THE MIDLAND

By Lois T. Hartley

World War I marked the first great cultural break between the United States and Europe. If for physical reasons further contact was briefly impossible, at least America was culturally ready for the break. The rapid expansion of her material development toward the end of the nineteenth century, the closing of the frontier, and the rising nationalism all combined to make the country aware of its own potentialities. With this awareness, the cultural focus of the country swung away from the eastern seaboard. Regionalism, in fact, was almost synonymous with the cutting of European bonds. Areas like the Middle West became conscious of their own identity, and while manifestations of this self-consciousness took many forms, one form was the appearance of "little magazines" like *The Midland*.

The first number of *The Midland* appeared in January, 1915. The editor, John Towner Frederick, throughout the eighteen-year span of the magazine, always kept his readers informed of the purposes, policies, difficulties, and triumphs of the little publication. The first issue began with an editorial called "The First Person Plural," written anonymously by C. F. Ansley, "consulting editor and prime mover in the establishment of the magazine," in which the immediate policy of *The Midland* was set forth. It was not to be a commercial enterprise, nor was it to be endowed. Its publishers, editors, and contributors would receive no payment; and miscellaneous advertising would not be sought or accepted. The only expense would be the cost of printing and mailing, and it was hoped that subscriptions would cover these items. The editorial continued:

> The magazine is merely a modest attempt to encourage the making of literature in the Middle West. The region is already renowned for certain material products and for financial prosperity; but the market of its literary and other artists has commonly been beyond the mountains, and the producers have commonly gone to their market. Possibly the region between the mountains would gain in variety at least if it retained more of its makers of literature, music, pictures, and other expressions of civilization. And possibly civilization itself might be with us a somewhat

> swifter process if expression of its spirit were more frequent. . . .
>
> Makers of art do not moralize; yet they are artists because they have something to say. They have the faith of Saint Francis in something above the material, and for it they must at least have the will to take poverty as bride. So it happens that the Middle West has a few publishers, editors and writers who wish to do some of their work strictly in the amateur spirit. They will try to make and print some literature.[1]

One communication by Frederick appeared in the first number. He said that the people who had worked together to prepare the introductory issue had discovered certain things: that Middle Western writers were willing to give time and labor in order to make possible the publication of a magazine such as this one; that their experience proved the Middle West to be unable to find adequate expression through eastern publishing houses; that they shared the editor's belief in the literary future of the section; and that the Middle West possessed a regional consciousness not limited by state lines.[2]

The Midland was first edited in Iowa City, where John T. Frederick was an undergraduate at the State University of Iowa. In the first number Frederick announced his staff: editor, John T. Frederick; associate editor, Ival McPeak; literary editor, R. H. Durboraw; and consulting editor, C. F. Ansley. Ival McPeak and Raymond H. Durboraw were both undergraduates when the magazine was founded. Two other students, Roger L. Sergel and Esther Paulus, made important contributions. C. F. Ansley, head of the English department at the University of Iowa, helped Frederick more than anyone else during these early years.

John Towner Frederick was born on February 1, 1893, on a farm near Corning, Iowa, the only child of Oliver R. and May E. Frederick. While a boy, he was tutored in Greek and German in order to get advance credit for the State University of Iowa, for which he was ready after his graduation from Corning High School in 1909. During his first year at the State University, he washed dishes and scrubbed floors to help pay his expenses. It was necessary for him to interrupt his university education for two years while he taught school and saved money at Prescott, Iowa. There he was

[1] *The Midland*, 1:1-2 (January, 1915). (Authorship of editorial supplied by John T. Frederick.)

[2] *Ibid.*, 32.

principal, coach, and the only high school teacher. Returning to college, Frederick graduated in 1915.

At the University he was active in literary affairs and was senior class president. After his graduation he married Esther Paulus of Iowa City. He taught for two years in the English department at the University of Iowa; after receiving his M. A. in 1917, he was for two years head of the English department at the State Teachers College in Moorhead, Minnesota. His next move was to the 1,400 acre family farm near Glennie, Michigan. When the farm felt the postwar deflation in 1921, Frederick returned to the State University of Iowa to teach in the English department, where he remained until 1930, except for one year at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1930 Frederick moved to Chicago. There he taught part time in the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. He also taught part time in the English department of the University of Notre Dame. In 1936 he became a full professor at Northwestern, and the following year he accepted the position also of weekly book reviewer for the Columbia Broadcasting System program called "Of Men and Books." From 1937 to 1940 he served as regional director of the WPA Writers' Project.[3]

In the first number of *The Midland*, Frederick made it clear that the magazine was to be devoted to the interests of one region and its writers. He continued the theme in an editorial, "The Spirit of the Middle West," which appeared in January, 1916. This was one of the most enthusiastically regional of all the editorials that appeared in the magazine. In it Frederick stated that the Middle West, the region of the Corn Belt, was "favored by nature" and blessed with fertile soil. He believed that the farmers of the section were comparatively more prosperous than the farmers of other regions of the world and that the Middle West had "come as near the abolishing of poverty as any region [had] ever come." A land with no lower class, it was "democracy incarnate." Moreover, the Middle West was not at the end of its progress and not without ideals; it was not and had never been middle class because it had never been content. Frederick concluded that the region "must make its landscape of country and town say unmistakably to every beholder that those who live here live in the earthly paradise."[4] These editorials were the only ones published in the first five years

[3] For additional material on John T. Frederick, see Maxine Block (ed.), *Current Biography* (New York, 1941), 309-311.

