



When Mr. Moore purchased the Don Frazier Derrydale collection close to fifteen years ago, he didn't just purchase a collection of books or sporting titles, he secured one of the finest American sporting book collections ever to be assembled. Not only was it one of the finest American sporting book collections ever to be assembled, but it was by the greatest sporting book publishing company of all time.

The Derrydale Press was borne in 1926 by a man named Eugene Virginius Connett III, the son of a successful hat manufacturer. His schooling was one of privilege – his preparatory schooling was in New Hampshire, a far cry from his residence in Orange, New Jersey. He then went on to Princeton for college, graduating in 1912. He joined the family business after school – as any good son should, married, had their first child and then was summoned to service in World War I. When he returned, he joined the family business, was made factory manager and, by 1925, he had sold it lock, stock and barrel. In the years from the time he graduated from Princeton to the time he sold the family business, Connett's personal interests led him to amass a sporting library, with the help of an antiquarian book dealer, Ernest Gee from New York City. It is widely known that Mr. Gee was a great influence on Connett in the formation of The Derrydale Press, and I suspect that Connett was a great influence on Gee and his own publishing as well. During these same years he became a skillful sportsman in his own right, which would serve him in many ways while navigating the helm of The Derrydale Press. With a short stint as salesman for a printing company that the family business once used, and a trip to Europe, Connett returned to the States with a passion for publishing at full throttle.

We know Connett founded the New York Angler's Club Bulletin in 1920, fourteen years after its inception. In the same year, he published a book titled *The Romance of Men's Hats* -- it is not clear if he authored the book. The creation of The Press was still six long years away, yet this shows that his interest in publishing was not an overnight idea.

Publishing is a risky business and so is farming, but chances are if you failed in farming it was because of something Mother Nature did or did not do for you. In publishing, your decisions are your drought and locusts. Selections in content, printing run, binding, marketing and so on can make you wish for simpler days in Iowa behind a plow.

The successful start of The Derrydale Press is a story of great creative ingenuity in what was to become one of the most trying economic times in American history. Connett founded The Press in 1926, and his first two books to be published were *The Living Constitution*, contracted by the Worker's Education Bureau Press, Inc. for five thousand copies in hard and soft cover, and Mark Twain's *1601 A Fireside Conversation* for a run of 100 copies. Both were contract work with no risk of marketing and sales. The third was published for the Angler's Club of New York. I have to believe that although it was the first the company would sell, the risk was minimal since it would be a safe wager that the Club's members would show their support for the project. This would be the first of four titles The Press published for the Angler's Club of New York, including Connett's first title as writer, and the cornerstone of any Derrydale library, *Magic Hours* in which he wrote, typeset, printed by hand on his own press at home, and bound by hand. Other ingenious methods to save money for the company included only binding a safe amount of the books that he felt would sell in a given time, and to having

some of his titles bound with new and experimental materials, for which the producers of the materials charged little or no money at all.

In the latter part of the 1920's Connett, with the help of Ernest Gee, further minimized risk and insulated himself and The Press from peril by advertising that the company would publish books for people who had manuscripts and also his suggestion of books as Christmas gifts, which brought him further business as low risk. These privately printed works, although having little to do with sporting, would become crown jewels in a serious Derrydale collection because of the low numbers that were printed, thus making them quite scarce. Gee's contribution in the early years was contracting The Press to publish two titles for his business in 1926 with more in the years to follow and, more importantly, his introduction of people of means to Connett, who shared the same passion and interest in the sporting classics. Books would be published with their moral support and financial backing.

By the time the country was gripped by the Great Depression, The Derrydale Press had become one of the premier sporting publishing houses in the world. Connett's business connections became well-rounded. He had his association with Ernest Gee, his fellow members of the Angler's Club of New York, and people of the sporting community, who not only helped financially but who I am sure had friends of their own who were interested in the work The Press was doing at the time. Connett's proficiency as a sportsman and as a writer, with his many contributions to sporting magazines, gained him the respect and admiration of his sporting peers and The Press as well.

The 1930's saw The Press in full steam and running at full throttle. Just as the New York Yankees had their Murderer's Row with Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig leading the way, so did Eugene Connett with his parallel version of authors and artists. Artists such as Lynn Bogue Hunt, Edwin Megargee, Gordon Stevenson, A. Lassell Ripley, Robert Ball, Churchill Ettinger, Roland Clark, Dr. Edgar Burke, Paul Brown, William Schaldach, A.B. Frost, Ralph Boyer, Marguerite Kirmse, Milton C. Weiler, Ogden Pleissner, as well as authors with names as grand as Nash Buckingham, Jack O'Connor, Philip Babcock, Ralph Bandini, Joel Barber, Gordon Grand, Roderick Haig-Brown, Russell Annabel, William Beach, Horatio Bigelow, Burton Spiller, Howard T. Walden II, Edmund Ware Smith, Harry Worcester Smith, Charles Phair, Henry P. Sheldon, H.G. Pickering, Preston Jennings, Henry Van Dyke, William Woodward, Ben Ames Williams - and even Ernest Hemingway pitch hitting with a chapter in the 1935 *American Big Game Fishing*. The talent was so deep that even its publisher had put pen to hand with a couple of his own titles and editing a few more.

