

October 2015

Helen Albee Prince Correspondence

Helen Albee Prince

Mr. Harrie Coe

Henry Ernest Dunnack 1867-1938

Maine State Library

Hilda McLeod

Maine State Library

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PRINCE, Helen Albee

North Anson, 1855 (?) -

Portland, Me., Feb. 12, 1935

Mr. Henry E. Dunnack,

Dear Sir:

I need information and not knowing just where to apply for same, I am taking the liberty of addressing you.

I have ready the ms. of a book of about thirty thousand words, (perhaps two or three hundred more,) and seven original illustrations, made by a Boston artist, which I am anxious to have published this spring. It is mainly about Maine and is supposedly written by a young girl from Ohio, on her first visit to the Atlantic coast.

The title is, "Grandma's Album Quilt," and presents a succession of stories about Maine people, (and Maine localities) of grandma's friends, whose names are written on the white blocks, in the center of each patchwork square. Among the localities mentioned are Portland, (tuna fishing) Freeport, (Maine Desert.) Wiscasset, Kennebec Valley, Penobscot river, (Salmon.) Mining in eastern Maine in the 80's, Cadillac Mt. and a trip I once took up there in 1883 on the old cog-wheel road. Much of the book is biographical, as I am now past 80 and have incorporated many facts of my early days, including parts of a diary kept by me during the Civil War, when young,

school girls were picking lint and helping to pack barrels of supplies to send to the soldiers.

This was during my early days in my home town, North Anson.

Having so much Maine publicity incorporated into its pages, I thought I might dispose of it to a "Publicity Department," "Chamber of Commerce," or some similar organization, but do not know how to proceed to contact them. If desired I will bring my ms. to Augusta for their inspection, or perhaps I could see them in this city as well.

If you would care to look it over before advising me what to do, I will be glad to send the ms. to you on request.

Sincerely yours,
(Mrs.) Helen A. Prince,
492 Cumberland Ave.,
Portland,
Maine.

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HENRY E. DUNNACK
STATE LIBRARIAN
THERESA C. STUART
ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN



MAINE STATE LIBRARY

AUGUSTA

February 13, 1935

Mrs. Helen A. Prince
492 Cumberland Ave.
Portland, Maine

My dear Mrs. Prince:

I have your letter of February 12 in relation to your book "Grandma's Album Quilt."

I should be very glad to look over the manuscript, and also I shall be very glad to do anything I can to help you find a publisher.

I suggest that you talk with Mr. Harrie Coe of the Maine Publicity Bureau, Longfellow Square, Portland, Maine. After you have talked with Mr. Coe, write me in regard to his opinion.

Very truly yours

H. E. Dunnack
State Librarian

HED/m

Refer it to

Maine Development Commission

Mr. Brown, Chairman

John C. Scales, Vice Chairman

Portland, Me. Feb. 15, 1935.

My dear Mr. Durnack:

I thank you for your kindness in replying so promptly to my urgent request for advice. Today I obtained a ten minute interview with Mr. Coe, and while he did not have time to look the manuscript over, he wrote a suggestion on the bottom of your letter hereinclosed:

I also enclose a letter and sample contract, sent me by a Boston publisher last fall.

Not having \$400. to finance the first edition, I requested them to return the ms. by express, and am sending same to you, in that way, and asking you to return it by ^{collect} express, as I want to have a copy typed, which will be free from errors.

As I told Mr. Coe today, I would like to arrange with the Development Commission for a loan of \$450. giving the ms. as security. As you notice from the Publisher's terms, this will all be paid back to the author from the first sales of the book. I will undertake to introduce the book extensively throughout New England and elsewhere, and as a return for the use of the money, will agree to repay it within one year, to the

Commissioner's fund^{ing} I will give 10 cts^{each} on all copies sold during the first year after publication.

Expect^{ed} to introduce it at many of the beaches and other resorts, as well as putting it on sale in book-stores as soon as off the press.

Pardon me for taking up so much of your time, and accept my thanks for all your kindness

Sincerely yours

Helen A. Prince.

492 Cumb. Ave., Portland, Maine.

Portland, Me., March 27.

