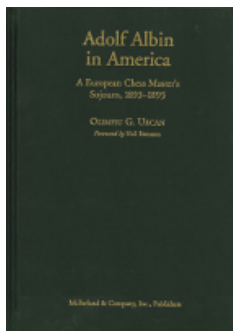




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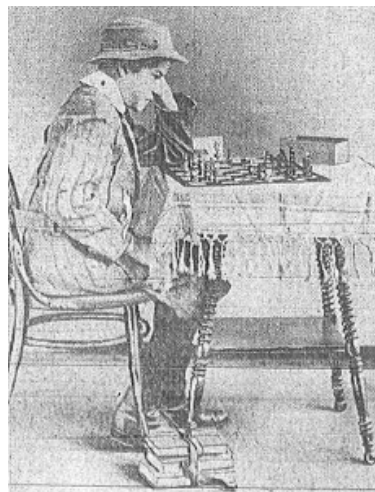
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## E. M. Edwards: Forgotten Prodigy

"Take any boy," he declared, "any boy fairly intelligent and fairly healthy, and you can make a chess prodigy of him – or any other sort of prodigy. If you can succeed in riveting his mind on any field – chess or Latin, or memorizing the Bible or athletics – you will make him proficient in that field."

"If a boy plays chess constantly there will come a time when he will be what we call a prodigy in chess, just as by listening to his mother tongue he finds himself suddenly able to speak it. Such accomplishment is a function of mental growth, which is, as is well known, greatest in years of youth." - Emanuel Lasker (c. 1926)

Edward Winter's article "[Chess Prodigies](#)" serves as a continuously updated directory of historical juvenile chess talents listing sixty-five names thus far. In the present column, we submit a new name for consideration: Edward Mitchell Edwards, a junior Philadelphian who around 1910 was considered a chess prodigy by many chroniclers. Our search was fueled by the fine illustration of him offered below. Published in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of November 20, 1910, it had the following text appended to the headline "This Boy Is A Chess Wonder":

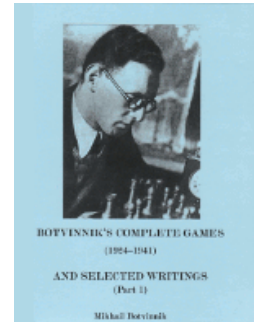


Edward Mitchell Edwards  
*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 20, 1910

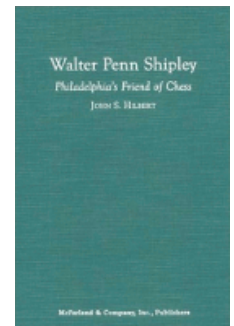
A boy chess "phenom" is astonishing the veteran players of Philadelphia. E. M. Edwards, the new wonder, is a thirteen year old school boy. He can be seen almost every day playing the cracks of the Mercantile Library Chess Club, and compelling many of the best players of that ancient organization to admit defeat. Recently Edwards played a simultaneous game against six opponents at the Norristown Chess Club. He played in all eleven games, winning six, losing one and drawing four. Young Edwards has tried his skill against Dr. Lasker, the world's champion, but did not succeed in wresting the title from that player. He recently played a game with Capablanca, the Cuban prodigy, and lost by a narrow margin. A player of international fame, who analyzed Edwards's game with Capablanca said that he could find no flaw in the boy's playing, he having made the very best move possible in every instance. Capablanca won by superior play, with no error on the part of this boyish opponent to aid him.

Edwards, who would never grow to be more than five-feet, seven-inches tall,

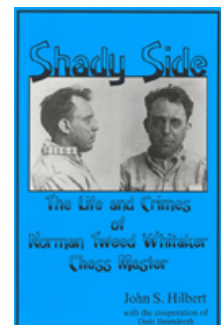
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*Botvinnik's Complete Games  
1924-1941*  
by Mikhail Botvinnik



*Walter Penn Shipley*  
by John S. Hilbert



*Shady Side*  
by John S. Hilbert

the fellow with brown hair and blue eyes immortalized above, was born on December 24, 1896 in Pennsylvania as the youngest of the four boys of the then thirty-eight-year old Lucy B. Edwards. His mother was the daughter of an Englishman married to a Pennsylvania woman. Besides Edward, Lucy was the mother of Richard (born February 1885), William (born February 1887), and Leonard (born August 1895). By 1900, four years after Edward M. Edwards's birth, Lucy was a widow living with her sixty-seven-year old mother, her four boys and their four young servants hailing from Ireland and Scotland at Philadelphia's Seventh Ward.

When the picture above circulated in the press, Edward Mitchell Edwards was thirteen-years old and chess was his all-consuming passion. But did this boy actually meet the chess greats of his time as the announcement in the *Eagle* had it? Chess columns from Philadelphia newspapers confirm that Edwards indeed played against leading masters, but that he did so while playing them in simultaneous exhibitions. For instance, in the first week of May 1910, Edwards lost a game to Emanuel Lasker, the world's champion, during a twenty-one board simultaneous exhibition given at Franklin Chess Club (+19 -1 =1).

