October 2015

Bernice Richmond Correspondence

Bernice Richmond 1899-

Mrs. Reginald Robinson 1899-

Bernice Nelke Richmond Robinson 1899-

Captain Torrey

Mrs. Gerrish

See next page for additional authors

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Creator(s)
Bernice Richmond 1899-, Mrs. Reginald Robinson 1899-, Bernice Nelke Richmond Robinson 1899-, Captain Torrey, Mrs. Gerrish, Alice Frost Lord, Captain Solomon A. Nelke, Pamela Nelke 1844-1923, and Hilda McLeod Jacob
RICHMOND, Bernice (Mrs. Reginald Robinson)

Livermore Falls,
August 27, 1943

Mrs. Reginald Robinson
Mark Island
Winter Harbor, Maine

Dear Bernice Richmond:

It is with impatient eagerness that we have awaited the publication of WINTER HARBOR; but we expect our library copy soon now that it is actually off the press. It promises to be a charming book.

Possibly you know of the Maine Author Collection. Started many years ago, this exhibit now numbers over a thousand volumes, written and inscribed and presented by those born in Maine, resident here, or writing about the state. It is really a remarkable collection, ranging from Longfellow to Millay, and from Elijah Kellogg to Kenneth Roberts. We also collect and preserve biographical, photographic and critical material about our authors.

It is a pleasure to welcome a new name to Maine's literary foster, and we hope that you will want to inscribe and present a copy of WINTER HARBOR to the collection. We wish it the best of success.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY

By

hmj
Encl--1

SECRETARY
Mrs. F. W. Jacob  
Maine State Library  
Augusta, Maine  

Dear Mrs. Jacob:  

Thank you for your letter of August 27th. We have been having such heavy seas the last week that I have not been able to leave the island. Your letter was brought out to the next island at low water on a trip when Captain Torrey came for my husband.

I've no idea when this will be posted! However I want to have it written and ready to go when it is possible to make the trip.

I shall, of course, be delighted to send you a book. If Mrs. Gerrish has one in her store I shall mail it immediately. If not I shall ask her to get a copy for me. I haven't any here at the moment.

The collection of Maine authors sounds fascinating and I feel honored that you want my little book.

Thank you for writing me.

Cordially,  

Bernice Richmond
Miss Bernice Richmond
Winter Harbor
Maine

Dear Miss Richmond:

The inscribed copy of WINTER HARBOR reached us today, following your friendly letter; and the book is certainly all that we hoped. It is delightful, so filled with genuine adventure and happiness. It should find old friends of the Maine coast, and make new ones with its forthright charm and humor and ability to share the beauty of your island lighthouse.

You are kind to be interested in the Maine Author Collection, and we appreciate the privilege of adding WINTER HARBOR to the shelves. When you happen to be in Augusta, do call at the library and see the books.

Please accept our thanks for your gift copy and also for writing the story of Winter Harbor Lighthouse, so that others may enjoy through you that special kind of life. It is good to have a book of this sort, after the great number of war volumes; and we should think it might easily be a popular Christmas gift book. Good luck to it!

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY

by

hmj

Encl.--6¢ postal refund

SECRETARY
Another Version of Bernice Richmond's Maine Island Life

BY ALICE FROST LORD

It is appropriate at just this time to quote from Bernice Richmond's article, which ran in the "Gourmet" (N.Y.) because it deals with Fall at her island home in Frenchman's Bay on the Maine coast. The author, of course, is a native of Lewis­ton, where she was known as Bernice Nelke; and her book, which came out not long ago, has had a wide sale.

This article is like a chapter from it, or perhaps better appended to it. The illustrations in black and white are particularly interesting, and are reproduced here by courtesy of the magazine. We are quoting a few of the descriptive passages, which have to do mostly with cranberries.

As she points out, autumn may arrive in flaming colors across the bay at Mount Desert Island. But this is not true around her four-acre lighthouse home. "The high vivid blue heavens and the wide expanses of matching sea could be June. Big breakfasts, woolen socks, and moccasins could mean any morning of the Summer. But one thing does bring Fall, suddenly and irrevocably. Cranberries appear."

