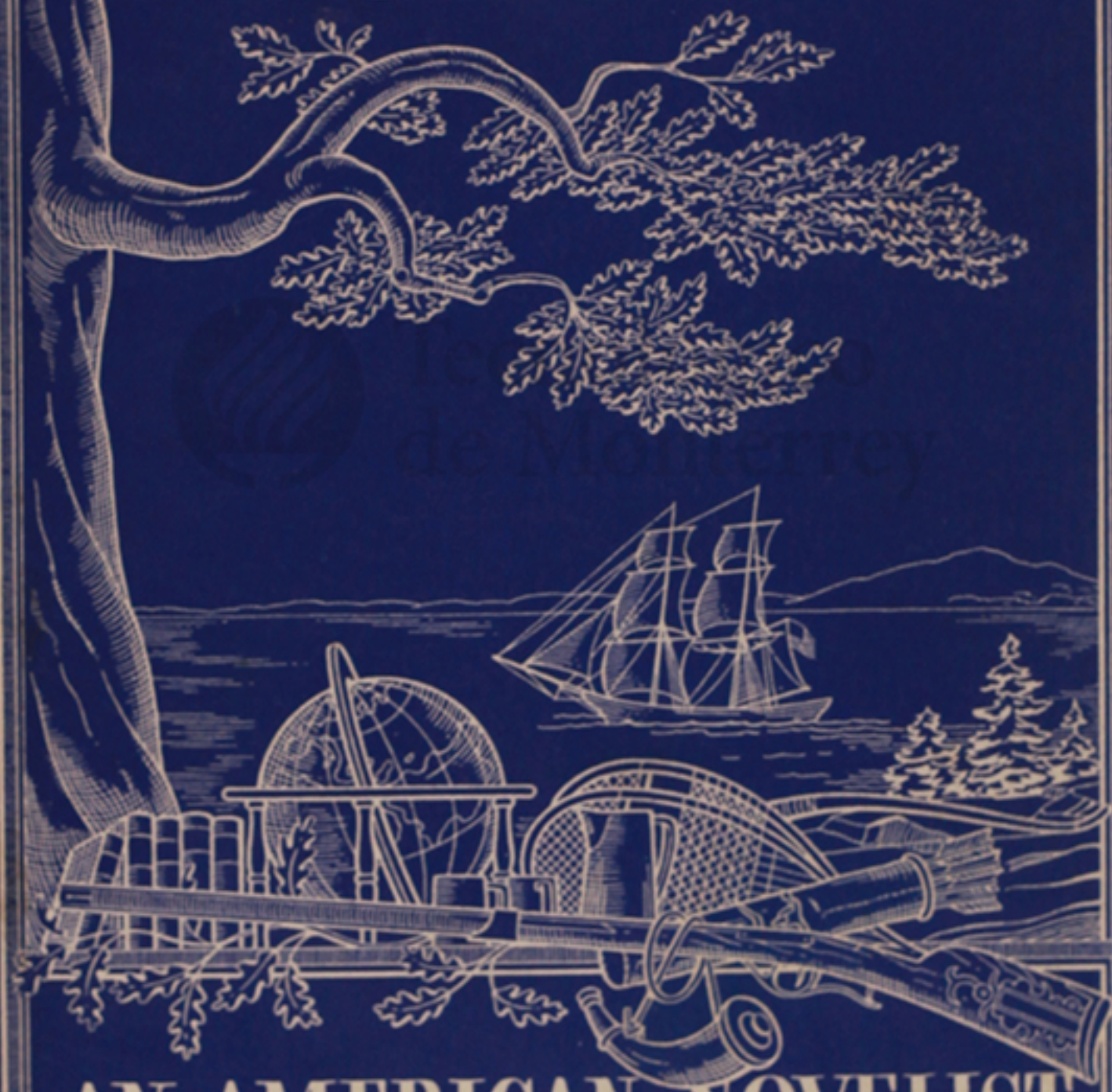


KENNETH ROBERTS



AN AMERICAN NOVELIST

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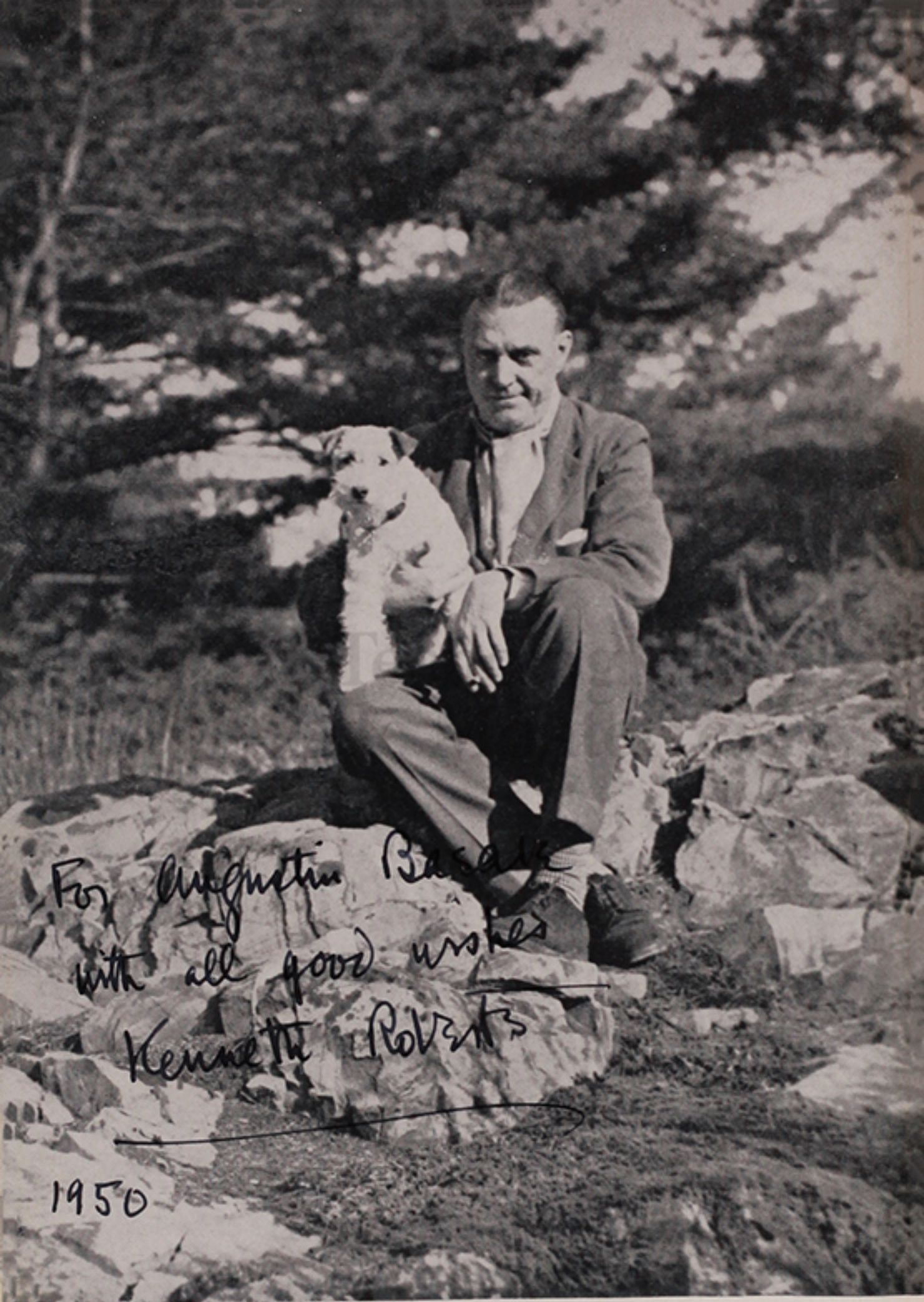
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For Augustin Baskin
with all good wishes
Kenneth Roberts

1950

KENNETH ROBERTS

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF KENNETH ROBERTS

MAINE is in Kenneth Roberts' blood. Arundel was the village that later took the Indian name of Kennebunkport, and it was in Arundel that his parents, grandparent, greatgrandparents and he himself had lived. To Berwick and Kittery, not far away, his ancestors had come in 1639, and for the two stormy centuries that followed they were a part of the history of the state. They fought with Washington, they followed Benedict Arnold up to Quebec, they manned privateers in the War of 1812. It is not by accident that the scene of his novels has been, for the most part, the land in which he was born.

The latest edition of *Who's Who In America*, with its customary brevity, supplies this outline of his career up to now:

Roberts, Kenneth (Lewis), author; *b.* Kennebunk, Me., Dec. 8, 1885; *s.* Frank Lewis and Grace Mary (Tibbets) R.; A.B., Cornell U., 1908; Litt.D., Dartmouth, 1934, Colby, 1935, Middlebury, 1938, Bowdoin, 1938; Phi Beta Kappa (Dartmouth, 1937); *m.* Anna S. Mosser, of Boston, Mass., Feb. 14, 1911. Editor in chief, *Cornell Widow*, 1905-08; reporter, spl. writer and conductor of humorous column and page, *Boston Post*, 1909-17; editorial staff, *Puck*, 1916-17; staff *Life*, New York, 1915-18. Capt. Intelligence Sect., Siberian Expeditionary Force, 1918-19. Staff corr. *Saturday Evening Post* since 1919. Mem. of the Nat. Institute of Arts and Letters. *Author:* *Europe's Morning After*, 1921; *Why Europe Leaves Home*, 1922; *Sun Hunting*, 1923; *The Collector's Whatnot* (with Booth Tarkington and Hugh McNair Kahler), 1923; *Black Magic*, 1924; *Concentrated New England*, 1924; *Florida Loafing*, 1925; *Florida*, 1926; *Antiquamania* (illustrated by Booth Tarkington), 1928; *Arundel*, 1930; *The Lively Lady*, 1931; *Rabble In Arms*, 1933; *Captain Caution*, 1934;

For Authors Only and Other Gloomy Essays, 1935; It Must Be Your Tonsils, 1936; Northwest Passage, 1937; Trending Into Maine, 1938; March to Quebec, 1938.