Yet Edwards's earliest chess activity appears to have been conducted not on the premises of the Franklin Chess Club, but on that of the Rex Chess Club, a smaller entity that opened in mid-September 1910. As John S. Hilbert remarkably chronicled in a history of the club, there was plenty of passion, youth, and energy within the club's short existence. While Hilbert scanned the club's activities with a broader view in mind, it was evident nevertheless that Edwards was one of the top talents there and our purpose here is to bring him further to the forefront. At the end of September 1910, when the fifty-three-year old Hermann Voigt, one of the strongest chess players in the city, gave a twelve-board simultaneous exhibition (+10 -2), Edwards was one of the two players who scored against him. The game was found by Hilbert in *Philadelphia Item* of October 2, 1910. As for most of the games for this column we offer them fully annotated in the [DGT Chess Theatre](#). In the main text however, we offer only the most remarkable sequences to illustrate Edwards's key moments:

### Hermann G. Voigt – Edward Mitchell Edwards

Rex Chess Club

Twelve-Board Simultaneous Exhibition

September 22, 1910



[FEN "r5k1/pp4pp/2n5/3R4/5pP1/1P3N2/1P2rPP1/1R4K1 b - - 0 23"]

#### Position after 23.Rf1-b1

Here, after twenty-two moves in a Petroff Defense in which he cleverly pressured Voigt's centre, Edwards obtained a slight advantage in terms of pawn structure and rook activity. With his next move, **23...Rd8!**, Edwards persisted in exchanging Voigt's most active piece: **24.Rf5 Rf8! 25.Rxf8+ Kxf8 26.Kf1 Re4!** Another excellent idea instead of the more tempting **26...Rc2**, which could have been promptly rebutted by **27.Ng5! Kg8 28.Nxf4**. With the text move, Edwards planned to pressure further White's b-pawns on the b-file thus, reducing Voigt's mobility. **27.Rd1 Rb4! 28.Rd3 Ke7** Edwards's intention to activate all his pieces with maximum of speed should be applauded. **29.Nh4?!** By contrast, Voigt, the more experienced player,

failed in the same department; recommended was 29.Ke2. **29...Ne5!** Once again, Edwards wasted no time activating his pieces on best possible squares. **30.Nf5+ Kf6 31.Rd6+ Kg5!** At a critical moment, the youngster proved again able to select the most difficult move for his opponent. Objectively better was 31...Kf7 and White's queenside pawns would fall. Yet the text move added considerable pressure on the master, who was busy handling eleven other games. **32.f3?** Voigt failed to find 32.Rd5 to offer more stubborn resistance. **32...Rxb3 33.Re6?** This allows Edwards a final push for victory. Better was 33.Rd5 Kf6 34.Nxg7, but Black should still be winning after 34...Kxg7 35.Rxe5 Rxb2 36.Re7 Kg6 37.Re6+ Kf7 38.Re4 b5. **33...Nc4! 34.Nxg7** If 34.Re2, then 34...g6 35.Ng7 Kh4! 36.Ne6 Kg3 and Black wins nicely, with all his pieces occupying ideal locations. **34...Rxb2 35.Nf5 h5 36.Ne7 Ne3+!** Edwards allows Voigt no counterplay whatsoever. **37.Kg1 Rxd2+ 38.Kh1 Rf2 39.Rg6+ Kh4 40.Nf5+ Kh3 41.Nxe3 fxe3 42.gxh5 e2 0-1**

On October 22 of the same year, according to the November 5 *Philadelphia Inquirer* column, Edwards lost a game to young José Raúl Capablanca in a nineteen board simultaneous exhibition (+15 –2 =2). Edwards's game against the Cuban was found and published only relatively recently. One of the historical sources that printed the score of this encounter was *Philadelphia Item* of October 30, 1910. A masterful Capablanca ground down his younger opponent:

**José Raúl Capablanca – Edward Mitchell Edwards**  
Franklin Chess Club  
Nineteen-Board Simultaneous Exhibition  
October 22, 1910



[FEN "8/5r1p/p1n2r2/3k4/3pRp1R/  
5P2/PPPBK3/8 w - - 0 28"]