[4] *The Midland*, 2:3-4 (January, 1916).

which stated policies or purposes. Only two other editorials appeared. One of these was concerned with the death of an associate of Frederick;[5] the other dealt with the teaching of literature.[6]

In his annual "Review of the American Short Story" for 1915, published in the Boston *Transcript* and in *Best Short Stories of 1915*, Edward J. O'Brien singled out *The Midland* for special and enthusiastic comment. William Stanley Braithwaite, in his annual anthology, gave high rating also to the poetry in the first volume. This recognition and encouragement was influential in Frederick's decision to go on with the magazine after its first year.

The first five years of the magazine's history may be discussed as a unit. Volume 1 contained two special departments in addition to the articles, short stories, and poems which were always to comprise the bulk of each number. The first of these departments was "The Midland Library," consisting chiefly of short reviews of books about the Middle West or of books written by inhabitants of the region. Even in the first volume, however, the department showed signs of deterioration, and it disappeared altogether after the January issue of 1917.

This first book-review section of *The Midland* was completely dedicated to the Middle West. One of the memorable brief reviews was that of Vachel Lindsay's *The Congo and Other Poems*. The reviewer admitted that Lindsay's poems fulfilled the intention of the "Higher Vaudeville," as explained in Harriet Monroe's introduction, but doubted the advisability of such a contribution to poetry. He said that poetry appeals "through the ear or the eye to the higher emotions of the hearer or reader, and must be balanced in all cases by his intelligence. Measured by this rule, *The Congo and Other Poems* is disappointing." A few poems, the reviewer continued, such as "Darling Daughter of Babylon," "The Amaranth," and "An Indian Summer Day on the Prairie," have in them the true spirit of poetry. "These do not need the bolstering of typographical eccentricities, or of such marginal directions to the readers as, 'To be brawled in the beginning with a snapping explosiveness, ending in a languorous chant.' "[7] This review called forth one of the few letters published in *The Midland*, a letter in which

[5] See editorial concerning R. H. Durboraw in *The Midland*, 5:1-2 (January-February, 1919).

[6] *Ibid.*, 1:65–9 (March, 1915).

[7] *Ibid.*, 1:97 (March, 1915).

Arthur Davison Ficke said that the reviewer failed to recognize "originality of artistic invention" in Lindsay's lyrics and declared Lindsay to be "one of the most noteworthy of American poets."[8]

During these early years of the magazine, three book reviews appeared which were not part of the "Library." The first, printed in July, 1915, was John T. Frederick's review of Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, in which he recognized the essential truth of Masters' poems, called the book a "work of fact, whatever else it may be," and praised the beauty of the lines and the tone and conception of the work.[9] The review was one of the most favorable ever to appear in *The Midland*. The second review, also by Frederick, criticized Carl Sandburg's *Chicago Poems*.[10] While Frederick thought the book lacked "uniformity of purpose and achievement" and that much of it was "relatively trivial," he had high regard for *Chicago Poems* as a record of fact and as a social document. The third review, "Realizing America in Poetry: Vachel Lindsay's 'The Chinese Nightingale,'" was written for the December, 1917, issue by Nelson Antrim Crawford.[11] Perhaps the chief value of these reviews is that they are evidence of *The Midland's* awareness of these historically important books.

The second department which appeared in the first volume of the magazine was "The Midland Chronicle," which performed many functions. It announced meetings of societies in the Middle West, drew attention to new magazines, recommended articles, stories, and poems in various other magazines, announced the publication of books by Middle Western authors, told of sectional art exhibitions, and so on. It was a collection of facts which Frederick thought would be of particular interest to Middle Western people. The department appeared regularly from January through November of 1915; after that time it did not appear again, but some of its functions were taken over by "The Midland Library."

The magazine gradually changed in policy and became more devoted to the publication of poetry and fiction. In the first volume approximately twenty non-fiction articles appeared; in the second volume, ten; in the third, fourth, and fifth volumes, only one or two each. Articles which were not necessarily distinguished by high literary quality but which dealt with

[8] *Ibid.*, 1:170-71 (May, 1915).
[9] *Ibid.*, 1:238–43 (July, 1915).
[10] *Ibid.*, 2:189–93 (June, 1916).
[11] *Ibid.*, 3:356–9 (December, 1917).

Middle Western themes or were closely connected with Middle Western problems were written by L. H. Bailey, Johnson Brigham, Dan Elbert Clark, Louise V. M. Hopkins, G. N. Malm, Selden L. Whitcomb, and Malcolm G. Wyer.

