

Ansill  
Dec. 18/56

Box 27

Great Village, Nova Scotia  
November 22 1956

My Dear Raddall:

Congratulations on your "Wings of the Night." I have read a few pages at random but I hope to do it all soon. Have also had the pleasure of "Tidefall" and part of "Warden of the North" but you are producing at such speed I can't keep up to date. A yen for Nova Scotia books has sort of overtaken me of late but it is all very pleasant.

Just in case you wonder who the undersigned is or the reason for writing, your visit to the Mariners Museum at Newport News, Virginia, a few years ago with Mr Lusby, which you probably remember will give the clue. I was Director then, since retired on account of health and am still General Consultant. Mrs Hill and I moved here last fall where we bought a rather charming old place where we are enjoying every moment. Last winter for a starter, may have had a few exceptions - it was a terrific change from the previous one in Jamaica!

If your travels bring you up this way be sure and come by. I'm pretty sure there are a few rope ends we could spin if you have time. If T L is with you we could find a few for him also.

Best wishes for "Wings..."

Sincerely,

*Fredk F Hill*  
Fredk F Hill.

Dr Thomas H Raddall,  
Liverpool, Nova Scotia  
Canada.

October 23, 1962

Dear Fred,

I address this to Great Village, but I expect that you and Nola have departed for warmer (and dryer, I hope!) climes. Sorry I couldn't get up your way during the past "summer" for a chat.

No doubt you will be stopping in at the Mariners' Museum on your way to or from the South. Could you do a little investigation for me?

One of the nautical tales I've struck, in searching old Halifax newspaper files, was the case of the mysterious murders aboard the barquentine "Herbert Fuller", of Harrington, Maine. She came into Halifax on July 21, 1896, towing in a boat astern the bodies of her captain, his wife, and the second mate. All had been killed, at night, with an ax, a week before.

Investigation in Halifax showed that only two men were in a position to commit the murders, which all took place in the cabin:- The mate, a West Indies mulatto whose name was Bram, and the helmsman, who said he was a Dutchman and called himself Charles Brown. Subsequently the helmsman admitted that his name was Westerburg, and that he came from ~~Swed~~ Sweden.

Each of these men accused the other of the crime. There was a famous trial in Boston, and eventually Bram was convicted and sentenced for life. However, in 1913 he was paroled by President Taft; and in 1919 he was granted a pardon by President Wilson. Bram dropped from sight for a long time. Then, in 1928, his name appeared in the newspapers as master and owner of a large four-masted schooner, the "Alvena", which was in distress off Cape Hatteras. He seems to have kept out of trouble otherwise. The last trace of him, that I've been able to find, was 1935 Lloyd's, which showed the "Alvena" still afloat and registered at Jacksonville, Florida, with the owner's name given as "Captain Thomas M.C. Bram".

I'd like to find out what material the Museum library may have on the "Herbert Fuller" and the Bram case; any existing photographs, etc.

As you see, I'm still puttering away. Trust that you and Nola are in good health and trim.

Cheers!

Mr. Frederick F. Hill

January 2, 1963

Dear Fred,

Thanks for your letter of Dec.10, with so much useful information. Thanks also for your influence in getting the HM to send me photostats of news clippings, and a copy of their photograph of the HERBERT FULLER. These are important, too. On reviewing all the old court evidence, and other material that has come to hand, I have no doubt that Bram was the murderer. However he won his own life, and later his freedom, on the lawyer's ground that his accuser, the helmsman, proved to be a man with a shady past, an assumed name, and a far from stable mind. Bram's contention was that the helmsman could have lashed the wheel, slipped into the cabin, spent fifteen or twenty minutes killing the three people below, and got back to the helm before Bram or the seaman forward were aware of it. (Bram, the mate, being at his post at the forward end of the cabin house.)