Sadly in 1941, as the darkened skies of war covered the country, the need for raw materials had become a premium and that included paper. The quality paper on which The Derrydale Press was accustomed to publishing vanished, just as the bamboo for quality rods had. The Press closed their doors that year and liquidated. Connett took a job as executive assistant to the Director of the New Jersey Highway Department and while he was there started the Department's first newspaper called *The Highway*. Some people just have it in their blood. A few years later he joined D. Van Nostrand publishing and as head of the Director of the Sporting Book Division. Not limited to just overseeing publication of sporting titles, he also edited and wrote additional ones as well while he was employed there. Mr. Connett passed away in 1969.

Before Eugene V. Connett III closed his eyes for the last time, a young man by the name of Don Frazier had begun his pursuit of Derrydale titles. It began with his affection for horses and ended with his passion for The Derrydale Press. His passion would lead to collecting Derrydale Press books, starting his own business - Calderwood Books - with his partner Jo Koch as a Derrydale Press book dealer and privately printing his own bibliography on The Press, *Recognizing Derrydale Press Books: A Book of Pictures* in 1983. His collection is the most complete collection to ever come to auction on The Derrydale Press and, thanks to Mr. John Moore's generosity, the donations of this auction will benefit the Carter Foundation.

Mr. Frazier's bibliography, although brief in text, is no less important in content to that of Colonel Henry Siegel, Harry C. Marschalk, Jr. and Isaac Oelgart *The Derrydale Press: A Bibliography* published in 1981, which from here on in and through the book lots will be referred to simply as Siegel. Siegel's bibliography is one that bibliophiles would expect - and it is written in the strong regiment of what you would expect from a Colonel in the Armed Forces. Straight to the point, exact and precise. Frazier's is much looser, but it is filled with important information and especially for the first time the titles are broken down into their various states with

explanations on the subtle differences of each state. They complement each other extremely well and no Derrydale collector can afford to be without them. It would be like a homebuilder showing up on the job site with only a small bottle of Elmer's glue. Both bibliographies have differences of opinion on what is and what is not to be considered a Derrydale title. This must be left up to the individual collector to decide and I have tried to be impartial in my opinions on this matter while writing up the descriptions. It is simply not my place.

The doors of The Derrydale Press might have closed over sixty-five years ago, but the enthusiasm of its collectors is very much intact. Mr. F. P. Williamson, the foremost authority and collector today cites in Siegel's bibliography fourteen of the slightly over two dozen deluxe Derrydales sold for a sum of \$66,000 in 1980. My guess would be no more than three or four of the right titles would fetch that in today's market. The deluxe titles along with the "vanity" titles (those published privately and in small runs) are little jewels in any Derrydale collection and most likely it will always be that way. You can see after all these years The Press's influence in quality binding in some of the sporting books published today. As the Currier & Ives prints of the Nineteenth Century show life in America during that time period, The Derrydale Press has encapsulated sporting life in the first part of the Twentieth Century forever. Generations from now, sportsmen will long for what it was like back in the olden days just as our curiosity leads us to want to learn about sport in the Nineteenth Century, and The Derrydale Press will be there like soldiers on a shelf ready, willing and able to tell them the story. All they will have to do is pull them off the shelf, open to the first page and the story begins.

The question arises if there will ever be another sporting book publishing company, like The Derrydale Press again. Most likely not, the equation is too forbidding an undertaking. Imagine having to belong to the right club, know the right people, be a proficient writer and sportsman, use creative and ingenious methods of cutting overhead and produce an aesthetic quality product, gather an equally impressive group of authors and artists, cover an array of sporting and non-sporting topics and start this all three years before the greatest economic downturn in the country's history. Really, who would enjoy being punished like that? Just collecting the books is punishing enough and with that I would like to leave you with a quote from Siegel's bibliography of almost twenty-five years ago from Mr. F. P. Williamson. Even with the advents of the computer and the internet, it still holds true today:

*Collecting Derrydales is no simple avocation; it is filled with pain and pleasure, frustration and reward. Even when money is no object the task of acquiring a complete Derrydale collection can take a life-time. The search is endless and often frustrating, especially when one has sought a particular book for years. One day a bookseller's catalogue arrives and lo and behold there the book is listed. You get on the phone and call immediately only to discover it was sold only ten minutes earlier to another collector who will not part with it for a king's ransom. When you least expect it, as you are casually looking over a bookseller's stock, you see it there and the years of that particular search come to a glorious end. At just about the same time the Derrydale collector becomes all too knowing, another publication of The Press comes to light...and the search starts afresh.*

*Cited:* Recognizing Derrydale Press Books: A Book of Pictures by Don Frazier, The Derrydale Press: A Bibliography by Siegel, Colonel Henry A., Harry C. Marschalk, Jr. and Isaac Oelgart and The Derrydale Press: Notes from an informal talk... by Mrs. Randolph Catlin for this Introduction.

*Steve C. Starrantino*