**Position after 27...Kd6-d5**

Following imprecise play in a King's Gambit, Edwards succeeded in mobilizing his pieces and had good prospects for an even game. With his next move, Capablanca grabbed the f4-pawn and the decisive moment of the game emerged: **28.Bxf4 Nb4?** This particular impatient move got Edwards in real trouble. Much stronger was 28...Rf5!, a move that would have underscored some problems in Capablanca's liberty of movement. **29.c3** Good enough yet much stronger was 29.Bg5! Re6 30.c4+ with a decisive advantage for White. **29...Nc6 30.Rh5+ Kc4?!** Again, 30...Rf5 was needed. **31.Bd2 Rf5 32.b3+ Kc5 33.Rxf5+ Rxf5 34.Be1 dxc3 35.Bxc3 Rh5 36.a4 a5 37.Rc4+ Kd6 38.Rg4 Ke6 39.Kd3** Another sample of Capablanca's skilful endgame play. He lured the younger player into a clearly winning rook endgame based on the speedy queenside pawn majority. **39...Ne5+?** Best was 39...Rf5 40.Ke4 Ne7 even if White maintains the lead. With the text move, Edwards collapsed quickly. **40.Bxe5 Kxe5 41.Rg7 Kf6 42.Rb7 Rf5 43.Ke4 Re5+ 44.Kf4 Rf5+ 45.Kg3 Rg5+ 46.Kf2 Rh5 47.Rb6+ Kf5 48.Rb5+ Kg6 49.Rxh5 Kxh5 50.b4 axb4 51.Ke2 b3 52.Kd3 1-0**

Less than two weeks after his profile appeared in the *Eagle*, Edwards scored perhaps his biggest success to date: according to the December 4, 1910 *Philadelphia Inquirer*, a draw against Frank J. Marshall during the latter's seventeen-board simultaneous exhibition at the Franklin Chess Club (+11 –5 =5). The *American Chess Bulletin* of January 1911 (Vol. 8, No. 1, page 6) announced that Marshall also played two off-hand games with Edwards and

Marshall won them both. None of the games with Marshall have yet been found. Further samples of his play in Philadelphia area proved extant however and they may serve us well to get a view of Edwards's play.

Beginning with January 1911, Edwards was actively involved in playing in the championships of the Mercantile Library and Franklin Chess Club. He also took part in the Pennsylvania State Chess Association's championships and in a series of Pennsylvania-based correspondence tournaments. He did so with reasonably good results. In February 1911, he won a game from Norman T. Whitaker, who went on to become a leading American player and a notorious convict who broke bread with Al Capone at Alcatraz as documented in Hilbert's *Shady Side*. This encounter, discovered too late for inclusion in the Whitaker biography, appeared originally in the *Item* of January 22, 1911.

**Norman Tweed Whitaker – Edward Mitchell Edwards**  
Mercantile Library Championship  
January 1911



[FEN "r4rk1/ppqbppp/3p4/4pP1n/1n2P1P1/1PNP4/1PP1N2P/R1B1QRK1 b - g3 0 12"]

**Position after 12.g2-g4**

After a dozen sharp moves in the Vienna Game, Edwards gambled away in the above position with **12...Qc6?** when good chances were offered by 12...Nxc2! 13.Qd1 Nxa1 14.gxh5 d5! 15.Nxd5 Bc5+ 16.Kh1 c6 and Black's play should be preferable. Instead, the text move could have wasted the opportunity had Whitaker found the proper moves. **13.gxh5 Nxc2 14.Qg3** Equally strong was 14.Nd5! **14...Nxa1 15.f6?** An error that Whitaker must have regretted considerably. Very strong was the simple 15.Bh6 g6 (forced) 16.fxg6 fxg6 17.Rxa1 with a winning position for White. The poor choice in the text allowed Edwards to showcase some defensive resourcefulness. **15...Bxf6 16.Rxf6 Kh8!** After this it became questionable if Whitaker possessed the needed force to continue the attack. **17.Qf3?!** Challenging for Black was 17.Bg5!; for instance, 17...Qc5+? would run into 18.d4! Qa5 19.h6 g6 20.Nd5 and White wins. But even after 17.Bg5, Black could have defended with 17...Rg8! 18.Rxf7 Raf8. **17...Nxb3 18.Bg5 Qc5?!** Best was 18...Qd7 preparing for the forceful assault: 19.h6 g6 20.Nd5 Rae8 21.Rf5 Re6 22.Bf6+ Kg8 23.Bg7 Rfe8 24.Nf6+ Rxf6 25.Rxf6 a5 with even play. **19.Be3 Nd4** Preferable was 19...Qb4. **20.Bxd4?** Evidently better was capturing with the knight: 20.Nxd4 exd4 21.Rf5 Qb6 22.h6! with powerful attack. **20...exd4 21.Nd5?** An impulsive move that gave away the game. 21.Rf5 was needed first. From now onwards, Edwards punished Whitaker flawlessly: **21...c6! 22.b4 Qb5 23.Nxd4 Qa6 24.Nc7 Qa1+ 25.Kg2 Qxd4 26.Rf5 Qb2+ 27.Kh3 Rac8 28.Ne6 Rg8 29.Rxf7 Qe5 30.Nf4 Rgf8 31.Rxf8+ Rxf8 32.Ng6+ hxg6 33.Qxf8+ Kh7 34.hxg6+ Kxg6 35.Qb8 Qf4 36.Qe8+ Qf7 37.Qc8 Qf3+ 38.Kh4 Qf4+ 39.Kh3 Kg5 40.Qd8+ Qf6 41.Qxf6+ Kxf6 42.Kg4 b6 43.d4 a5 44.e5+ dxe5 45.dxe5+ Kxe5 46.Kg5 axb4 47.Kg6 b3 0-1**

In February 1911, during his play in fourteenth annual tournament of the Pennsylvania State Chess Association, Edwards won from Elihu S. Maguire and A. Goldberg. His game against the latter, who won the Franklin Chess Club's championship in 1906, appeared in the March 5 *Philadelphia Inquirer* column with the following note: "We have not seen recently a game where the combination play has been as intricate."