What the court never knew was the evidence collected by the new crew, shipped at Halifax under Bluenose captain McLaughlin, who took the FULLER to South America and back, after the murders. McLaughlin's men tested the ship, again and again, with full sail set and the wind on the beam, and proved that it was impossible for the helmsman to leave the wheel, even for a few minutes, without the ship coming up into the wind. They also proved (what the helmsman had maintained in court) that by keeping one hand on a low spoke of the wheel, the helmsman could stoop and lean around the corner of the house enough to peer into the window of the captain's room, where he swore he saw Bram swinging the ax at the skipper on the bed.

The year 1962 wound up with a bang here, as you possibly know. An unpredicted gale of hurricane force (winds registered up to 100 m.p.h.) that "ris hell" from Long Island Sound to the Gulf of St. Lawrence -- an appropriate finish to the darkest, wettest and stormiest year in local records.

Cheers to Nola and yourself,

Fred Hill Coy

Frederick Floyd Hill  
Freno Farm  
Great Village, Nova Scotia

1516 South Peninsula Drive  
Daytona Beach, Florida  
January 28th 1967

Dear Tom:

As you can see by the enclosed we have taken the liberty of sending to the Editor of the CHRONICLE-HERALD -Voice of the People - a letter re Hangman's Beach. The book deserves all the "free advertising" it can get. We hope this deed of ours is all right by you.

We trust you and Edith are enjoying health. No doubt you both are busy with pencil and the typewriter. This writing business seems to be a bit contagious and has affected us somewhat down here.

Our kindest regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fred". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Your fan Alice Strickland has just finished a book  
The Rugged Pioneers of Florida



AIRMAIL.

1516 South Peninsula Drive  
Daytona Beach, Florida  
January 28th 1967

Editor  
THE CHRONICLE-HERALD  
Sackville Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

For The Voice of the People column

Dear Mr Editor:

I am enclosing an unsolicited ~~letter~~ comment from an outstanding Florida historical author and President of The National League of American Pen Women, Daytona Beach branch. The letter concerns one of Nova Scotia's great living authors, Thomas H Raddall, whose books are so widely read.

We had previously enjoyed Hungryman's Beach and can highly support the context of the letter. Every Nova Scotian of readable age would gain much pleasure and a tremendous insight into the way of life in the early days of our Province through the media of Mr Raddall's fascinating presentation.

Yours truly,

(Mrs Frederick F Hill)

h/2

C O P Y

Astor, Florida  
January 26th I 9 6 7

Dear Mr and Mrs Hill,

I have just read a splendid book, Hangman's Beach, by Thomas H Raddall, and as it is an historical novel of Nova Scotia I felt that I must write to you and urge you to read it. I was particularly impressed with the historical research Mr Raddall must have done to write with such authority and feeling for that period in Canada's history before the War of 1812.

The characters are so real, and so entirely different to any I have had the pleasure to meet in fiction for a long time. I know you are familiar with the history and topography of Nova Scotia and I shall be interested to hear from you if McNabb's Island is known by that name today, and if other places mentioned in the book are well known to you.

Do hurry and get this book from the Library in Daytona Beach - you will be delighted to read a book with such an enthralling story of adventure, romance and history of your beloved Nova Scotia.

If you ever see Mr Raddall when you are in Nova Scotia please tell him that I admire him very much and think he is an outstanding writer - wish I could meet him some day!

With best wishes,

(Signed) (Alice Strickland.

February 5, 1967

Dear Fred and Nola:

Many thanks for your letter to the Halifax Chronicle-Herald and the note to me. Bless your hearts!

The Chronicle-Herald didn't use the letter. In the first place they never advertise anything free. In the second place their mysterious owners don't like me -- I made some tart remarks about the change in ownership, and the dull news policy established by the present regime, and printed these remarks in the latest edition of my history of Halifax. This is not the way to win friends and influence newspapers, I know, but when you're writing history you have an obligation to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but. This used to be an obligation of both the Herald and the Chronicle under the old regime, but times have changed.

So far we've had an open winter on the South Shore. Until the end of January there was very little ice and snow. Two days ago the thermometer got down to zero for the first time, and the next day we had an oldfashioned blizzard. Today the thermometer is up to 40 and it's pouring rain.

