

# Life Ticks Smoothly for Collins

## 70-year-old Man Licked Depression With His Collection of 300 Antique Clocks.

By DELOS LOVELACE.

Georges Mills, N. H., June 11.—Two or three weeks from now the first visitors of 1941 will plank down their quarters and ramble through this crossroads' clock museum, the like of which no man will find anywhere else in these United States.

The quarters will continue to drop through July and August and every ring and jingle will help to support two propositions of which the museum's proprietor and sole guide, C. D. Collins, stands as lively, living proof:

A. It isn't only better mouse-traps that bring the world to an off-the-trail door.

B. Even at seventy a man doesn't have to let a depression beat him.

### Collins Was Sitting Pretty.

Back in the late Twenties Mr. Collins was sitting pretty pretty, along with so many of us. He had been a traveling salesman all over New England, peculiarly notable for his vigorous recitation of the rowdy ballad, Tige. Now he was retired. His old employers were paying him a fat pension. He owned his own home. And his clocks filled up his spare time. He had collected Early American clocks through most of his lifetime.

"Many a night," Mrs. Collins says, "he came home broke, but with a fine Eli Terry or Seth Thomas in his arms."

Many a night he did. And now all his treasures were set up through the house. Nearly 300 of them, all ticking away like so many ceaseless beetles.

"Because," says Mr. Collins now as he said then, "I wouldn't give house room to a clock I couldn't get going."

He got them all going. The soft murmur of their brassy gears and cogs was like a gentle rain.

Every day Mr. and Mrs. Collins wound them up, every last one. Took a solo winder an hour and thirty-seven minutes. It was fun. And repairing new ones was fun.

Mr. Collins, pensioned and as snug as a bug in a rug, was having himself a time.

Then three or four years later bad luck hit a one-two punch. First Mr. Collins's old employer went under, and Mr. Collins's pension went along. Next his house blew up. Actually! A gas pipe leaked and one morning an explosion wrecked the place beyond repair. Mr. Collins carried no insurance and he was able to salvage only the price of the lot in a depression market and some small cash from scrap lumber.

The clocks, mostly, had stopped. They weren't beyond repair, though. Few persons would have tried, but Mr. Collins was sure he

and span now, though the season is only two months long. On top of the admission receipt, Mr. Collins turns a ~~very~~ penny each winder by mending other folks' clocks. He never refuses such a job, provided it is an honest antique.

"Can't touch it now," he will say in July or August. "But I won't be so busy when the snow lies. Leave her with me, and next summer she'll be as good as new."

She always is.

In his museum all the famous clockmakers of Early America have exhibits. Timothy Chandler, who dates back at least to 1785; Levi Hutchins, 1778, and Simon Willard. Some others are Jerome Barrow, Seth Thomas and Eli Terry. Curators of the big museums in New York and elsewhere will doubtless come aniling this summer, as in every one past, for a couple of prize pieces.

His clocks are worth, Mr. Collins figures, all the way from \$50 to \$1,500. He isn't downright sure. He doesn't much care. He said anywhere from \$10 to \$300 for them. His most valuable piece was made by Simon Willard of Roxbury, Mass., back in 1790. A similar clock sold in New York, back when the depression was deepest, for \$1,350.

His best bargain is a looking glass clock by L. W. Noyes, Nashua, N. H., 1830. He gave a hooked rug for it a long, long time ago. Somebody gave him the hooked rug for a nice little timepiece of no antiquity and almost no value. Now the looking glass clock is worth between \$100 and \$300.

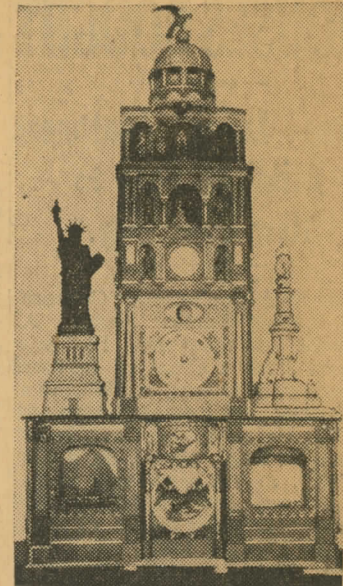
Probably his rarest piece is a wagonspring model made by Joe Ives at Bristol, Conn., in 1832. Ives was quite a fellow. Took out more patents than any other clockmaker in a day when Connecticut was the center of the clock world.