Among the writers, later comparatively well-known, who found publication in the early volumes of *The Midland* were Maxwell Anderson, Witter Bynner, Howard Mumford Jones, William Ellery Leonard, John G. Neihardt, Edwin Ford Piper, Lizette Woodworth Reese, Ruth Suckow, and Willard Wattles, all of whom wrote poems for the magazine. While most of the poems published in *The Midland* show very little evidence of regionalism, Edwin Ford Piper's "Barbed Wire and Other Poems" and "The Neighborhood,"[12] two series of poems on prairie life, are definitely products of the region in theme, outlook, and vocabulary.

To attempt to classify the types of stories and sketches which appeared in the magazine would be futile. Stories were printed dealing with many occupations and classes of people and with almost all sections of the United States. Of course, stories written by Middle Westerners and about the Middle West predominated. Of these, one of the best was Walter J. Muilenburg's "The Prairie," printed in August, 1915; but many other examples could be cited. Plays seldom appeared in *The Midland*; but for the January, 1916, number, Frederick wrote "Twelfth Night in Fisher's Crossing," a one-act play which was Middle Western in conception.

The Midland was in its formative years during the first World War, and the reflection of the conflict in the pages of the magazine is worthy of notice. One of the first contributions dealing directly with the war was John G. Neihardt's "Katharsis (Sonnets on the War)," published in April, 1915. Until May, 1917, the war did not seem much in the consciousness of writers for *The Midland*; then a series of war stories and poems began to appear. Among the writers on the subject were Hartley B. Alexander, Paul Lyman Benjamin, Kate Buss, E. W. Dolch, Jr., Glenn Ward Dresbach, Martin Feinstein, Ruth McIntire, Clara F. McIntyre, Edna Tucker Muth, Chandler Trimble, and John H. Wallace. The writers for the magazine became increasingly interested in the war as a theme for original composition. Stories and poems on the subject continued to appear even after 1919, but they were few in number. The outstanding piece of prose fiction dealing

[12] *Ibid.*, 3:1–14 (January, 1917); 52–64 (February, 1917); 65–77 (March, 1917); 98–107 (April, 1917); 289–306 (October, 1917); 362–413 (December, 1917).

with the war was probably William March's "Fifteen from Company K," in the November-December issue of 1930.

At the end of the first volume the editor announced that *The Midland* would be able to continue publication for another year. To gain new subscribers he offered three subscriptions for $3.00, although this "Magazine of the Middle West" then sold for $1.50 a year. Following the policy set down in the first editorials, Frederick included very few advertisements in the pages of his periodical. Advertisements in the first volume, for example, included those of *The Dial* and *The Miscellany,* both literary magazines, and of the Economy Advertising Company, which printed *The Midland.* In 1917 *The Midland* made a new publishing venture when the first book was printed by The Midland Press, which was allied to the magazine but financially independent. This book, typically, was Edwin Ford Piper's *Barbed Wire and Other Poems,* which had appeared earlier in the pages of *The Midland.*

The magazine was both printed and edited in Iowa City until August 15, 1917, when Frederick left his instructorship at the State University of Iowa to teach at the State Teachers College at Moorhead, Minnesota. The removal of the editorial office to Moorhead caused some changes in the editorial staff.[13]

For the first three years *The Midland* appeared monthly, but in 1918 and 1919 it was published only every two months. In the latter year the editorial office moved again, this time to Frederick's farm at Glennie, Alcona County, Michigan. The editors for 1919 were the same as those listed for 1917 except for the addition of Ival McPeak and the withdrawal of Esther Frederick and R. H. Durboraw. In 1918 Durboraw, one of the most loyal friends of the magazine, died. According to the account in *The Midland,* he was

> . . . one of the group of four young men whose association at the State University of Iowa in 1910-11 may be said to mark the inception of *The Midland* idea. When the actual plans for the magazine were in process of development, in the summer and fall of 1914, Mr. Durboraw's enthusiastic belief in the project, his

[13] *Ibid.,* 3:256 (August, 1917). Associate editors: Hartley B. Alexander, Lincoln, Nebr.; C. F. Ansley, Glennie, Mich.; Mary Grove Chawner, Evanston, Ill.; Nelson Antrim Crawford, Manhattan, Kans.; R. H. Durboraw, Moorhead, Minn.; Percival Hunt, Iowa City, Iowa; Edwin Ford Piper, Iowa City, Iowa; and R. L. Sergel, Iowa City, Iowa. Assistant Editors: Esther Frederick, Moorhead, Minn.; and Delbert M. Halverson and H. W. Holbrook of Iowa City, Iowa.

