

September 2015

Edith McEwen Dorian Correspondence

Edith McEwen Dorian 1900-1983

Helen Frye
Mc Graw Hill

Hilda McLeod Jacob
Maine State Library

Marion B. Stubbs 1888-1967
Maine State Library

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Recommended Citation

Dorian, Edith McEwen 1900-1983; Frye, Helen; Jacob, Hilda McLeod; and Stubbs, Marion B. 1888-1967, "Edith McEwen Dorian Correspondence" (2015). *Maine Writers Correspondence*. 218.
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DORIAN, Edith McEwen

Harpswell Author Writes Novel Centered In That Historic Area

By ALICE FROST LORD

Maine readers who know anything about the South Harpswell region will relish Edith Dorian's new book, "No Moon on Graveyard Head", although this is written for juveniles. Moreover, it will revive many happy memories associated with the historic Auburn Colony, which overlooks Potts Point, as South Harpswell was originally named; and with old-timers who have lived there, like the Toothakers and Skolfields and Hamiltons and Douglasses.

Mrs. Dorian's children are fourth generation Harpswellians, for Grandfather Currier bought his cottage in the Auburn Colony about 1877; and after these buildings there burned he promptly built a new summer home, which later became the property of E. Farrington Abbott of Auburn, who was president of the Colony until his death.

Summer Resident Still

When Mrs. Dorian was asked about her experiences on Casco Bay shores, she responded with obvious enthusiasm. Said she:

"No year-rounder loves Casco Bay any better than I do; and I have spent a great many years of my life listening with both ears to Captain Steve Toothaker and Captain Everett Gatchell and Tom Skolfield and Will and Mary Haskell and Ellis Hamilton and Annie Douglas, who are full of utterly enchanting stories of Harpswell's past.

"Perhaps, at that," she smiled. "I'm not entirely an outlander for my cousins, the Edward Dennys, are Maine to the core; Damariscotta people.

"Anyway, father and mother did the best they could. They even named me for an Auburn girl, Edith Conant (sister of the late Charles Conant of Auburn). But nearly six years of my young life skidded away before I actually reached South Harpswell. So I'm ready to admit that the worst mistake I ever made was growing up! Because, until I was foolish enough to do that, Harpswell was my home four months out of every 12."

Plans Permanent Home Here

Mrs. Dorian then explained that, while she still has to be content with what she calls a "scrap of the summer" in Maine, she definitely plans, some day, to live in Harpswell the year around; and she says that the Dorians, meaning her family, can "hardly wait."

"Our teen-age daughter already is threatening to 'retire,' she said, because she avers that she'd surely collapse and be unable to work anywhere else, just brooding about parents onery enough to settle down in 'the best state in the Union' without her!"

It seems that Mrs. Dorian's mother was the one responsible for the family interest in Harpswell. When she was only 11 years old she had an illness that made New Jersey doctors recommend a cool New England climate for the summer.

As a result, Grandpa Currier cruised up the New England coast, putting in here and there, but always moving on farther East, until he reached Casco Bay. There his search ended. For he bought an Auburn Colony cottage around 1877, which, when burned, was replaced by the new one.

Continuing her story, Mrs. Dorian said that her mother, when engaged to Dr. Floy McEwen of Newark, N. J., brought him to Maine for a visit; and he invested in the cottage now owned by the author, which was Mrs. McEwen's birthday gift.

"Naturally, when I became engaged, I followed the same pattern," she said, "and brought Mr. Dorian to inspect our Harpswell site. I have to observe, right here, that both our converts, my mother's and mine, were thoroughly converted! I can still hear father's voice firmly telling patients that two weeks' vacation in Harpswell was worth four anywhere else!"

Casco Bay Lore

As other Maine people well are aware, the Casco Bay region is rich in lore, historical and imaginative.

"I cannot remember," said the author, "when Grandfather and my father and mother were not telling us stories of the Bay and the Islands. Our shelves were filled with enticing books about Maine: Rev. Elijah Kellogg's Elm Island tales; Harriet Beecher Stowe's, Sarah Orne Jewett's, Wheeler's history of Brunswick, Harpswell and Topsham, and the works of Noah Brooks, Herbert Sylvester, and William Haynes.

"These same well-worn volumes are to be found today on a shelf nearest my living-room arm chair, in my Highland Park home in New Jersey."

When we told Mrs. Dorian how her new book rang bells of memory for us, because South Harpswell had been a cherished vacation spot for all-too-brief summer freedom from a job; and how, in later years, it has been a most desirable objective for still briefer motor trips, she expressed much pleasure in our verdict that "No Moon on



—Courtesy McGraw-Hill Co.