Mr. Henry E. Dunnack,

Dear Sir:

Early in February
I wrote you asking if I might
submit manuscript of a book
I had written, to you for your
opinion, and upon receiving a
favorable reply, I forwarded the
same by express. Not having
heard anything further and

being anxious to have a newly
typed copy made ready to
submit to a publisher by the
10th of April, I am writing to
ask if you will please return
the ms. to me by express col-
lect, at your earliest convenience
and greatly oblige

Yours very truly

(Mrs.) Helen A. Prince,
492 Cumberland Ave.,
Portland,
Maine.



March 30, 1935

Mrs. Helen A. Prince
492 Cumberland Avenue
Portland, Maine

Dear Mrs. Prince:

We returned your manuscript "Grandma's
Album Quilt," March 28. I was very glad
for the opportunity of looking over this man-
uscript. I am returning your letter from
the Meador Publishing Company.

I cannot think of any way we can be of
service to you in securing its publication.

Very truly yours

HED.m

State Librarian

February 18, 1936

Mrs. Helen Albee Prince
The Westlawn
47 West Street
Portland, Maine

Dear Mrs. Prince:

May we offer you our sincere congratulations on the publication of your book, GRANDMA'S ALBUM QUILT. We are pleased and proud to be able to add a new name to our list of Maine authors, and we hope we will be privileged to add the book to the Maine Author Collection.

Some years ago the State Library started a project which is now known as the Maine Author Collection, and which comprises several hundred volumes, written by Maine-born people, and also by those who have lived here, or have written about the State. Seldom do we have an author who was born in Maine, has lived here, and has written about his native State, and therefore it is with added delight that we welcome you to our literary list.

The books in this collection are for exhibit purposes only, and in years to come will form a valuable and interesting background of Maine literature. The volumes are nearly all inscribed, and most of them presented, and the collection increases steadily in size and worth.

We hope that you will wish to inscribe for the Maine Author Collection a copy of GRANDMA'S ALBUM QUIET; we assure you that your kindness would be very deeply appreciated.

Please accept our very cordial invitation to visit the library and the Maine Author Collection when you are again in Augusta.

Very truly yours

Maine State Library

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Secretary

47 West St. Portland, Me.

March 4, 1936

Miss Hilda McLeod,

Seig Maine State Library,

Dear Miss McLeod:

Replying to yours of recent date will say that I will be very glad to contribute a copy of "Grandma's Album Quilt" to your collection.

As soon as they come from the binders' hands, I will be proud to autograph a copy and forward

you. Not only am I Maine-born,
but my parents, grand parents
and great-grand parents were
(with the exception of two from N. H.)
all born in Maine, then Massachusetts.

When next I visit Augusta, I will
be very glad to accept your kind
invitation to visit the Library.

Yours sincerely
Helen A. Prince

April 1, 1936

Mrs. Helen A. Prince
47 West Street
Portland, Maine

Dear Mrs. Prince:

Your kind letter of March 4, promising us an inscribed copy of GRANDMA'S ALBUM QUILT for the Maine Author Collection, delighted us. We are anticipating its arrival, and trust that no unfortunate delay will occur in the publishing of a book that, according to advance notices, holds such interest, especially for natives of Maine.

Very truly yours
Maine State Library

Secretary

April 8, 1936

Mrs. Helen A. Prince
47 West Street
Portland, Maine

Dear Mrs. Prince:

GRANDMA'S ALBUM QUILT has arrived, and we are unusually delighted to be privileged to add such a charming, attractive and authentic book to the Maine Author Collection.

The jacket is fascinating, and the entire book should please as many types of persons as are represented in the quilt. It is an altogether uncommonly captivating book, and we sincerely hope that it will enjoy the popularity it richly deserves.

Please accept our hearty congratulations upon so auspicious a literary debut, and our deep gratitude for your interest and kindness.

Very truly yours
Maine State Library

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Secretary

Maine Grandmother, 81, Launches

Literary Career With Her

First Book



Left—Grandma at the age of 12, a pen and ink illustration to be used in Mrs. Prince's book, adapted from an actual photo of the author taken back in 1867. Drawn by Miss George Eleanor Shaw of Medford, Mass. Center—Mrs. Helen Albee Prince of Sanford and Portland, author of "Grandma's Album Quilt." Right—An illustration from Mrs. Prince's book, depicting a true adventure that happened to the author and her playmate many, many years ago. Drawn by Miss Shaw.