I have my book of true stories ( the "Mary Celeste", etc.) pretty well ready, and I hope the publishers will consent to a decent number of photographic plates, even though plates cost a lot and books of short stories don't sell in hugely profitable numbers. Tentative title for the book is "Footsteps On Old Floors", and it should appear next Fall.

Meanwhile I'm busy on some scripts I've promised to the CBC, both radio and TV.

Edith joins me in good wishes to you both, and in the hope that we may get together again this coming summer.

Cheers!

J.H.R.

Please express my warm appreciation to Alice Strickland. Coming from a writer of her stature and experience, her remarks to you were compliments indeed. Perhaps some day I shall have the pleasure of meeting her.

Frederick Floyd Hill  
Freno Farm  
Great Village, Nova Scotia

Written from :  
1516 South Peninsula Drive  
Daytona Beach, Florida  
December 6th 1967

Dear Tom:

Greetings once again. The summer seemed to go by the board so quickly that it is now almost a bit of history. We had hoped to perhaps make a brief three or four day trip around the southern part of the province, in which case we might have had the pleasure to say "hello" to you. It has been many a year since we covered the Capet Sable area. We also had planned a trip to EXPO but Nola's mother passed away in August after a lengthy illness, so that our trip to Montreal did not materialize either.

In spite of what was a generally wet and overcast summer, folks seemed to find their way to Freno Farm. They must have been able to see the path by footprints in the mud! If you and your good lady had been among those present, it would have brightened the season.

Well - Time marches on. Middle Age seems to be creeping up on us a bit but we flew part way south and finished by car as usual. Much as we love dear old Nova Scotia in summer, wintering down here seems to be a fixed habit. The season has been very dry here (referring to the weather, of course) - November the driest month ever on record.

How is bookwork coming along. Anything new under way? From past records, I'm sure your pen is not idle. How is Monsieur Cascamonde? We surely enjoyed meeting him and the other characters last year!

1917  
Well - December 6th seems always a deeply impressed and memorable date for me. Impossible to believe that 50 years have slipped since I had an opportunity to go on the Can. Government Steamer SIMCOE - three of us <sup>asked</sup> for the job. She foundered soon afterward on this date with all hands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. A murderous winter night - I remember it well. The only item ever found was a lifebelt - of all places, on Sable Island. Walter's father, Archie Ward, was Chief Officer with us on the ABERDEEN. I can still see the message I had to hand him. Ironically last summer I saw a memorial headstone to Walter in a cemetery in Saint John not far from our own family plot.

Our kindest regards. Have a good Christmas and may Health be yours and Edith's through 1968.

Sincerely,

Fred.



Frederick L. Hill  
1516 South Peninsula Drive,  
Daytona Beach, Florida

January 6, 1967

Dear Fred:

Your reminiscence of the sinking of the "Simcoe" on the night of Dec. 6, 1917 rang a bell for me, because the only bit of her ever found was a lifebuoy bearing her name, which drifted ashore on Sable Island some weeks or months afterwards. I saw it hanging in the lifeboat shed there, along with various "name-boards" and other wreck souvenirs, during the year I was posted at VCT. Like everybody else I often wondered what could have happened so suddenly that her wireless operator never had a chance to snap out an SOS.

My book of true stories, FOOTSTEPS ON OLD FLOORS, will be coming out this spring, probably in March. Included are the stories of the "Mary Celeste" and the "Herbert Fuller", and the foreword will contain acknowledgements to you and to the Mariners' Museum. I'll send you a copy, with my personal thanks, as soon as the publishers (Doubleday) put it out.

You ask what's cooking next. At the moment I don't know what to put in the pot. For many years I have had in mind a history of Sable Island, and I have been reading and filing away all the information I could get. The publishers would make no money on it, nor would I, because the demand would be small; but I felt I should do it for the sake of the few who would be interested. However during the past year I found that two competent people are preparing histories. One is a lieutenant in the Australian Navy who has been an exchange officer with the Canadian Navy at Halifax for the past three or four years. He has literary inclinations, and was fascinated with Sable Island from the moment he first saw it. He consulted me here, and I gave him all the information I had. He expects that the writing of the book will take his spare time for the next two years, during which time he will be posted with the U.S. Navy at San Diego. He is a highly intelligent and dedicated chap, and I'm sure his book will be a good job.

