American Literature at the Universities of Lyon and Clermont-Ferrand and has resumed his duties as Chairman of the Committee on American civilization, replacing W. Stitt Robinson, Department of History. Professor Ward Miner, who taught American Literature and American Civilization, 1956-57, is now Associate Professor of English in Youngstown University. Rhoten Smith, Political Science, and Robert Schofield, History of Science, have been appointed to the Committee on American Civilization, replacing Eldon Fields and W. Stitt Robinson. Robert Branner, History of Art, has been appointed Assistant Professor of the History of Art in Columbia University. Gustav Blanke, American Civilization, University of Munster, Germany, recently lectured to students of American Civilization on Semantics as a Tool in the Study of American Civilization.

The University of Kansas City. Recently an American Culture program has been defined here. It is an honors program, governed through a committee composed of those teaching in the program. The student achieves his major by taking pertinent courses divided as follows: 6 credit hours in American Art, 9 credit hours in American Literature, 12 credit hours in American History, including the basic course in American Culture. There are suggested electives including a course in American Ideals given in the philosophy department. In addition to one year of a foreign language, the student must make a 1.5 (C+) grade average in the major. The whole is capped with a cooperative senior seminar focusing research attention on the Snyder Collection. This research collection of 18,000 volumes (plus additional items) of Americana should be of interest to many in this area since it includes rare and unique items and books not generally available.

Personnel involved in the American Culture program, 1957-58: George Ehrlich, Assistant Professor of Art; Kenneth LaBudde, Director of Libraries; Viola (Andersen) Perotti, Curator of the Snyder Collection; Philip Staudenraus, Assistant Professor of History and Government; Parry Stroud, Instructor in American Literature; John Dowgray, Jr., Assistant Professor of History and Government.

MacMurray College. Walter B. Hendrickson, Professor of History at MacMurray College, was awarded an American Research Center grant for 1957-58 to aid his research in the history of natural history societies and academies of science in the early Middle West. On November 15 Professor Hendrickson spoke to the Academy of Science of St. Louis on: "Natural History and Urban Culture in the Middle West."

There have been two additions to the English department, Richard Lynn (M. A. from University of Chicago) and Harold Kehler (about to receive his M. A. from Ohio University at Athens), whose teaching is chiefly in freshman composition. Thomas Rogers has left to go to the University of New York at Oyster Bay. Alexander Jones, who has written several articles

on Mark Twain, is now at work on an article on The Turn of the Screw.

University of Missouri. Bower Aly has accepted a professorship at the University of Oregon. His address is Department of Speech, 209 Villard Hall, Eugene, Oregon.

Park College. The American Studies Program has, during the current academic year, an enrollment of one senior and three juniors.

The senior student is writing a thesis on the "Historical and Social Significance of the Novels of Jack London." This student, whose field of concentration is history, is participating in an American Studies Seminar discussing the urbanization of the United States from the standpoint of the various disciplines participating in Park's American Studies Program.

For the spring semester a continuation of the thesis and seminar is planned. At the same time the junior students (field of concentration for each of them is different: history, political science, sociology) will enroll in a readings course designed to discuss the theoretical aspects of American Studies and to fill the gaps in the knowledge of the American scene these students possess. Each of the students will work therefore on two reading projects during the semester.

Two faculty members are at work on research projects connected with American Studies. C. Stanley Urban of the history department prepares a book on the founder of Park College, Colonel George S. Park, and his involvement in the pre- and post-Civil War Missouri and Kansas history. Wayne Wheeler of the sociology department studies the changes in a Swedish immigrant community in Kansas.

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The Bulletin of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association is issued twice during each academic year, in the fall and in the spring. Material for the Spring, 1958, issue should be in the hands of the Editor by April 1, 1958.

Bulletin of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association,
vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring 1958).

The Bulletin

of the

Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association

Volume I Number 2

Spring, 1958

STOW PERSONS writes:

The affairs of the Central Mississippi Chapter, as represented by the President's file of papers which has duly come to my hand, appear to be in such good order that there is nothing for me to do but to extend greetings and to mention the perennial problem of membership.

As many of you know, the organizational activity of the ASA in the last few years has been made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. This support will cease after June 30, 1960, and expenditures are now being cut back in anticipation of the lean times ahead. Beginning this fall, the Executive Secretary will change from a half-time to a quarter-time officer. Other Foundation support is being sought, but in the long run the Association must become self-supporting.

Association dues for 1959 will be increased to \$6.00, which will include both national and chapter dues, and will have the effect of "inducting" several hundred national but regionally unaffiliated members into the local chapters in the respective areas in which they reside. Personally, I welcome the consolidation of national and regional membership as a salutary change.