> steadiness and clearness of vision, were of service which it would be hard to over-estimate. He was one of the most active of the associate editors during the crucial first year of the magazine's existence. His fidelity in sharing the burdens of that year, and his hopefulness in the face of discouragements, were alike unfailing.[14]

An event important to the existence of *The Midland* occurred in 1919, when Frederick adopted a system of sustaining subscriptions. Unable to gain enough funds by the regular subscription method, he hoped to make additional funds available by seeking subscribers who would pay $25 or more each year for three years. In addition to some anonymous subscribers, his first sustaining members included the following: Mrs. Alice Weitz, Des Moines, Iowa; James B. Weaver, Des Moines, Iowa; Edwin Ford Piper, Iowa City, Iowa; H. B. Alexander, Lincoln, Nebraska; Nelson A. Crawford, Manhattan, Kansas; Mary G. Chawner, Evanston, Illinois; O. R. Frederick, Corning, Iowa; and Mrs. D. M. Halverson, Minneapolis, Minnesota.[15] The list is interesting because it shows that all the sustaining subscribers were inhabitants of the Middle West and, with the possible exception of Mrs. Weitz and Mr. Weaver, all were editors or had some close connection with editors of *The Midland*.

Beginning his fifth year as editor, Frederick wrote an editorial in which he emphasized that when *The Midland* was founded there was no other general literary magazine between the Alleghenies and the Rockies and that the result of the centralization of publishing opportunities in the East was "a tendency to false emphasis, distortion, in literary interpretations." Among the people neglected in competent literary works, Frederick pointed out, were the cowboys of the Plains. *The Midland*, he said, would include honest interpretations of these and other neighbors in its pages. To the extent that it gave space to writers interpreting unrepresented regions, *The Midland* could be considered sectional. "Probably it is not more sectional than other magazines; probably its isolation makes it more conscious of sectionalism." This editorial was one of the first declarations of the new purpose of the magazine. Instead of being solely an organ of the Middle West, it was developing into a magazine existing for all new and unpublished writers. "Writers of merit, wherever their homes," were welcomed.

[14] *Ibid.*, 5:1 (January-February, 1919).

[15] *Ibid.*, 5:ii (1919).

"Service by and to a region is now no less an ideal; but larger service to the fine art of literature is sought increasingly."[16]

In this same editorial, Mr. Frederick pointed out what an examination of the magazine quickly reveals — that it was entirely literary and avoided treatises and polemic. Forums abounded in which controversial writers could gain hearing. *The Midland* was not meant to be a forum but simply an organ of artistic expression.

The year 1921 saw an unusual amount of editorial activity; in that one year Frederick wrote seventeen editorials. In the first of these, printed in January, he announced a new policy. Although in the past he had been content to let the form and content of *The Midland* express its purpose, he said, "the present time seems to lay upon those who follow an ideal the obligation to speak their faith openly."[17] So Frederick wrote the creed of *The Midland*:

> We believe that American democracy must be justified by artistic achievement comparable to that of other lands and of earlier times.
>
> We believe that the region between the mountains will come to have primary importance in the artistic life of America, as it already has primary economic importance.
>
> We believe that in order to attain its rightful place in American literature, the middle west must publish as well as produce.
>
> We believe that the development of American art, especially of the art of letters, is hindered by commercialism, which misnames financial success as literary success; and by academicism, which misnames historical research as literary achievement.
>
> We believe that there are very many writers and readers in America who will welcome leadership out of the bondage of the market-place and out of the desert of the schools.
>
> For service in such leadership *The Midland* lives. It hopes to help other leaders, and to be helped by them. It does what it can, without expectation of wealth or the desire of fame.[18]

Continuing this new policy, Frederick wrote on national elections. He wondered whether anyone had taken time to consider the artistic tastes and capacities of the presidential candidates. Remembering that there had been

[16] *Ibid.*, 6:1-2 (January-February-March, 1920).

[17] *Ibid.*, 7:60 (January, 1921).

[18] *Ibid.*, 60-61.

times when rulers and their people were interested in the arts and aesthetic questions, in beauty, he said:

> Of the millions of children living in America today, most seem destined never to see a beautiful building, or a beautiful picture, or a beautiful statue, or a beautiful piece of furniture; never to witness a noble drama; never to hear a symphony; never to read a great book understandingly. It would seem that the President of the United States might be expected to do something about this, as he is expected to do something about the tariff, and the affairs of Europe.[19]

In another editorial in the same issue, Frederick continued his commentary. Announcing satirically that a new course called "Bad Literature" was being inaugurated in a certain imaginary college and that this course would revolutionize the teaching of literature, he commented that the campaign speeches of Harding and Cox should be included in the study as examples.[20] This was one of the few times when *The Midland* mentioned political affairs.

Although a book-review section was not included in Volume 7, Frederick took space to mention three novels of "more than ordinary significance" published in the fall of 1920. That *Main Street, Moon-Calf,* and *Poor White* were all three "middle western in character and in setting . . . may be coincidence; but it is not without meaning."[21] He found occasion also to quote from and to defend *Poetry* of Chicago, to note the growing interest in Middle Western literature, and to recommend *The Measure,* a new magazine of poetry.[22]

One new department was added in 1921 — a section called "Contributors," which gave very short biographical notices for each author represented in each number. The "Contributors" department appeared under various names thereafter, but it was present in the magazine from 1921 until the demise of *The Midland* in 1933. The section is very helpful in determining the extent of the regionalism of the magazine. One sees readily that the great majority of authors were Middle Western, although writers from other regions were not excluded. This directory of contribu-

[19] *Ibid.*, 61-2.

