September 2015

Gertrude Mackenzie Correspondence

Gertrude Mackenzie 1917-

Scotty Mackenzie 1917-

Hilda McLeod Jacob

Maine State Library

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August 23, 1955

Mrs. F. W. Jacob
Maine Author Collection
Maine State Library
Augusta, Maine

Dear Mrs. Jacob:

Your July 27th letter has just caught up with me. Your "spring letter" never has.

However, I gather that you'd like an inscribed copy of MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE STATE OF MAINE for the permanent exhibit within the State Library. And I'm highly honored. And of course I'll get one to you.

I plan to be in Augusta on business sometime during the middle of September and I shall get in touch with you at that time. Many thanks for welcoming my small effort to your collection.

Cordially,

G. Mackenzie

GM
AN AUTOGRAPH PARTY was held at the Community Hall of the association where many of the characters in the book had a chance to meet the two authors. They also found out who “Albion” and “Chris Marble,” two local characters in the book really are.

Archie and Fred Smith were the men the authors used for the characterizations. Both helped Miss MacKenzie when she started a summer hotel here several years ago. They are not related.

The book, released on May 6, already has gone into the third printing at Simon and Schuster Inc., publishing house. Its effect on the quiet summer colony has been felt throughout the country as tourists stop at stores and restaurants to inquire about the beach location.

Miss Dorothy Mignault, one of Miss MacKenzie’s many friends named in the book, said today that many persons have moved to the beach this summer “just because they read about it in the book.”

MEANWHILE, sales of the book throughout the nation are beginning to climb and well known bookstores in New York are featuring the volume in window displays. Local stores report the book has been sold out, with orders piling up for more copies.

How the publication of a book about a summer resort affects its subjects can best be summed up by Archie Smith, a native of the beach area and one of the book’s principals.

“People keep slowin’ down as they pass my place and try wavin’ at me,” he noted dryly.

Some residents at the beach have picked up the book and made it a necessary part of their homes. A popular game that started a few weeks ago is trying to connect correctly the book’s characters (who all have fictitious names) with real persons in the colony.

Many of their guesses were backed up by Miss MacKenzie during the autographing tea. It was Miss MacKenzie’s first public appearance here since the book’s publication, and everyone at the tea, in the book or not, was excited about it.

“The people here love it,” she says, “and I guess I wouldn’t have fallen in love with them if they weren’t the kind of people they are. Seeing them here today was like lighting the torch again.

Writers And Pair They Featured

The authors of “My Love Affair With The State Of Maine” and two of their Maine characters. They are, left to right, Fred Smith, who was Chris Marble in the book; Gertrude “Scottie” MacKenzie, Archie Smith, who was Albion, and Ruth Goode. With them are Imp and Spike, the two dogs who figure in the story. (By Staff Photographer Whitcomb)
Diary Of A Country Wife
By Mary Dunne

It's been interesting to read a book which isn't officially published yet, a privilege I don't often have, and made doubly exciting because of the subject. I understand that "My Love Affair With The State of Maine" by Gertrude Mackenzie with Ruth Goode will be in the book stores early in May, and I do sincerely recommend it to my fellow Maine enthusiasts.

This is Miss Mackenzie's experiences as a village storekeeper at Goose Rocks Beach where, with her friend Dorothy Mignault, she managed a combined store, dance hall, restaurant, gas station and guest house. Miss Mignault was familiar with Maine, having summered here for many years; but Scotty MacKenzie had to start from scratch in learning to cope with the peculiarities of Maine and its inhabitants. I, a died in the wool Maine inhabitant myself, readily admit the peculiarities; and it is to this New Yorker's credit that she so earnestly tried to find out why the natives seem to have a chip on their shoulders where Summer People are concerned—or, to quote, "the gulf between Yankee suspicion and out-of-state insouciance."

She says, "In those first days, a good many things went clear over my head. I suppose people talk as much in Maine as elsewhere, but they don't say much. It seemed to me that a vast amount of what I heard did not mean what I thought it meant when I heard it. I felt like a not-very-bright child trying to follow the conversation of adults who didn't want me to catch on."

A Maine friend tried to explain some of the Maine temperament to her when she, quite naturally, complained, "Just because you speak differently, dress differently, they treat you as if you're subhuman ..."

He told her, "We Maine people suffer from one big mass inferiority feeling. Everywhere else, people travel, go places, see the world, get rich. Maine people stay in Maine, fish in their cold water and scratch in their stony soil and struggle through a long winter. And then the lovely summer comes—and everybody else is out playing on their beaches and swimming in their ocean while they work to make a living . . ."

This seems a grim explanation, but it has the germ of truth in it. Only a very small percentage of us in Maine profit by the summer trade; but we have to stand back when summer comes and Vacationland is invaded. And then, too, we natives have a holy horror of being patronized and a great many of us do have unpleasant memories of the delighted laugh or, worse, the repressed chuckle at some of the colloquialisms (from people whose accents seem far more outlandish and affected, to us, than our Maine drawl). "My Love Affair With The State Of Maine", however, is not all New-Yorker-versus-Maine-unfriendliness. It is gay and witty and vastly readable; and I was deeply impressed by the amount of sheer manual labor these Madison Avenue girls went through to make their venture a success. If you want to know just how much a storekeeper's feet can hurt . . . or how dreadful the 1947 fires were in Maine . . . or how you go about pricing a head of lettuce—then read about Miss Mackenzie's Love Affair.

Wrote Book About Maine
Gertrude "Scotty" MacKenzie, author of "My Love Affair With The State of Maine" who will arrive here by plane today for radio and TV appearances. Miss Mackenzie and another young woman from New York came to Goose Rocks to visit; stayed to become storekeepers. The book, published this week, is about their experiences.