December 2015

Burt L. Standish Correspondence

Gilbert William Patten 1866-1945

Maine State Library

Burt L. Standish 1866-1945

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Recommended Citation

Patten, Gilbert William 1866-1945; Maine State Library; and Standish, Burt L. 1866-1945, "Burt L. Standish Correspondence" (2015). Maine Writers Correspondence. 592.
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PATTEN, GILBERT  1866-1945
(pen name Burt L. Standish)
Corinna
Mr. Gilbert Patten  
c/o Barre & Co.  
Grosset & Dunlap  
1140 Broadway  
New York City

Dear Mr. Patten:

I find that we do not have in our Maine Author Collection in the Maine State Library any of your works, and am writing to see if we cannot fill the void. Our Maine Author Collection is for exhibit purposes only, comprising about a thousand inscribed presentation volumes, written by Maine sons and daughters. Biographical and critical information is collected also, and all correspondence is carefully filed. Preservation of such items, and the representations of Maine's contribution to literature will offer an invaluable source of data for future historians and students.

One of the great values of the collection, which occupies a special room in the library, is the fact that they are for the most part inscribed by the authors. I am hopeful that you will be willing to inscribe and send to us as gift volumes some of your books. The library will be glad to purchase others to complete the collection. We are proud of our Maine Author Collection, and we wish to include all the books of all Maine born authors.

As a resident of Penobscot County, and for twenty-five years editor of the Bangor Commercial, I have often written articles relative to your birth in Corinna. I also very pleasantly remember our slight acquaintance when I was editor of the Rockland Daily Star, and was playing baseball down in Knox County.

I trust you will be able to accede to our request as expressed above, and also hope that you will long continue to supply wholesome sport stories for the boys of the nation.

Very truly yours

OLH.m  
State Librarian
February 20, 1941

Mr. Gilbert Patten
Frank Merriwell's Rancho
Yucaipa, California

Dear Mr. Patten:

When a recent article from the Las Vegas, Nevada, Review Journal, came to our notice, we nearly sighed with relief! We had written to you previously regarding the Maine Author Collection, but our letter had been returned to us; and we had no late address.

We now enclose a copy of this letter, as written by the former State Librarian, Oliver L. Hall. This letter explains, we believe, the purpose, ideal and scope of the exhibit of Maine authors' books.

It is regrettable indeed that the works of so distinguished a son of our state should not be represented in the collection. One of the aims which we try to make clear to people is that the Maine Author Collection is abundant in present interest, and attracts many visitors; but the honor is enduring, and the books are to be kept here always. Thus is maintained a complete panorama of the work of Maine writers, and our sorrow at not boasting of the inclusion of your books would not excuse us to future generations!

We do sincerely hope that you will want to help us to overcome this omission, and that you will feel an interest in this project that will prompt you to inscribe copies for the exhibit. Our best wishes go to you for the success of your new Frank Merriwell story.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj
SECRETARY

Encl--1
Hilda McLeod Jacob,  
Sec. Maine State Library, 
Augusta, Maine. 

Dear Miss Jacob:

I trust you will pardon my delay in answering your letter dated Feb. 20, and I wish to assure you that I will forward an autographed copy of "Mr. Frank Merriwell," which will be published the first day of April, when I pass through New York some time in May on my way back to "Freedom's Shore," my home in Camden, Maine.

And it may be that I have one or two other copies of my cloth-bound books at my home that I can contribute to the Maine State Library. I do not possess, myself, a complete list of the paper-bound Merriwell stories, which are now very difficult to obtain and may be bought only at a premium. I was told, two or three years ago, that an original copy of my first Merriwell story, bearing my autograph, had been sold for $500.00, a ridiculous price if the report was true. However, I do know that dealers demand a premium on all the first editions of the Merriwell yarns and are asking $2,600 and upward for a complete collection of all titles. Not even the Library of Congress has a complete file, many copies having been stolen.

I shall keep your letter with me to remind me to fulfill my promise concerning "Mr. Frank Merriwell."

Thank you.  

Sincerely yours, 

Gilbert Patten.
April 3, 1941

Mr. Gilbert Patten
Frank Merriwell's Rancho
Yucaipa, California

Dear Mr. Patten:

You are kind to write to us, and generous to promise MR. FRANK MERRIWELL, and the possibility of other books for the Maine Author Collection. We have felt keenly the lack of your works in this exhibit, and are really most appreciative of your gracious offer to help.