[20] *Ibid.*, 62-3.

[21] *Ibid.*, 7:110 (February, 1921).

[22] *Ibid.*, 7:110-111 (February, 1921); 295 (July, 1921); 174–6 (April, 1921).

tors makes clear also that the proportion of professional writers had become much higher than in the first few numbers of the magazine, when many of the writers were students like Frederick, Durboraw, Sergel, and McPeak, augmented by a few established writers such as William Ellery Leonard, E. J. O'Brien, and Howard Mumford Jones, who were apparently willing to lend the new magazine a helping hand by contributing to its pages.

The first part of Volume 7 was edited at Glennie, Michigan, where Frederick was very much a pioneer farmer. Even the editorials which he wrote at this time reflected the difficult but satisfying life which he lived on his wilderness farm; those of February and June, 1921, are particularly good examples. During the year, however, the editorial office moved back to Iowa City, where Frank Luther Mott and Ruth Suckow became associate editors. Delbert Halverson and Percival Hunt left the editorial staff at this time. While Frederick was doing his editorial work in the intervals of building and farming at Glennie and after he returned to teach at the State University of Iowa, he received valuable help from Edwin Ford Piper, Nelson Antrim Crawford, and others.

In 1922 *The Midland* was sent to a great many new readers. In his opening editorial to them Frederick said that, partly because his magazine paid no salaries and paid out no money for manuscripts, an exceptional relation had developed between writers and editors: "For every manuscript accepted and printed in the magazine, a score have been returned with detailed criticism. Sometimes writers can be helped to find place in other magazines. Such personal contact is considered a part of the duty and privilege involved in editing the magazine. *The Midland* has no rejection slip."[23]

Many promising writers came to Frederick, and he spent a great deal of time criticizing their work and encouraging them. Through his coaching, some literary artists were developed, but he was never able to produce as many fine artists as some of the other little magazines. "It was Frederick's ill luck that many with whom he spent laborious hours during the first eight years died before they could develop their original promise."[24] Among the most noteworthy of these were Ema S. Hunting, a sister of

[23] *Ibid.*, 8:37-8 (January, 1922).

[24] Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton, 1946), 143.

Ruth Suckow, and Agnes Mary Brownell. Some wrote only a few good stories, then disappeared from the literary scene. Frederick helped some of these embryonic writers through his classes, particularly those at the University of Iowa. In an anonymous essay called "Fanning the Spark," printed in the July-August issue of 1919, a writer, who may have been Frederick himself, urged teachers to read college themes zealously and to persuade youth of the joy of writing. Perhaps Frederick did not write the essay, but his attitude in his classes was an encouragement to young writers; and a few students, such as Ruth Lechlitner, Vernon Lichtenstein, and Lee Weber, contributed stories, poems, and reviews to *The Midland*.

In March, 1922, Frederick wrote that his editorial office would again be at Glennie until September; and in March, May, and October, he gave his readers more editorial pictures of farm life. Then his profession took him to Pittsburgh, which became the new editorial home of *The Midland*. Although Frederick declared in October, 1922, that the intention and method of the magazine were to be the same, the change in policy since 1915 is evident when one compares the titles: its secondary title was now no longer "A Magazine of the Middle West" but "A National Literary Magazine."

A new department, "The Sketch Book," appeared in the eighth volume. Introduced to include informal essays, outdoor sketches, and very short pieces of fiction, it was not intended to appear in every number and was to give greater variety to the magazine. "The Sketch Book" was introduced in January, 1922, and did not reappear until March, 1923, when most of the number was given over to it.

In 1922 Frederick also made some changes in format. Because the small book-sized paper used originally was unavailable during the war, he had been compelled to cut down larger sheets in order to preserve the size of the magazine. Since this process was wasteful, he decided to adopt a slightly larger sheet size for the eighth volume. In addition, he attempted to gain more harmony and beauty in typography.[25]

The January and February numbers of 1923 did not promise well for the future of *The Midland*. Frederick told his readers that there was a considerable deficit at the end of 1922 and that it would be necessary to begin 1923 conservatively with smaller numbers than normal. Although he had

[25] *The Midland*, 8:39 (January, 1922).

no glorified picture of the importance of his magazine, he knew that it was "a definite contribution to the artistic development of the middle west and of America," and he asked that *The Midland* might find an end of its financial struggles through the contributions of a new group of sustaining subscribers.[26] His plea was not answered immediately, and difficulties continued. The June, July, and August numbers were delayed so long that they finally had to be issued as one; and, while the March and April numbers were not as late as those for June, July, and August, they too failed to meet the usual publication date. Hoping to arouse his readers to save *The Midland*, Frederick quoted H. L. Mencken's statement in the July *Smart Set*: "'*The Midland* is probably the most important literary magazine ever established in America.'"[27]

The sojourn of *The Midland* in Pittsburgh had been a troubled period. When Frederick left the University of Pittsburgh in the summer of 1923, the editorial office of his magazine moved back to Iowa City. There *The Midland* staff was joined by Raymond Knister of Blenheim, Ontario, who became assistant editor. The new secondary title, "A National Literary Magazine," was retained.

