

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

1213 K STREET, NORTHWEST  
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AMERICAN LANGUAGE CENTER  
DISTRICT 7-6866

28 January 1961

Mr. Thomas H. Raddall  
c/o Doubleday & Co., Inc.  
Garden City, N.Y.

Dear Sir:

I have been reading The Governor's Lady, and at the half-way point I cannot forebear sending you a word of appreciation. You see, I was a great friend of the late Lawrence S. Mayo, and am myself the author of Lake Wentworth (1956), and have followed "Johnnie" both to Wentworth Woodhouse and to Halifax. I am filled with admiration for your style of writing, for your gift, your accurate and felicitous gift, of rendering the times and the places and the people. If you could spare the time, I should like to ask you a great many questions. My first would be, how in the world did you learn so much about "Smith's Pond"? Whatever your documentation may have been, I am sure you must have visited Wolfeboro.

There are three immediate favors I should like to offer the author of so excellent a book. First, I can make available to your publisher a list of all the summer campers on Lake Wentworth, and they should all be your readers -- more than 250 of them. Secondly, I can give you a good deal of information, some of it not to be found in print, about the roads and buildings connected with the Governor. And thirdly, whenever I am at my camp on Turtle Island -- in alternate years -- you would be a most welcome guest.

Sincerely yours,



(Dr.) Walter P. Bowman

February 8, 1961

Dr. Walter P. Bowman,  
The American University,  
1213 K Street, Northwest,  
Washington 5, D.C.

Dear Doctor Bowman,

I'm glad you are enjoying my book, and it was very good of you to write and tell me so. When the novel appeared in the bookshops last September it was exactly three years after I went to New Hampshire to begin the research.

Actually I had come upon the story of John and Frances while making research in 1947-48 for a history of Halifax, N.S. Their career in Nova Scotia was a lively one and I was curious to learn the earlier part, for they seemed good material for a biographical novel. However, other work intervened, and it was ten years before I was able to turn to *The Governor's Lady*.

My visit to New Hampshire was most interesting and fortunate. Miss Dorothy Vaughan, chief librarian in Portsmouth, had been the chief consultant of my old friend Kenneth Roberts in matters pertaining to New Hampshire history; and when I appeared with my notion of a book about the Wentworths she was very kind and helpful. I made my headquarters in a hotel near the library, where I went every morning and afternoon. Miss Vaughan provided me with a desk and typewriter, and delved into the library stock for every book and document that had to do with the lives and times of Johnnie and Fannie. Thus I was able to study everything available, and to make extensive typewritten notes for future reference. Also I was able to secure for myself a copy of Lawrence Mayo's "John Wentworth", a copy of your "Lake Wentworth", and later on the three-volume Wentworth genealogy.

Miss Vaughan provided me with a map of Portsmouth in the 18th century, compiled by herself with the aid of a local artist, showing the location of all the important houses, taverns, stores and wharves. To supplement this I secured modern maps of the town, of the state, and charts of the whole Piscataqua estuary.

To supplement my library studies, Miss Vaughan took me on tours, by car and afoot, to see houses (including the Governor's) that are still in existence, the old burial grounds of Queen's Chapel and Point of Graves, the site of the Atkinson house and of "Puddle Dock". We also made expeditions to the old fort on Newcastle Island and to Governor Benning's house at Little Harbor. At her home Miss Vaughan showed me her own excellent collection of photocopies of portraits, so that I was able to study many of the men and women of the period face-to-face.

With my Portsmouth researches completed, I went to Wolfborough. Here again I was fortunate in meeting people eager to be of help. I was able to explore the site of Wentworth House, the "Rye Field" and much of the lake shore; and (in an old Dodge truck) I was taken over parts of the old Governor's Road and the College Road which still exist as backwoods tracks. In the same way I was able to explore a good deal of the shore of Winnepesaukee. To get the authentic "feel" of a place there is no substitute for actually going over the ground; it not only makes the documents comprehensible but it brings them to life.

Armed with all this, I returned to Nova Scotia and spent that winter in ardent study. Meanwhile, through correspondence, I had located in England two collections of Frances Wentworth's letters, written to the Rockinghams and Fitzwilliams over a period of many years, beginning in New Hampshire and ending in Halifax. (John's own papers, a bulky collection, repose in the Archives at Halifax.)

In the spring of '58 I went to England and covered the ground of the Wentworths' wanderings during the period of exile -- all the way from Poland Street, Soho, to Brussels and the Ardennes.

I began to write the book that summer, as soon as I returned. I decided to end it with the triumphant return of John as the newly appointed Governor of Nova Scotia. (The rest of their lives was really an anticlimax, after the long struggle that went before. John soon relapsed into a greedy autocrat, grasping for money in all directions to finance Fannie's extravagances, and in 1808 the British Government was glad to get rid of him.)

Whatever the merits or faults of my own book, the intrinsic story of John and Frances Wentworth is one of the most remarkable romances that ever arose in America -- and not least Fannie's rise from a demure Portsmouth housewife to a baroness and lady-in-waiting to the Queen. Some reviewers have observed that the book is as much or more the story of John than of Frances; but that was to be expected. It was impossible to write one without the other. Fannie was a colonial Becky Sharp, of course. John was far the more admirable figure, and the story of his rise, decline and fall is essentially a colonial tragedy.

I shall keep in mind your very kind invitation to visit you on Turtle Island when I get a chance -- and when you are in residence. I remember vividly the beauty of the lake and islands and the surrounding hills, and the kindness of everyone I met.

Sincerely,