**A. Goldberg – Edward Mitchell Edwards**  
 Pennsylvania State Chess Association Annual Championship  
 February 1911



[FEN "r1bqk1nr/pppp1ppp/1b6/nP2N3/2B1P3/8/P1PP1PPP/RNBQK2R b KQkq - 0 6"]

**Position after 6.Nf3xe5**

The game was in fact a genuine tactical slug-fest with the younger player ending on top: **6...Qf6!?** A daring approach instead of the more popular 6...Nh6. **7.Bxf7+ Kf8 8.d4 d6 9.Bxg8 dxe5 10.Bd5 c6!?** Another move that causes massive complications. Edwards did well to avoid 10...Bxd4 11.Qd2! and if 11...Bxa1, then 12.Qxa5 Bd4 13.0-0 with pleasant play for White. **11.Ba3+** Exciting play was offered by 11.Qh5+!? g6 12.Qh6+ Ke8 13.Bg5 Qf8 14.Qh4 cxd5 15.0-0 Bxd4 16.c3 Bb6 17.Bf6 dxe4 18.Nd2 with complicated play, but chances for both sides. **11...Ke8 12.Nc3** This offered Edwards a chance to grab the initiative. Safer was 12.0-0 cxd5 13.Nc3 exd4 14.Nxd5 and White could have still continued the hunt for the black king. **12...Bxd4 13.Qd2 cxd5 14.Nxd5 Qf7 15.Qxa5** Edwards must have been quite comfortable even after White's better move 15.c3 because of 15...Nc4! 16.Qe2 Bxc3+ 17.Nxc3 Nxa3. **15...Qxf2+ 16.Kd1 Bg4+ 17.Kc1 Rc8 18.Nc7+ Kd7?** Even stronger was 18...Rxc7! 19.Qxc7 Qe3+ 20.Kb1 Qxa3 and it's all over for White. Edwards delayed this for one move; thus, considerably diminishing its impact. **19.b6! Rxc7 20.bxc7 Bxa1 21.Qd5?+** Imperative was 21.h3! with chances for a comeback. After the text move, Edwards sailed smoothly to victory. **21...Kc8 22.Be7 Qd4 23.Qb3 Bc3 24.h3 Bd7 25.Rd1 Qe3+ 26.Kb1 Qb6 27.Qxb6 axb6 28.Bd6 Re8 29.Rd3 Bd4 30.Ra3 Be6 31.Ra8+ Kd7 32.Rb8 Rc8 33.Rxc8 Kxc8 34.a3 Kd7 35.c8Q+ Kxc8 36.Kc1 Kd7 37.Bb8 Bc4 38.Kd2 Ke6 39.c3 Bc5** and Goldberg resigned a few moves later.

According to Hilbert's [Walter Penn Shipley](#), when Shipley, then the city's leading player, gave an eight-board simultaneous at the Rex Chess Club, Edwards happened to find a seat among the players. Hilbert found the following game in the *Philadelphia Item* of May 14, 1911 and reproduced it on page 355 of his book without annotations. It is worth noting Edwards's original play on the kingside, which was remarkably shrewd strategy against a master busy at seven other boards. Here is the decisive sequence in this swift execution by Edwards:

**Walter Penn Shipley – Edward Mitchell Edwards**  
 Rex Chess Club, May 4, 1911  
 Eight-Board Simultaneous Exhibition



#### Position after 10.Bc1-f4

Shipley's last move in this Ruy Lopez was evidently inferior to the more popular 10.Nbd2. Edwards's reaction deserves proper credit nevertheless: **10...g5!** This launches a forceful kingside attack for the price of a pawn. **11. Be3 g4 12.Nd4 Nxe5 13.Nxe6 fxe6 14.Bf4 Bd6 15.Bxe5 Bxe5 16.Qxg4 Qd6 17.Qh5+ Kd7 18.Na3** Developing the queenside is an understandable reaction, yet somewhat more useful was 18.g3, starting to take measures against the incoming assault. **18...Rag8!** After this move, White is simply lost as Edwards's attack seems unstoppable. **19.Rad1 Rg5 20.Qh3 Rhg8 21.g3 Bxg3! 22.Qxh7+** Shipley was also losing after 22.hxg3 Rxg3+ 23.fxg3 Rxg3 + 24.Qg2 Rxg2+ 25.Kxg2 Qg3+ 26.Kh1 Nf2+ 27.Rxf2 Qxf2 28.Bc2 c5 and White's pieces are no match for Black's queen and mobile pawns. **22...R8g7 23.Qxe4 Bxh2+ 24.Kh1 dxe4 25.Rxd6+ Bxd6 0-1** Faced with a mate in three, Shipley resigned.