In January, 1924, "The Midland Library" department was renewed; it was to contain one or more critical reviews and several shorter reviews each month. The January, 1924, issue included reviews by Frank Luther Mott, John T. Frederick, Raymond Knister, and Esther P. Frederick. The majority of the reviews for the rest of this year were written by Frederick. His most faithful assistant in book reviewing was his wife, Esther Frederick. Among the significant books reviewed in 1924 were Harry Hansen's *Midwest Portraits* (in February), Robert Frost's *New Hampshire* and Thomas Beer's *Stephen Crane: A Literary Study* (in March), Edna St. Vincent Millay's *The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems* (in April), and William Ellery Leonard's *Two Lives* (in June-July-August).

Frederick's editorials in Volume 10 appeared under the title of "The Editor's Page," but only two appeared during 1924.[28] One of the editorials for May, 1924, drew attention to the first illustrations to be published in *The Midland*. Frederick felt that magazine illustrations usually were foreign to the intention or spirit of the writer and therefore were not

[26] *Ibid.*, 9:24 (January, 1923).
[27] *Ibid.*, 9:140 (June-July-August, 1923).
[28] *Ibid.*, 10:64 (January, 1924); 256 (May, 1924).

helpful in showing the significance of his writing. If the writer could illustrate his own work, the drawings would be true to his intention. Since George L. Stout was able to draw his own illustrations, Frederick permitted him to do so for "Dust" and "Plumes," two war stories printed in the May, 1924, number. The only other illustrations to appear in *The Midland* were the sketches by Katherine Gibson for her story, "'Art Was Cut Out For Me,'" in the December, 1927, number.

During the five-year period from 1920 to 1925, several issues were distinctive. The October, 1922, number was devoted entirely to the poems of Leyland Huckfield, while the following number was composed chiefly of book reviews. The issues for April, May, and September, 1923, a difficult year for *The Midland*, were distinguished by their small size. The May, 1923, number, for example, consisted of only one contribution — Henry Goodman's story, "One of Them." *The Midland* for September, 1923, was written by Edwin Ford Piper, an editor of the magazine, and consisted of two of his regional poems — "By the Waving Wheat, By the Tasseling Corn" and "Wayfarers." In December Frederick printed a Leyland Huckfield memorial number, containing "Poems by Leyland Huckfield," "Voyage (For Leyland Huckfield)," by Vincent Starrett, and "Leyland Huckfield: A Friend's Record," by John T. Frederick. In this review a sentence appeared which is worth quoting because it is typical of Frederick's attitude toward the Middle West: "It seemed to him, as it does to me, that the occupation of the central plain of North America by the white race is the most dramatic event in human history."[29]

During these years some of the important contributors to *The Midland* were Howard Mumford Jones, MacKinlay Kantor, William Ellery Leonard, Frank Luther Mott, Edwin Ford Piper, Lew Sarett, Ruth Suckow, Raymond Weeks, and Mark Van Doren. *The Midland* for February, 1921, contained "Uprooted," the first published story by Ruth Suckow. Miss Suckow's first contribution to the magazine had been a four-line poem in the September-October issue of 1918. Later she contributed "Retired" (April, 1921), "The Resurrection" (June, 1921), and "A Rural Community" (July, 1922). *The Midland* had reason to be proud of its discovery of Ruth Suckow.

Stories and poems about the Middle West continued to be very numer-

[29] *Ibid.*, 9:264 (December, 1923).

ous, but, as usual, the poems were less likely to be regional in theme than were the stories. One poem commands attention because it was not American in authorship; this poem, "A Song of Unending Sorrow," by Po Chu-Yi, had been translated from the Chinese by Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-Hu.[30] It was probably the only poem not written by an American to appear in *The Midland*.

John T. Frederick began the second decade of *The Midland* with the announcement of two innovations.[31] One was that, because he had more duties than he could handle, he had decided to choose a co-editor. Since Frank Luther Mott was qualified for the position by training and experience, since he had been one of the first to recognize and help *The Midland*, and since he had already served as associate editor and unappointed assistant, Frederick chose this good friend as co-editor. Frank Luther Mott carried a full half of the editorial burdens for the next five years. During this period several student assistants — Charles Brown Nelson, Charles W. Roberts, Percy S. Wood, and Harry Hartwick — also contributed much to the magazine.[32]

The second innovation was the publication of *The Midland* twice a month, except perhaps during the summer. In most cases each number was to be the work of one author. Frederick believed that *The Midland's* function — "the bringing together of sincere and competent writers and sincere and competent readers"[33] — might be better achieved if it published the work of individual authors in single, larger offerings, and thus displayed the range of their work. The monotony of this system would be offset by increased frequency of publication.

The semimonthly publication plan lasted less than a year. In July and August, as Frederick expected, he edited only one number each month. By November of 1925 he was back on the monthly schedule. During the time in which *The Midland* was semimonthly, stories and poems were contributed by writers from all sections of the United States, although Middle Western writers predominated. With the exception of seven numbers, such as the October 1 "Fall Book Number" and the November 15 "Santa Fe Number," all issues were devoted to one writer.