Those are the unelaborated facts, the bare bones of a great career. About the books, and about Roberts' position as a novelist, Ben Ames Williams has written with skill and insight, later on in this booklet. About the career he has said less.

It opened as a reporter and special writer in Boston, on the staff of the *Boston Post*. After many years he is still actively remembered in the *Post's* offices, for the vehemence of his opinions as much as for the brilliance of his reporting. He established then his reputation for accuracy and his passion for the exact truth, a passion which grew with the years and which his novels vividly reflect. Since he was not only a good reporter but a notable humorist, he found himself eventually on the staff of *Life*—not the present picture magazine but the old weekly that everyone over thirty-five remembers with a wistful sigh. That was in 1918, the war was on, and before the year's close he was sailing for Siberia with the Siberian Expeditionary Force.

He returned in the spring of 1919, and, in the *Saturday Evening Post*, proceeded to publish a number of incendiary articles on Russia and on the Philippines. In the same magazine he published also his only serious dramatic work, a one-act play written with Robert Garland, called *THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN*, and dealing with the last days of the Czar. Collectors should keep a watchful eye for the issue in which it appeared.

Such was the furor raised by his articles that later in the same year the *Post* sent him to Europe to find out what lay behind the confused post-war dispatches, and to look into the flood of immigration then reaching the United States from middle Europe. Through 1920 he continued his work, bringing to a head with a startling and nationally read article the dangers lying in the drainage of Europe's pauper reservoirs onto American soil. His work was followed by Congressional action, and the erection of quota restrictions that are still in effect.

Between 1920 and 1927 his *Post* articles had reached the stature of a national institution. He covered Europe from end to end,

set Washington by its ears with his political dispatches and a singular contribution to political satire: the august figure of David Augustus Flack, ex-minister to Bessarabia, a blunt humorist whose views could not completely have pleased the sacred Washingtonian cows. By 1923 he was back in Europe investigating the future of two new figures on the scene: an Italian named Mussolini, whose legions had just captured Rome, and an obscure little brown-shirted man named Hitler, who was setting out to rescue Germany from the Jews, the French and the international bankers. In the intervals he had had the opportunity of examining (and doing much to explode) America's own South Seas bubble, the Florida boom; he had written a series of satirical political one-act plays, and he had been to Scandinavia to report on liquor control to prohibition-ridden America.

It was in 1926 that he first began to collect material for a series of novels. Books dealing with many phases of his reportorial career had appeared but the novel was a new form. He had made himself the best and the best-known reporter in the country; that career he proposed to put behind him. He had long felt that parts of the American Revolution had never before been adequately treated, and so his research was directed toward the epic campaigns of the Northern Army from the March to Quebec in 1775 to the Battles at Saratoga in 1777. With the Revolution itself he had an intimate family link: his great-great grandfather and two other relatives fought at the siege of Louisburg in 1745; three others were in the army that attacked Ticonderoga in 1759; two of his great-great-grandfathers were captains in the Continental Army during the march to Quebec in 1775, the retreat from Ticonderoga in 1777, the battles at Saratoga in the same year and at Valley Forge in 1778.

For two years he collected his material and in 1928 set about writing his first book, *ARUNDEL*. That summer he continued his work in Maine with the assistance of his friend and neighbor, Booth Tarkington, and the following May completed it in Italy in a little farmhouse on a hilltop in the small fishing village of Porto Santo Stefano, midway between Leghorn and Rome. *ARUNDEL* was published in January of 1930. That was the first of the famous "Chronicles of Arundel" and its publication marked the rise of a new star of the first magnitude in the literary skies.

For many years, when not in Europe, the greater part of the year Kenneth Roberts lived in a house near the sea at Kennebunk Beach, with his wife and a small white wire-haired terrier named Serena Blandish. Across the road was his workshop, an odd building in Spanish style designed by the owner in conjunction with such architectural authorities as Booth Tarkington and Samuel G. Blythe. Even in Summer it was extremely cold. There, surrounded by an unexcelled library of books dealing with his own particular periods, the plotting of all his novels was done. Most of the writing, and much of the agonizing work of revision, used to be done at Porto Santo Stefano; but that retreat has been temporarily and perhaps permanently abandoned as the demands upon him, because of the constantly growing popularity of his books, became more and more insistent. In 1938 he built a stone house on high land above Kennebunkport, looking across the little river from which many of his ancestors sailed as sea captains, and over the blue light of Wells Bay, where he has fished and gunned since boyhood.

Like most able authors he has little of the author about him. He has a profound knowledge of wines, speaks Italian with a somewhat Neapolitan accent and English with great vigor and conviction, writes in longhand on large sheets of yellow paper whose margins are quickly filled with annotations. Having been president of a society at Cornell called Kappa Beta Phi, whose objectives were somewhat opposed to that of the older society of Phi Beta Kappa, Dartmouth has recently made him a member of the latter, and other colleges, like Colby, Middlebury, Bowdoin and Dartmouth, have awarded him honorary degrees.

His methods of work are arduous, involving as they do minute research and continuous rewriting. He keeps a business man's day, in his study from nine in the morning to six or after; occasionally working late into the night. He has none of the idiosyncrasies which great writers are often supposed to possess. Had he liked he might have been a successful business man, but fortunately for America he was stricken from the beginning with an unquenchable desire to write. That desire, linked with the true flame of greatness, has given us the "Chronicles of Arundel", NORTHWEST PASSAGE and promises in the future even more far-reaching achievement.

M. J.

KENNETH ROBERTS

By Ben Ames Williams

ON THE SIXTH DAY of September, 1928, Kenneth Roberts sat down at his desk, filled his fountain pen, and wrote at the top of a sheet of yellow paper the words: "Arundel, Chapter I." He was at that time just short of forty-three years old. As a staff writer on *The Saturday Evening Post* he had established an international reputation as a great reporter; but except for two short stories he had never written fiction. For ten years he had been brooding over the notion of writing a series of novels dealing with the fortunes of one family through three periods in the history of Maine. In 1925, his more or less formless thoughts began to settle into shape; and he began that incredibly patient research which was to become the basis of his novels. On that September day in 1928 he wrote the first words of ARUNDEL; on the twenty-fourth of May, 1929, he finished the first draft. The man who can today fairly be rated as America's greatest writer of historical fiction—with no time limits—had done his first job of work.

Not that ARUNDEL was finished. The manuscript had already been three times revised; the book was to be revised again and again, both before its publication and afterward. Nevertheless, the completion of the first draft may be taken as marking the emergence of the novelist from the reporter.

Today there stand five novels to Mr. Roberts' credit. The public verdict on them has already been delivered, and the critics have applauded each book as it appeared; but it is now possible to make

some appraisal not of the individual volumes, but of the stature and importance of the man's work as a whole.

There has been too much emphasis, in the discussion of Mr. Roberts' works, on the fact that they are based on history. "Novels that require the use of reference books," he himself once wrote, "are occasionally damned by being called historical novels. If there is anyone able to write effectively of any period in the world's history, including the immediate present, without cluttering his desk and brain with upwards of three tons of assorted reference books smelling faintly of old glue and moldy leather, I congratulate and envy him. What is more, I doubt that it can be done. In other words, I am of the opinion that every novel which deals adequately with any period at all is an historical novel."

This is, of course, true. The present is a part of history, as well as the past; and the best novels dealing with our life today will be source books for the historian of the future. So in the wider sense all novels are historical novels.

The result of this emphasis on the extent and accuracy of Mr. Roberts' historical research has been to becloud his merits as a novelist. It is conceivable that any first-rate reporter could have put together an account of the expedition against Quebec as complete and as accurate as that in *ARUNDEL*; but only a first-rate novelist could have written the book which Mr. Roberts wrote about that expedition. If it were not so easy to say that Mr. Roberts is a profound student and a great historian, it would have been clear long ago that he is also a novelist whose stature and whose capacities are steadily increasing.

It is impossible to define a great novel. Probably only time can offer a final appraisal of any book. But from an examination of those novels which after half a century or more still appear to be first-rate—*TOM JONES*, *VANITY FAIR*, *BOVARY*, *WAR AND PEACE*, *COPPERFIELD*, half a dozen others—it appears that they have some traits in common. They have gusto. They seem to have been written headlong, rushing, the words tumbling over one another like those of a speaker so full of his subject that he cannot wait to pick and choose. They are long yet seem short; the novelist has so much to tell that the reader puts his book down while still hungry for more, still full

of questions and inquiry. No man can read *WAR AND PEACE* and remain incurious about Napoleon. No man can read *ARUNDEL* and *RABBLE IN ARMS* without wishing to know more about Benedict Arnold. One reader, having finished *RABBLE*, raced through every biography of Arnold in the Boston Public Library in a fruitless effort to satisfy that profound curiosity which Mr. Roberts had evoked.

This quality of gusto in the great novels of the past was not a mere matter of piling words on words. It was the robust exuberance of overflowing genius, pouring out—sometimes without discretion or critical restraint—scenes and characters and chapters in a teeming flood, from which the reader might take what he chose and let the rest go by. And those great novels had another common quality. They were most often tragic in their theme; and their writers were more interested in failure than in success, in weakness than in strength, in vice than in virtue. The novelist exalted what was good by hating what was bad; he praised virtue by portraying the ugliness of vice. No one who has read the book can think of adultery without remembering that hideous thin black fluid which trickled out of Madame Bovary's mouth when she was dead. Mr. Roberts as an individual and as a novelist hates sham, hypocrisy, littleness above all things. When he deals with the petty and the mean his words have a scalding bitterness; and seen through his eyes, the stupid follies, the selfish intrigues, the petty bickerings of the Continental Congress become as abominable as adultery.

His novels have these two qualities—the gusto, and the abhorrence of evil things and men—which appear to be common to all great novels. But merely to write many words does not make greatness in a novelist; nor to hate evil. The man must also be master of the tools of his trade. He must know how to handle humor, description, characterization.