AUTHOR AND ARTIST—Mrs. Dorian and Forrest Orr, who made the Chart of South Harpswell Bay and who is a Native and a Distinguished Water Colorist.

"Graveyard Head" is genuinely true to Harpswell life, places, names, all.

"Trying to write a Maine yarn when you are only a summer resident," she observed, "is risky business. But we were so saturated with Harpswell lore that my brother, Currier, and I would have been delighted, and hardly surprised, had we encountered Jocelyn's salty 1639 serpent ahump off our starboard bow, when we were cruising around Casco Bay with Grandfather years ago in his Seminole!"

Her Third Book

"No Moon on Graveyard Head" is the third junior novel Mrs. Dorian has written, the others being "High Water Cargo" and "Ask Dr. Christmas." This literary output crowns some years of teaching in the English department at Rutgers University, in the New Jersey College for Women.

Incidentally, she has been on the faculty with Dr. Leon Haussmann, ornithologist, who with his wife has spent many summers in Maine, and who was on the staff of the

Bates Summer School, one season. An alumna of Smith College, with graduate work at Harvard and Columbia, Mrs. Dorian experiment first with short stories and other articles and reviews, before she tried the long story. In the meantime, she has gained no small prestige for her book talks, and for her leadership in civic affairs at Rutgers, where her husband is Dean of Instruction. They have two children.

To re-inforce the realism of the South Harpswell background McGraw-Hill her New York publisher, arranged for Forrest Orr, a native Harpswellian and a distinguished water-colorist, to supply the chart that is used for the endpapers. Streaming down from Brunswick, the Bowdoin college town a dozen miles north, is seen the highway as it swings abaft the heads of both Basin and Ash Points on the west side, and of Juniper Point and Graveyard Head on the east, until it reaches Pinkham's beach at the neck that joins the Auburn Colony area to Potts Point, and thence down past Ed. Raidall's store to the tip.

Orr's Map Interesting

Outlying are indicated Haskell's Island at the south, Orr's, over which the sun rises "like thunder" across Merriceoneag Bay, and even Goose Island where sunset flames at night. Purchas Yacht Basin is featured especially, because of the



AT AN AUTOGRAPHING PARTY—Mrs. Dorian is pictured here at an autographing party held in an unidentified book store. She is seen here smiling up at one of her teen-age readers.

Lewiston Journal Magazine
Section
November 28, 1953



Purchas family in the book. It lies off the Juniper Point shore. There also is a biological laboratory, which was being established at the time of this story; and people who knew South Harpswell some years ago well remember that such a laboratory was a fact, east of the causeway. This outfit more recently folded its wings and flew farther along the Maine coast, settling at Hulls Cove on Mount Desert Island.

Mrs. Dorian has boy meet girl, of course, the latter a promising young artist, the former with plans conflicting between biological work and building or sailing boats, after finishing his course at Bowdoin College at Brunswick. A mystery develops that further sustains interest. The book is thoroughly saturated with Harpswell, and ought to "sell" the place far and wide! Such is the publicity no State development commission pays for! But it is the best kind!

CHART OF SOUTH HARPSWELL—This chart was drawn by Forrest Orr for Mrs. Dorian's book "No Moon on Graveyard Head." It includes the entire South Harpswell Bay area and the outlines will be familiar to Maine residents and visitors to Maine in the summer months.

September 10, 1954

Mrs. Edith Dorian
c/o Whittlesey House
330 West 42nd Street
New York City 18

Dear Mrs. Dorian:

When your book NO MOON ON GRAVEYARD HEAD was published, we seized upon it eagerly for our traveling libraries and bookmobile. It is such a good story, and of course we are always especially interested in books with Maine backgrounds. We noted the novel in the Maine in Print column which appears in the quarterly Bulletin of the Maine Library Association, so that all Maine libraries would be sure to know of its publication.

It occurs to us that NO MOON ON GRAVEYARD HEAD would be a most suitable addition to the Maine Author Collection. Do you know of this collection? It is a permanent exhibit of books written by Maine people, or about the state. Most of the volumes (about two thousand) are inscribed presentation copies, and the inscriptions, being amusing or poetic, artistic or biographical, are a distinctive note. The collection constantly increases, and is a steady attraction to students and visitors.

We hope that you may agree with us that your book should be included. It would certainly give us pleasure to have it among the other Maine books. You are to be congratulated on the fine and exciting story, and we trust that there are going to be more about a vicinity which you obviously know so well.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hcm

MRS. DONALD C. DORIAN
115 NORTH FOURTH AVENUE
HIGHLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY

OCT 4

September 29, 1954

Dear Mrs. Frost,

U. Moon set sail for the
Maine Authors Collection the other day so
perhaps it has already come to port.
It is pleasant indeed to know that
Maine people approve of it.