[30] *Ibid.*, 10:74–9 (February, 1924).
[31] *Ibid.*, 11:30 (January 1, 1925).
[32] *Ibid.*, 20:56 (March-June, 1933).
[33] *Ibid.*, 11:30 (January 1, 1925).

By 1926 *The Midland's* editors had returned to the monthly plan and to the original subtitle, "A Magazine of the Middle West." The magazine continued as a monthly in 1927. During these years editorial writing was at a minimum. The changes in the staff of associate editors were chiefly the addition of George Carver of Pittsburgh and Roy A. Tower of Bloomington, Indiana, and the withdrawal of H. W. Holbrook of Iowa City.

In 1928 *The Midland* was rejuvenated. "The Sketch Book" reappeared after several years' absence and continued to be an important section in 1929, 1930, and the early months of 1931; then it disappeared entirely from the pages of the magazine. The editors revived the policy of writing numerous editorials and, even more than usual, requested letters of criticism from readers. *The Midland* became bimonthly again and continued so till the end of 1930.

During the third five-year period, from 1925 to 1930, Nelia Gardner White, Haniel Long, and Marquis W. Childs were among the contributors. Two articles of distinction, written by Frank Luther Mott, were "The Harlem Poets" (May, 1927) and "Life and Color" (July-August, 1929), which reflected the growing interest in books by Negro writers.

A book-review section called "Brief Reviews" was, during this period, a popular part of the magazine. Mott and Frederick worked together on this department, reviewing a wide variety of books chosen on a non-sectional basis. In 1928 "Brief Reviews" was replaced by "I've Been Reading—," edited alternately by Frederick and Mott. Usually this book-review section was subdivided into such headings as "Two Books of Poetry," "Stories Good and Bad," "Spanish Romance," "Some German Short Stories," "Hair Raising and Blood Curdling," "And More Deteckatives." The reviewing was extremely high in quality — competent and outspoken. Mott and Frederick were not concerned with reviewing the best-sellers; they wanted to discuss what they considered the best books, even if written by unknown authors and not well publicized. Later, Frederick's experience as a reviewer for *The Midland* served him well when he became weekly book reviewer for the Columbia Broadcasting System program, "Of Men and Books."

With the January-February, 1930, issue, *The Midland* resumed the subtitle, "A National Literary Magazine." Frederick pointed out that this change was a "somewhat belated recognition of the fact that almost from the beginning the material printed in the magazine has come from all parts

of the country."[34] The addition during this year of an emblem on the cover — an outline of the United States with the four cardinal points of the compass indicated on it — underlined the new national emphasis.

The editorial of most interest in the 1930 volume appeared in the November-December number. Frederick pointed out that *The Midland* had outlived such "little magazines" as *The Dial, The Seven Arts, The Little Review,* and *Reedy's Mirror.*

> Yet at the end of its sixteenth year *The Midland* is still young enough to go adventuring. With a box of subscription-cards and a sheaf of manuscripts — alike slender, sole impedimenta of the editorial office — it has moved from Iowa City to Chicago. Instead of the two glorious oak trees on the grassy slope west from University Hall, the windows of *The Midland* office frame acres of black roofs and the utilitarian facade of a twelve-story garage.[35]

This move of *The Midland* grew out of Frederick's fight against commercialism in American literature. Believing that America needed "at least one magazine to which a writer in any part of the country can send his work knowing that it will be judged on its literary merits alone, not upon its probable effect upon circulation or advertising revenue," believing that the "literary despotism" of New York was bad for American literature and should be challenged, Frederick chose Chicago as the place from which the domination of New York could best be combated. He based this decision on the growth of the printing industry in Chicago, the growing literary tradition of Chicago, the fact that the city was the logical axis for a literary and cultural development of the country as a whole, and the attractiveness of the city through its vigor, turbulence, and typically American contrasts and problems. "When American literature becomes truly American, representative of the life and expressive of the ideas and emotions of men and women in all parts of the country, its energies and achievements will focus in Chicago."[36]

Volume 17 contained only the numbers for January-February and March-April, 1931. In May of that year the magazine again became a monthly, and it again underwent an extensive change in format. Until that time, *The Midland* had been printed on exceptionally good paper, bound well, and

[34] *Ibid.*, 16:60 (January-February, 1930).
[35] *Ibid.*, 16:369 (November-December, 1930).
[36] *Ibid.*, 369–71.

given the appearance of a high-quality periodical. Now the small, book-size pages gave way to a larger page of two columns of print. The paper was poorer in quality; the heavy paper cover was replaced by a thin paper cover, and there was no secondary title. *The Midland's* only editor was again John T. Frederick. Since 1930 Frank Luther Mott had been associate editor rather than co-editor. Esther Frederick was assistant editor. Frederick explained why the format of his magazine had been changed: "From all parts of the country we are receiving in steadily increasing quantity work which is too good to reject, which we are eager to print. The new form, much less costly than the old, will permit us to publish each month as many stories and poems as the old bimonthly issues contained, without an increase in the subscription price."[37] *The Midland* continued to be printed in the office of the Economy Advertising Company of Iowa City, in which Frederick had once been an apprentice of the printing craft. There he had become acquainted with John Springer, a fine printer and craftsman, to whom he owed much of his interest in typography.[38] This interest in fine printing and book-binding was one of the chief reasons for the superior format of *The Midland* and for Frederick's pride in The Midland Press.