Mr. Roberts since he began his career as a reporter has always been skilled in humorous writing, and humor enriches every page of his novels. Cap Huff as a character in whom humor was an inherent and persistent quality can face any comparison without flinching. The Harvard episode in *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* is Mr. Roberts at his humorous best; but there are single lines and brief passages here and there through all his novels which will make the reader smile or chuckle or laugh aloud before he reads on. Mr. Roberts' descriptive

passages, especially when he writes about that region around Arundel which he knows and loves so well, evoke a deep peace and serenity, as though the reader looked upon the scenes which the author describes. These passages, by virtue of Mr. Roberts' skilful use of the first person form of narrative, are enriched by affection. The reader comes to love the land as Steven Nason loved it long ago.

Mr. Roberts has created a dozen characters which fix themselves in memory more deeply than the reader may at the moment realize. Another novelist half a dozen years after ARUNDEL was published found himself with the first draft of a novel finished, and suddenly realized that his leading feminine character was not only exactly the Phoebe Marvin of ARUNDEL, but she was even called Phoebe in this later tale. Some of Mr. Roberts' characters have this trick of embedding themselves permanently in the reader's consciousness. In the more superficial matter of quick characterization, Mr. Roberts is adept. One line often serves to present an individual complete and recognizable. "She had the look of never having done anything that did not give her pleasure." "I have never known a man so proud of a weak stomach, or so desirous of discussing it." "Wyseman Clagett . . . stood there looking at me horribly." "High Sheriff Thomas Packer—the same who later hanged the school teacher, Ruth Blay." "It seemed to me he was the most violent-looking man I had ever seen." "He had a merry, easy way with him; an air of polite attention to whatever was being said." "A man with a nose all bulbous, like a red sponge . . . peering at me out of eyes nearly hidden by bloated lids." Examples could be multiplied unendingly. In these technical respects, Mr. Roberts is master of the tools of his trade.

Of his books, four are written in the first person. The fine novels which have been written in the first person can be counted on the fingers of two hands. The writer beginning his task may choose to tell his tale from any one of a number of points of view. He may write as though he were omnipresent and omniscient, knowing not only everything that is said and done, but everything that is thought. He may write in the third person, yet tell only what one person in his tale sees and hears and witnesses. He may select any vantage which appeals to him as the most useful for his purposes. But it is an axiom in the writing trade that the more strictly a writer limits

himself in this respect, if he works successfully within the limits he has set, the more effective his work will be.

To write in the first person, to tell only what "I" saw or heard or thought, is perhaps the most severe of limitations. This form of narrative Mr. Roberts has made completely his servant. No one has used the first person so effectively since LORNA DOONE.

To any reader of Mr. Roberts' successive novels it must be apparent that his capacities are steadily increasing. His most recent novel is unquestionably his best thus far. I said in reviewing ARUNDEL that it revealed Mr. Roberts "as a novelist of extraordinary powers. The publication of this, his first work of fiction, is an event; the book itself is a fine, thrilling, human, vivid tale. Roberts has been able to deal as justly with great men as with mean ones; he has known how to let the reader share in suffering and triumph too; he has caught in pen and ink the ache of cold, the gnaw of hunger, and the stupor of great weariness. And he has found a way to keep alive, throughout these pages, the sense of valor and of loyalty which make them shine."

Seven years later, in reviewing NORTHWEST PASSAGE, I said: "When Kenneth Roberts wrote ARUNDEL, he produced a novel which for most writers would have been a culmination. In RABBLE IN ARMS, and today in NORTHWEST PASSAGE, he has proved that ARUNDEL was no more than a promise now bountifully fulfilled."

It is of interest to compare these two novels; to see in what respects NORTHWEST PASSAGE is the better. In Mr. Roberts' own opinion, ARUNDEL was too long. He says: "I was unfortunate in the amount of information I had accumulated. . . . I was filled with an almost uncontrollable desire to tell what I knew. . . ." The first draft, even after three revisions, ran to something over 300,000 words. In the fourth revision it was cut a few thousand words; in the fifth, and again in proofs, further cuts were made so that the first edition contained about 250,000 words. Out of his original draft, enough words to make a long novel had already been thrown away; but the end was not yet. The book was published in January, 1930; and as late as July and August, 1932, Mr. Roberts put aside his work on RABBLE IN ARMS for two months while he made a further revision of ARUNDEL for a new edition.

So Mr. Roberts' own opinion was that ARUNDEL was too long; but

for the reader that novel was too short. Of such books it is almost impossible to have too much; but ARUNDEL seemed too short for a more definite reason. There was, clearly, much that remained to be told. The novel as it stood was rich and satisfying; yet there was something more which needed to be written.

THE LIVELY LADY followed ARUNDEL. It was complete; it was in pleasant ways, for easy and delightful reading, perhaps the best of his books. But it lacked the grandeur of ARUNDEL; and it was to be overshadowed presently by RABBLE IN ARMS.

RABBLE IN ARMS is the longest of Mr. Roberts' novels; and it is a sequel to ARUNDEL. The reader of ARUNDEL had felt that in some way hard to define ARUNDEL demanded completion; but RABBLE IN ARMS did not complete ARUNDEL. It served to make clear that ARUNDEL was in fact only the first part of a noble tragedy, the end of which still remains unwritten.

Mr. Roberts has said that the original plan of his novels was to set down the adventures of one family through certain vital periods in the history of Maine; and his earlier novels have been called "Chronicles of Arundel". As he began to write, he modified that original plan to the extent that he designed ARUNDEL and RABBLE IN ARMS as a record of the campaigns of the Northern Army.

But he was writing more than history; he was writing a novel, and a novel must have people in it, and the lay reader will inevitably be more interested in the people in any novel than in its historical background. No one could write a novel, or a series of novels, about the Northern Army without finding every page of his book dominated by the figure of Benedict Arnold. This is what happened to Mr. Roberts. Arnold captured these two books. ARUNDEL and RABBLE IN ARMS are as they stand the first two volumes of a great tragedy which remains unfinished so long as the rest of Arnold's story remains untold.

But to write the story of Benedict Arnold was not Mr. Roberts' plan; and to this extent, these two novels escaped from his grasp. In themselves complete, they are also incomplete. Mr. Roberts wrote the story of the Northern Army as it had never been written, and as no one else could have written it. Even though they may be considered as the beginning of an unfinished work, ARUNDEL and RABBLE IN ARMS, taken together, may justly be rated as the greatest

historical novel written by an American—with one exception.

The exception is *NORTHWEST PASSAGE*. Here is not only an historical document of the first importance; here is also a great novel in the strict tradition of classic tragedy. It is great because in this novel Mr. Roberts had his plan; it was complete; he wrote it complete. It has those qualities of magnitude and order essential to tragic beauty. Mr. Roberts presents Major Robert Rogers in his heroic period, in those years when he was able to multiply himself, to make out of ordinary men giants able to do the impossible. But Mr. Roberts goes farther. He continues the tragic tale while the heroic figure of the leader of the Rangers begins to shrink and grow small; it dissipates itself; it withdraws into shabby shadows; it ceases to be heroic; it becomes in the end negligible.

Such tragedies as that which Mr. Roberts here chose to depict are in life numerous enough. A man may hold for a while the centre of the stage; but as the years pass, young men spring up around him, his figure grows less, he appears now and then to the public eye but these appearances awaken only reminiscent sympathies. Men may say: "He used to be . . ." This happens day by day and year by year. It is as though one watched a strong swimmer for a while breast the current and master it, then swim more weakly—more noisily perhaps, with more splashing, yet more weakly still—till at last he sinks and is gone and the stream flows strongly on. It is like watching a race in which one man surges to the front, draws further and further ahead, and then begins insensibly to lag till the pack overtakes him and he is no more than one among many, and lesser figures hold the eye till he is forgotten altogether in the ruck behind.

The Greek philosophy of tragedy held that the best fable is simple, without catastrophe; and that the hero should be a figure of moderate excellence, reduced to adversity through some great human weakness or error. The fable which Mr. Roberts chose to use in *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* fitted the classic tradition; it was the simple fable of a hero of moderate excellence reduced to adversity through human weakness and error. For a novelist to conceive the second part of *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* required a calm remoteness of mind. The novelist had to feel the pity and the terror which the mean end of Rogers must evoke without being shaken by them and rendered artistically inarticulate. To write the second part of *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* without

the easy recourse to the devices of climax and catastrophe was a task incredibly difficult. Mr. Roberts undertook this task, and he accomplished it. He wrote what he planned to write. He saw the fable whole, and he wrote it whole.

In these eight or ten years of his career as a working novelist, Mr. Roberts has shown a steady growth and an increasing mastery of his plan and of his instrument. From such pens, greatness comes.



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LITERARY DETECTIVE WORK IN KENNETH ROBERTS' NOVELS

By Clara Claasen

LIFE in the vicinity of Kenneth Roberts during his working-hours is considerably enlivened by outbursts against historians for their frequent failure to include details in their narratives. In his opinion, a story can be given clarity and reality by using accurate detail: without that accurate detail, it is bound to be lifeless, or will in all likelihood give the reader a dim and confused picture. This attitude has made it necessary for Mr. Roberts to be a sort of literary detective.

He is dissecting, let us say, Frothingham's *SIEGE OF BOSTON* in order to obtain a clear picture of the evacuation of Boston by the British on March 17, 1776. Approximately 12,000 troops and Americans who objected to the lawless behavior of rebellious mobs embarked that day on more than 120 vessels and set sail for Halifax. Nowhere is there a detailed account of that dramatic and harrowing event. Before him Mr. Roberts has all the known sources: General Howe's *Orderly Book*, Sabine's *LOYALISTS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*, Van Tyne's *LOYALISTS IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*, large-scale maps showing Boston's wharves in 1776. As he fingers through them he growls and grumbles. How, he wants to know, did this great throng of people get into their vessels? Where were the vessels? How long had the people hung around, waiting to embark? What method of policing was in force to avoid riots and panics? Sabine doesn't say. Van Tyne doesn't say. Howe's *Orderly Book* doesn't say. None of the histories of the Revolution attempt to say. Only Frothingham's book attempts to answer: "About nine o'clock the garrison left Bunker Hill, and a large number of boats, filled with troops and inhabitants, put off from the wharves of Boston." Mr. Roberts is in a rage. Why doesn't Frothingham say what he means? he wants to know. How many boats is a large number? What does Frothingham mean by "boat"? Properly speaking, a boat is a row-boat. Does Frothingham mean that 12,000 people rowed out in boats to the

vessels in which they were sailing? Or is he merely inaccurate in his terminology; is he referring to brigs, ships, snows and schooners as boats? If the latter, he ought to be spanked, Roberts says. At all events, the story of the evacuation of Boston can't be told effectively without reconstructing the embarkation details which all the historians had so successfully ignored.