It appears that during 1910 and 1911 the illustration of Edwards given at the start of this column was one of at least two different photographs, likely taken at the same sitting, that circulated throughout a multitude of American papers. A slightly different version appeared in a supplement of the March 1911 issue of *The Technical World Magazine* (Vol. XV, No 1, page 110):

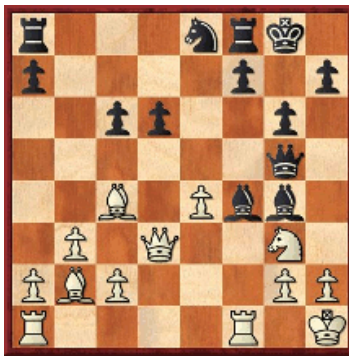


Edward Mitchell Edwards

Edwards's seemingly growing strength earned him a place in the Franklin Chess Club's team in the traditional match against the powerful Manhattan Chess Club's team on May 30, 1911, match refereed by Charles Jaffe. Edwards's drawn game against A. H. Bierwirth was published in July 1911 issue of the *American Chess Bulletin* (Vol. 8, No. 7, page 148) and by the *New York Sun* of June 4, 1911. Not quite a brilliancy, the game nevertheless highlights the youth's pragmatism in an important team match in a moment when he was selected to represent the state and the club alongside the more mature and experienced players:

#### Edward Mitchell Edwards – A. H. Bierwirth

Franklin Chess Club vs. Manhattan Chess Club Annual Match  
May 30, 1911



[FEN "r3nrk1/p4p1p/2pp2p1/6q1/2B1Pbb1/1P1Q2N1/PBP3PP/R4R1K w - - 0 19"]

### Position after 18...Be3-f4

In the above position, Edwards temporarily sacrificed the exchange with **19. Rxf4!?** instead of the calmer 19.h3. After **19...Qxf4**, he continued pragmatically: **20.Qd4 Qe5** A forced move. 20...Nf6 was out of question because of 21.Rf1! Qe5 22.Qxe5 dxe5 23.Rxf6 and White has clear winning prospects. **21.Qxe5 dxe5 22.Ba3** and eventually the game was drawn without difficulty. At his twentieth move, although his two bishops and the half-open f-file could have persuaded many other youngsters in building up some sort of kingside pressure, Edwards did not allow himself to be carried away. Especially so in a team match where the honor of two of the strongest chess clubs in the country was at stake.

In early June 1911, according to the June 25 *Philadelphia Item* column, Edwards began to offer simultaneous exhibitions at the Rex Chess Club (+6 =1). Thanks to Hilbert's research, we now have a most illustrative description of such seance, penned by L. R. Smith, a leading member of the club and the only one who managed to get away with a draw:

### Prodigy Plays Peripatetically

...had a cartoonist visited the Rex Chess Club on Thursday evening, June 8th, he might have drawn a ludicrous picture of a semicircle of graybeards and bald heads seated at their chess boards as the adversaries of a babe in swaddling clothes, who had to be wheeled in a go-cart, from board to board, by a Celtic nurse as it played simultaneous chess. The artist might have also depicted the bewhiskered crew with various forms of agony on their faces, while he showed the infant smiling in radiant triumph. Clouds of cigar smoke might be added to give the picture atmosphere. In the background might be sketched in shadowy outline the spectators—wise ones who are so busy telling how to play that they never get a chance to perform in public themselves.

Such might have been the caricature of E.M. Edwards, the juvenile champion of the Rex Chess Club, playing seven of his club mates simultaneously. It is a custom of the Rex Chess Club to extend to its champion each year the practice of giving a simultaneous séance to the club. Young Edwards accepted this year's invitation. Among the seven who opposed him were three members of the six [*sic*] board team that won the championship of the Philadelphia Chess League for two consecutive years. Prestige, however, never daunted the diminutive expert. In a very few moves, after the beginning of play, the manipulators of the Black pieces found themselves coping with strong attacks, for, be it known, Edwards never stands still to be bombarded. He played with amazing rapidity and accuracy, and in a little over an hour, had the pleasure of receiving the resignations of six opponents and of agreeing to a draw with the seventh.

Towards the end of that year Edwards played (and apparently won) a match against another youthful member of Philadelphia's chess fraternity: William H. Stewart. On December 12, 1911, Edwards played once again against Capablanca when the Cuban offered a twenty-board simultaneous exhibition at the Franklin Chess Club (+16 –3 =1). According to the *Philadelphia*

*Inquirer* of December 24, this time Edwards succeed in obtaining a draw against the master. Doubtlessly, for a boy who obviously loved chess so deeply, there could have hardly been a better early Christmas and birthday gift. On December 31, the columnist of the same newspaper wrote that "E. M. Edwards and W. H. Stewart, although well under 20 years of age, give promise of exceptional ability." It is worth noting that Stewart won from Capablanca during that particular simultaneous exhibition, a game that is well-known today. The score of Edwards's own draw against the Cuban is unknown to us.