Fall Is Best

In fact, she would like no better time of year to be at that spot than in September and October. She likes "the pleasant smell of extra stoves burning driftwood", and the "tart cranberry which follows all the sweetness of the other berries. It is a time of year when everything is at its peak—the berries, the garden, the colors and the seas."

It is a time for wine-red simmering on the kitchen stove; for cartons of cranberries being picked over for canning "Maine cranberries as beautiful as the ladies' jewels."

It is on the highest wind-swept point of the island that her own cranberries grow—great "two-carat garnets". Smaller than the bog cranberry, its leaf is larger, she explains. The bog berry is more plentiful, needs more sugar, and is packed away for shipment to city folks for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

She explains how the cranberry season is the time for thicker lobsters, more freshly painted lobster buoys around shore, and fishermen fearless of rough weather.

How She Cooks Them

From this article we quote precisely the Maine author's Maine way of preparing lobster for mankind:

"People talk a lot about the way they like their lobsters cooked," she writes. "To all this Reg and I say nothing, which makes them describe their sauces with still greater vigor. "Small, hard-shelled lobsters right out of our cold Maine water, immediately cooked the way Mort—a village fisherman—has taught us, are perfection. When a half-inch of sea water has started boiling furiously, he throws the lobsters into the kettle headfirst."

"From along the shore, he finds a piece of driftwood he can use as a cover, a rock to weigh it down, and..."
Lewiston
Evening
Journal
November 11, 1944

"GOURMET" pictures this island interior.

then all we have to do is to keep the lobsters steaming. The trick is not to overcook them.

"I know three ways to estimate the right length of time. One is to keep them cooking hard, if they are small, for about 20 minutes; another, to watch for an all-over bright color; and Mort's way, to let the lobsters boil over three times, snatching the kettle off the fire each time. The third time they are done.

"With our lobsters we like good bread and butter and ginger-ale cooled in our cellar. *** When we come to the tomatally, or green part, we place it on crisp saltines, add a dash of chilled home-made boiled dressing. We like a green salad with French dressing next.

something small and sweet, some coffee, and we call it a dinner.

"Gone are the days when we prided ourselves on devouring three or four lobsters. By eating fewer at one sitting, we are hungry for them more often. By having them at noonday we sleep better, too. Our extra lobster we eat cold the next day in a salad, or mixed with boiled dressing in a sandwich, or 'hashed,' as Mort calls it.

"Lobster hash is made by removing the meat from the cooked lobster, breaking it up into small pieces, and frying it in the fat of tried-out salt pork. Lobster hash is very rich, and a little goes a long ways."
Dear Alice Frost Lord:

Found the Lewiston Journal and the magazine section when I returned from New York on Saturday. That was a nice personal story and thank you. And the Magazine section I thought very fine indeed, very interesting and a fine idea too.

I signed my contract on Thursday under the nicest possible conditions. I told Random House about your idea of an announcement on the book with pictures of Grammy and Grandma. They say they think it a fine idea but wish you would do that story as the book comes out. I took the pictures with me and as my agent thought I ought to show them to the editor in charge on my book I did. He was perfectly delighted with them and thinks they may make some use of them and is holding them for the time being. They also feel they can warm the picture of me at the lighthouse out of International News Service. Now all these things can in time come back to you and see that you get them if you also think it a good idea to hold the story of that book until publication. It would be very good publicity and would be appreciated all around. A cousin at the Falls is taking a picture of my birthplace and will send that along some time.

The editor favors calling the book "Old Hundred" using quotes and explaining that Grammy called all small children that. As she called me in the book I objected a little fearing it might focus some attention, too much, in fact on me as the author. But they say it is a good title and that's important and they think the jacket will take care of that. I'd be interested to hear what you think. The second choice is Balm of Gilead. When I left "Old Hundred" was the more popular one. The publication date is late spring - May, if all goes well.

An interesting complication has come up with the third book on Winter Harbor. Random House want to see that as soon as it typed, if they like it may publish it first and let Grammy come out sometime before Xmas 1946. All this is hardly for publication and I would think left you nothing to write at the moment although I do not know what notes you took that day. If you want to do something know you could say I signed a contract Random House, book and date still unsettled and you could look over my snap shots and see if there is anything you would like. I've one with my fur hood I wore on the island when I stayed late last year which will be used in the other Winter Harbor book if sold. I like to say "if sold" because I do not like to count chickens!

