

## [Dunnell #13]

Mass. 1938-9 Mr. G. O. Dunnell - Hay, Grain and Feed Man Paper 13

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

NAME OF WORKER ROBERT WILDER

ADDRESS NORTHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

SUBJECT LIVING LORE

DATE OF INTERVIEW June 19, 1939

NAME OF INFORMANT G. O. DUNNELL

ADDRESS NORTHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Name: Robert Wilder

Title: Living Lore

Assignment: Northfield

Topic: G. O. Dunnell - Hay, Grain and Feed Man Paper 13

“Young people these days ain't what they used ter be,” said Mr. Dunnell, dealing himself a hand of his favorite solitaire from a worn pack of grimy cards. “When I was young we used to walk. We'd think nothing of an eight or ten mile walk. Although, if we were going that far we generally managed to get hold of a horse. But for walking up the street, and walking down the street, or over to the post office, we never asked anybody to drive us. Even if a team was all hitched up and waiting we wouldn't take it. It would have been right

## Library of Congress

in the way, and might have interfered with what we'd want to do after we got to the place. I'm not sure but the reason we have so many corner loafers and drug store cowboys is on account of the damned automobiles. Young people like to go places and do things. If they are allowed to drive an automobile, why those that haven't any car envy them. They think the young person with the automobile could drive to San Francisco if he wanted to. They forget that his old man buys the gas and keeps a good check up on what's used. That the young feller ain't got no money of his own. And that the drug store is about as far as he dare go. And that about all the fun he gets out of life is standing on the drug store steps, and making believe to a bunch of other fellers in the same fix as himself, that he's been everywhere and seen everything, so that he don't feel like driving no more. Once in a while he hooks somebody that ain't got a car to put up money for 2 the gas and oil. But the chances are that the feller paying wants to go to a liquor place where he can show off to the feller with the automobile. By himself, or with the friends held have if none of their fathers had automobiles, held never go near a liquor place. He'd rather have a nice cream sody, or some candy. But just because he ain't never been taught to use his legs to get places - and I don't suppose it does any good for any one family to try to fix it - he ends up in a booze joint. The young feller that ain't got a car has a tough time, too. He hears the crowd talking about how sick they are of driving around. He ain't never been nowhere. But like all young fellers he's managed to learn how to drive a car. Not being anything but a kid, he listens to the talk, and next thing you know, he's 'borrered' somebody's car.

"I ain't got no use for 'Goop' Sauter. He's got a nice mother that he's meaner than dirt to at times. But I don't see how he got into jail. And where his car stealing habit come from. 'Course, there must be something wrong in his top story, or he never would leave cars that he's stole where he does. They point right towards him. I guess, though, it's got so that no body could have a car stole 'round this section without 'Goop' getting the blame for it. They've guessed right too many times now. But he never tries to sell the cars. He never hurts 'em none. He just takes 'em for the ride. Last thing he did that I heard of, he took a dump truck from Morgan's garage and went 3 over to the Hollywood and made whoopee.

## Library of Congress

He got it back all right without the Morgans missing it. But the State cops asked the garage what they were doing running one of their dump trucks like hell, about two o'clock in the morning 'way over in Bernardston. Mike Morgan said 't wasn't any of his trucks. The cops said it had his number on it. Mike knew that the truck had been filled with gas, so he checked up, and they was only about two gallons left, so he guessed it might have been his truck after all. He found out that 'Goop' had been seen at the Hollywood and put two and two together. He told the cops that if they saw any more of his trucks anywhere to stop 'em. And that if 'Goop' was driving to pinch him. That he'd never give him any permission to drive, 'cause he knew he didn't have a license. And that he'd tell who ever was driving his trucks before they started out not to die of heart failure if a cop stopped 'em, but to give the cop their names peaceable and answer any other questions the officer wanted to know.

"Ever hear about our Sheriff Darby losing his car? Stole right in front of the Court House? That was a number of years ago now. Darby ain't here no more. He used to be the station agent. And he was appointed Deputy Sheriff about the time he become head of the Masons here. He had some out of town visitors and a brand new car. He thought it would be a good way to entertain them to show 'em the new court house. It was summer time then, so he had his wife put 'em 4 up a picnic lunch. And they drove to Greenfield - him, his wife, and the visitors - give the Darbys a chance to show off their new car, too. They parked in front of the court house and went inside. When they come out the car was gone. Him and his new badge and his wife, visitors and everybody was left on the sidewalk!

"That wasn't quite the worst of it, either. The lunch was gone. And so was Darby's straw hat. Not to mention a collection of tools, like handcuffs and blackjacks and pistols - sort of tools of the trade that Darby had. The fellers used to say that Darby would never be able to arrest anybody. That before he had time to make up his mind which tool to use that he'd be knocked cold. But the whole tool kit went with the car. And all Darby had left was his bare hands and his bare head.

## Library of Congress

“He thought he seen a car that looked like his turning from Main Street into High. So he run out into the street, and 'most scared a man to death by jumping on to the running board of his car and telling him to get going. He explained matters somehow and the feller did his best. But as all he had was a model T Ford, he wan't no match for the feller in Darby's car - if it was Darby's. So Darby dropped off at the Weldon and 'phoned ahead. He notified everybody clear to Boston. But it didn't do no good. His car was gone. But I guess the state police don't pay much attention to what a feller says. They ain't much love 5 lost between the state police and the sheriff's office. But the state police got hold of the facts; number of the car, engine number and that stuff, and broadcast it, or sent it to other state forces. Well sir, they found Darby's car 'way out in Kansas City or loway, or somewhere 'way off. And they got the feller that stole the car, too. He lived in Turners Falls. And Darby went out and got 'em. But that was about the last of Darby's public appearances around here. He's moved out of the state. Even the papers made fun. 'He Brazen Thief, You stole the Sheriff's Carl was one of 'em. That was a headline.