Mrs. Helen A. Prince Writes Story Of Album Quilt People

By Leon Harold Tebbetts

To be an 81 year old grandmother and to be launching a literary career at the same time is indeed a record of personal achievement few of us may hope to emulate. In fact, to attain one of such accomplishments is something nearly all of us never bring to pass.

It was, however, a long, long dream with Mrs. Helen Albee Prince of Sanford and Portland to write a book. She dreamed about it when she was a little girl up in North Anson, even filled pages and pages of composition paper with childish stories. Later, when she entered wedded life, she still wanted to write a book, and did jot down ideas, but time did not permit her to write the book she wished to do.

A Task Undone

Middle age passed and old age came, and still she had not tackled the book she had planned as a girl. Swiftly her 60's came and went, and then the march of the 70's began, with only snatches of the book written. Church, club and home duties kept her too busy to commence the writing of her book.

All the time she had been planning the story, a book about an album quilt and its patchwork people, a narrative for children and adults alike, about New England, but laid principally in Maine. From her storehouse of memories she intended to draw the material for the character tales she would spin.

Then one day last year she found herself at her 80th birthday, looking back on four score years of life, and she suddenly realized that if she ever were going to write her book, the time to begin was soon. Rummaging through bureau drawers, attic trunks and scrapbooks she gathered up all the material she had accumulated for the past 71 years, among the assortment being a quaint old diary which she had written when she was a girl

Portland Sunday Telegram
Feb. 16, 1936

of nine. Then, crowding the work in with her other duties, she began resolutely the long delayed task of writing a book.

Last Summer Mrs. Prince's book, "Grandma's Album Quilt," was finished, and next month it will be published by Falmouth Book House, Portland, successfully bringing to fruition a lifelong dream.

The book Mrs. Prince has written is an authentic and amusing account of old Maine and its people. In former days people used to make album quilts. These quilts were not made by any one person, but were pieced together over a period of years by different people, each one sewing in a group of squares with one white square in the center. Upon this white block was written the name of the person who made the square.

Real Quilt People

Taking such a quilt as the theme for her book, Mrs. Prince has caused a 16 year old girl to spend the Summer in Maine with her Grandma and there she is introduced to the quaint quilt which is kept in Grandma's attic. One by one, on rainy days of

Summer and other times at her leisure, Grandma takes up each square and spins a story about its maker.

Many of the accounts are actual happenings in Maine, and some of the characters described by Grandma are real people who lived long ago, or are living today. The author has, of course, carefully concealed real names and places, but to one familiar with the events and scenes, the accounts should bring back memories.

There is a story of the copper mining boom which took place in Maine some 50 years ago. Another chapter deals with the little cog-railroad which once ran up the side of Mt. Cadillac, formerly called Green Mountain.

One part of the book tells a true adventure had by the author and a girl playmate many years ago. On an exploring trip, the two bold little girls, who looked so much alike they were called twins, set out to follow Arnold's trail up the Kennebec. On the return journey, after having given up the idea of following the trail to its

end, the two were so tired that one little girl put strawberry juice upon the cheeks of the other to make her appear fresh again and frightened her mother into believing she had a fever.

Rare Sense of Humor

Some of Mrs. Prince's stories display a rare sense of humor, as for instance, the account of Araminta Whicher, pretty Maine schoolmarm, who promised her lover that she would wait for his return to marry her. It was in 1885 when Billy Watkins, her fiance, left for the West with faithful vows to come back in five years and marry her. In 1905, Araminta was still waiting for her lover and had bought four wedding dresses in the meantime, one at the end of each five years of vigil. Araminta never lost her faith in her

beloved until one day, after 20 years absence, he returned at last to the Maine town where Minty was, bringing with him his half-breed wife and six nearly grown children.

The most authentic and truly charming portion of the book was written just 71 years ago. It is a diary of Civil War days, written by the author herself, and incorporated in the book exactly as it was copied from the yellowed pages found up in the attic. This diary pictures in its childish way the life and daily happenings of a Maine community while the war between the states was being waged. It unfolds the everyday experiences of a little girl who was more or less of a tomboy—who once behaved awfully nice to all the boys in the school because she didn't know which one of them had sent her the

pretty valentine and was afraid of offending the wrong person. This strain was relieved only when she learned that the valentine came from an aunt.