I thought I was driving in today and would talk with you. Snow, beautiful snow, all over the farm. When I do come in I'll phone you and see what you would like to do unless you would scream over the tele-hone with me! or write me RFD?

Gratefully,

Bernice Richmond
September 20, 1946

Miss Bernice Richmond
Winter Harbor Lighthouse
Winter Harbor, Maine

Dear Miss Richmond:

One of the bright spots which we anticipate this fall is the arrival of your new book, RIGHT AS RAIN, for which we have already placed our order. This copy is of course for the lending section of the library.

RIGHT AS RAIN promises to be a book of wide appeal, and we take pride in the fact that it is of Maine. We hope that an inscribed copy may be placed in the Maine Author Collection beside your lovely WINTER HARBOR, which you so graciously presented to the exhibit.

Our very good wishes for the instant and enduring success of the new book.

Sincerely yours,

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection
Winter Harbor Lighthouse
Winter Harbor
Maine

October 5th, 1946

Mrs. F W Jacob
Maine State Library
State House
Augusta, Maine

Dear Mrs. Jacob:

Thank you for your letter of September 20th.

It won't be long now before I can send you the copy of Right as Rain you want for the Author Collection. I have only recently had a few advance copies.

Thank you so much for your best wishes for the book.

Cordially

Barnice Richmond
November 27, 1946

Miss Bernice Richmond
Winter Harbor
Maine

Dear Miss Richmond:

The inscribed copy of RIGHT AS RAIN has arrived for the Maine Author Collection, and we are delighted that we may add this charming story to the exhibit.

This is not, of course, our introduction to the book: we made sure of copies for our lending section, and for the traveling libraries, and are happy to report that Grammy is making new friends constantly.

It is a fascinating book, and many readers will be grateful that you have preserved Grammy and her life in RIGHT AS RAIN.

Please accept our warm thanks for the gift copy to the Maine Author Collection.

Sincerely yours,

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection
BERNICE (NELKE) RICHMOND (ROBINSON), AUTHOR.

By ALICE FROST LORD OCT 12 1946

"To have, been gentle, composed and tolerant had been Grammy's strength. She had given her life to children and was now drawing on her great store of little words and looks and scenes. She could sit through the day and re­live the hours she liked best. As her children married, she had drawn their families to her as she had her own.

"Perhaps one secret of her continued happiness was that she never made demands on people, never wanted things beyond the satisfactions she had in the yellow house. Quiet and simple and unpretentious, she was still the main force and center, the very heart of her family. That was her achievement."

"My Maine Grandmother"

Just as Bernice Richmond (one-time Miss Nelke of Lewiston) captured the attention of lovers of Maine by “Winter Harbor” her ear­lier book on experiences while living on a lighthouse island off Winter Harbor supplied the unusual experiences which enlivened the pages of her first book. Her hus­band is Dr. Reginald Robinson, also Maine-born, who is an expert so­ciologist well known on both the East and West Coast. This is a Random House book, N.Y., at $2.50.

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"On cold and rainy November days the air was often ripe with the fragrance of a New England boiled dinner, mince pies or chocolate cake. The room in the evening under the soft light of kerosene lamps was perfumed by russet apples piled high in a bowl on the table.

"Most of her flowers were in the front parlor but she had one pot of ivy in the sitting room on the mantle. Grammy had trained the ivy to grow up the side of the door and over to the window, where it had reached the moulding, slowly march­ed along the whole east side of the room, turned the corner and started along the northern side."

To a surprising degree the book will be read with interest by youth, who recall their own grandmothers' stories, or are fascinated by these anecdotes, as well as by adults all over New England, to whom the picture is more or less familiar and heart­eningly poignant.

"Shaw, now" she might ejaculate. "Who'd believe it!"

The Author

It should be recalled that Miss Richmond, who was born in Liver­more Falls in the house shown in the accompanying picture, came to Lewiston to make her home on Col­lege Street.

