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## Advertising by accountants

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# ADVERTISING BY ACCOUNTANTS

by

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While Mr. Coker had a valid premise for writing his article on CPA Advertising in 1914 (Historians' Notebook, Fall, 1984), the use of advertising by certified and non-certified public accountants extends far back. The subject and use of advertising is part of the history of the profession and its antecedents. The present author has done some research into the history of accounting and accountants in Baltimore. In the course of those studies several instances of advertising by accountants were noted and commented on in papers (1)(2)(3) presented before regional meetings of the American Accounting Association. There were no legal requirements or restrictions surrounding accountants in the United States prior to 1896 (1900 in Maryland), so it was each to his own thinking. Therefore, there were a number of accountants who used the city directories and newspapers to address the public.

Although newspapers were available, accountants in early days extolled their capabilities in their books. Mr. Charles Snell, sometimes noted for his auditing of the Sawbridge books in the South Sea scandal advertised his professional capabilities in this fashion:

"Such persons as may desire their children taught by the author a most noble and generous way of writing all hands, and how to command their pen.

"The practical manner (of Arithmetic) used by merchants in calculating and examining their Accompts.

"Foreign Exchange, their calculations, Negotiations, and Arbitrations.

"The true manner of keeping Merchants' Accompts (the Waste Book having been real business) stated in the Italian method of Book-keeping by Double Entry.

"He also fits persons for Public Offices, and boards at this house such as desire it." (Beresford Worthington, (1895) Chap. III, p. 25, par.2)

Obviously, penmanship and accounting are closely related but many examples seen by this author indicate a marked deficiency in both areas.

"Richard Dafforne, accountant and teacher of the same, after an exquisite method, in the English and Dutch languages."

"This pedantic writer says, in an epistle dedicatory --- 'I emboldened myself to prepare this antidote, being by nature obliged to offer up part of the widow's mite of my knowledge unto the land of my breath's first drawing.' (1660) Merchants Mirror. Worthington, p. 26

The Baltimore American regularly contained display advertisements called "tombstones." In 1891 two of these "tombstones" were engraved by Wm. F. Rogers (Maryland No.5) and Frank Blacklock, (Maryland No. 3) consulting accountant, 14 E. Lexington Street, both members in 1907 of the American Association of Public Accountants. Consistent daily advertisers were John P. Ayers, (1886) Phillip R. Reese, consulting accountant, 15 South Street, (11-4-1890). Another ran this extensive card:

John W. Arnold, Expert Accountant,  
Office, Room No. 5,  
Nat. Bank of Baltimore Building,  
Books Opened and Closed.  
Partnerships Formed and Partnerships  
Dissolved.  
Special Counsel to Firms in Trouble.  
Liquidation or Assignment.  
LEGAL PAPERS PREPARED.  
Opinions Upon Expert Work.  
Highest References and Bond Furnished.

(Arnold was one of four accountants who consistently advertised in 1890. - Ayers,

Rogers, Blacklock and Arnold. Rogers rarely advertised on Sunday.)

Webster, in his "First Twenty Years of the AAPA" had a chapter (#28) on "Advertising in Periodicals" and noted only one for Baltimore. He wrote specifically of the "ingenious arrangement of Wm. F. Rogers, 323 N. Charles St.", extracted from 'The Accountant', 9-5-1891, V. 17, p. 629.

There were at that time several advertisers in the Baltimore papers, but, it may be that Webster was thinking in terms of magazines. He referred specifically to the advertisement of Wm. F. Rogers and stated that he was the "first Treasurer of the Maryland Ass'n of Public Accountants" which was incorrect as may be verified by references to publications of the Maryland Association.

While seeking to confirm Webster's reference to Rogers (MD CPA #5) as reported, I confirmed Rogers' address at 323 N. Charles St., Loudon Park Building, for three-years - 1889, 1890, 1891. For the last six months of 1890 he had display cards in The Baltimore American under the caption - "Business Chances". The same search was made for the first quarter of 1891 with no success. Webster's use of 'periodicals' may have excluded daily newspapers.

