

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION
AIR LETTER
AEROGRAMME



Mr Thomas Raddell

Liverpool

Nova Scotia

Canada.

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Second fold here

Sender's name and address:

Prof. W. E. L. Smith

London House, Guildford St.

London W.C.1.

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED THIS LETTER
MAY BE SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL

To open cut here

29 May/54.

Dear Mr Raddall:

Fortune has favoured the search in naval history & I have two months here again. Only June is left now, however.

I promised to look up whatever I could find in the Public Record Office about a couple of H. M. ships along your coast in the Napoleonic wars. I believe it was. I am not sure that the jottings I have with me are adequate so I write to see if you would send me a few particulars, i.e. names & dates. Given those there are various leads that can be followed to add to the information.

I am sorry to trouble you. The difficulty was that at the last minute my flight date was advanced. It meant finishing a Session meeting at about midnight & packing for a 2 am. train. So some useful notes were overlooked.

I hope you are getting some summer weather for your enjoyment. I think with grateful appreciation of the visit last January that you & Mrs Raddall made so enjoyable.

Sincerely yours

Waldo Smith

Ans'd
air mail
June 3rd

June 3rd 1954

Dear Mr. Smith,

Thanks for your letter. Two of H.M. ships figure in the history of Liverpool N.S. with some importance. One was H.M.S. Senegal, a frigate commanded by one Dudington. She was posted in the mouth of Liverpool Harbor from December 1775 to April 1776, as a threat to the inhabitants, who were suspected of seditious relations with their cousins in New England. (Most of western Nova Scotia had been settled by people from New England in the fifteen years before the American Revolution.) Dudington and his men behaved with the utmost tyranny throughout the winter, impressing young men into H.M. service, seizing all sorts of goods as "contraband" from the rebellious states, abusing everyone from the town's chief magistrate to innocent young women, and in fact nearly drove the people into open revolt.

The other ship in which I'm particularly interested was H.M.S. Blonde, a frigate taken from the French and commissioned in the Royal Navy. She was on the Halifax station during the American Revolution, and finally was wrecked off Seal Island N.S. on what has been known ever since as Blonde Rock. On April 24, 1778, she chased into our harbor the French frigate Duc de Choiseul, which had refused to answer a challenge off ~~the~~ the Nova Scotia coast. At that time Britain and France were not at war, but the Duc de Choiseul was behaving in a mysterious manner, flying no colors, etc., and Captain Milligan of the Blonde decided rightly that she was up to no good. Firing began inside the mouth of our harbor and continued after Duc de Choiseul struck a reef. She took a bad beating from Blonde's guns and finally surrendered.

On boarding her Milligan found that she was stuffed to the hatches with arms and munitions for the American rebels, together with a number of French officers who gave real or fictitious names, and who were undoubtedly going to join the American army. One gave his name as the Chevalier de Sucay. Another gave his name as Jet d'Eau, an obvious bit of pleasantry. Milligan also found American colors on board, and -- the most damning evidence -- a letter from Silas Reade, who was Benjamin Franklin's right-hand man in Paris, addressed to a member of the Continental Congress.

This business set the Franco-American cat out of the bag, and France declared open war shortly afterwards. Yet the historians of the war have missed this significant encounter. The information I give above is from local records, chiefly the diary of one Simeon Perkins, chief magistrate of Liverpool at the time, who witnessed the affair, talked with Captain Milligan aboard Blonde after the fight, and later at Milligan's request took charge of the French prisoners until they could be removed to Halifax.

Anything you can find out, especially from the ships' ~~logs or captains'~~ logs or captains' reports, would be of the utmost value.

July 14th, 1954

Dear Professor Smith,

I am most grateful for your time and trouble in hunting up detail of the Senegal and Blonde and their operations in the vicinity of Liverpool during the early part of the Revolutionary War. I found your notes most interesting. They supply information missing from the local letters and diaries, and taken in conjunction with the local accounts they are most valuable.

Captain Milligen of Blonde was obviously a very able and zealous officer, and his handling of the Duc de Choiseul affair earned him, I hope, a good bit of prize money and promotion. Immediately after Blonde left Liverpool harbor to get repairs at Halifax, two American privateers came in and demanded of the inhabitants that they give up any arms and goods taken out of the wreck -- "in the name of the Congress." These privateers had been lying in the adjoining Port Mouton, a place with only three or four inhabitants. It seems clear from their actions that a rendezvous had been arranged between the privateers and the Choiseul. The transfer of French arms and stores could have been made in the quiet and security of Port Mouton, and the Choiseul could then have returned to France in all apparent innocence. To have attempted such a transfer at sea off the rebel coast of New England would have been risky, and to have taken the ship right in to Boston or some other rebel harbor would have let the cat out of the war-bag several months before the French were ready to release it. The choice of a lonely harbor on the wild coast of Nova Scotia for the rendezvous was a touch of genius, and nothing but the luck and vigilance of Milligen could have spoiled it.

This whole episode, which is so significant in the events leading up to the entry of France into the war, seems to have passed unnoticed by British and American historians alike. So was the affair of the Senegal, to which I gave considerable space in my novel His Majesty's Yankees.

With my deep thanks and every good wish for the success of your own work,

Sincerely,

Professor Waldo E.L. Smith

Queen's Theological College
Kingston, Ont.

Department of Practical Theology & Church History
Rev. W. E. E. Smith, M.C., M.A., Ph.D.

Mr Thomas Raddall

Liverpool. N.S.

Dear Mr Raddall:

When at the National Marine Museum I
had photographs made of old paintings of the Isis
& the Blonde in which you were interested.

My best wishes go with them

Sincerely yours

Waldo Smith

As from Kingston P. R. 2. Ontario.
27 July 1956

Mr. Thomas Raddall.
Liverpool, N.S.

Dear Mr. Raddall:

When going through a bundle of letters in the Record Office (London) last month, Series Promiscuous, I chanced upon this petition of Sarah Adams. Her husband in command of a Yankee ship in 1782 had rescued the crew of the wrecked Blonde & set them ashore at Cape Rescue. For this he was badly treated by the bitter British who had to emigrate to Halifax where he got employment as a pilot. Sarah, his widow asked for help.

I am sending a photograph of this under separate cover. If you have no occasion for it perhaps some Nova Scotia museum would find a place for it.

Sincerely yours

Waldo Smith.

Asael
Aug 9/56