

Yarmouth Public Library

Yarmouth, Nova Scotia

May 19, 1964

Dr. Thomas H. Radcaill,
44 Park St.,
Liverpool,
Nova Scotia.

Dear Sir:-

In a letter from Mr. W.S. Avis, of the University of Alberta English Department, there is a reference to you as a "good researcher". Undoubtedly you know that Mr. Avis, in company with Professor G. Gargill, is working on the compilation of a dictionary of Canadian English terms.

I have been collecting words for them, over a number of years: words in use in the Arctics and Newfoundland. Now Mr. Avis is asking me to help them with some problematical words.

Already we have done considerable research about kiack, our western counties' name for the alewife or gaspereau. The National Library and the National Museum, as well as Dr. Ganong of Acadia, and some other people have all failed to find the origin of the term, which had been suggested as Micmac. Can you offer any suggestions about that?

Mr. Avis also asks if cat spruce, which you often mention, is the same as "hemlock spruce", or "black spruce". He is also troubled over canoe moccasin, to which you refer in "Wings of the Night", p. 95.

Trusting that I am not giving you too much trouble,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

Grace S. Lewis

Grace S. Lewis,

Chairman for Press and Publicity.

May 21, 1964

Miss Grace Lewis,
Public Library,
Yarmouth, N.S.

Dear Miss Lewis:

The "canoe moccasin", as I have heard the phrase used hereabouts, is an ordinary leather moccasin with the addition of a thin leather sole. As you are possibly aware, the moccasin is ideal footwear when paddling a canoe. It is comfortable, it cannot damage the canoe's interior in any way, and it gives the paddler the right "feel" when he places his feet on the interior ribs. The addition of a thin flexible sole enables him to travel over rough portages, with the canoe on his back, without hurting his feet.

"Cat spruce" is the black spruce as it grows in an exposed and windy place, as on the sea shore, a large open pasture, or a high hilltop. In such places the tree is rather stunted and bristling with branches from ground to top. As a result the wood is full of knots and of little use for lumber or for pulp. On Tancook Island, at the mouth of Mahone Bay, N.S. I have heard this called "mink spruce".

The word "kiack", meaning alewife, ^(gasperneau) was interested me for a long time. Its use seems confined to the south-western counties of Nova Scotia, although the maps show a "Kyak Brook" flowing into Port Howe harbor, near Canso. It is definitely not a Micmac word. The Micmac word for the gaspereau is "segoonumekw". One can only theorise. The use of the word "kiack" occurs in the parts of N.S. first settled by New Englanders in the period 1760-1775. These people must have ^{seen} the Indians dipping the fish on the way up the streams from the sea in April and May. On this annual journey to spawn the kiacks move in dense schools but at erratic intervals. Thus the fisherman may have furious dipping for half an hour, and then a wait for the next to appear. When the gap occurred an ~~Indian~~ Indian might exclaim "kakayak!" meaning "Gone" or "All gone"; and white strangers hearing him might assume it was the name of the fish. I feel sure the resemblance to the Eskimo word for "man's boat" -- "kayak" (which is pronounced "Kiack") is simply a coincidence. Except perhaps in prehistoric times the Eskimo never lived in or near Nova Scotia.

Have you told Mr. Avis about the word "rout", used by Cape Sable fishermen to mean "the noise of surf"? I thought it a local expression, and then found it in Hakluyt.

Sincerely,

Yarmouth Public Library

Yarmouth, Nova Scotia

Aug. 17, 1964

Dr. Thomas H. Raddall,
44 Park St.,
Liverpool,
Nova Scotia.

Dear Dr. Raddall:-

Dr. Avis, the lexicographer, is now asking about lammie-coat, of which you speak on pages 146 and 147 in "Muster of Arms". He says that he wore such a coat when on a gun of the "New Amsterdam", but does not remember it being called by that name. He asks "Is this term used in Nova Scotia?"

When in the "Wool Shoppe" here last week, I asked Mr. McIsaac if he knew the term. He showed me "lammie wool" gloves, made from the skin of new-born lamb. They were soft suede leather outside, and woolly inside; made in England; and priced \$13.50.

Is the coat also made of new-born lamb?
Perhaps you will be so good as to let us know.

Yours sincerely,

Grace S. Lewis

Grace S. Lewis.

Chairman, Press and Publicity

August 23, 1964

Miss Grace S. Lewis,
Yarmouth Public Library,
Yarmouth, N.S.

Dear Miss Lewis:

The "lammy coat" was a hooded woolen coat (or frock or smock), usually of a cream color, issued in the Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy during World War One, for winter wear in the North Atlantic. During World War Two the same type of coat was issued, but was usually blue in the Canadian service.

Webster's International Dictionary defines the word thus:-

" Lammy, lammie (prob. dim. of lamb) Naut. A quilted woolen frock or jumper worn by seamen. Rare ."

(The words I have underlined are in italics.)

From this I surmise that the term is an old one (our lammy coats were not quilted) which continued in use for such "frocks or jumpers" during World War One and for some years afterward in British and Canadian ships. During the period 1918-1922 I found the lammy coat in use (and called by that name) in various Canadian merchant ships and on Canadian shore wireless stations. All of these coats were of the wartime naval issue.

Yours sincerely,