Hope Pazol and Edna frisked less
violently around Augusta than they did
in the Harpswell area. They certainly
did not win any hearts in the process
of denuding us of 200's, 200's, 200's, 200's.

lights and water!

A pleasant winter to you

Sincerely yours,

Edith Dorian

MRS. DONALD C. DORIAN
1 NORTH STREET AVENUE
PARK CITY, UTAH

December 21, 1924

October 8, 1954

Mrs. Donald C. Dorian
115 North Fourth Avenue
Highland Park, New Jersey

Dear Mrs. Dorian:

NO MOON ON GRAVEYARD HEAD reached us safely, and we appreciate the privilege of adding it to the Maine Author Collection. Thank you very much.

No, Carol and Edna made no friends in this vicinity! I'm sure I don't know what good could possibly come of such ill winds, but perhaps you can work them into a book?

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

September 28, 1956

Mrs. Donald C. Dorian
115 North Fourth Avenue
Highland Park, New Jersey

Dear Mrs. Dorian:

THE TWISTED SHADOW hasn't yet come our way, but we shall be having it in the bookmobiles and traveling libraries. It's a natural!

We can write more intelligently about it after at least one of our copies has come, but we know right now that the result of your taking romance, mystery, and the hurrican in a Maine setting can add up to nothing but a tremendously popular book.

We hope that the Maine Author Collection may anticipate the inclusion of an inscribed copy?

Good luck to it.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

October 16, 1956

Mrs. Donald C. Dorian
115 North Fourth Avenue
Highland Park, New Jersey

Dear Mrs. Dorian:

From the inscription and the dedication, right to the final page, we love THE TWISTED SHADOW. Are you aware that all our young and attractive librarians will be applying for positions in the Sinnett library? You quite evidently know about libraries -- that they are anything but dull, and frequently can be feverishly busy and exciting. We are especially appreciative of this kind of treatment!

Certainly one wouldn't label this mystery-romance a "career" story, but you have used two careers so skilfully in the background that THE TWISTED SHADOW may well influence some young people to look more closely at herpetologists and librarians.

Beside these details, you have given us a wholly satisfactory and engrossing story. We congratulate you, and are at last able to find something good that came of Carol!

Thank you very much for the Maine Author Collection copy of the book.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

115 North Fourth Avenue
Highland Park, New Jersey

November 17, 1956

Dear Mrs. Jacob,

Now I've done it! That was such a nice letter from you about the Twisted Shadow and I got such a bang out of it---especially because you liked what I'd done about libraries--that I rashly showed it to Helene Frye, Junior Books editor at Mc Graw Hill. And she loved it,--but she now wants to know whether you would let her quote some of it. Probably you've forgotten what you wrote and haven't a carbon; so I'm typing the letter out for you,--but please say "no" frankly if you don't want to be quoted. Mrs. Frye didn't say what she wanted to use, but I suspect the library part because she's been hoping that librarians would react "happily!"

Writing books about Maine is more fun than writing books about anything else except Indians. You all are such a swell reading audience.

Sincerely,

Edith Dorian

I do know libraries a little bit because I've been chairman of our library board for ten years and Nancy, my daughter, has had a summer bookmobile job in New Brunswick, N.J. for three years. That's why I got so tired of hearing that they are dull places to work!

November 19, 1956

Mrs. Donald C. Dorian
115 North Fourth Avenue
Highland Park, New Jersey

Dear Mrs. Dorian:

Your request to quote from the letter we wrote about THE TWISTED SHADOW was discussed with Mrs. Stubbs, whose permission it seemed wise to ask. She agrees, and so I am happy to tell you that you may quote what you please of it. We are glad that we can help a little in boosting such a really good book.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj

March 30, 1965

Mrs. Edith M. Dorian
Topsham
Maine

Dear Mrs. Dorian:

How nice of you to know that we'd love having HIGH-WATER CARGO for the Maine Author Collection! Thank you very much indeed.

We are constantly delighted by your feeling of loyalty to Maine, and we hope that this agreeable state continues for a long, long time.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
MAINE AUTHOR COLLECTION

January 5, 1965

Miss Edith Dorian
39 Elm Street
Topsham, Maine 04086

Dear Miss Dorian:

What a wonderful New Year's gift !
Thank you for the addition to the Maine
Author Collection of the new book,
ANIMALS THAT MADE U.S. HISTORY, and for
knowing that we would welcome with
enthusiasm not only the book, but the
knowledge that you are one of us in
December as well as July.

Now that you are a neighbor, do
come in some day and get acquainted.

And thank you so much for the new
book.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection