

1606 Dorion Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario

November 26, 1972.

Miss Eleanor Shaw,
100 Ridout Street, South,
London, Ontario.

Dear Miss Shaw:

I had intended writing to you some time ago, but absences from the city and other poor excuses have caused a deferment. May I explain that I was one of Miss Mabel Williams associates in the National Parks Branch many years ago, and over the past five years we began corresponding after she found out that I was writing a history of the National Parks system of Canada.

I was very sorry to learn of Miss Williams death, although I realized that she was running out of time. However, she never lost her enthusiasm for the parks, nor her regard for our former Commissioner, the late J.B. Harkin. I guess what finally prompted me to write you was the fact that quite recently the Department asked me to prepare a short biographical sketch of Mr. Harkin. This I was able to do, largely on information that Miss Williams had furnished.

I have one item on which I would like information. Prior to Miss Williams last birthday, I suggested to the Director of National Parks, Mr. Nicol, that the Minister send her greetings on her birthday. I was delegated to prepare the letter. I know it was signed by Mr. Chretien, and I have always wondered if Miss Williams received the letter before she became too ill to understand its import.

I also would like to know if, among the items forming her estate, she left any early papers belonging to Mr. Harkin, or relating to the early days of the National Parks Branch. I know that her old friend and associate, Miss Dorothy Barber of Ottawa, had custody of some of Mr. Harkin's papers, which I believe eventually were received in the archives here in Ottawa. If there was anything else, I am sure the Archives would like them.

Miss Williams also had one or more photographs of Mr. Harkin. If any of these were surplus to the requirements of the legatees it would be treasured in the National and Historic Parks Branch as it is now called.

With respect to the history on which I have been working for nearly four years, you may be interested to know that I have completed four chapters, and was able to mention Miss Williams name. As a senior citizen, I haven't got the stamina of my work output of a few years ago, but manage on an average five hours a day on a five day week.

I shall miss hearing regularly. She was very pleased to learn that some one was writing the Parks history, and I do hope I will be able to finish. The trouble is that history is in the making while I try to recapture the past. Ten new parks have been set aside since I commenced this job.

Well, Miss Shaw, I hope the foregoing will not offend or bore you. It is really meant as a tribute of my high regard for Miss Williams, and my wonder at the stamina she retained to reach the status of a nonagenarian. My last note from her was at Christmas when she apologized for her writing, which she could no longer follow by sight. She certainly was a wonder.

Yours very sincerely,

W. Fergus Lothian

[WF Lothian to Eleanor Shaw (a close friend of MB's in later life), 26 November 1972]

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