Another book on Sable Island is being prepared by a Montreal schoolmaster who is also an excellent painter. He visited Sable Island a few years ago, and has done some marvellously animated and accurate paintings of the ponies in their wild habitat. ( I have commissioned one myself, and hope to have it by next summer.) His book will be a then-and-now account of the island, illustrated with his own pictures. He is visiting Nova Scotia next summer and I expect to have a chat with him about the book and the tentative publication date.

My publishers would like me to start another novel now, but at the present time I can't see a subject that interests me enough to warrant the two years of blood and sweat involved. And I've always worked on the principle that I must be deeply interested myself if I'm to make it interesting to other people. I stuck to it all through the years when the support of a wife and children made a desperate problem, especially for a Canadian writer dealing entirely with Canadian people and scenes; and now that I've achieved financial independence there isn't the least temptation to turn myself into a literary sausage machine.

Recently two universities (one of them in the U.S.) asked me to present their libraries with all my manuscripts, research notes, correspondence, diaries, etc., -- either now, or by ~~my~~ bequest. It made me feel that I must have both feet, if not both hands, in the grave. However I intend to stick around for some time yet, and my replies were grateful but noncommittal. I intend to write my own memoirs, and maybe I should get on with them now. Fortunately I began to keep a diary when I went to sea as a boy, and the habit has remained with me all my life. Ultimately all my papers will go to one of the universities interested in my work, and then any curious student can check them with my own memoirs and see if I told the truth.

And that's enough of that!

Cold bright weather here, with about a foot of snow on the level, and kids skating on all the ponds. When the walking is fit I take an afternoon hike up the west side of the river to Milton, cross over the bridge there, and return down the east side -- a total of six miles. My bones creak a bit ( sometimes I wish I could poke an oil can into my right hip socket especially) but I enjoy the open air after long sessions at study or the typewriter. In younger days I used to tramp the woods on snowshoes at this time of year, and spent many a weekend with two or three outdoor cronies in a log cabin at Eagle Lake. We had good thick eiderdown sleeping bags, and just for the hell of it I often slept in mine outside, under the stars, with the lake ice twenty feet away crackling with frost pressure and sometimes booming like a cannon. It's wonderful to be young and tough.

Edith joins me in best wishes to Nola and yours. We must get together next summer.

Cheers!

J.H.R.

1516 South Peninsula Drive  
Daytona Beach, Florida  
February 15 1968

Dear Tom:

Your letter of January 6 was most welcome and the items and places therein turned back several pages of history for me. I am interested in the forthcoming stories of Sable Island (by other writers) but I am sure you would have added another corking good yarn to your already lengthy list. I shall watch for the results in the book reviews - ATLANTIC ADVOCATE and others.

Congratulations on your recent Magnum Opus Footsteps on Old Floors. I am already by the head (not IN the head - I usually choose my more comfortable chair in which to read!) and have finished the Blonde and the Fuller stories. I do not think anyone can follow your story of the Blonde with more enjoyment than I. As to turning back the pages (ancient now) of history, I recall that we were replacing the Blonde Rock buoy after it had been out of position. The day was cold and bright and the sea smooth except for a long and considerable ground swell. We had the new buoy - heavy as hell - on the rail and ready to drop when we located the Rock for fair. BANG! Right under the keel. It shook the old vessel from stem to stern, darn near took the lifting gear out; scared the Old Man and a number of others, too! and knocked the cook and several others off their feet. Yes, Sir. We knew exactly where Blonde Rock was. I believe I still have some of the photographs I took at the time.

As for Seal Island, I have been there several times. I remember Mrs Hamilton. I think she was the daughter of old Mr Crowell, the Lightkeeper - a fine old gentleman, well read and had a nice library. He used to come down to the landing and tell us the news from Boston (WNAC) as he was the proud possessor of a radio. I got interested, made a set for myself with Shaker Salt boxes and wires, etc, and <sup>was</sup> right in business. On zero nights aboard ship I could even get Jacksonville (WJAX) and had visions of palm trees waving in a balmy breeze and, no doubt, at that age, thinking of the grass skirts in the background. Well. Here I am, not too far from Jacksonville - sans grass skirts - replaced sometimes, I'm told, with bikinis. It took a long time to do it. All this sounds like a ham-fest, but middle age has really got me reminiscing at the moment.