We assure you that paper bound or cloth bound copies will be more than acceptable, and our one regret is that we fear it will not be possible now to accumulate a complete file of your famous stories. You may modestly insist that five hundred dollars is "a ridiculous price," but we are thoroughly aware of the scarcity of the Merriwell stories.

We hope that you will call at the library during your stay at "Freedom's Shore," and we assure you of a most cordial welcome.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj

SECRETARY
August 18, 1942

Mr. Gilbert Patten
Freedom's Shore
Camden, Maine

Dear Mr. Patten:

A year ago this past spring you kindly wrote to say that you would present to the Maine Author Collection an inscribed copy of your book, MR. FRANK MERRIWEEL; and you also said that you might have other of the Merriwell books for the Collection.

We dislike to appear insistent, but we realize keenly the lack of this exhibit in regard to your writings, and we continue to hope that it may be possible to overcome this defect. We shall be greatly appreciative of your effort and kindness in helping us to distinguish the collection with some Merriwell books.

Our good wishes go to you for a pleasant summer; and if the summer seems by mid-August to be waning, then our good wishes for the coming fall!

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY

hmj
SECRETARY
Gilbert Patten, Camden author who died at the home of his son in Vista, Calif. 

**DEATH OF GILBERT PATTEN**

Camden Author Made Famous By the Authorship of the \"Frank Merriwell\" Novels

Gilbert Patten, 78, who wrote under the pen name of Burt L. Standish in producing the popular \"Frank Merriwell\" stories, died in his sleep Tuesday night in the home of his son, Harvan Barr Patten, in suburban Vista, Calif.

Gilbert Patten was one of the most prolific writers of dime novel fiction in the world. His tremendously popular \"Frank Merriwell\" stories, commencing in 1896 and continuing 17 years, totalled more than 26,000,000 words. His life-time production was estimated at 40,000,000 words.

His melodramatic Merriwell stories, appearing in Tip Top Weekly, earned a fortune for his publishers (Street & Smith). He named the waning public pulse for that type of fiction in 1912 and later was active in its transition into the \"pulp\" magazine of today.

Born in Corinna, Me., he was christened George William Patten last week in San Diego, Calif., today, was \"a Maine Yankee\" and proud of it.

When Patten dropped the writing of his story hero, \"Frank Merriwell,\" he said:

\"That didn't work,\" he said ruefully.

He ran away from home at 16 because of his aversion to school and his father's ultimatum: \"Study or go to work.\" Earning 90 cents a day in a machine shop he learned that labor was the only resource of the unskilled. Determined to be an author, he went home, Calif.

Patten continued to write and in 1895, he sold his first efforts, short stories entitled \"A Bad Man\" and \"The Pride of Sandy Flat.\" At 19 he sold \"The Diamond Sport\" for $50. A second novel sold for $75, a third for $100, and his career had started.

A friend and schoolmate, Alice Gardiner, became his critic and confidant, contributing to his early success. She married Patten in 1896, the first of his three marital ventures. They were divorced in 1898. Patten and his second wife, Mary Nunn, were married in 1900 and divorced in 1916. In 1918 he married Carol Kramer of New York, and grew rapidly into a gangling six-foot, 115-pound boy at 14. The nickname \"Willie\" in early youth riled him so he dropped the \"William\" and changed \"George\" to \"Gilbert\" in an effort, he said, to make the name \"Frank\" and \"Merriwell\" of today.

When \"Frank Merriwell\" graduated from Yale his fiction brother, \"Dick Merriwell\", was created and \"Dick\" received $150 a week. When on occasion he wanted a week off, he stepped up his output. At one time to reach the presses, he wrote 50,000 words in a week—his best record.

Meanwhile, Patten took the editorship of Top Notch, first of the sport story pulp magazines of today, and wrote much of its material himself. After seven issues he returned to become its chief contributor.

When Patten dropped the writing of the Merriwell series other writers kept the series alive until 1916. Meanwhile, Patten took the editorship of Top Stotch, first of the sport story pulp magazines of today, and won fame in New York with his Merriwell stories. Patten continued to return to Camden as a summer resident of \"Overrocks,\" a substantial, attractive home on the shore of Penobscot Bay.

Many of those early homes acquired titles as \"Dunham Dan, the Dazard,\" \"The Corinna Owl,\" which he edited and published in his home town. For 30 years after he had won fame in New York with his Merriwell stories, Patten continued to return to Camden, about 1889. In between he managed a semi-pro baseball team and his literary apprenticeship was off the \"Eastern State,\" a Dexter, Me., newspaper and his reading taste for \"thrillers\" waned. He ventured into the weekly newspaper publishing business in 1899 with the \"Corinna Owl,\" but he sold it shortly afterward. Moving to Camden, Patten continued to write and in 1907, followed \"Frank Merriwell, Jr.\" which he saw the series decline and fail.