Still another chapter in Mrs. Prince's book deals with interesting places to be seen in Maine, as described by Grandma. In this chapter the author tells an amusing anecdote about a Portland school girl who had to describe in class the Soldiers' and Sailors' monument, one of Portland's points of interest. The teacher on the previous day, in explaining the features of this monument by Sir Franklin Simmons, had called it symbolic of the great republic, and had told in full how the lady was dressed, ending by saying that her feet were encased in sandals. Next day the youngster in question arose in class, and in a vain effort to remember the description, said: "There she stands—she symbolizes the great Republican party and her feet are encased in scandals."

In an interview with Mrs. Prince, this writer found her to be a very alert

woman, belying her age, keenly interested in the world's affairs, gently disposed toward the younger generation, and thoroughly imbued with the desire to keep going.

Asked as to how she had managed to live to such a ripe age (a question usually asked by force of habit of elderly people by reporters who can't think of anything else to ask), she did not come back with any stereotyped answer but instead reached into her pocketbook and drew out a clipping from a newspaper. It contained an essay on how to keep well which had won her the first prize in a contest conducted in 1930 by the Three Quarter Century Club.

In telling how to keep well, Mrs. Prince inadvertently answered the question of how to live long. To quote from her prize-winning article: "In considering the question of how to keep well, the first and most important factor is one over which we have no control, namely, to be born well, or in other words, we should have chosen parents and grandparents who were perfectly well, mentally, morally and physically.

"Unfortunately for us we have no voice in that choice, but have to accept just whatever is handed down to us. Then it becomes a duty as well as a pleasure to make the most and best of the foundation given us, for building up a structure of health and happiness. In order to keep well, we must keep busy. If we sit down in idleness and brood over our lonely and forlorn condition, we become more forlorn and in a mood of self-pity and discontent become a burden to ourselves and doubly so to those around us."

Mrs. Prince in her article puts in a good word for the younger generation and claims that not being too critical of the actions of youth is still another way for old people to keep well. She says: "We may not approve of some of their activities, but we know that they are no worse than the young folks of our day, and at heart they are all right." Writing about the grouch, one of the causes of old age, she says: "If we feel a grouch coming on that we cannot shake off, let us get out into the open and count our many blessings. To check up all of them, you will undoubtedly find that it will take all the fingers and thumbs of both hands—and then some. Follow this counting up by saying, 'Get thee behind me, Grouch!'"

Mrs. Helen Albee Prince was born in North Anson, and educated there in its schools. In those days the State did not require a normal school education of a teacher and at the age of 15 she turned from being a pupil to becoming a schoolmarm in a country school in the town of Anson. There she taught a class of 18 or 20 pupils, ranging in age from primary tots to young men and women well advanced in the study of Latin and algebra.

At 18 she was married to Herman Cousins of Lamoine and three sons were born to them, two of whom are now living; one, Fred W. Cousins, of Bluehill, the home of Mary Ellen Chase; and the other, Edmund B. Cousins, a resident of Long Beach, Calif.

Later in life she was married again, to William N. Prince of Portland, who died 20 years ago. Mr. Prince was a member of the well-known dry goods furnishing concern, known as the William N. Prince & Co., which closed its doors some years ago. On the death of Mr. Prince, Mrs. Prince went to Sanford to live, and since then has spent her time between there and California, visiting her son in the latter place. This Winter she is residing at the Westlawn on 47 West Street, Portland, expecting to return to Sanford in the Spring. She is a member of the Searchlight Club of Sanford, the D. A. B., the Sanford Congregational Church and the Three Quarter Century Club.

Just Begun

In speaking of her literary plans for the future, Mrs. Prince announces that since she has at last embarked upon the long procrastinated ambition of hers to write, she definitely does not intend to stop. She does not want to be remembered as a one book author and has already contemplated other ventures.

If people take well to her initial effort, she will doubtless write more stories of a Maine character, for after all, to her way of thinking, no other place in the world is more worth writing about. There is not a thing to stand in her way of pursuing a literary career, she is convinced. Certainly not her age, for what are 81 years but splendid experience, and material galore for stories. And as for being a grandmother, how lucky she is. When she writes a book about a Grandma's album quilt, as she has done, who can deny that she does not know her subject?