

Wednesday
January 19, 1955

Internal Memorandum

Fred I. Kent Papers, Scarsdale, New York (Kent Memo No. 3)

The Kent collection is proving far better than I dared hope in the beginning. Mr. Kent had quantities of correspondence and manuscripts tucked away in drawers, not only in the basement storeroom, but also in the library on the main floor of the house. He seems to have kept all pamphlets and periodicals which came, the result being that he has a whole series of the various types of conference board reports, the magazine Banking, and publications of various organizations to which he belonged. He also had a great many books on various phases of finance and economics. These presumably will go with the notes and manuscripts.

Since I was last there the secretary, Miss Dorothy Warden, has done a great deal of clearing and straightening. The period of active throwing-away seems mostly to be over, or at least it has given way to a period of sorting and straightening. The result is that one can begin to get a picture of what the collection may be when it is finally ready to inventory.

Miss Warden's chief difficulty was that she did not know what was wanted, and she was in terror lest she throw away important papers. Now that she has a better idea of what should be kept in the collection, she proves efficient and competent.

We have worked out a scheme which she hopes to persuade Warner Kent to adopt, under which she will work three days a week in Scarsdale straightening and cataloguing the collection. I have told her that it is necessary to have some list of what is in it before it is offered formally to an institution. She understands this and is working as well as she possibly can. If Mr. Warner Kent does not pay her salary, however, on this three-day basis, we may be in trouble for help to put the collection in shape.

Among the things which turned up in the upstairs library were old papers

concerning the Gold Settlement Fund, the National Monetary Commission, and a continuation of the foreign material which we found the other day.

The indefatigable energy of Mr. Kent is one of the outstanding impressions one always gets in that house. It has been said before in these memoranda that he was a self-made man, and small details confirming and illustrating this come to light from time to time. One small story was told today which sheds light both on this quality of the self-made man and of the sense of humor which the man obviously had. When he was first married, he was extremely fond of his wife and eager to help her in the house in every way. They lived on the fourth floor of a walk-up apartment in Chicago. Mr. Kent used to come home at night and after supper do the dishes for his wife. At the same time, he had an enormous amount of study which he wanted to do and a very active brain. He was a constant patron of the International Correspondence School in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Because doing dishes took time, he had his wife read aloud to him, whether it was the lesson for the day or the latest pamphlet on gold or silver or foreign exchange, she read it faithfully while he washed the dishes.

All his life he was edicted to doggerel verse, and at this time, he wrote a poem about Carrying Out the Swill, a country term for garbage much used at that time. The substance of it was that he didn't mind doing it himself, but he was going to earn money enough to see that his descendants never had to. Thus far, the second and third generations show no sign of being bound to this task.

In the attic of the Kent house we found a machine made by the Edison Company around 1905 for cylinder phonograph records and a complete set of French lessons on the cylinders. This certainly antedated his going abroad by a good many years and may represent one of his early reachings for mental equipment which he needed in his job or for culture.

He was a passionate musician. He had a small orchestra of his own in Chicago and seems to have arranged musical programs. He played a wind instrument,

probably the clarinet. The original clarinet and a successor clarinet are still in the house.

One other small incident of the family's propensity to save in his generation is the fact that the Kent table is furnished not with butter, but with margarine. Mr. Kent's secretary figured that they saved \$1.00 a week by this substitute.

These are minute things and not to be measured against the man's achievement. Nevertheless, they do shed light on an interesting career.

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