The period of financial difficulty into which the magazine was entering was brought clearly before the readers in Frederick's editorial for November-December, 1931. He lamented that the gloomy future made it necessary for *The Midland* to become bimonthly again. It continued so till the end of its career. Moreover, the space available was reduced to half at a time when there was no decrease in good material. Within a few years Frederick had printed contributions by Paul Engle, Phil Stong, James Hearst, James Farrell, David Cornel DeJong, Albert Halper, Clifford Bragdon, Tupper Greenwald, Warren L. Van Dine, Jay G. Sigmund, Leo L. Ward, and Benjamin Appel,[39] in addition to contributions by other writers already mentioned. After *The Midland's* arrival in Chicago, there had been an "increasing proportion of sincere and competent work."[40]

Before the move to Chicago, the magazine seldom had more than five hundred subscribers, but the editor had had to supply only about $100 or

[37] *Ibid.*, 18:1 (May, 1931).

[38] *Ibid.*, 18:36 (May, 1931).

[39] Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazine . . .*, 145-6.

[40] *The Midland*, 18:204 (November-December, 1931).

$200 yearly.[41] After it became established in Chicago, the subscription list grew to 1,200, and success seemed certain. Then the depression of the 1930's struck; subscriptions to *The Midland* were dropped, and Frederick was compelled to go into debt about $1,000 a year, trying to survive the hard times. The final volume contained only two numbers, January-February and March-June, 1933. It was the work of John and Esther Frederick, both being listed on the cover as editors.

For the March-June, 1933, number, John Frederick wrote his last *Midland* editorial. He said that the fourth year of the depression[42] had been too much for *The Midland,* that the income had declined so sharply within the preceding six months that publication of more issues would only add to an already heavy deficit. Frederick was sorry to stop publishing. He knew that *The Midland* still had a place to fill for the young writers of America, and he knew also that he would miss the magazine for its own sake: "For nearly twenty years I have given to it money taken from my income as teacher and farmer, time taken from my work as teacher and farmer, from my reading, from my family life; and though the money and time have been alike sometimes needed and hard to spare, my personal rewards have been great."[43]

The Midland's stories and poems had an unusually high percentage of excellence. Of the 337 *Midland* stories that came to Edward O'Brien's notice when he was preparing his *Best Short Stories* volumes, he judged 324 of high merit, and he gave 105 of them his highest rating.[44] In spite of the fine record of the magazine, Frederick never had any illusions as to its importance. He knew that it would leave public taste much "as it found it," that "the American literary situation" would be "about as it was," that *The Midland* would not much change "the incredible inertia of the thought and conduct of the race."[45] For these thoughts he had an answer: "I have not learned that, in a good cause, the certainty of defeat is sufficient reason for

[41] The material for this paragraph was taken from Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazine . . .*, 142, 146, 147.

[42] It is interesting to note the reflection of the depression in the pages of the magazine. For example, see Cyril John Clarke, "Depression," in *The Midland*, 17:43–57 (January-February, 1931), and Marvin Herrick, "Depression," *ibid.*, 19:154–7 (November-December, 1932).

[43] *Ibid.*, 20:56 (March-June, 1933).

[44] Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazine . . .*, 147.

[45] *The Midland*, 8:296 (October, 1922).

refusing the fight."[46] In the first number he had written: "When *The Midland* dies, late or soon, may it die unashamed and leave pleasant memories."[47] Frederick's own modesty about the significance of his magazine should not be the final evaluation of *The Midland*. First, it was important in the development of regionalism in the Middle West, the literary expression of which it voiced in its opening editorial and throughout its history.[48] Second, it made a valuable contribution in the coaching of young writers, some of whom like Ruth Suckow, James T. Farrell, and David Cornel DeJong published their first efforts in its pages early enough to profit from Frederick's careful editorial comments. Third, it published a large amount of excellent fiction, of which any little magazine might well be proud. It was this high quality of its contents which prompted O'Brien to recommend in 1930 that *The Midland* should take the lead in crystallizing "the best expression of contemporary national life," as the *Atlantic Monthly* and Harper's Magazine had done in the nineteenth century. Then not Boston, not New York, but Iowa City would be the new literary capital of the nation.[49]

Frederick fought well the battle against what he considered the literary domination of the East. His magazine was one of Iowa's important contributions to the culture of the Middle West and of the nation.

[46] *Idem.*

[47] *Ibid.*, 1:2 (January, 1915).

[48] Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazine . . .*, 147. In this book, *The Midland* is ranked with *The Dial*, *The Little Review*, and *Poetry* in the development of regionalism.

[49] O'Brien's statement quoted in *ibid.*, 145-6.