The ASA and the University of Pennsylvania now jointly support and control the American Quarterly. Previously, the Association "endorsed" the Quarterly but had no voice in its management. In addition to the regular issues, it will continue to publish the Supplement featuring American Studies theory and pedagogy, bibliography, and the ASA membership directory. Library subscriptions now number 513. I trust that members will urge their institutional libraries to subscribe where they do not already do so.

ASA membership for 1957 totalled 1245, an increase of 9% over the previous year. But this is still well short of the number necessary to carry on Association activities on a self-sustaining basis. We should not hesitate to urge upon colleagues and students with inter-disciplinary interests the merits of membership.

Stow Persons, President
Central Mississippi Valley
American Studies Association

Department of History
State University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa
22 April 1958

NEWS AND NOTES FROM REGIONAL COLLEGES

Eastern Illinois University. Next year, Donald F. Tingley is offering three new courses. One is in the Old Northwest. The others will be in intellectual history. The first of these will cover the colonial period and the second will deal with the nineteenth century.

University of Illinois. The University of Illinois has this spring offered the Phineas L. Windsor Lectures in Librarianship, a series which is scheduled usually every second year. This year the general topic is "Aspects of American Folklore." Professor Mody L. Boatright of the University of Texas offered the first lecture, "The Family Saga as a Form of Folklore," March 17. Director Robert B. Downs of the University Library gave the second lecture, "Apocryphal Biology: A Chapter of American Folklore," March 18. John T. Flanagan of the university's English Department gave the third and last of the series, "Folklore in American Literature," on March 19, 1958. As usual, the University of Illinois Press will publish the lectures, and the book should be released by late fall.

John T. Flanagan is editing, in collaboration with Professor Arthur Palmer Hudson of the University of North Carolina, an anthology entitled Folklore In American Literature, to be issued by the Row, Peterson Company.

Saint Louis University. A doctoral dissertation, THE SAGA OF AN IMMIGRANT FAMILY: THE DESCENDANTS OF JOHN KULLANPHY, by Alice L. Cochran, has been completed and accepted. The study was based on the Mary C. Clemens papers.

A new seminar program for Masters of Arts in Teaching was inaugurated during the current semester. The traditional seminar approach (e.g., exploration of many facets of one selected topic, such as American Philosophies of Social Reform, the current U. S. Social-Intellectual project) has been retained in the M. A. research and Ph. D. programs. For the M. A. teaching seminar a broader topical approach has been outlined, e.g., one report on Immigration, one on Labor, etc. The student in charge of each meeting is expected to give a critical analysis of the literature related to the topic, indicate controversies, demonstrate at least one method of presenting the topic, and prepare a written resume. It is hoped that this approach will enable the members of these seminars to make more immediate use of the information acquired.

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INTRODUCTION

With this issue of its Bulletin, the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association concludes the publication of papers read at its 1958 Annual Meeting.

The Bulletin of last spring (Volume 1, Number 2) was devoted to American humor as it serves to express social class relationships in the antebellum South, as it appears in Ring Lardner's view of the common man, and as certain aspects of American life have been satirized by Artemus Ward. In its own way, each of these treatments manifests the literary-historical, socio-humanistic approach of the developing field of American Studies.

In the current issue, the Bulletin turns its attention to change and personal and dynastic influence in two cities, Kansas City and Saint Louis. The interdisciplinary perspectives which these three papers bring to the study of American urban growth will contribute to a view of America-as-a-whole within which exists a certain diversity. Drs. Brown and Glaab have titled their papers, collectively, "Nature and Enterprise: Two Studies in the Culture of 19th-Century Midwestern City Growth". To these two papers, which comprised a section of the annual meeting, has been added the paper by Dr. Cochran, submitted for publication at the time this issue of the Bulletin was being planned.

The article by Louis Filler, which concludes CMVASA's Fall, 1958, Bulletin by asking "Why 'American Studies'?" may serve as a summary of this issue and the previous one. It can also act as a challenge for the future of American Studies.

Wayne Wheeler, Editor

Bulletin of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association,
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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association will be held at MacMurray College, Jacksonville, Illinois, on March 21, 1959. Walter B. Hendrickson is in charge of local arrangements. The chairman of the program committee is Robert W. Habenstein, Department of Sociology, University of Missouri, Columbia. President Stow Persons of CMVASA has appointed Howard Webb of Central Missouri State College, Warrensburg, to assist with the program.

Bulletin of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association,
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The Bulletin

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Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association

Volume II Number 2

Spring, 1959

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