

[Connecticut Clockmakers]

1

ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one)

PUB. Living Lore in New England

(Connecticut)

TITLE Connecticut Clockmaker (MacCurrie)

WRITER Frances Donovan

DATE 12/19/38 WDS. PP. 4

CHECKER DATE

SOURCES GIVEN (?) Interview

COMMENTS

W15074

Federal Writers' Project - Connecticut

December 19, 1938

Francis Donovan (Dec. 14, 1938)

Thomaston, Conn.

CONNECTICUT CLOCKMAKERS

Library of Congress

Mr. Maccurrie in the only occupant of the circle of chairs near the window in the fire house today, and he is engrossed in the daily paper. As a matter of fact his absorption may be a cloak for his foolings, for they are burying one of the "boys" this afternoon. For reasons of his own, no doubt, he has not planned to attend the funeral, but several of the others have gone, for the deceased was a faithful attendant of the afternoon gatherings and his sudden passing was a distinct shock.

Mr. MacCurrie looks up from his newspaper to voice a curt greeting and buries himself once more in its pages, while I maintain a discreet silence. He comments briefly once or twice on the Waterbury municipal scandals, then lays the paper down and removes his glasses.

"I suppose it's human nature, dammit, though it's certainly rotten when you read about it," he says. "What makes it worse, is that when they was takin' this money, the people down there didn't have enough to eat, some of them. And all the while it was goin' on, they had that Mutual Aid plan down there, takin' money out of the pay envelopes of the poor working man every week to support those on relief.

"You can't pick up the paper without readin' somethin' that gets your goat, these days. If it ain't in our country, it's Hitler and Mussolini. This Eytalian barber up the street the other day there was a couple of lads in the shop talking about Mussolini tryin' to grab land from France. Well, that big French peddler from Waterbury came in, and he got into the conversation. I don't think the Eytalian knew the lad was French. It pretty near ended in a war. The Eytalian says 2 Mussolini would get what he wanted from France in the end, and the Frenchman says, 'Don't you believe it. Those French will fight for what they own, he says. When it came to giving away Czechoslovakia, that part of it was all right, but when it comes to their own territory, they'll fight, he says. The Eytalian see he was gettin' sore, so he didn't say nothin'.

Library of Congress

“Those people like to brag, you know, but they forget to mention the times the Eyetalian soldiers ran away. They ran away during the World War, and they ran away over in Spain. They're known for it.”

Mr. MacCurrie is silent for a while, gazing out the window. I ask him if he has been for his daily walk yet.

“I have,” says he; “down around Terry's Bridge and up the Railroad tracks.”

I express surprise, for it is a considerable distance.

“That's nothing,” Mr. MacCurrie assures me; “I don't call that a walk. I was comin' up the tracks, and I see some of the hoboies have got a hole dug out in the rocks down there beyond the cut. There's a spring down there the trackman use. Fine water it is, too. The boys have all the comforts of home.

“There's been quite a few of them applyin' for lodgin' at the lockup down here these days too. And that ain't a bad place for them to be, in out of the cold. There was a time when they had to register, leave their name and address and age and occupation, if any, but they don't make them do that no more. I suppose they figure what the hell's 3 the use. You'll always have them kind of people, because they like the life. We had 'em when times were good and we've got 'em now. They don't live in any place long enough to establish a legal residence, so they ain't no town or city responsible for them.”

Mr. MacCurrie glances at his watch, compares it with the clock. “Funeral must be about over,” he says. “Too bad about poor Ed.” We are briefly reflective.

“Days are getting shorter,” Mr. MacCurrie observes. “What is this, the fifteenth? Fourteenth? 'Twill be Christmas before you know it. If I had a lot of money, I'd like to buy toys for all the kids in town that won't get many this year. It must be a great thing to

Library of Congress

have plenty of money. Another thing I'd like to do is take a trip right out to the coast, by automobile. I never did all the travelin' I wanted to."

Mr. Odenwald, who has been to the funeral, comes in.

"I didn't go to the cemetery," he explains, in answer to Mr. MacCurrie's inquiry.

"He have a big funeral?" asks Mr. MacCurrie.

"Fairly big. The boys from the company acted as bearers. Three from the company and three from the Odd Fellows.

"Ed certainly went quick, didn't he? A fella gets that age and it don't pay to be careless. He shouldn't have tried to chop wood, and do things like that.

"Was he a charter member, Henry?" asks Mr. MacCurrie.

4

"Oh, no, he wasn't a charter member. But he was treasurer here for a good many years. And there wasn't an afternoon in the week, when he was feelin' good, that he didn't show up here. You could almost set your watch by him. Poor Ed. Well, there won't be many of us old timers left, before long.

"By the way, Andrew, how's Jim Foster, still in the hospital?"

Mr. MacCurrie says he doesn't know how Jim Foster is doing, but he does know that Jim is still in the hospital. "We ought to go down and see him," says Mr. Odenwald. There is a lengthy silence, and it is obvious that neither Mr. Odenwald nor Mr. MacCurrie is in conversational mood. "I guess I'll go home, get my supper and go to bed," says Mr. Odenwald.

Library of Congress

“That's what you need,” says Mr. MacCurrie; “get some rest, you've been staying up too late nights.” Mr. Odenwald leaves and Mr. MacCurrie begins to struggle with his rubbers.