

Clayton W. Fountain Collection

Papers, 1930-1977
(Predominantly, 1948-1950)

2.5 linear feet

Accession #891
OCLC #

The papers of Clayton W. Fountain were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in August of 1978 by Mr. Fountain and were opened for research in July of 1984.

Clayton Fountain was born in Scott's Point, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan on April 21, 1909. He left high school at the age of seventeen and worked as a garage hand, a sailor on the Great Lakes and an auto worker. In 1933 he found work at the Chevrolet Gear and Axle plant. One of the founders of UAW Local 235 at the plant, he was fired for union activity, but after the GM strike of 1937 he was reinstated. During this period he joined the Communist Party, but left in 1938 over the issue of freedom of speech and thought as well as Russian direction of the party in the United States.

In 1939 he was assigned to the editorial staff of Local 235 News. Walter Reuther placed him on the international staff of the union in 1943 as an administrative assistant. He was appointed associate editor of the United Automobile Worker, the official UAW paper, in 1946 and served in the union's Public Relations Department under Frank Winn. In the 1940's his regular column, "On the Beam," appeared in several labor publications.

In 1949 Fountain published *Union Guy*, his autobiographical account of the early days of the UAW and the struggles between the Reuther and Communist factions for control of the union. He gave up publicity work in 1953 and moved to San Francisco, where he continued to write and worked as a reporter and photographer on a weekly paper and published a column, "Pulse of the Public." He also worked in construction and as a cab driver.

He moved to San Mateo in 1958 to work for the U.S. Postal Service in ElGrenada. In 1967 he was appointed Postmaster, a position he held until his retirement in 1974.

Fountain has continued writing, and in 1977 he published a volume of his poetry, *All Heaven Broke Loose*. Many of his poems have also appeared in magazines and newspapers. Since his retirement, he has lived in HalfMoonBay with his second wife, Edith Maples Fountain, and in addition to writing, has continued his lifelong interest in folk and labor songs. He also served on the San Mateo City Commission on Aging and has been actively involved in the ecology movement.

The Clayton W. Fountain Collection documents the publication of *Union Guy* and his other writing projects. There is also material on the Bell Aircraft strike in 1949. His wife, Edith, was a classmate of Walter Reuther at Dearborn's Fordson High School, and her yearbook containing several pictures of him and of Melvin and Merlin Bishop is included as well as a

Important subjects covered in the collection are:

Bell Aircraft Strike, Buffalo, 1949

Ecology

Union Guy

Among the important correspondents are:

Farrell, James T.

Williams, G. Mennen

Non-manuscript material:

A large quantity of photographs, most taken by Fountain, have been placed in the Archives Audiovisual Collection. These photographs depict AFL and CIO officials from the period when Fountain worked in the UAW Publicity Department.

Also included are pictures of Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman and other political figures. Two tape cassettes of Fountain singing labor and folk songs have also been placed in the Audiovisual Collection.

Contents

2 manuscript boxes

1 large flat

Box 1

1. "All Heaven Broke Loose," 1977
- 2-3. Bell Aircraft strike, 1949
4. Canadian labor education, 1950
- 5-6. Correspondence, 1942-76
7. Credentials
8. Fountain, Clayton; biographical material
9. Fountain, Edith Maples; high school yearbook, 1930
10. Labor clippings, 1943-50
11. Labor songs
12. Letters to the editor from Clayton Fountain
13. Letters to the editor from Edith Fountain
- 14-15. "On the Beam"
16. Progressivism; H. B. Parkes
17. "Pulse of the Public," 1954
18. Reuther, Walter

Box 2

- 1-2. *Union Guy*; correspondence, 1948-50
- 3-8. *Union Guy*; draft
9. *Union Guy*; reviews, 1949
- 10-11. Writings, unpublished
12. Writings, published, 1936-75
13. Writings, unsigned

Box 3

- 1-3. Scrapbook; clippings of Fountain poems, articles and letters to the editor. Also correspondence and UAW-related clippings.
4. Scrapbook; correspondence and clippings relating to *Union Guy*

Index to Correspondents

Farrell, James T., 1:5-6, 2:2, 2:9
Kuchel, Sen. Thomas H., 1:6
Reuther, Walter P., 1:5
Williams, Gov. G. Mennen, 1:5