When he was writing *ARUNDEL*, he was brought to a halt by the sudden and mysterious disappearance of provisions, on October 16, 1775, from one of the divisions of Arnold's little army. What happened to that food? If the story was to sound real, the reason must be given. The outstanding history of Arnold's great adventure is Prof. Justin H. Smith's *ARNOLD'S MARCH FROM CAMBRIDGE TO QUEBEC*, but it contained no explanation of the missing food. "We cannot possibly understand the case," wrote Professor Smith. "On October 15th all three divisions had provisions for three weeks; yet the very next day Greene's men saw starvation at the tent door." Mr. Roberts turned to other historians of Arnold's march: to Codman, to John Fiske, to Allen; but in none of them could he find the answer. He re-read every journal written by members of the expedition; and in one of them, Melvin's, he found a terse reference to a theft of food, on October 29th, by Morgan's riflemen. Having been a soldier himself, Mr. Roberts suspected he had found the answer to the great food-disappearance of October 16th. From the different journals of the expedition he reconstructed the position of Arnold's men on October 14, 15, 16 and 17, 1775. Until the 14th of October the army had been led by Morgan's division, with Greene's division second. On the 14th Morgan's division was unaccountably delayed; and while it was thus delayed, Greene's division moved up through Morgan's men. At noon on October 17th, Morgan's men went dashing through Greene's division, took their regular position at the forefront of the army, and held that position till the army reached Quebec. But on October 16th, while Greene's division was passing through Morgan's unaccountably delayed troops, all Greene's food had vanished. Professor Smith hadn't been able to account for Greene's loss of food, Mr. Roberts said, because Professor Smith had never been a soldier. In reality the answer was simple. Morgan's men were delayed because they had to find food. The only food they could find was Greene's. After the manner of all good soldiers, they helped

themselves to Greene's provisions: then hurried on. The first thing Greene knew, he had no food left. It's all very simple—if you know how to do it.

When Kenneth Roberts started to reconstruct the battle of Valcour Island in *RABBLE IN ARMS*, he found himself up against a blank wall; for historians had failed miserably to provide details. Even Admiral Mahan, greatest of naval experts, had confessed that there was no way of knowing how Arnold's row-galleys looked or how they were rigged.

Since the Valcour battle in *RABBLE IN ARMS* is seen from the deck of Arnold's row-galley, Roberts had to know what row-galleys looked like, and he couldn't describe them without knowing all about them. From General Waterbury's report of the battle he learned that the mainmast of General Waterbury's *Washington* row-galley had been struck by a cannonball. He argued from this use of the word "mainmast" that row-galleys had two masts: otherwise Waterbury would have referred merely to his "mast." Since the galleys were built by shipworkers from Portsmouth, and in a hurry, and for unskilled seamen, he further argued that the vessels would be rigged with the utmost simplicity, with easily handled sails, and with a rig familiar to Portsmouth shipbuilders. Lateen rig answered this description better than any other, so he rigged the row-galleys with two stubby masts, two lateen sails, and gave them high quarterdecks. He then advanced his theories to his friend Howard I. Chapelle, marine architect and author of *AMERICAN SAILING SHIPS*. Chapelle disagreed with them, and contended that the row-galleys must have been rigged as sloops with a single mast. Roberts insisted that Waterbury's report showed this to be doubtful and asked Chapelle to go to friends in the British Admiralty and try to find out whether the British had made records of the *Washington* galley when she surrendered on Lake Champlain. Chapelle did so, and some months later received copies of the drawings of the *Washington* galley made by a British naval officer in 1776. She was 72 feet long, had a high quarterdeck, two stubby masts and lateen sails, exactly as Roberts had reconstructed her.

FOR *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* he did more of this literary detective work than for all his other books put together. For two winters he employed a searcher in London, and provided her with clues to run

down in England's Public Record Office—a vast repository of letters, reports, treaties, orders, accounts, petitions: all the documents having to do with England's governments, wars and colonial possessions. Since the chief character in *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* was Major Robert Rogers, and since Major Rogers had been court-martialled on serious charges, Roberts refused to start his novel until he could locate that court-martial; for he felt that unless it could be found, there was no way of learning the true motives for Rogers' strange behavior at Michilimackinac. Only one comprehensive life of Rogers had been written; and its author, Prof. Alan Nevins, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1936, was of the opinion that the Rogers court-martial didn't exist. Roberts, however, found it.

The discovery of the court-martial enabled him to show that Rogers had been told by the King himself and his favorite minister, Charles Townsend, to hunt for a Northwest Passage. It explained why Rogers had spent large amounts of money at Michilimackinac. It explained Rogers' hitherto obscure relationship with Jonathan Carver, author of Carver's *TRAVELS*. It also proved that Carver was employed by Rogers to make the journey that resulted in the writing of Carver's *TRAVELS*; that Carver, in return, stole Rogers' plan to discover the Northwest Passage, withheld all credit from his benefactor and superior officer, and was a liar and a trimmer as well as an ingrate. It also helped Roberts to explain two hitherto unsolved mysteries—how and why Carver had obtained from Sioux Indians a grant to the present state of Wisconsin; why Carver had abandoned the search for the Northwest Passage on which Rogers had sent him, and turned back on the pretext that Rogers had given him insufficient supplies.

Roberts took the clues provided by the Rogers' Court-martial, supplemented them with other clues from New York and South Carolina, and thus reconstructed the circle of influential Englishmen who espoused Rogers' Northwest Passage scheme, and interested the King in his behalf. Who these men were had never before been known. Roberts dug them out one by one. From a New York paper he unearthed a "Proposal," dated Charlestown, S.C., early in 1762, for publishing Robert Rogers' *Memoirs*, in which were to be printed "some proposals for the Discovery of the Northwest-Passage by Land." Going back still farther, Roberts found in the Chatham

MOTOR ROUTES

(The following copy, compiled by Kenneth Roberts, describes map overleaf.)

1. THE ARNOLD TRAIL

(Arundel)

- GARDINER:** Arnold's troops marched from Washington's camp at Cambridge to Old Newbury; sailed from there in coastwise vessels to Gardiner. Here at Colburns' shipyard were built the bateaux in which they were to travel.
- AUGUSTA:** Bateaux and supplies were transported to Fort Western (Augusta) where preparations for the march were completed. From here the army began its ascent of the Kennebec, part of the men traveling in bateaux, part marching along the river. (Model of bateaux and Indian relics now on display in reconstructed Fort Western.)
- SKOWHEGAN:** Just above the Skowhegan bridge is the rock cliff up which Arnold's men dragged their bateaux.
- MADISON:** Site of old Indian town of *Norridgewock*. Opposite the mouth of Sandy River stands the obelisk erected to Father Sebastian Rasle, killed by Boston troops in 1724.
- NORTH ANSON:** The motor road here leaves the Kennebec, follows the Carrabasset, climbs a shoulder of Mt. Bigelow and comes down to Dead River near where Arnold's men put their bateaux into that stream after transporting them across the Great Carrying Place.
- FLAGSTAFF:** Site of cabin of Natanis. Just above here Arnold's army was almost destroyed by a wandering West Indian hurricane. The motor road skirts the Chain of Ponds but cannot cross the Height of Land where Arnold's men crossed. Detours eastward.
- ST. AUGUSTIN DE WOBURN:** The road enters Canada, passes between the two ponds where Arnold's army nearly perished in the swamps, and strikes Lake Megantic near its southern end. From that point the traveler looks back to the swamps at the end of the lake, the Beautiful Meadow at the head of Seven Mile Stream, and the same serrated summits of the Height of Land that Arnold's men saw.
- MEGANTIC:** Travelers are here often directed to Quebec by way of Stornaway; but only by taking Route 24 can motorists follow Arnold's footsteps.
- ST. GEORGES:** Known to Arnold as Sartigan. Here Route 24 joins main road from Quebec to Jackman. Two rivers flow into the Chaudiere at this point: the Du Loup and, a few hundred yards nearer Quebec, the Famine. The first house in Canada, in Arnold's day, stood where the Famine joins the Chaudiere, and there Arnold's troops had their first rest after traversing the wilderness.
- STE. MARIE:** Where Cap Huff contrived the flogging of Flood for stealing Capt. Dearborn's purse: then filched the keg of Spanish wine from the Inn.
- QUEBEC:** At 4 A.M. on December 31, 1775, Arnold and Montgomery attacked the city in a blinding snowstorm. Montgomery was killed, Arnold wounded, and the bulk of Arnold's men captured.