Around Cape Sable and the south coast country, I "helped" and suffered with Cascamonde most of the way, even on some of the weary miles on foot on his way back to Halifax. No wonder I enjoyed that story, too.

It is an honor indeed that you well deserve, to have an invitation to deposit your mss. and other papers in a suitable university. Suitable or not, I definitely think they are pushing

Cont.

the seasons, much too much. You will just about have the umteenth case packed and discover a note that says that in the other seventeen there is enough material for two or three more "shorties" like "Warden of the North" or "The Governor's Lady." Just think of all the work you would have, to unpack again.

Bones creak? Man, you have plenty of company. Do not, as you say, poke an oil can into your right hip socket. Put some good hip oil in <sup>the</sup> right hip pocket, and don't forget to use it. That sounds about the same but the effect is different.

More anon re Simcoe and others. Simcoe said she was behaving badly that evening. I believe it -it was a wild night.

We should love to have you and Edith up for a weekend gam this summer at Freno if you have time.

for Footsteps on Old Floors.

Meanwhile, thanks again ~~Withour~~ <sup>Best</sup> regards,

Sincerely,



here

PS Cyril Wilson and his wife spend the winters. Cyril was a radio engineer when the old Barrington towers were built and installed much of the gear. Audrey is an ex-Mt. Allison buddy of Nola's.

F.



Mailed book  
Apr. 27/68  
Mailed card to Fred  
same date?

1516 South Peninsula Drive  
Daytona Beach, Florida 32018  
April 21 1968

Dear Tom:

I loaned "Footsteps..." to Dana Bowen and he not only enjoyed it on the first reading but he has it slightly dogeared, he says, from the second and third run. I have not seen it for several weeks but it is in good hands. He thought the story of the MARY CELESTE was a dilly - as did I. In fact I am much intrigued with that part which told of the possibility that the smallboat was trailed astern until the line parted. It could well have happened.

Dana liked the book so well he would like to order a copy, so will you please send him one with statement of course. He has a number of autographed books in his library. If you would add yours with a note of salutation he would appreciate it very much. It should be mailed to

Dana Thomas Bowen  
(address as above).

It is from Dana that we have rented this same apartment for the past ten winters or more. He is a Great Lakes historian and has written several books as "Lore of the Lakes" "Memories of the Lakes" and others. You might know what our conversation is when we get together. No- NOT Les Girls. You guessed it - Steamboats!

We hope to fly north in a fortnight or so. Sorry to say that Nola has been in the Halifax District Hospital here for the past ten days. She had a severe cough which followed a cold last month - which seems to have been the case with many other persons this winter. Nola ruptured a blood vessel in her chest. Is improving nicely but requires utmost rest and quiet for a few more days.

We trust you and Edith are enjoying Health, and that you had a nice Easter Season. Our best to both of you, and

I still drinks an' looks t'ard ya. And I hopes you "bows accardin".

Hastily,

Fred

Fred Hill  
Box 3186  
Daytona Beach, Fla.

February 22, 1971

Hello Fred:

It's good to hear from you again. As our post office loafers tell each other, "She's a hard ole winter." We enjoyed a long Indian summer, and on December 3rd I was playing golf at White Point. No frost or snow, in fact we noted several buttercups and dandelions in late bloom about the fairways. Then the roof fell in. A blizzard on Dec. 4, and a succession of storms and zero temperatures ever since, with very little respite. Today was one of the good ones. Our streets and roads are banked with old and new snow, so for a good walk I drove out to Summerville Beach, a mile long, and walked the firm sand to Broad River and back. Good level footing, no traffic to dodge, and bright sunshine. Years ago, when I was first learning something of the Micmac language, I wondered why they called February the "snow-blinder" month. (March seemed more appropriate.) But on a day like this, when the sun has come far enough north to make a dazzle on new-fallen snow, I can see their point.