“There used to be trouble enough in the old days with fellers stealing horses. They'd steal 'em and dye 'em and fix 'em up so that the owner wouldn't know 'em. Then they'd sell 'em somewheres. But if a feller wanted to give a horse away he'd had no trouble. That is, if he could find anybody to take it. But it seems that you can't even give an automobile away unless you go to a lot of trouble. Not even if they's someone that wants it.

“Take Davis up here. I don't know as I got the facts just straight. But I got 'em near enough to show what I mean. Davis hired a feller who come along looking for work. The man had a car. The feller needed clothes and he needed this and that. He couldn't register the car when the time come, so he sold Davis the car, and Davis registered it. That was all right. That was legal. But the feller got a job somewheres else for more money, or something Davis was left with a car he didn't 6 want. But he used it some and let his new hired man drive it. The feller wanted to buy it. But Davis said no, 't wan't worth selling, that the man could have it. The car hadn't been registered for several years. Davis had only used it

## Library of Congress

to drive around his place, on his own land, and figured that if the hired man registered it that was about all the man was financially able to do. Well, when the hired man got to circulating around in the old bus, he found another job. And it didn't seem right to him to take the car Davis give him, so he wouldn't take it. He said that when Davis give it to him he must have figured on him doing an errand now and then. And as he was going where he couldn't do no errands for Davis that he insisted that Davis take back the car. And that he appreciated what Davis had done for him.

“Well, Davis had the car back. But he didn't want it. The hired man that come to take the other feller's place asked him what he wanted for it. Davis didn't know the feller. He hadn't shown whether he was any good or not, and they wasn't any reason why Davis should give him the car. So he dickered with him, and after awhile they closed the deal for seventeen dollars, and the feller paid six dollars down. That is, it was agreed to take the six dollars out of the feller's wages. At the end of the week the hired man allowed as how he'd take the car and drive over and see his folks that lived up in Halifax, Vermont. That was all right with Davis. A hired man has to have some time off 7 now and then. But the feller didn't come back. Davis smelled around and found that he was working up in a lumber camp on Stratton Mountain. So he got himself a new hired man. I don't think he ever give a thought to the car.

“But it seems that the feller who bought the car had his troubles. He was on a back road somewheres when the clutch give out. He couldn't do a thing with it. So he takes off the license plates and pushes the thing off into the brush and leaves it. They wan't anything else he could do. He didn't have the price of repairs and couldn't get trusted, for he didn't know nobody, and the thing probably wan't worth repairing anyway. He thought he'd done all right. But the farmer [on?] whose land he'd pushed the car didn't think so. He didn't know who'd left the car. But he claimed it wan't no way to get rid of old automobiles to push 'em on to his land. That he wan't in the junk business. And that the thing should be removed. He called in the state cops. They found the engine number, of course, and traced the thing back as belonging to the man who used to work for Davis. They spent

## Library of Congress

considerable of the tax payers' money looking for him . Finally, they found him. But he said he didn't know nothing about it, that he'd given the car back to Davis. The cops chased over to Davis's. And he said, 'Yes', the feller had given the car back to him. But that he had sold it to this other feller who'd 8 skipped out owing him. Davis give 'em the feller's name. But I don't think he told 'em where to find him. He didn't want to get the feller into no trouble. He wouldn't lodge no complaint of stealing. Said he was glad to be shut of the car. But the state police detective force is pretty good. I don't know as they used bloodhounds, but they did use a bit more of the taxpayers' money. And by sticking close to their knitting and keeping up a relentless under cover man hunt, they finally located this poor cuss.

"The feller said he was the man all right, and give 'em the plates he'd taken off the machine. He told 'em all about it. He thought he'd done all r ight. But with those plates the fat was in the fire. The cops pinched him. And then they come and pinched Davis.

"You see, when the hired man give the car back to Davis, that time, the hired man's plates was on it. He didn't have no car so he left 'em on. Davis had no use for the car so he didn't bother the plates. And he never thought about 'em when he dickered with the hired man that was now in trouble with him. He wa'an't going to let the man get himself no plates 'til he'd paid for the car. And he thought, if anything, that when he was given the car he was given the feller's rights in the plates. He didn't think it important, anyway. No more than you would if they was a halter on a horse that someone give yer. Sort of went together, yer see.

9

"But the Judge didn't see it that way when they arranged the two fellers out in court. The Judge fined both of 'em five dollars. Davis pleaded guilty to allowing the feller to operate the car - 'cause he did let him. And the feller pleaded guilty to operating it. Davis could pay his fine. But the feller couldn't, so the Judge give him a chance to go to jail for thirty days. Davis butted in and said he'd pay the feller's fine if the feller would come and work for him.

## Library of Congress

The feller was glad to. And everything come out all right. The feller is working there yet, I guess. Thinks the world of Davis.

“But you see what I mean? A feller could give a horse away easy. But Davis had to work like hell to give an automobile away. And when he thought he had, he gets pinched and fined for it. I tell yer, the damned automobiles complicates things all up. Fixes it so a man can't even be open handed and kind to folks. And, as for the young people, it's fixing 'em so they can't walk, and I vum, I expect to live to see the day when babies is born with no legs at all, but wheels where their legs is supposed to be! It'll happen, too, unless something is done about it. “