2. RETREAT OF THE NORTHERN ARMY

(Rabble In Arms)

- QUEBEC:** The Americans besieged the city until early May, 1776, when Burgoyne's troops arrived and drove the Americans helter-skelter to Montreal.
- NEUVILLE:** In 1775 called Pointe aux Trembles, to which Arnold and his men retreated to wait for Montgomery. (*Arundel*)
- TROIS RIVIÈRES:** Sullivan's troops were defeated by newly arrived British regiments. (*Rabble in Arms*)
- BERTHIER:** From this town on the western end of Lake St. Peter, automobilists ferry across to Sorel.
- SOREL:** American troops lay festering from smallpox here in June, 1776. Only when

[Continued on p. 22]

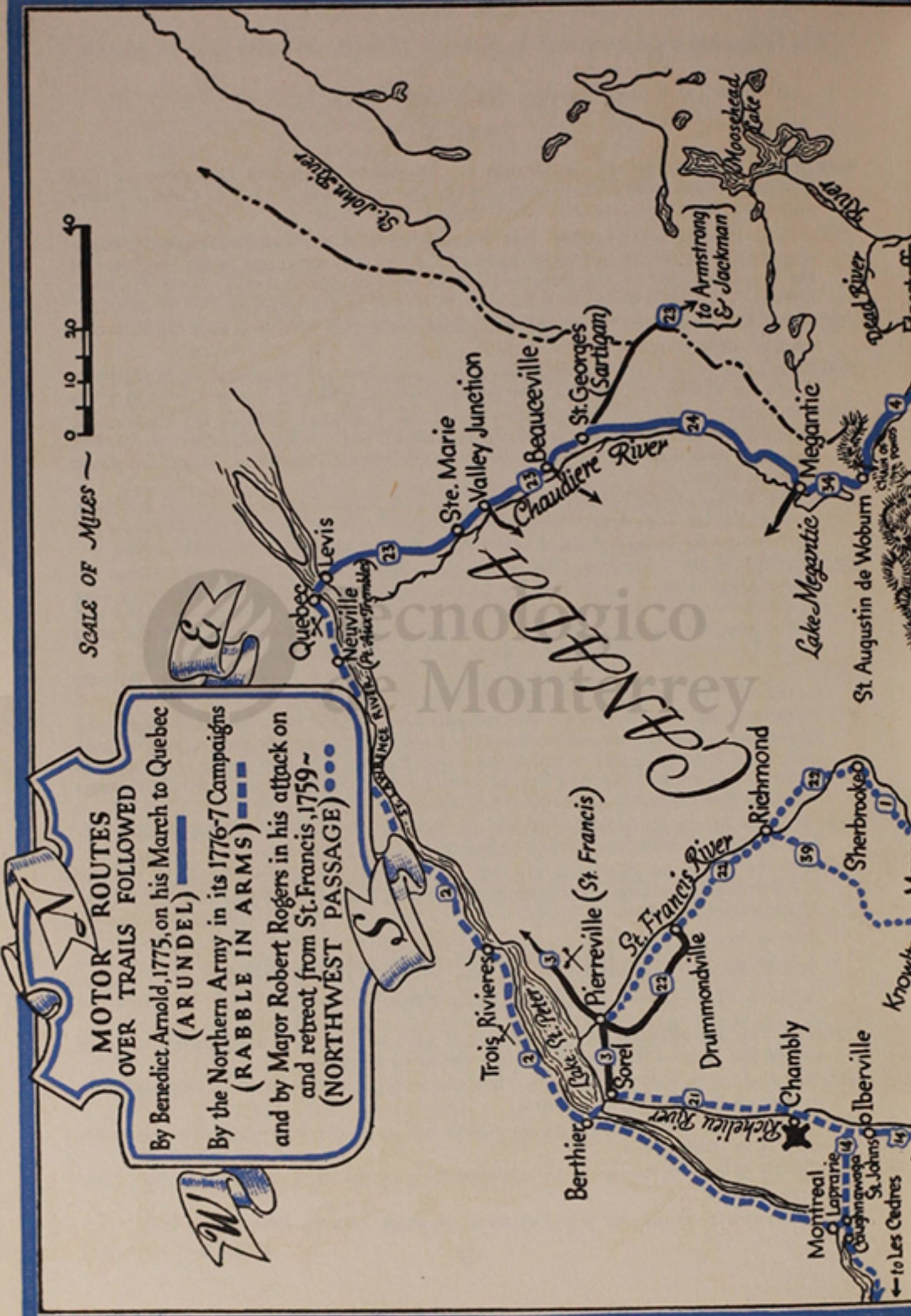
**MOTOR ROUTES
OVER TRAILS FOLLOWED**

By Benedict Arnold, 1775, on his March to Quebec
(ARUNDEL) ———

By the Northern Army in its 1776-7 Campaigns
(RABBLE IN ARMS) - - - -

and by Major Robert Rogers in his attack on
and retreat from St. Francis, 1759 ~
(NORTHWEST PASSAGE) ····

SCALE OF MILES ~ 0 10 20 40



St. Lawrence Valley



St. Augustin de Woburn

to Les Cedres

Knowlton

Sherbrooke

Richmond

St. Augustin de Woburn

Megantic

Beauceville

St. Georges (Sartigan)

St. John's River

Dead River

Elanstruff

to Armstrong & Jackman

Moosehead Lake

Chaudiere River

Lake Megantic

St. Augustin de Woburn

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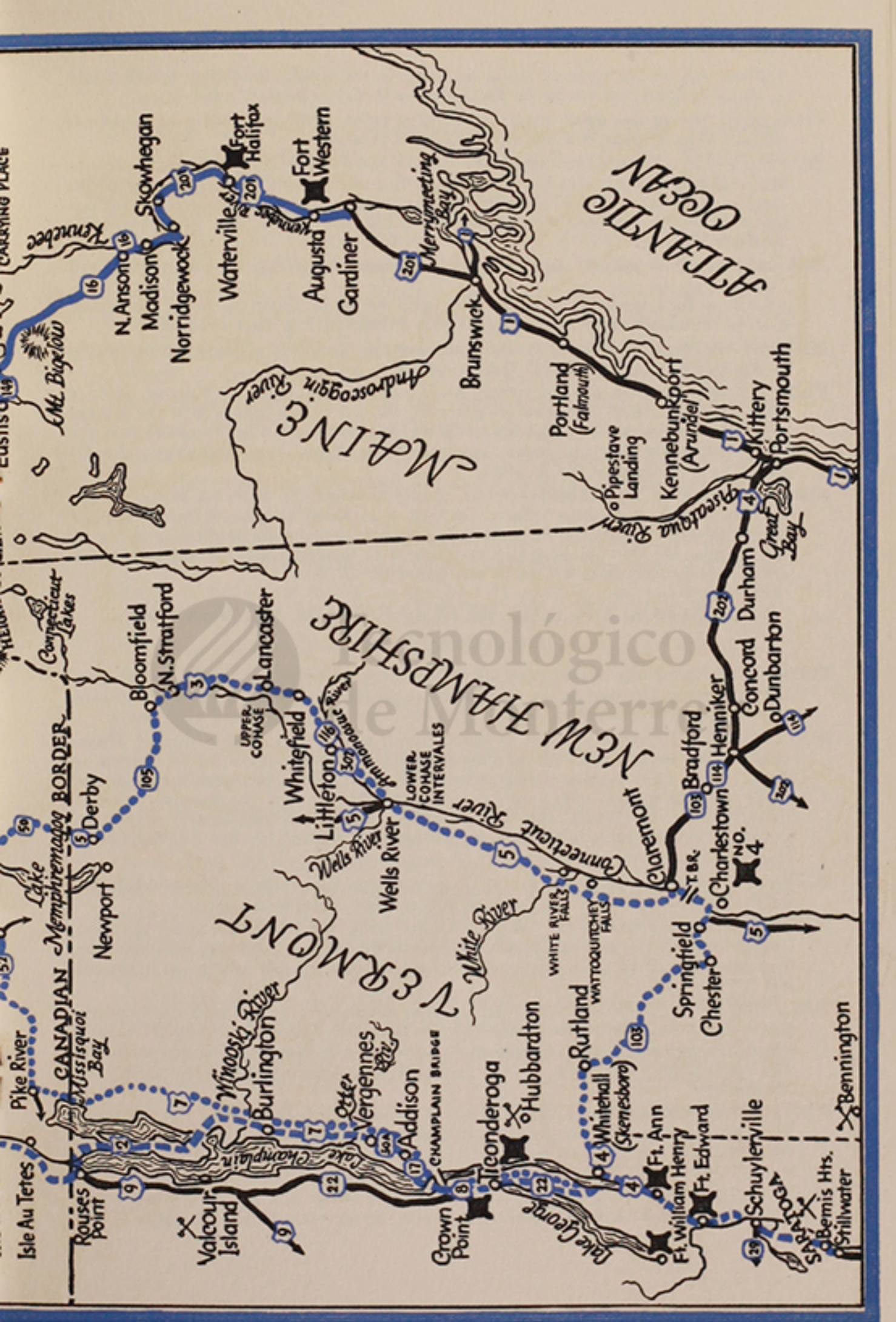
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[Continued from p. 19]

Sullivan was on the verge of losing his army to the rapidly advancing British would he abandon Sorel and retreat up the Richelieu to Lake Champlain and safety.

CHAMBLY: Having no other means of transportation, Sullivan's half-dead regiments dragged their bateaux over the rapids below Chambly.

ST. JOHNS: Here Sullivan was joined by Arnold and his few men, who escaped from Montreal a few jumps ahead of the British. The united army rowed painfully to Isle aux Noix—known to Cap Huff as Eel Ox Nox—and for days lay rotting with smallpox and flux. On Isle aux Noix were the death pits into which those who died were rolled by hundreds.

ISLE AUX NOIX: Sullivan's army of invalids retreated from here to *Crown Point* and *Ticonderoga*.

Arnold at once began to build the fleet with which he hoped to delay the British. Most of the vessels were built at *Skenesboro* (Whitehall) in three months.

ISLE AUX TETES: In September Arnold sailed here, made a demonstration for the benefit of the British, then fell back to Valcour Island to wait.

VALCOUR ISLAND: On Oct. 11, 1776, Arnold fought the battle of Valcour, made a masterly retreat, was overtaken on the 13th, ran his vessels ashore near the present town of *Addison*, escaped by land to Crown Point. Not until the following year did the British under Burgoyne break through, capture *Ticonderoga*, and pursue the demoralized Americans to *Fort Edward*.

SARATOGA: During 1777 American morale slowly returned. On Sept. 19, Burgoyne met his first setback at *Freeman's Farm*. On Oct. 7, at *Bemis Heights*, Burgoyne made a second attempt to pass the Americans, and was stopped by the leadership of Arnold and Morgan. On Oct. 10, Burgoyne surrendered to General Gates (at *Stillwater*), and the British invasion from the north was ended for all time.

3. ATTACK ON AND RETREAT FROM ST. FRANCIS (Northwest Passage)

CROWN POINT: On Sept. 13, 1759, Major Robert Rogers, Commander of Rogers' Rangers, left here with 220 men in 17 whaleboats to attack the Indian town of *St. Francis* (Pierreville), whose warriors for 100 years had harried New England settlements.