This author, in his paper on post-civil war accountants, reported some of the various advertisements by accountants, some of which will be displayed here.

(From a directory of 1875, p. 761)

Ayers & Riddell,

Accountants,

No. 18 Rialto Building.

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Irregular Accounts adjusted.

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Partnerships and Dissolutions arranged.  
Special attention given to Bankruptcy  
Proceedings, and compositions effected with  
Creditors.

---o---

(From a directory of 1877, p. 821)

Ayers & Riddell,

Accountants,

No. 57 Saratoga Street,

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Special attention given to Bankruptcy  
Proceedings.

Compromises between Creditors and Debtors  
effected in the United States Courts or by  
private arrangement.

Ayers was also in business for himself in 1880 and with a partner named Foot, 1887-8. In 1887 he proffered "first class references as to *capacity* in all branches of our profession" and in 1888 - "as to *expertness* in all branches."

Another item from Jones's Post-Civil War Accountants, found in 1887:

A. (Andrew) J. Carnes, EXPERT  
ACCOUNTANT and  
PROFESSIONAL EXAMINER OF  
DISPUTED HANDWRITING

Twenty years' Experience in every known class  
of Accounting.

Forgery and Alterations of Written  
Documents, etc., etc., Demonstrated.

Office, 126 E. Fayette Street, opp. Barnum's  
Hotel.

As early as 1829, as reflected in Jones's Accountants - Prior to the Civil War(1) (p. 32), one J.H. NORFOLK advised the public in the City directory:

COLLECTOR & GENERAL AGENT

"Respectfully informs the public generally that he would willingly *undertake the posting of books*, adjustment of, and collecting accounts, & c. Having been engaged in the mercantile business for some time, and *possessing a pretty extensive knowledge of bookkeeping*, he feels assured that he should be able to render entire satisfaction to those disposed to encourage him in his *profession*." (underscoring by the author of this paper.)

The following is also extracted from: Accountants Prior To The Civil War (1)

Several instances were found where accountants and book-keepers advertised their services. The following is copied from the 1819 Baltimore City Directory.

Baltimore, 28th May, 1819

"Meet the disorder at its outset. The medicine may be too late, when the disease has gained ground through delay.

"The subscriber continues to examine and adjust Publick, Company and Individual Books and Accounts, no matter how complicated or erroneous; and to organise books from original entries and miscellaneous papers, in a concise and intelligible form: Also to examine vouchers and prepare accounts of Executors, Administrators, Guardians, Surviving Partners, Trustees, & for the Orphans' Chancery and other courts; and for private settlements: Likewise, occasionally, to investigate titles, and draw deeds in Fee, Leases and Re-Leases, Under-Leases, Assignments, Mortgages, Bonds, Bills of Sale, Powers of Attorney, Co-Partnerships; Articles of Agreement, & c. - Applications in the City, and from a distance, will be attended to with thanks, and the usual despatch and correctness.

Very Respectfully,  
William G. Hands.

(To which is added this - )

"Postscript.

"The friends and patrons of my proposed Elementary and Practical Book-keeping, Etc. (see the following prospectus;) are respectfully informed, that flattering prospects exist of the required number of subscribers being had at an earlier period than could be reasonably expected, considering the unusual pressure of the times. Persons who may not meet with the solicitor, and feel disposed to add their names to the list, have an opportunity afforded them through the politeness of Mr. Joseph Escaville, keeper of the Merchants' Coffee House, and Mr. F.M. Wills, (Old Post Office, St. Paul's Lane) where subscription books are left by desire; and also at my office.

"Parents, Guardians and others having the care and tuition of youth intended for business of any kind, would probably do well to stimulate them to subscribe, by advice and example. The Manuscript may be seen at my office by any person so inclined."

W.G.H.

Bentley made note of Hands' book in Part IV of his Bibliography.