In February 1912, Edwards, a student of De Lancey School, played on the top board for the Philadelphia School seven-man team when pitted against the strong University of Pennsylvania's Chess Club team headed by the very gifted Rudolph Sze, a brilliant Chinese student about whom we first wrote for [The Skittles Room](#) and then (in a slightly different version and with some rare illustrations of Sze) for *NIC Magazine* 7/2008. The February 18, 1912 *Philadelphia Inquirer* column noted that Edwards won this decisive encounter and expressed the intention to offer the score of the game in a future column. It did not see print in the next months however. The same column also announced that Edwards "gave a remarkable simultaneous exhibition at the rooms of the club, playing simultaneously against seven players, winning all his games."

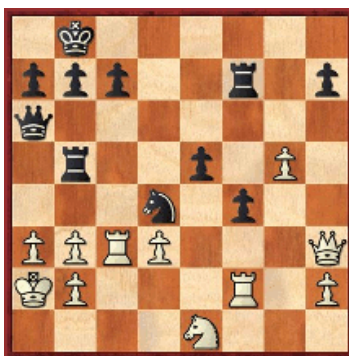
In February and March of the same year, Edwards took part in the fifteenth annual championship of the Pennsylvania State Chess Association (he tied third/fourth with Morton Eschner) and was leading in its correspondence tournament. In April, he crossed swords with New York's strongest student players in the first meeting of the New York and Philadelphia schools. According to the *Inquirer* of April 14, 1912, the New York players won 5½ - 4½ and the columnist cited the following words from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*:

Edward M. Edwards, who unquestionably is above the average of schoolboy ability, won one game and lost the other against J. Grossman, captain of the Stuyvesant High School, of Manhattan. He is out with a challenge to the winner of the individual championship tournament now in progress here for a set match, the victor to be known as the American interscholastic champion.

These words, belonging in fact to Hermann Helms, were cited from the April 4, 1912 edition of the *Eagle*, which also offered the little-known score of Edwards's game against Grossman, who, following his graduation would be the top board player for Cornell University's chess team. Prefacing the game-score Helms noted the following: "Capital chess was witnessed in the two games at the first board between Edwards and Grossman. In the second meeting, Edwards was a bit too precipitous in developing an attack and failed to reckon with the resourcefulness of his clever opponent who turned the tables in most decisive fashion":

#### **Jacob Grossman – Edward Mitchell Edwards**

February 1912, New York  
Inter-Scholastic Chess Championships



[FEN "1k6/ppp2r1p/q7/1r2p1P1/3n1p2/PPRP3Q/KP3R1P/4N3 b - - 0 32"]

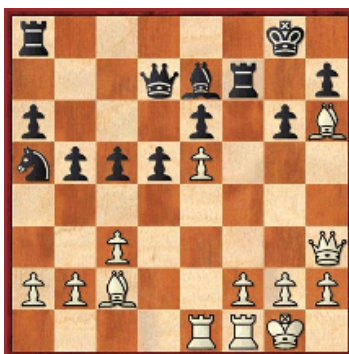


### Position after 32.Kb1-a2

The critical moment is diagrammed above. Following precise play in the Four Knights Game, Edwards succeeded in obtaining a very good position. But, as Helms correctly indicated, here Edwards failed to remain in full control and, probably mesmerized by the potential combination he had foreseen, played **32...Nxb3** based on 33.Rxb3 Rxb3 34.Kxb3 Qb6+ and capturing the rook on f2. Grossman grabbed the opportunity instantaneously: **33.g6! Rf8 34.gxh7 Qf6 35.Rg2 Qf7 36.h8Q Nc1+ 37.Kb1 Qa2+ 38.Kxc1 Qa1+ 39.Kd2 Qxb2+ 40.Nc2** and Edwards resigned. Instead of 32...Nxb3, Edwards could have actually won easily with 32...Qg6! The fall of the g5-pawn is imminent and with that Black would have obtained a decisive advantage: 33.Nf3 Nxf3 34.Rxf3 Qxg5 35.Rc1 Rd5 36.b4 c6 37.Re1 Qg6 and Black's impeccable position would have been enough for Edwards to claim a win. The same Hermann Helms wrote the following words about Edwards in the March 10, 1912 edition of the *Eagle*: "Edward M. Edwards is among the most promising of the younger element in the City of Brotherly Love."