MISSISQUOI BAY: Rowing at night to elude French and Indians, Rogers reached Missisquoi Bay in 10 days, hid his whaleboats; then set out overland for St. Francis—a march of 100 miles through trackless forest. His boats were discovered and destroyed by French and Indians, who set out in pursuit. For 11 days the Rangers struggled through a bog. On Oct. 6, they wiped out St. Francis, and immediately turned and set off for the Connecticut River and the safety of the fort at *No. 4* (Charlestown, N.H.).

SHERBROOKE: Rogers ascended the St. Francis to the *Grand Forks* (Sherbrooke), followed the Magog River to the northern end of *Lake Memphremagog*.

DERBY: The Rangers crossed the Canadian border in the vicinity of this town, then bore eastward to the Connecticut. Somewhere near Derby, Rogers' starving men split into detachments to hunt food. Three of these were ambushed and wiped out by French and Indians.

THE AMMONOOSUC RIVER: Rogers led his own detachment safely down the Connecticut to the Ammonoosuc; down the Ammonoosuc to its junction with the Connecticut, where he had ordered supplies to be brought. An officer had brought them, but had taken them away again the day before Rogers' desperate followers reached the rendezvous.

WHITE RIVER FALLS: At the mouth of the Ammonoosuc Rogers built a raft, on which he embarked with the two Rangers and an Indian boy to get help for his almost dead men. The raft was wrecked at White River Falls. Rogers, too weak to chop trees, burnt down enough for a new raft, which he nearly lost at *Wattoquitchy Falls*.

CHARLESTOWN, N.H.: On Oct. 31, Rogers arrived safely at *No. 4* and returned to the Ammonoosuc with provisions in time to rescue the remnants of his command.

Papers, in London, a recommendation from Arthur Dobbs, Governor of South Carolina, and his Council, written in 1761, that Rogers be made Superintendent of Southern Indian Affairs. Arthur Dobbs was vitally interested in the Northwest Passage. Rogers was in South Carolina in 1761. Thus Roberts proved that Rogers must have discussed his Northwest Passage scheme with Dobbs years before Carver ever heard of it. Dobbs' closest friend was Henry Ellis, Governor of Georgia, another Northwest Passage enthusiast. Ellis was in London when Rogers went there in 1765. The Agent for Georgia in London was Dr. John Campbell, a historian, named in the Rogers Court-martial as the agent for Rogers' discoveries in America. One by one Roberts assembled Rogers' friends and helpers: then welded them together in *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* in a dinner-table scene that brought unstinted praise from leading London literary critics.

A few Americans spoke lightly of that dinner-table scene. The author of *NORTHWEST PASSAGE*, they said, had followed the usual custom of historical novelists, and had dragged in the leading figures of the period, just to emphasize the importance of his own characters. This was exactly what Roberts hadn't done. By the hardest sort of literary detective work he had discovered and used the exact persons with whom Major Rogers had been associated during his life in London.

Roberts, when questioned about the accuracy of his novels, says lightly that every writer is bound to make mistakes; that he prefers to be known as the author of interesting novels rather than as the author of accurate ones. The fact remains that his skill as a literary detective makes it unsafe to accuse him of inaccuracies. Some readers took him to task for saying, in *ARUNDEL*, that tomatoes were in use in 1770. Tomatoes were called "love-apples" in 1770, they said, were regarded as poison, and were never used. Roberts produced, from the files of the American Medical Association, a statement made in 1765 by Dr. Siccary, a Jewish practitioner in Virginia, highly recommending the eating of tomatoes to promote longevity. None the less, he removed his references to tomatoes from *ARUNDEL*, saying that even though a fact might be correct, it should be removed from a book if too many readers considered it an anachronism. A story should *sound* true, he says, as well as *be* true.

Others protested when he used the word "dollars" in *NORTHWEST PASSAGE*. There was no United States mint in 1768, they pointed out; hence no dollars. Roberts produced the *JOURNAL* of Alexander Henry, a trader from Montreal to Michilimackinac in 1765. Henry paid for provisions and transportation in dollars—Spanish Trade Dollars.

There were protests from New Hampshire hunters when he spoke of deer in New Hampshire in 1759. The first white-tailed deer killed in New Hampshire, they said, was around 1872, and men walked miles to see it. Roberts replied that deer had been driven out long, long ago by encroaching settlers: then had returned. He proved his point by producing a law passed by the New Hampshire and Vermont legislatures in 1777 and 1778 forbidding the killing of deer between January and July.

A few readers of *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* were derisive when they read that Rogers' Rangers ate bologna sausage in 1759—until Roberts produced Major Rogers' own *JOURNAL* containing an entry for March 12, 1758, "all our provisions from the beginning was a small bologna sausage and a little ginger."

Mr. Roberts' publishers have received letters protesting that soldiers in 1775 didn't use modern profanity, such as "My God" and "lousy". When the letters were referred to Mr. Roberts, he said that soldiers in all wars have talked the same. He produced General Dearborn's *JOURNALS*, in which Dearborn had gone somewhere "toot sweet". He produced a return of troops made by the captain of a Massachusetts militia company that went to the relief of Fort William Henry in 1757. It was signed, "A True Roll. O.K., David Black." He produced a letter from Colonel Baldwin, who referred in 1776 to the "lousy militia" that had stolen his spare clothes, and another from Samuel Paine of Worcester saying that the American troops quartered in Harvard were "lousy". He produced a letter from a young lady, written to her aunt on April 17, 1776: "The King's troops have evacuated the town. I have been twice there. Good God! What a scene!" He produced an entry from Caleb Haskell's *Diary*, dated July 31, 1775, in which a sentry shouted, "Turn out, for God's sake turn out!" He produced many others, some of them almost unfit to print; and all of them together tended to show that Kenneth Roberts is hard to beat as a literary detective.

KENNETH ROBERTS IN THE SCHOOLS

EDITORIAL NOTE:

From the publication of *Arundel*, the value of Kenneth Roberts' novels has been recognized by progressive educators in many parts of the country for their value both as literature and as history. They have offered English classes a welcome variation from older classics. Typical of the schools using the novels is Culver Military Academy at Culver, Indiana. In the articles that follow, two of the instructors there outline briefly how they have worked with the material.

ENGLISH "REVOLUTIONIZED"

By William J. Graham

Assistant Instructor in English

HISTORY, enriched by the reactions of those who experienced it, is interesting and meaningful. Only by giving his students a chance to learn what common people did and felt during any epoch in history can a teacher make a student understand the sacrifices and the sufferings experienced by those people. Once the sacrifices and the sufferings are known, the student sees historical figures as he sees himself and his fellows—as real people, with real heartaches and real problems. Dusty dates take on added significance and history-in-literature becomes for him the most interesting of all studies, instead of the most tiresome.

Kenneth Roberts in "The Chronicles of Arundel" and *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* has proved that historical facts need not be dry, for in these books the student finds the heroism and romance of commonplace people in commonplace surroundings.

It is a basic principle that the greatest value of literature lies in its power to suggest to the reader the scenes and the scents, the tastes and the sounds, the persons and the things with which he himself is familiar. The nearer literature comes to the reader's present background, the more likely it is to stir his memory and stimulate his imagination: the more it will deepen his sensibilities, increase his appreciation of good things, spur him on to independent thought and to eager inquiry. The classics usually read in English courses have a setting so foreign, so remote, that the student seldom gets from them what he ought to get from the best literature. This is not true of Kenneth Roberts' novels. They are American, of America, about Americans.

The possibility of using Kenneth Roberts' novels for study in English courses occurred to me before the close of the 1936-37 Winter School session, as a result of my observations of the interest shown by boys in these particular books. Among the volumes in my office, four—*ARUNDEL*, *RABBLE IN ARMS*, *THE LIVELY LADY*, and *CAPTAIN CAUTION*—were extremely popular; and at the same time most of the historical classics were doing nothing but gathering dust on the shelves. I say the Roberts novels were "in my office". It would be more correct to say that they had a place there. They were never "in" except to be returned, laid on the desk, soon to be taken by other boys who had been promised them or apparently knew they had been returned. Usually the boys wanted to talk about the books, and from what they said I soon discovered that the books had the unusual merit of stimulating a tremendous interest in good literature. I saw that if used in class, they would be ideal, not only to impress skeptical American boys with the deep satisfaction to be obtained from good reading but also to help my students understand how one can live vicariously through literature if it properly mirrors life.

Mr. Roberts' novels have more than their interesting plots to recommend them. They conform to the "action and adventure" reading prescribed for the ninth-grade boy. *RABBLE IN ARMS* not only isn't

juvenile, but the boy who reads it is free of the uncomfortable feeling that those who guide his reading consider him incapable of appreciating good literature. He takes the same enjoyment in *RABBLE IN ARMS* as do his elders. Thus he feels on an equal footing with adult readers, and at the same time he is impelled to read other books that will tell him what happened to Mr. Roberts' characters in their earlier days or in later life.

The characters in "The Chronicles" aren't as young as Jim in *TREASURE ISLAND*. Their affairs are much more serious and worth while than his; their speech, mannerisms are more virile than those of *IVANHOE*. The historical background in *RABBLE IN ARMS* is less remote in time; is more closely related to the government, culture and home of the American boy. Again and again I was impressed by the incentive to research that accompanies the class study of these books, and the manner in which they facilitate correlation with the citizenship courses of History Departments.

The boys seem to gain an added pleasure from knowing that the author is a living personality from whom we may expect more novels, and to whom frequent reference is made when their families discuss books and reading. Even now, long after the study of *RABBLE IN ARMS* has been completed and all the other novels of Mr. Roberts' have been read, I am asked by the "sons of the Rabble" that constituted the class, "Do you know when Kenneth Roberts will publish another book?" When Mr. Roberts wrote me he was working on a book of the source material of his novels, they were delighted.

For these reasons I was strongly in favor of introducing one of Mr. Roberts' novels into the English courses of the ninth and tenth grades, relegating the traditional historical novels to outside reading, to more comprehensive courses of later years, or to elective courses in which boys accept and read classics for the sake of the cultural background they gain.