Mr. Coker had deviated from the title of his article. The inference in the title that all CPA's advertised as illustrated by a few

examples is unwise especially when other examples shown lack credible evidence and some cited examples are not accountants. Exhibits 1,3, and 4 are not identified with CPA's. Exhibit 5 may be acceptable on the basis of "audit company" but those words were contended to be misleading. In Exhibit 6 Walker does not claim to be a CPA. The ads under Exhibit 7 do not relate to CPA's or PA's; they are touting stationery.

Ten years after the New York CPA law, in the A.A.P.A. year book for 1907, (p. 139) under PUBLICITY, there were two constraints. "1. No professional accountant should advertise or display his talents as a merchant does his wares. "2. Professional cards should show in plain inconspicuous type the name, occupation, and office address. No strained effect is consistent or dignified." These are AAPA *Guidelines*. (Was this intended to apply only to calling cards?) However, on page 238 of the same 1907 Year Book, the following is extracted from the Rules. "5. No member shall in his business advertisements use any initials as an affix to his name that is not either authorized by statutory enactment of this country or by the well-known associations established for a similar purpose in the British Empire, nor shall he affiliate or substantially recognize any society that is designated or in any way sets itself out to be a so-called Certified Public Accountant Society, without the State in which such Society is organized having the requisite statutory enactment in full force and effect." Obviously, this was authorization to advertise, or it was condoned.

Coker gave some illustrations of classified advertisements in Exhibit 2. The advertiser, M. Miller, was not a member of, nor associate of, the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants in the A.I.A. yearbook, 1917, nor for five years thereafter. The AAPA roster for 1914 does not include his name.

Louis Gross, also Exhibit 2, was an associate at 280 Broadway in the 1912 year book of the AAPA. He was not a member of the New York Society of C.P.A.'s in 1914 and not in the A.I.A. roster for 1917.

Although Mr. Coker has placed some emphasis on the probable influence of the passage of income tax legislation in 1913, it is appropriate to consider the probable effect of the bankruptcy act of the late 19th century. According to *The Modern Encyclopedia* (p.104) a uniform system of bankruptcy was established in the U.S.A. by the law of July 1, 1898. According to the 1922 *Manual of Commercial Law* (p.127) this act "suspended the operation of the state statutes as to insolvency and bankruptcy at least to the extent that they conflict with it." (U.S. Constitution. Article I. Sec. 8 powers. p.4). The state statutes were based on the English law of 1570. Thus, it is understandable that accountants advertised their services in settling these problems as shown by examples herein.

In summary, CPA's rarely advertised, even in the era around 1914. If the advertisements utilized by a few CPA's were unimaginative, that might be attributed to constraints preferred by the A.A.P.A. Prior to that era, as demonstrated herein, accountants unhesitatingly proclaimed their virtues and capabilities. Academy members in other cities may find interesting material or additional opportunities used by accountants to acquaint the public with their services.

Notes:

- (1) Accountants in the Commerce of Baltimore Prior to the Civil War.
- (2) Post-Civil War Accountants in Baltimore.
- (3) More about Post-Civil War Accountants in Baltimore.

**AAANZ**

The Accounting Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ) is the Australia counterpart of the American Accounting Association (AAA). Of course it is a much smaller Association which nonetheless has been in existence for about a quarter of a century. Emeritus Professor Louis Goldberg has been commissioned to write a history of the body and is actively researching this subject during 1985.

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**NOTE FROM KEN MOST**

The Manuscripts Editor of *The Accounting Historians Journal* reports that he is beginning to catch up with the backlog of articles submitted to his predecessor. The second volume for 1985 (Vol. 12, No. 2) will contain a number of articles submitted in 1984. There has been a printing delay with Vol. 11, No. 2 and apologies are due all subscribers. Vol. 12, No. 1 is at the printer, and authors whose work is included in that issue will be receiving galley's shortly. Please keep the manuscripts rolling in.