Last fall a scuba-diver in Bedford Basin found on the bottom near Rockingham a small piece of ship timber. It was oak, showed signs of fire, and had a copper bolt in it. This was in the fairly shallow water off Birch Cove, where D'Anville landed hundreds of his sick sailors and soldiers in 1746. More than 1,100 perished of scurvy and typhus ("ship fever"). As you know, D'Anville killed himself in a fit of despondency, and eventually what remained of the expedition went back to France. Before quitting Bedford Basin they took several unseaworthy ships, (including the "Parfait" a 50 gun frigate) stripped them, ran them aground, and destroyed them by fire. Haliburton says the charred hulks could be seen under the surface for many years. The diver presented me with this interesting relic, which is quite possibly from "Parfait". Only navy people could afford copper bolts in those days, and no other ships are likely to have been burned and sunk so close to the shore off Birch Cove.

I am still going over my papers, notes, and diaries, in preparation for an autobiography<sup>3</sup> but I'm in no hurry to write it, and on days when snowstorms swirl about the house it's pleasant just to loaf and read. The CBC are going to make a TV play from one of my short stories, "The Wedding Gift" (no exact date yet) and their radio network are going to do "Roger Sudden" as a serial this year. The so-called "stories" of the modern far-out set aren't worth a damn as plays because they have no beginning and no end and in fact don't tell a story at all. The movie and TV people now realise this, and they turn to oldfashioned squares like me for material -- witness the huge success of the Forsythe Saga all over the TV world during the past year. Only a few years ago smart professors and students of English literature were saying that Galsworthy's novels were as dead as his long-buried corpse.

Edith is still able to get about the town for shopping etc., but she can't join me in golf or on my beach walks in winter any more.

Cheers from both of us,

Tom

P.O.Box 3186  
Daytona Beach, Fla. 32018  
February 15 1 9 7 I

Dear Tom:

It appears as if my New Year Resolutions for outgoing mail have quietly sunk in my surrounding Sea of Procrastination. I intended to write you ere now but my efforts fell short of the mark. However - since your Christmas card, which was pleasant to receive, except for the distressing word at Edith has not been well, I have thought of you both very often. I trust there has been improvement and hope to hear that this is so.

I trust that the winter and snowfall on the South Shore has been lighter than that in the Northern part of the province. Mail from the Village and the HERALD CHRONICLE tell of the frightful storms and low temperatures. I can never recall that the mercury ever reached 12 below zero before in Halifax. It must have been desperately penetrating. Neighbors sent me some colored pictures of Freno. The top of the fence is barely visible. Reminds me clearly of /57 when Nola and I were there.

The old poetry "I heard a bird sing in the dark of December... We are nearer to Spring that we were in September..." carries its always hopeful note. The days are lengthening out noticeably here and no doubt similarly in Nova Scotia. Temperatures here have been somewhat up and down, but fortunately most on the upside.

Am glad to say that I have been quite well. My sister Elizabeth has been with me (from New York) since the Christmas Season and has been pleasant company. We have the usual Civic Music and Symphony series and I have also enjoyed "An Intimate History of New Brunswick" (Trueman "Loch Bra D'Or" (MacPhail), "The Boat Who Wouldn't Float" "Usque ad Mare" etc. Am now encountering heavier going on "The Arms of Krupp, 1578-1968" by Manchester. An incredible story. It took Manchester seven years for research. I hope it doesn't take me that long to read it!

Sorry to hear from Capt. John (Parker) North Sydney, that he was hospitalized with a heart attack. I believe he had planned to winter in the West Indies with his boat. Is at home now but taking matters easy.

Today's report is that the QUEEN ELIZABETH is now on the end of a towline on her way to Kingston, Jamaica, -the way of all good ships, I guess. I intended to go to Ft. Lauderdale for the day she was to leave, but friends came by and we enjoyed them instead.

Kind thoughts to you and Edith. Will be glad to have a note when convenient.

Most Sincerely,  
*Red.*