Thus English courses, instead of being dreary hours spent in fumbling with plots all remote from the student's life and concerned with things for which he cares little or nothing, can be revolutionized by Kenneth Roberts' books. Literature is something filled with flesh-and-blood individuals engaged in worthwhile pursuits. Library permits are in demand. Encyclopaedias that previously were never known to exist are pored over for biographical sketches. As a matter

of fact, so real are the fictitious characters that the student often looks for them also. Pens scratch furiously, taking notes. Biographies are consulted and compared for their truthfulness or bias toward a certain character. Biographers are praised or condemned, according to their abilities. Histories are reopened with new interest. Literary magazines are scanned anxiously for announcements bearing on forthcoming books by the author. Newspapers are clipped to furnish items of historical interest in connection with places in the novel. The picture collection on the classroom walls grows to include candleholders and warming pans! To cap the climax, one student brought in an old horse pistol—a priceless relic—and another a powder horn. The feeling becomes one of “Say, there’s really something to all this, isn’t there?”

The student isn’t in doubt about the truth of the factual framework on which “hangs the tale” of the Roberts novels. Concrete evidence of it is furnished by the photostatic copies of pages from his source books with their caustic notations and searching comparisons.* The writing of the weekly theme comes to seem simple by comparison with the labors of the novelist. The student benefits from the proofs of Mr. Roberts’ perseverance in the tireless dissection of innumerable books, documents, historical records; in visiting the localities of which he writes, in order to draw true pictures. Arnold and Rogers would have found in him a companion for attention to details and the boys sense and appreciate it. They soon learn that his characters are historically accurate: that they always talk and behave like human beings: that the occurrences in his books are inevitable, and not made to fit the plot. In the student’s own words, “The people in his books always do what seems the best to do.”

Mr. Roberts has brought about not only a new feeling for America but for literature as well. It is no longer necessary for the teacher to urge completion of the reading assignment; he now must curb the class from discussing events not yet taken up.

*These photostats may be borrowed from Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., New York, N. Y., for a small fee to cover carriage and insurance. Requests should be addressed for the attention of the Trade Educational Service Department, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., New York, N. Y.

THE CLASS FINDS A NORTHWEST PASSAGE

By Alfred T. Hill

IT ALL STARTED when a ninth-grader approached me in the fall with the request that he be allowed to do some extra reading and writing for honor credit in English. He expressed an interest in *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* and agreed that it would be worth while to write to the publishers for information concerning the author and the source material of the novel. Doubleday, Doran & Company responded generously to his youthful appeal by sending a large envelope with mimeographed material on the book and a biographical sketch of Kenneth Roberts. The boy was enthralled, for his reading and writing were suddenly directed toward a common purpose: the search of his own Northwest Passage to the treasures of literature.

At this time two tenth-graders volunteered to make a joint book report on the novel. The upshot was that shortly after Thanksgiving two window shades appeared posted horizontally across the rear wall of my classroom. One was a diagrammatical study of the book and the material sent by the publishers in which interest was focussed upon the author's life and literary career, the leading characters in the novel, and the sources from which Mr. Roberts had gathered the material for his story. The other chart was divided into an upper and a lower section correlated by a legend of printing between the two. The lower section represented the course of the plot of the story as the interest rose and fell, while the upper section traced by different colored lines the importance of the four leading characters, the upper line representing the predominating character in each episode. One whole morning was devoted to a detailed report by the three boys involved, so that four different sections of English were introduced very enthusiastically to this novel.

Apparently the work of these youngsters was convincing advertising in itself, for in no time requests began to come in for the loan

of my copy; and not only was the library copy always out, but inscribed beneath its title in the librarian's notebook was a long waiting list. By the beginning of the second semester the popularity had grown to such an extent that one section volunteered to buy their own copies if I would permit the substitution of *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* for *SILAS MARNER* as the novel of the semester. With much less serious consideration than I appeared to give the problem I accepted their "offer," after duly impressing them with the fact that they were undertaking an experiment the success of which was very largely up to them.

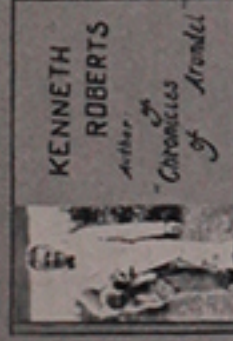
At this point I sent a letter to Kenneth Roberts asking for his co-operation and soliciting any suggestions he might wish to make with regard to the use of his novel. I quote a part of his reply, which will be particularly interesting to anyone who has read the book:

I appreciate the work your boys are doing, but it gives me an uncomfortable feeling to see one of my books dissected—especially NORTHWEST PASSAGE. The task I set for myself was to tell Rogers' life in the form of fiction. . . . I find it depressing when profound critics wrangle over whether the first or the second part of NORTHWEST PASSAGE is the better. Singular word, "better"! I had to show that there was only one man in the world capable of doing the job Rogers was asking to be allowed to do. I could only do it by showing him doing a similar job. This made it necessary for me to reverse the proceeding ordinarily followed by authors: put my physical climax first; then hold the reader's interest through the true climax, which is a psychological one. As Bernard DeVoto wrote me, that was hard on some critics: they'd expected a straight plunge off tackle, but instead of that they got a reverse around the end, which left 'em all up in the air.

In subsequent correspondence it developed that we both saw this unit of work as an opportunity for leading young readers into paths of new discovery where they would travel toward their own ends and gain individual insights.

NORTH WEST PASSAGE

Author



Booth Tarkington
Edits ROBERTS' BOOKS
AND CONTRIBUTES TO
THEIR SUCCESS

MAINE ANCESTORS
INSPIRATION FOR
HISTORICAL NOVELS

LEADING HISTORICAL
NOVELLIST, STRICTER
FOR ACCURATE DETAILS

CHARACTERS

ROBERTS
EXPLORER OF NORTH
WEST PASSAGE -
INDIAN FIGHTER -

Landon Towne: Joins
ROBERTS RANGERS -
EXPLORES NORTH WEST
PASSAGE - PAINTS INDIANS

ELIZABETH, ROBERTS'
SHREWISH WIFE, RUINS
HIM.

ANN POLLER, DAUGHTER
OF ROBERTS' AIDE, ASSISTS
AND FINALLY MARRIES
TOWNE

HISTORICAL
SOURCES

EXPLORES BY-PATHS
OF HISTORY

FINDS CIRCUMSTANTIAL
RECORDS IN
BRITISH ARCHIVES

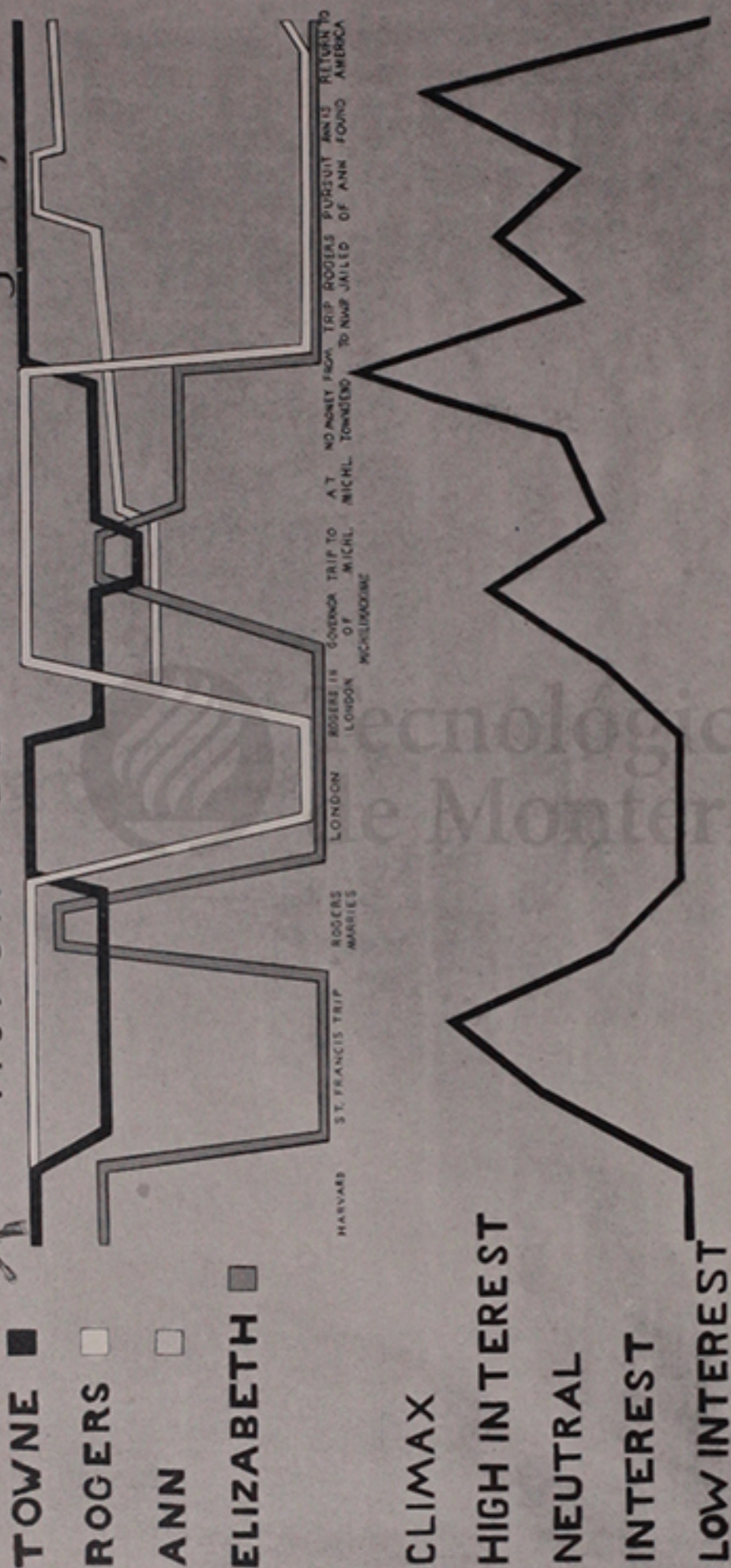
HOGARTH, REYNOLDS,
FRANKLIN, TOWNSEND,
DR. JOHNSON, AMHERST,
GAGE & JOHNSTON,
BURKE, WENTWORTH.