Well-remembered by many friends as a dramatist, and her interest in the theatre and dance which led her to New York City, then to Vienna and London, back again in the metropoles, she taught acting and danced as accompanist for concert artists, as well as taking roles in several Broadway produc­tions.

Eventually, she returned to her native state, where the purchase of an abandoned lighthouse island off Livermore Falls supplied the unusual experiences which enlivened the pages of her first book. Her hus­band is Dr. Reginald Robinson, also Maine-born, who is an expert so­ciologist well known on both the East and West Coast. This is a Random House book, N.Y., at $2.50.

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CAPTAIN SOLOMON A. NELKE, who is Grandma in the story.

PAMELIA, wife of Captain Nelke.

BIRTHPLACE of author in Livermore Falls.
Charming Book About The Maine Of Happier Days

By OSCAR SHEPARD

Although Bernice Richmond's career carried her to London, Vienna and New York, and in- ch Cellar contribution to Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" and other Broadway plays, she cherishes memories of her childhood in Maine. She is the wife of Reginald Robinson, a New York sociologist, also Maine born, and some years ago they bought an abandoned lighthouse at Winter Harbor.

Her first book, "Winter Harbor," was born of her experiences there and was published in 1943. Now comes her second, "Right As Rain," described as the story of my Maine grandmother.

It is a simple, homely narrative of Miss Richmond's childhood days in Livermore Falls. It is not one exciting passage, and yet there is something warm and human about it all. Her style is leisurely, as was life in Maine at the turn of the century. Apparently, she has an almost uncanny memory. And so her book is made up of little character sketches principally of the devoted "Granny," and of gently appealing happenings in a big yellow house and quiet town overlooking the Androscoggin. It is life as seen through the wondering eyes of a small child, now told with the literary skill of a brilliant adult.

The world in those days was not one closely-knit neighborhood of tragedy and frustration. In fact, it seems to have been a rather happy place; and some of this happiness is reflected in the pages of Miss Richmond's tale. We feel better for having read it. It's pleasant to bask in the light of the sun—even a sun that shone nearly a half century ago.

One thing more—a subject that may not interest the writer personally, but is likely to interest many others. How they did eat in those old days! There are endless references to "eleven egg angel cake," crusty home-made bread, mountains of golden butter, maple syrup, apple pie and—oh, what's the use? Miss Richmond, for all her charm, must have had a sadistic streak in her. Why write things like that for readers in this year of grace and empty cupboards, 1946?

Right As Rain Captures Charm Of Simple Life

Every now and then a little unheralded book moves onto the shelves of book dealers and huddles unostentatiously between best sellers and literary club selections which shouldn't be in the same room with it. Such a book is Right As Rain (Random House) by Bernice Richmond, a native of Livermore Falls and former resident of Lewiston.

Miss Richmond, whose first book, Winter Harbor, published three years ago, is remembered but somewhat subtle differences happily by many Maine people. They are outlined in the preface and has turned out in her new book a warmly human portrait of her grandmother and in the process or humorously—says "whereas has recaptured, the spirit of the simple and good life of the Maine village of a generation back.

The reader should be warned of this Book: It is not quaint. There is nothing of Chamber of Commerce provincialism in it. It makes no conscious effort to be charming, or cute. It has a simplicity which, at first, may disarm its reader. But as the first few pages are turned, one gradually becomes aware that this simplicity, so difficult for a writer to attain, is this author's special gift. And it is this same simplicity which finally weaves a spell over the reader, lifting him into the past and stirring within him his own memories of years that have gone and taken with them a way of life that was fine and good.

Miss Richmond's book should touch the hearts of many Maine people. For it brings to reality in a period many of them knew. In its pages are men and women like those they knew and were themselves. To read it will be to relive. But enjoyment of this book will not be confined to oldsters; any Maine person will take pleasure in its artless reproduction of old days and the heart-touching way it sets forth the beauty, serenity, and charm of life as lived by a vanishing race who knew true values.