Opporunity came when Patten, at the age of 39, was offered a chance to write \"on approval\" for \"Tip Top Weekly\" \"The Boy From the West.\" It began a period of 30 years of continuous fiction writing.

\"Frank Merriwell, or First Days at Fardale,\" came off the presses in April, 1891, and Patten received a contract for three years at $50 a week. It drove him to night and day efforts, for he required time for research as well as writing. Often he finished an installment barely in time to reach the presses.

Renewal of his contract came in 1899 and an advance to $60 for each installment of the Merriwell series. In the last four years Patten did the actual writing of them, he said, \"I was the actual writing of them, he said, \"Frank Merriwell, or First Days at Fardale,\" wrote much of its material himself. After seven issues he returned to become its chief contributor.
Mr. Haryan Barr Patten  
Vista  
California  

Dear Mr. Patten:  

Your recent loss is one that is keenly shared by a host of friends and acquaintances of Gilbert Patten, and by even more friends of Frank Merriwell. The loss to Maine is that of a distinguished son; and it is particularly because your father's birthplace was this state that we take the liberty of writing to you.

The Maine Author Collection is an exhibit of about fifteen hundred volumes, inscribed and presented, written by Maine people. The present interest of visitors is great, but we are admittedly building for the future; and the value of such a collection increases constantly. We gather also all available biographical, critical and photographic data, and preserve the correspondence with our authors.

Some time ago we wrote to Mr. Patten about the possibility of including his work in the collection; we had a most friendly and generous reply in the spring of 1941, promising us his latest book, MR. FRANK MERRIWELL, and in addition suggesting that it might be possible for him to send other Merriwell titles for the collection.

That the gift did not materialize is greatly to our regret, for Mr. Patten was eminent in his field of literature. That is why we are writing to you. We thought it possible that you might want to present such of your father's books as may be available to the Maine Author Collection in tribute to his memory and his long and illustrious career. Such a gift would fill us with gratitude.

Sincerely yours

hmj  
Secretary  

Encls.
The Maine State Library
Augusta, Maine

Attention Mr. F. W. Jacob

Dear Mrs. Jacob:

I trust you will pardon my not answering your letter of February 2nd sooner, but I have been in Maine myself during that period, just getting home a couple of days ago.

Thank you for your very kind letter. My Father and I have been very close for the past three years, which made the shock harder to bear. However, his going was very easy to him.

I have an extra copy of "Mr. Frank Merriwell" and at my earliest opportunity will forward it to you.

I have practically, a complete library of his books, but as most of them are out of print I cannot let them go. There will, in all probability be a biography published in the near future, and when it is done I will most certainly see that a copy is sent to the library at Augusta.

Sincerely yours,

HBP.P
July 31, 1945

Mr. H. B. Patten
Santa Fe Avenue at Broadway
Vista, California

Dear Mr. Patten:

Last March you very generously wrote that you would send an extra copy you had of MR. FRANK MERRIWELL for inclusion in the Maine Author Collection. The volume has not yet arrived, but we have hesitated to write again, knowing that many matters must claim your attention.

It is too bad that the State Library of your father's native state should not have a complete set of his remarkable writings, but we know how exceedingly scarce and difficult they are to obtain. We can only hope that from time to time they may become available, or may be deposited here by some reader in memory of Gilbert Patten. You are very fortunate, are you not, to have so complete a set!

We hope the biography of your father will be published, as you suggest; it is a book which we shall delight to have in the collection, and it is also one which of course we shall purchase for lending.

We appreciate the friendly interest you have shown in the Maine Author Collection, and look forward to placing on its shelves MR. FRANK MERRIWELL.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection
August 20, 1945

Mr. H. B. Patten
P. O. Box "D"
Vista, California

Dear Mr. Patten:

You are most kind to remember the Maine Author Collection with a copy of your distinguished father's book, MR. FRANK MERRIWELL. We have always felt extremely disappointed that none of his work was in this exhibit collection; we shall always regret the apparent impossibility of including his many earlier works; but we are certainly grateful to you for presenting MR. FRANK MERRIWELL.

We add it with pleasure to the shelves, and with appreciation of his notable career and of your generosity.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection