

William Lundrigan

W14981 1 [Conn.?] [1938-9?] Lundrigan

William Lundrigan having been recommended as a potential informant, I called this afternoon at Mr. Lundrigan's home. He had, he said in answer to queries, been employed at the mill for more than forty years, but felt that he wasn't "a good enough talked talker" to be of any assistance. He advised calling on William Byers, superintendent of the factory, who he said, had made a hobby of collecting data on the history of the mill for many years. "And anyway," concluded Mr. Lundrigan "he be the superintendent. He can tell oo what oo want to know, bettther than I can."

But Mr. Byers was only a little more productive.

"Why don't you start out by seeing Mr. Plume," he said. "I wouldn't want to give you anything while he was in a position to do it, too. He's the vice president of the company, and he's been there since he was a boy of seventeen. He knows the business from the ground up. Started as a mill hand, and then was assistant boss of the casting shop. Of course his father was in control of things then. He watched everything that went on, and he knew every little detail of the business. He was the guiding hand, you might say, for S. K.

"There's Mr. French, too, the president. You could see him, but he's in Waterbury every day. He's been with the company more than fifty years. I started in with the company in 1890 and he started a year of two ahead of me.

"I don't know much about the early history. You probably know yourself that it was started by Seth Thomas to make brass for his clocks. Then in 1860—and that was before my time they organized under the name of Holmes Booth and Atwood. And I think it was about two years later that it was changed to Plume and Atwood.

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“You go see S. K., and explain what you want, and I'm sure he'll be glad to help out. Now I've been there during the period of the greatest expansion.

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That is to say, it's all in my time that they've grown the most. They've put in a good many new machines within the past two years, and I could tell you something about them, but I'd rather have you see Mr. Plume first.

“There's the new electric furnaces in the casting shop. They've only two hand fires now, and when I first came in they had all hand fires. Then there's the oil muffles. They used to be wood. And the new machinery in the wire-mill.

“You go over to see S. K. and he'll give you all the information you want I'm sure. You could get him in the morning, any time after nine-thirty. He comes in at nine, and it usually take him about half an hour to go through his mail, and then he'll be free. Have you got any letters, or anything to identify yourself? otherwise, he'll probably think you're a Communist, or a spy for this fella[—?] what's his name—” Mr. Byers twirls an imaginary mustache—“Hitler.”

“Or if you'd rather, you could see Mr. French. He knows the business, too, and he should, for he started from the bottom. He was working in the casting shop when I first went to work in the mill. But he didn't stay there long. He went right on up. Got to be superintendent and general manager, and then here some years ago they elected him president. And the company has had its biggest expansion under him. They took over the American Ring Company, in Waterbury and began to make eyelets, and that's been a help to the business, and they built on to the mill here. Mr. French is a very progressive man.

“You'll hear a lot of them ask where he got his business ability, having been brought up on a farm. That's always seemed to me a foolish sort of attitude. I mean, there's some that

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are always envious, no matter how deserving a man may be, there's some that will hint, if they can do nothing more, that he got up to his position through luck or influence.

“Well in Mr. French's case it was neither. It was hard work and ability, 3 and anyone who knows him will tell you the same. But I think Mr. Plume will be your best bet. You can try him anyway. If he's too busy to talk to you, ask him for an appointment for next week. Because he's really interested in the company history and he knows it all better than I do.”