If more than one person will sigh on reading this book over the loss of other days, many more will feel misgivings that they were born too late to enjoy those days. And some, perhaps, may find in the book's contrast between the old way of life and our contemporary way what they are looking for in this confused and unsatisfactory modern world. For here for all to see and appreciate is a life which prospered not through striving and excitement, but through kindness, service, tolerance, integrity, and a keen enjoyment of simple satisfactions deeply rooted in the soil, environment, and the family.
Bernice Richmond’s Second Book Is Story Of Author’s Grandmother

By Franklin Wright

The seed of an idea, planted in a fertile mind in 1931 and painstakingly cultivated for 15 years, reached a rich, mellow maturity this week with the publication of Bernice Richmond’s new book, Right As Rain.

Well established as an author through the success of her first book, Winter Harbor, Miss Richmond will add many new readers with her simply told story of a typical Maine grandmother.

Seeds Of Inspiration

A few words of polite conversation at a New York party in 1931 were the seeds from which grew her second literary endeavor. The author, visiting Campbell’s Book Store here this week to autograph copies of the new volume, explained how memories of her grandmother became a book.

Guests at the party noticed my Maine accent immediately. They asked about Maine. As we conversed I mentioned anecdotes of my grandmother’s life. Later, one of the guests came to me and asked if he could write a story about my grandmother. I consented, gladly.

“After a visit at South Harpswell I again met the guest in New York, and asked how the story was progressing. He said he had been unable to do anything with it as he didn’t know the locale or the people and suggested that I write such a story.

“After that, I carried a notebook with me constantly and faithfully jotted down every recollection of Grammy. Finally they were prepared in proper order and here, with Random House’s cooperation, is Right As Rain, the story of my grandmother.”

It all sounded very simple. But 15 years elapsed between the planting of the seed and the harvest of the fruit.

Miss Richmond went to live with Grammy “about the time I was beginning to walk around freely” and her memory of the happiness in the yellow house at Livermore Falls is bright and simple. Later the family left Grammy Pameel and moved to Lewiston.

Career Uppermost

A career was uppermost in the thoughts of the young girl and she was of the clan that believed not in meteoric rises to fame. In accordance with her belief that success was the result of hard work and diligent application, she studied music, dancing, the theater.

Her pursuit of a career took her to Boston, Vienna, London and New York. In New York she has been associated with some 15 different theatrical productions, not the least among them Thornton Wilder’s Our Town.

“But I was still striving to create something,” Miss Richmond said. “I had never thought of writing. Perhaps if we had been subjected to aptitude tests when we were in school I might have directed my ambition toward the literary field.”

About this time, Maine authors were springing up in unprecedented numbers. It seemed that everything about Maine was interesting. A farmer took a wife and wrote a book. Between happy jinglings of a country store cash register, the farmer’s uncle wrote notes for another best seller. Surely, an ambitious, talented woman who had just purchased an abandoned lighthouse at Winter Harbor had adequate material for a book.

From that ambition, talent and material came Winter Harbor. And Miss Richmond was just a little surprised.

“I could remember about three rules of composition,” she said. “I’d never tried for literary success. And here was I, the author of a book.”

But Winter Harbor, though her first book, was not her first writing
May 12, 1947

Miss Bernice Richmond
Winter Harbor Lighthouse
Winter Harbor, Maine

Dear Miss Richmond:

One of the pleasantest events of the spring is the anticipation of your new book, OUR ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE. It will be like returning to old friends for another happy visit to renew acquaintance with your lighthouse through this book.

Of course we put it at once on our order list, and now we write to you about the Maine Author Collection, which we hope may also have an inscribed copy.

You have our very good wishes for the immediate and lasting success of OUR ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection
June 2, 1947

Miss Bernice Richmond
Winter Harbor Lighthouse
Winter Harbor, Maine

Dear Miss Richmond:

The inscribed copy of OUR ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE has arrived for the Maine Author Collection; and we are happy to welcome this warmly affectionate and humorous book.

The copy which we have ordered for the lending section of the library has not yet reached us, so we examined this copy with unusual pleasure. It is a delightful book, capturing the same charm and freshness that your first book did, and surely it will have many eager readers.

Please accept our thanks for your interest in the Maine Author Collection, and for OUR ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE, which is being placed with your earlier volumes in the collection with appreciation.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
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Encl--7¢ postal refund