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Correspondence

"EARLY DAYS OF ACCOUNTANCY"

Editor, The Journal of Accountancy:

SIR: I have read with a great deal of pleasure the first instalment of Mr. Anyon's very interesting article *Early Days of American Accountancy* in the January issue of THE JOURNAL OF ACCOUNTANCY, and am eagerly looking forward to the instalments which are to follow.

Mr. Anyon's reference to the late John Heins as seeming to be the only representative accountant in public practice in Philadelphia in 1886 is, I believe, subject to modification.

Soon after I entered the employ of Mr. Heins early in 1887, I came into rather close contact with the late Mr. Lawrence E. Brown, and I can recall several members of his staff at that time and believe that he had in his employ at least a dozen men, which was a fairly good force for those days. Mr. Brown had been in active practice as a public accountant from 1882. He was a man who devoted himself very closely to his profession and did not take much part in other activities, so that he was not so likely to be known to members of the profession outside Philadelphia.

Another man who had an established practice at that time was Mr. John W. Francis, who had been a public accountant from 1869. Some light is shed on the question of his standing at the time of which Mr. Anyon writes by the following extract from a biographical sketch of Mr. Francis read by Mr. J. E. Sterrett at a meeting of the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants on February 15, 1918:

In his vision of the internal development of accountancy, and in view of the circumstances existing at the time (it was truly a vision and worthy of a statesman), two things occupied the foreground: education and organization. As early as 1886 he brought together the little group of men who were then in practice in Philadelphia, and of whom Mr. Lawrence E. Brown is now (1918) the sole survivor. Several meetings were held in Mr. Francis' office, and a plan of permanent organization was worked out which provided for a charter as an educational institution. The original minutes of these meetings, almost if not entirely complete, are now in the possession of the American Institute of Accountants. When the plans were brought about to the point where an application for a charter was to be made, early in 1887, Mr. Edwin Guthrie arrived in America and advised the formation of a national society. The plan for a local organization was then dropped, and several of the Philadelphia men, Mr. Francis among them, joined in the formation of the American Association of Public Accountants.

Mr. Charles N. Vollum, whom many of the members of our Institute will recall, took up the work of public accounting in 1875 and played an important part in accountancy circles in those early days.

There were a number of other Philadelphians who were engaged in the practice of public accountancy, but the four mentioned were the outstanding members of the profession at that time.

It is a matter for gratification that one so well qualified to write of the early days of accountancy in this country has undertaken to put his recollections into print and the profession as a whole is under obligation to Mr. Anyon.

Very truly yours,

T. EDWARD ROSS.

Philadelphia, January 22, 1925.