Most extraordinary of all Mr. Collins's show is The Clock of America which now has the place of honor out in the big barn. A handbill written by Mr. Collins, himself, calls it the Acme of Mechanical Science.

### A Monstrous Clock.

Acme stands 13 feet high. Two 500-pound weights run it. Besides a clock, proper, it offers moving panoramas of great moments in American history, and panels crowded with dramatic paintings.

Acme and Then Some



The thirteen-foot historical clock in the Collins Museum at Georges Mills, N. H.

wanted to, Mr. Collins could, he says, have them all strike the hour on the second.

"Well, anyway, inside of a couple of seconds."

But that would be too much, probably, for visitors. And maybe too much for Mrs. Collins. So the nearly three hundred pieces are staggered a little. At that the ringing, the banging, the bonging, the chiming, is something visitors don't forget quickly.

Spread out that way, however, Mrs. Collins doesn't mind the noise at all. Fact is they both rather like it. And they are so used to the chorus they know instantly if any note is missing from the brassy symphony.

"I'll tell you the truth," Mrs. Collins says. "We notice right away if any clock even stops ticking."

That is hard to swallow, but Mrs. Collins says it is the truth and Mr. Collins backs her up. It is his word that clinches the matter. No man who was good enough at 70 to floor the Paul Bunyan of all depressions is going to bother with any little white fib.



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"It came up here to Georges Mills," he says. "I was born in Springfield a few miles away. Besides my sister was running an inn, Russel's Inn, on Lake Sunapee. And I figured that with the other hotels I could maybe make a clock museum go in the summer."

#### Visitors Began to Come Around.

It seems, looking back, a chancy move for a man around 70 and broke, or next thing to broke. But it turned out all right. In a little while the soft murmur of Mr. Collins's nearly 300 clocks ran like gentle rain through the shabby house on the hill opposite the barnlike Catholic chapel that Billy B. Van built some years ago. Behind the house stood an old barn destined shortly for a noble use.

And in a little while visitors began to plank down their quarters. They came to see the clocks. They lingered to hear the grey, chipper cricket of a little man who had built a better mouse trap, who wouldn't stay beaten. He has a set joke for every clock. He tells each one as briskly to the evening visitors as to the first arrivals in the morning.

The Cluck Museum has been running since 1932. It is spick

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#### A Monstrous Clock.

Acme stands 13 feet high. Two 500-pound weights run it. Besides a clock, proper, it offers moving panoramas of great moments in American history, and panels crowded with dramatic paintings. A man named Hubert built it and exhibited it at a fair in Chicago back in the 90's and made a pot of money. But latterly the Acme has seen shabby days. Mr. Collins got it for nothing, more or less.

Now, however, in the Clock Museum it is The Top. And well it might be, because besides being the Acme of Mechanical Science it is the final evidence in any argument about Mr. Collins's talent. When he got it, it wouldn't tick a tick. He was reluctant to tackle a 440,000-pound job at his age so he hired an expert.

"I paid him," Mr. Collins recalls now, "enough to keep me and Mrs. Collins all winter. Finally he packed up."

"I don't want any more of your money," he said. "That clock can't be fixed."

It seemed downright final. Mr. Collins was pretty gloomy. He had figured the big contraption would draw trade. He gave it a look. He fiddled with this spring, fingered that, fooled around with an oil can. And after a while he rolled up his sleeves.

"And I got her. I finally got her. My doctor says I'll kill myself some day hauling on those 500-pound weights. But she runs."

Every clock in the museum runs. And keeps time. If he

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