A win by Edwards, against Eschner in the Franklin Chess Club's championship, was given by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of May 12, 1912. A note by the columnist regarding Edwards's **10...Nxd2**: "10...Nc5 is the usual continuation. Edwards no doubt was aware of this and adopted the text move in order that both players might be thrown upon their own resources." Besides this desire for original play, the score of the game, the last of Edwards's sample of play offered in this column, stands as a telling sample of his ability to defend well, too:

### Morton Eschner – Edward Mitchell Edwards Franklin Chess Club Annual Championship April/May 1912



[FEN "r5k1/3qbr1p/p3p1pB/npppP3/8/2P4Q/PPB2PPP/4RRK1 b - - 0 18"]

### Position after 18.Ra1-e1

Faced with Eschner's growing kingside pressure, Edwards demonstrated his defensive skills: **18...Bf8! 19.f4 Bxh6 20.Qxh6 Nc6 21.Rf3 Ne7 22.g4 Raf8 23.Ref1 c4!** While 23...d4 was equally good if not better, Edwards kept an eye on his counter-attacking chances after he took precautionary measures on the kingside. **24.R1f2 Nc6 25.Bd1 d4!** The decisive push with which Black claims the initiative. **26.Be2 Qd5 27.Rh3 Qc5 28.cxd4** Practically conceding defeat. But even after 28.Bf3, the better move, Edwards could have won with 28...d3 29.Kg2 Rc7 30.Rf1 d2! **28...Qxd4 29.f5** One last desperate attempt. **29...Nxe5! 30.Rh4 Nd3 31.Bxd3 Qxd3 32.f6 Rd8 33.Qf4 Qd1+ 34.Kg2 Qd5 +!** Edwards's neat play is laudable. **35.Kg1 g5 36.Qg3 gxh4 37.Qxh4 Kh8 38.g5 Rg8 39.Rg2 Rxf6 0-1**

From 1913 up to 1916 the local chess columns made only brief mention of Edwards, who occasionally took part in the annual club or state championships without producing any notable results. It appears that his admission to University of Pennsylvania coincided with the start of World War I. According to page 340 of a massive *General Alumni: Catalogue of the University of Pennsylvania* (1922), compiled under the direction of the Alumni Association of the University, Edwards was a student of [Wharton School](#), the world's first collegiate school of business. This brief entry also

documents his exact date of birth, training as insurance broker, interests, association with various clubs, and his involvement with the military and war-time service around 1917-1919:

EDWARD MITCHELL EDWARDS, b. Dec. 24, 1896; Delta Psi; Tennis Team (2, 3); Soccer Team (2, 3); Varsity Club; Ins. Broker; Pvt., 2d cl., 1st Troop, Phila. City Cavalry, March-June, 1917; Pvt., 1st cl., Signal Corps, U. S. A., June, 1917-March, 1918; seaman, 2d cl., U. S. N., Naval Aviation; Ensign, Sept., 1918; ordered to inactive duty 1919; mem. Racquet, Merion Cricket and Phila. Country Clubs, 434 Walnut and 2117 Locust St., Phila., Pa.

E. M. Edwards's entry in  
*General Alumni: Catalogue of the University of Pennsylvania* (1922)

Edwards interrupted his university studies in order to enlist in World War I serving in both the Army and the Navy. Following the war he returned to University to complete his studies. In 1920, when the now twenty-three-year old Edwards returned briefly to chess, the country was mesmerized by a most authentic chess prodigy: Samuel Reshevsky. Edwards's own chess activities after the war were episodic and without any significant impact. Yet Edwards certainly was a high achiever in other, diverse fields. He developed a much stronger interest in racquetball and tennis. He was national amateur racquetball champion in 1934 and 1936, and in 1946/1947 he became the doubles champion (with William B. Lingelbach) of the national court tennis association. He worked in life insurance and opened his own brokerage firm. According to some databases, in 1942 he served in World War II. Following the war, he was described as a businessman and banker. Edwards retired in 1966 and died on August 10, 1987. Evidently, the interest of chess readers resides only in Edwards's early years when chess dominated his childhood. Could the rest of his earlier games against leading masters such as Emanuel Lasker, Frank J. Marshall, and José Raúl Capablanca, be eventually recovered? Are there any other significant samples of Edwards's chess play between 1909 and 1913? At any rate, Edward Mitchell Edwards should be worthy of an entry, prompting further research, in a directory of chess prodigies.

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### An Annotated Source List

1. The Lasker quotes given in the motto comes from a published interview with William Weer that appeared in a supplement in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in 1926. Unfortunately, our own copy of this little known interview does not carry an exact date. We offer it here in [full](#).
2. Edward Winter's *Chess Notes* column hosted online at [Chess History](#). From Winter's introductory text to his "[Chess Prodigies](#)" article: "The various claims are reported 'flatly', i.e. with no expression of suspicion or incredulity at any of the more fanciful statements found in print over the years. The term prodigy is, moreover, interpreted here quite loosely, and we have been more inclined to include 'older youngsters' from the nineteenth century than from the twentieth. First presented in C.N. 3812 (on 3 July 2005), this directory is expanded from time to time, and any additions, criticisms or other comments from readers will be appreciated."
3. Jeremy Gaige, [Chess Personalia. A Biobibliography](#), (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005). This comprehensive reference work first published in 1987 with about 14,000 entries of "the great and near-great in the world of chess" does not contain an entry on Edwards.
4. Chess columns (1910-1914): *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Item* (up to March 1912), *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, *New York Tribune*, *New York Sun*, *New York Times*. As it was often customary, some newspapers headlines engaged in hyperbole: "Youngster a Chess Player. Edward M. Edwards, 14 [sic] Years Old, May Be Champion Soon: [Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun], Philadelphia, April 5. Edward M. Edwards, a 14-year old boy of Philadelphia is bailed locally as the coming chess champion of the world."

