



*Saint Mary's University*

HALIFAX - CANADA

30 July 1966

Mr. Thomas H. Raddall,  
Liverpool, Nova Scotia.

Dear Sir:

Have just completed reading Hangman's Beach and thoroughly enjoyed it. As an historian by profession, I am very pleased to find anyone who is interested in writing about Nova Scotia's past but most of us with the interest unfortunately lack the talent.

My purpose in writing to you is primarily to enquire further about Father Edmond Burke whose visit to the McNabs interested me greatly. Did you actually find references to Burke acquiring money in the fashion which you mention in your novel? If so I would certainly appreciate learning of this. Such an interest is not just idle curiosity on my part but rather an attempt to plug some loose holes in an historical project upon which I have been working for a couple of years now in my spare time. This project is the History of Saint Mary's University which in its inception owes everything to the fertile mind of Father Burke, about 1802. The records of both the Archives and the Chancellory Office together with the biography of Burke by O'Brien all note the existence of a Roman Catholic school for boys as early as 1803 and it has always been a puzzle as to where money for such was derived. Private donations obviously accounted for a great deal but it is very difficult to prove the existence of such, hence my interest in your account of the McNabs.

Awaiting your reply with the greatest of interest, I am,

Yours sincerely,

*Elizabeth A. Chard*

Elizabeth A. Chard,  
Assistant Professor,  
Department of History

EAC:phd

August 3, 1966

Professor Elizabeth A. Chard,  
Department of History,  
Saint Mary's University,  
Halifax, N.S.

Dear Professor Chard:

My description of Joanna McNab giving money to Father Burke for his charities and schools was based entirely on deduction. Obviously Burke must have got money from people outside the small Roman Catholic group in Halifax.

We know from McNab family tradition that Joanna McNab was a devoted Catholic all her life. Indeed at her death she was carried to the grave by Catholic servants and tenants, and buried by a Catholic priest -- all of which must have been arranged by her husband, who survived her. Also the great-aunt Frances McNab (who taught the children of Peter the Second and Joanna) had been educated in a Paris convent and must have had strong Catholic sympathies if not an actual attachment to the Roman Catholic Church.

Peter McNab himself was noted for his broad outlook and generosity, but as a contractor to His Majesty's Forces he had to be careful about His Majesty's laws.

Gifts from his wife to the funds of Father Burke were the logical solution in this matter of schools, and I used the novelist's privilege in saying so.

Sincerely,