

The Yogi Club of Philadelphia



Over the years Philadelphia has had more than its share of magic clubs and organizations including S.A.M. Assembly #4, I.B.M Ring #6, The Houdini Club, the Society of Professional Magicians, and others. One of the earliest and most prestigious, however, was The Yogi Club.

Founded in 1907, the club held strong ties with the S.A.M. and although no longer in existence, its impact on the Philadelphia magic scene and the luminaries that visited the club deserve mentioning. My close friend, the late George Pfisterer, did a wonderful write-up on the early years of the club in the May 1980 M-U-M. I will draw information from his article as well items from *The Sphinx*, *The Linking Ring*, *M-U-M* and other publications accompanied by items from the club scrapbook of photos.

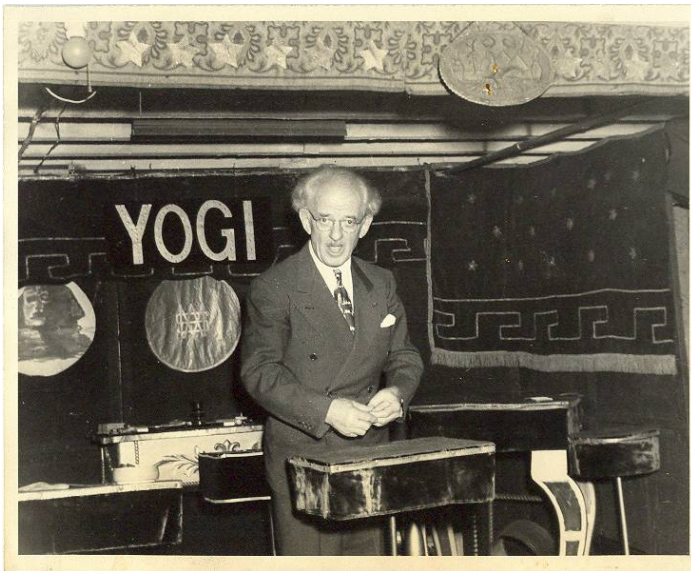
The original minute book notes the club started on September 14, 1907. The stated policy of the club was "...to promote harmony among those interested in Magic and to further the elevation of the Magicians Art." Also, "...to cooperate in the suppression of unwanted exposures." Dues were ten cents a month or one dollar a year in advance. There were sixteen charter members

Those founding members included Theodore DeLand, Carl Brema, C. Victor Dealy and others. Over the years the club hosted an annual banquet and frequently honored visiting magicians and S.A.M. officers. Members also attended performances of leading magicians including a visit to the Park Theater on February 8, 1908 where they witnessed Harry Kellar.

Visitors and guests of honor at their banquets included S.A.M President Oscar Teale, former S.A.M. President Francis Werner, Frederick Eugene Powell, Karl Germain, A.M. Wilson, Howard and Jane Thurston, Harry Blackstone Sr., Adelaide Herrmann, Elmer Ransom, Theo Bamberg, Dell O'Dell, John Northern Hilliard and many others.



V. Victor Dealy and Dell O'Dell
on stage at the Yogi Club



Blackstone Sr. on stage

Adelaide Herrmann visited on April 12, 1913 and was presented with an engraved fan. She, in return, gave the club a pistol used by her husband Alexander. She also presented them with one his checks, a poster, and several autographed photos of herself.



The club met in the home of C. Victor Dealy who had fitted out his basement with a magic room and stage. He called it "Le Petite Theatre" and it served the club well for many years. The walls were covered with memorabilia including an Alexander Herrmann poster, playing cards and a signed Herrmann check.



The back wall of Le Petite Theatre showing the Herrmann poster and check presented to the club by Adelaide.

Both Thurston and Bamberg performed on that stage did Blackstone and Dell O'Dell and other conjurors. During one visit by Thurston and Blackstone, club members and guests took the opportunity of getting a group shot on stage.



Shown on the Yogi Club stage are, Walter Gibson in the back row left: James Wobensmith, directly in front of Gibson: Thurston, with his hands on the shoulders of William Hanna: Blackstone Sr. in the front row right; Jane Thurston to Blackstone's left; James "El Barto" Barton just over Blackstone's right shoulder, and other club members. The previous owner of this photo mistakenly identifies Jane Thurston as "Blackstone's wife?"

The club eventually disbanded when Dealy was struck by an auto near his home and later died. The many members of The Yogi Club would go on, in future years, to be founders of S.A.M. Assembly #4, I.B.M. Ring 6, The Conjurors Apprentices, and other clubs in the city.