Some weeks ago the youngster entered a local tournament in which the chess masters of Philadelphia had entered. He has played eight games, winning six, losing one and drawing the eighth. After the weaker players had been eliminated the contest narrowed down to Edwards, Isaac Ash, who was a member of the international collegiate team: Leroy Smith, L. R. Lipman and J. McInnes. With Smith the lad broke even in the finals, losing the first and winning his second game. Ash lost and drew with the boy marvel and Lipman and McInnes were unable to draw either of the two games which each played Edwards. Hermann Voigt, one of the best local experts, who could give the boy a knight several months ago and win game after game with ease, is now forced to play his game to the limit" [*The Baltimore Sun*, April 6, 1911]. Chess columns often referred to Edwards as "chess phenomenon," "boy marvel," "chess wonder" and "chess prodigy."

5. John S. Hilbert, [\*Walter Penn Shipley: Philadelphia's Friend of Chess\*](#), (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 200). Page 355 of this Shipley biography offers the score of a game Shipley vs. Edwards (Rex Chess Club, 4 May 1911). No biographical details were offered on Edwards; John S. Hilbert, [\*Shady Side: The Life and Crimes of Norman Tweed Whitaker\*](#), (Yorklyn, DE: Caissa Editions, 2000). This work offers no Whitaker games against Edwards, but it exemplarily discusses Whitaker's rise in early 1910s Philadelphia chess scene. Out of several proficient, younger Philadelphians, Whitaker alone seems remembered at all today.

7. John S. Hilbert, "Philadelphia's Rex: How Small Club Play Helped Chess Flourish in Philadelphia a Hundred Years Ago," in *Quarterly for Chess History*, 8/2002, pages 164-222. This remarkable essay offers a broad context for Edwards's advent with the game. There is little biographical information but there is a precise mapping of his activities related to the Rex Chess Club. It offered the following game scores: Voigt vs. Edwards (22 September 1910), Capablanca vs. Edwards (22 October 1910; this game also appeared in *Quarterly for Chess History*, 4/2000, page 57), Whitaker vs. Edwards (January 1911), Ruth vs. Edwards (May 1911), Edwards, Cushmore, Ashmead vs. Warner, Lipman, Palmar, Middleton (18 May 1911), Edwards vs. Bierwirth (30 May 1911), Edwards vs. Smith (8 June 1911), Eschner vs. Edwards (1912).

8. *American Chess Bulletin*, 1910-1914. Various issues offer sketchy information of Edwards's play in Philadelphia-based competitions, information most likely culled from the local chess columns.

9. David Hooper and Dale Brandreth, *The Unknown Capablanca*, (New York: Dover Publications. 2003). Second, revised edition. See pages 182 and 184 for statistics of Capablanca's simultaneous exhibitions in Philadelphia attended by Edwards. No game against Edwards is offered in this collection of little known Capablanca games.

10. Edwards's full name was confirmed from several sources: "Edward M. Edwards" appeared in several *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* chess columns. Edwards's full name (also given by the *New York Sun* of March 7, 1912, including his middle name "Mitchell"), date of birth and other details are confirmed by the entry on page 340 in the *General Alumni: Catalogue of the University of Pennsylvania* (1922, compiled under the direction of the Alumni Association of the University) and by the US Census 1900. The latter source offered the information about Edwards's family and siblings. Leonard Brooke Edwards, also a young chess player from Philadelphia, was indeed Edwards's brother (*American Chess Bulletin*, April 1912, page 87 and *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 21, 1918). They played in the same team during the inter-scholastic events for 1912, but, unlike previously claimed, the census data indicates Leonard Brooke was older than Edward Mitchell.

11. For the second illustration of Edwards, see *The Technical World Magazine* (March 1911, Vol. XV, No 1, page 110); the same text (without any illustration) appearing in this journal also appeared in the *Labour Digest: A National Magazine for the Advocacy of Industrial Peace*, March 1911, page 28.

12. [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com) - On April 27, 1942, Edwards registered to serve in World War II - Source Citation: Roll WW2\_2240129; Local board: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Sourced with Ancestry.com: U.S. World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. His address at the time of registration was 8208 Seminole Street, Philadelphia. This registration card is the source for our physical description of Edwards's at the start of the present column; The Social Security Death Index Database indicates Edwards died in August 1987. His Social Security Number was 167-12-7003 and his last known address was Newtown Square, Delaware, PA. This is also confirmed by [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org)

13. Details of Edwards's life after World War II come from an obituary in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of August 11, 1987, page C10. It said Edwards founded General Grinding Wheel Co. after 1942. At the time of his death he was a "former Philadelphia investment banker and head of the General Grinding Wheel Corp." He was survived by his wife Delia Brown Edwards, a daughter Lucy Despard Edwards, a son William M. Edwards II, and a brother.

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