

L.M. Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables, and Royal Visits to Prince Edward Island

By Mary Beth Cavert © 2011

Portions of this article are from the manuscript of *The Friends of Anne:
L.M. Montgomery's Kindred Spirits* by Mary E. Cavert

Prince Edward Island, Canada is the birthplace of the famous book, *Anne of Green Gables*, as well as the author, Lucy Maud (L.M.) Montgomery. The author was raised by her British grandmother (who grew up in Dunwich, England) * and was named Maud after Queen Victoria's daughter.



Kate Middleton read and loved Montgomery's book and now, as Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cambridge, she requested that she and her husband, Prince William, include the Island in their trip to Canada in July 2011.

The Duchess is one of millions of readers who have wanted to see the beautiful waters, landscapes, and woodlands described so compellingly by Montgomery in her books. For over a hundred years, fans have come to the Cavendish/Avonlea crossroad and idyllic settings on the North Shore to see Montgomery's intimate places for themselves.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are not the first high-profiled Anne-inspired residents of the British Isles to come to Prince Edward Island.

In 1910, Albert Grey, the 4th Earl Grey (and Governor-General of Canada), came to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island and requested a visit with Montgomery. * Sir Andrew Macphail hosted a dinner for them at his home in Orwell (Macphail's friend, Dr. John McCrae, later known as the famous poet of "In Flanders Fields," was also present). Montgomery had Lord Grey's undivided attention when they went for a private walk and talked about her work. They corresponded afterwards and exchanged books.

Montgomery moved to Ontario after she was married. When she was visiting the Island on June 19, 1927, she was given a letter written sent to her from 10 Downing Street in London. Stanley Baldwin, Prime Minister of England, was touring Canada for the Diamond Jubilee of the Confederation and wanted to see Prince Edward Island and meet her.

Dear Mrs. Macdonald:

I do not know whether I shall be so fortunate during the hurried visit to Canada but it would give me keen pleasure to have an opportunity of shaking your hand and thanking you for the pleasure your books have given me. I am hoping that I shall be allowed to go to Prince Edward Island for I must see Green Gables before I return home. Not that I wouldn't be at home at Green Gables!!

I am sincerely yours,
Stanley Baldwin

Montgomery read his letter over and over to herself in "Lover's Lane," a path near the Green Gables house where she went for solitude.

...[I] read it not to myself but to the little girl who walked here years ago and dreamed—and wrote her dreams into books that have pleased a statesman of the Empire.

Montgomery left the Island before Baldwin arrived, but she saved all the newspaper clippings on his historic visit, including one describing Baldwin's love of her books: "No higher tribute could be paid to her genius," proclaimed her Island paper. Another British Prime Minister, Ramsey Macdonald, was a fan too -- he "read every Montgomery book I could get my hands on two or three times over."

In 1935 Montgomery met the Prince of Wales and his younger brother, Prince George, while they were in Canada. Their father, King George V, was celebrating the 25th year of his reign. Montgomery went to Ottawa to attend ceremonies in honor of this Jubilee, during which time she was invested as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. The O.B.E. was an award founded by George V in 1917 for both civilian and military service. It was a tremendous honor for Montgomery.

In 1939, King George VI and his queen, Elizabeth, toured Canada. Montgomery was chosen to write a literary essay about Prince Edward Island for the beautiful commemorative booklet called *The Spirit of Canada Dominion and Provinces 1939: A Souvenir of Welcome to H.M. King George VI and H.M. Queen Elizabeth*. Her essay is a famous description of the Island:

Peace! You never know what peace is until you walk on the shores or in the fields of the winding red roads of Abegweit on a

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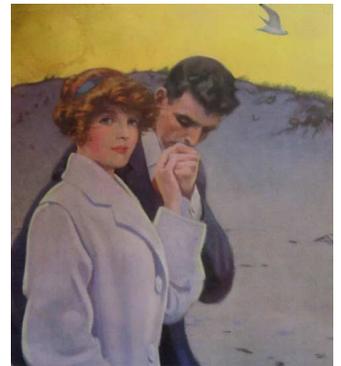
Carolyn Collins: founder/editor, Mary Beth Cavert: editor and web site, located at: <http://home.earthlink.net/~bcavert/>

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summer twilight when the dew is falling and the old stars are peeping out and the sea keeps its nightly tryst with the little land it loves. You find your soul then...you realize that youth is not a vanished thing but something that dwells forever in the heart. As you look around on the dimming landscape of haunted and long white sand beach and murmuring ocean, on homestead lights and old fields by dead and gone generations who loved them, you will say, 'Why...I have come home.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge will go to Green Gables (administered by Parks Canada), a farmhouse that represents the adopted home of "Anne." Undoubtedly, the couple will have the place to themselves, sans golfers, and will stroll by the brook and through the birches and pines, perhaps capturing a sense of what Montgomery experienced there.

If the royal staff have done their homework, they will ask the Park guides to direct the newly-weds to Montgomery's true "Lover's Lane", which is somewhat off the marked tourist path. Hopefully, they will wander on from Green Gables, past Montgomery's grave, and over to the peaceful Homestead site where she wrote *Anne of Green Gables* in 1908 – the home of her present-day cousins, John and Jennie Macneill. * William and Kate will truly feel the magic of Anne's home here.



Prince William can appreciate his own family connections with Montgomery through King George III. The Lake of Shining Waters is a landmark in *Anne* and the couple will want to take the short and stunningly beautiful countryside and sea-view ride (which passes Montgomery's birthplace) to it. The lake is located in Park Corner, a tract of land given to Montgomery's great-great-great grandfather, James Townsend, by King George III.

The Lake of Shining Waters lies between Montgomery's grandfather's home * and her aunt and uncle's farm * where she was married. She loved these homesteads and wrote here and often walked to the end of the lake where it flows between the dunes to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Many Montgomery readers come to this house to be married and then ride in a carriage along the banks of the lake and shores of the sea. Perhaps William and Kate will take that carriage ride too.



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* Her British grandmother

http://lmmontgomeryliterarysociety.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/6/5/226525/the_woolner_jug.pdf

* Earl Grey's visit with Montgomery

http://lmmontgomeryliterarysociety.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/6/5/226525/shining_scroll_part_1_2008.pdf

* John and Jennie Macneill

http://lmmontgomeryliterarysociety.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/6/5/226525/honoring_the_first_generation_-_lmm_08_conference_presenta.pdf

* Montgomery's grandfather's home

<http://home.earthlink.net/~bcavert/id11.html>

* Lake of Shining Waters and site of Montgomery's wedding

<http://www.annemuseum.com/gallery.php>

For more Montgomery sites, go to our Literary Society Links page:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~bcavert/id1.html>

Montgomery's books always have echoes of her life. Read more here:

Montgomery's own Gilbert Blythe.

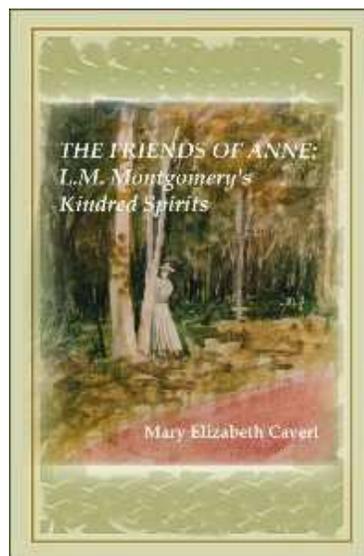
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Anne and Gilbert's Lighthouse.

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Montgomery and World War I

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