SALES OVER 100,000 IN
FIVE YEARS RESULT OF
CAREFUL REVISION

G.F.C. '37"

A diagrammatical study of NORTHWEST PASSAGE prepared by a student at Culver Military Academy. Interest is focussed upon the author's life and literary career, the leading characters in the novel, and the sources from which Kenneth Roberts gathered material for his story.

Northwest Passage



J.M. G. W.R. 11

A chart of plot and character interest in NORTHWEST PASSAGE, drawn by two students at Culver Military Academy. The lower half represents the rise and fall of interest during the course of the plot; the upper half traces the importance of the four leading characters. The uppermost line portrays the predominating character in each episode. A legend in the middle correlates the two sections.

With this rather liberal and experimental philosophy in mind I asked the class to set up their own goals of achievement and prescribe their own methods of study. Their aims were as follows:

1. To study Kenneth Roberts' style, especially his use of dialogue and description, as a model by which to improve some of the class writing.
2. To enjoy the story for its own sake and to discover new fields for appreciation beyond the mere following of the plot.
3. To increase vocabulary.
4. To improve speed, expression, and comprehension in reading.
5. To increase familiarity with the historical period shown in the novel.

This was a surprisingly large order, in my estimation, for ten boys to fill in six weeks; nevertheless, armed with novels, pencils and notebooks, we set to work. It was agreed that our work would be more orderly if we restricted ourselves to reading approximately twenty-five pages a night, and once a week had a formal class report in which we pooled all our findings. Then the ten members were divided into committees of two, covering each of the five above-mentioned objectives; these committees were shifted each week to allow for flexibility and to give each man a chance at all phases of the experiment. Specifically we agreed to make a "worksheet" covering various aspects of the novel, such as style, characterization, plot, setting and vocabulary.

Mr. Roberts' publishers then gave us invaluable assistance by lending us two dozen photostatic copies of sections of the original manuscripts and a special two-volume edition of the book, the second volume of which contained all the most interesting source material for the novel—including several different versions of the St. Francis raid, the court-martial of Rogers, and the divorce proceedings of Elizabeth Browne Rogers.

There is no way in which I as a teacher can overstate the value to the boys of studying these original sources. They fairly wallowed in the story. Perhaps the thing that made the greatest impression on them was the amount of time the author spent in gathering and organizing his material and the labor he put into revisions and cor-

BOOKS BY KENNETH ROBERTS

ARUNDEL

A Chronicle of the Province of Maine and of the Secret Expedition Against Quebec

IN ARUNDEL Kenneth Roberts has chronicled for all time the magnificent march of Benedict Arnold's little army of untrained colonials northward through the Maine wilderness toward the walls of Quebec.

ARUNDEL is the story of that epic march; of the inspired leadership of Benedict Arnold; of Steven Nason of Arundel, Arnold's right-hand man; of Cap Huff, the rollicking down-East Hercules; lovely, cold-hearted Marie de Sabrevois; Phoebe Marvin, with her seaman's clothes and her chain of cat's-eyes; of many another unforgettable character. With the story of the march itself is interwoven the romance of a young scout and a resourceful daughter of the frontier. ARUNDEL is a masterpiece of story-telling and of the re-creation of history.

632 pages, 5 1/8" x 7 1/2", vellum cloth, \$2.50

THE LIVELY LADY

A Chronicle of Arundel, of Privateering, and of the Circular Prison on Dartmoor

THE LIVELY LADY tells of the intrepidity of American privateersmen in the War of 1812, and the bitter suffering of thousands of American seamen within the mist-shrouded walls of Dartmoor Prison.

Against this background is laid the calculated daring of Richard Nason, Arundel seaman, son of Phoebe and Steven Nason, captain of a merchant brig at twenty. Forced into war against his will, into the twisted pattern of his life come a host of vivid characters: the mismated Sir Arthur and Lady Ransome; King Dick, the giant negro ruler of the Prison; Captain Thomas Shortland, cruel Commandant of Dartmoor; history's gentlest daredevil, Captain Thomas Boyle, Jeddy Tucker, hard-drinking schoolmaster-seaman . . .

THE LIVELY LADY brings one the thunder of the sea; the stench of Dartmoor; moments of bright courage; the true spirit of the days when America was young and bold.

368 pages, 5 1/8" x 7 1/2", vellum cloth, \$2.50

RABBLE IN ARMS

A Chronicle of Arundel and the Burgoyne Invasion

IN RABBLE IN ARMS Mr. Roberts takes up the story of The Northern Army where ARUNDEL left off. It tells of the starving colonial forces encamped on the snowy plains before Quebec; of the torn and bleeding men who, inspired by their indomitable leader, dragged their bateaux and supplies through the steaming marshes and trackless forests that lay between the St. Lawrence and Lake Champlain; of smallpox and flux and the countless horrors and privations that beset these men of the pitiable colonial army—"a rabble in arms", as the British called them; of dark days unparalleled in American history. It tells of the apparent miracle by which Arnold and his men hacked from virgin forests a fleet of war-craft; of two battles, one on the border of Lake Champlain, the other on the heights of Saratoga, because of which the tide of the American Revolution was turned and a new nation born.

870 pages, 5 1/8" x 7 1/2", vellum cloth, \$2.50

CAPTAIN CAUTION

A Chronicle of Arundel

CAPTAIN CAUTION is a dramatic and exciting story of the War of 1812. The book's chief character is Daniel Marvin, an Arundel mariner, and associated with him in his adventures are Corunna Dorman, sea-faring daughter of an Arundel shipmaster; Lucien Argandeau, a French privateer captain; Lurman Slade, master of an American slaver; and Matthew Newton, a Harvard graduate who became Marvin's fight-manager. How history repeats itself is shown by the bootleggers, gangsters, politicians, privateersmen and corrupt society that thronged the England and France of 1812.

Among the high-lights are Marvin's imprisonment in the hold of a British brig, his battle to re-take the brig from his captors, his prize-fight aboard a British hulk, his escape to France, his invention of the Gangway Pendulum, and his final engagement off Fayal with the brig commanded by his enemy, Slade. CAPTAIN CAUTION portrays a phase of American history never before adequately treated.

310 pages, 5 1/8" x 7 1/2", vellum cloth, \$2.50

* * * *

The four "Chronicles of Arundel": ARUNDEL, RABBLE IN ARMS, THE LIVELY LADY, and CAPTAIN CAUTION are uniformly bound in dark blue cloth with blind embossing and gold stamping.

NORTHWEST PASSAGE

IN *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* Kenneth Roberts has taken as his central theme the career of Major Rogers, whose amazing exploits during the five years of the Old French War proved him the greatest of all Indian fighters. Equally alive to the reader is Langdon Towne, artist and Harvard student who joined General Amherst's army. At Crown Point he casts his lot with Rogers' Rangers. From then on his life is inextricably bound with that of Rogers'. As Towne rises above adversity, Rogers sinks beneath it. Rogers is a figure out of Greek tragedy, descending from glory to the ignominy of Fleet Prison. And Towne himself, with his own career and his own star-shot romance, is a memorable figure.

NORTHWEST PASSAGE has the same literary distinction, historical accuracy, humor and romance which have distinguished its famous predecessors. *709 pages, 5½" x 7⅞", natural finish cloth, \$2.75*

MARCH TO QUEBEC*

Journals of the Members of Arnold's Expedition

Compiled and Annotated by Kenneth Roberts during the writing of *ARUNDEL*. The limited edition of *NORTHWEST PASSAGE*, containing an Appendix Volume of valuable historical data upon which Mr. Roberts based his famous novel, created a new, insistent demand from a public eager to explore the magnificent historical detail which has backgrounded so solidly the author's noted "Chronicles of Arundel." The present book, composed of authentic journals, diaries and letters on which *ARUNDEL* was based, is the first step in this direction.

The major episode in *ARUNDEL* is the march of Benedict Arnold's troops up Dead River and across the Height of Land to Quebec in 1775. The only trustworthy sources on that epic journey are the journals of the men who participated. In *MARCH TO QUEBEC* Kenneth Roberts has brought them all together, amplifying and clarifying them by his notes. These journals were written by members of the four divisions of Arnold's army. From their varying viewpoints is seen the sweeping panorama of a great military expedition. Here is a new kind of history, written by men unaware that they were writing a chapter in the autobiography of America. As a source book on a great military campaign *MARCH TO QUEBEC* is unique; as exciting adventure it ranks with the finest. (*Frontispiece, 2 maps, index.*)

Published September 9, 1938

657 pages, 5½" x 7⅞", buckram, \$4.00

*See *ARUNDEL*, page 33.

RECENT CRITICAL OPINIONS

IN AMERICA

The sensitive American of today, reading *NORTHWEST PASSAGE*, will get the same sort of feeling that comes to him as he explores Old Ironsides and wonders how human beings were equal to the tasks they imposed on themselves. The French Academy crowns a man who has accomplished such a feat: our English cousins embellish his name with a "Sir."

EDITORIAL, *Boston Herald*

It is the eternal pageant of the 18th Century that keeps one reading *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* to the very end. Of Robert Rogers Ann says: "Ah, no! You can't kill what was in that man!" And it seems you can't—not with Kenneth Roberts to bring him back out of the star dust and make him again so real.

R. L. DUFFUS, *New York Times*

The first half of *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* deals with the most spectacular episode in a war sufficiently horrible, one of the most agonizing marches in history. In the second half, the London of the period comes variously and most amazingly to life. You will read it with as much satisfaction as you ever got from *The Virginian*. Even so, it is not the best part. Suddenly Mr. Roberts is animating his material with an imaginative warmth that he has not shown us before. The hunger and desire of the nation just about to break westward into the untrodden lands, the tangle of cupidities and venalities and stupidities that in great part conditioned them—they are in *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* as they have not been in our fiction before. The soldiery, the traders, the *voyageurs*, and the first wave of the pioneers are done with fine versatility, and the Indians are done with genuine magnificence. In short, the second half of *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* is not only a good story, it moves on a plane of understanding and perception that only the best kind of historical fiction achieves.

BERNARD DE VOTO, *Saturday Review of Literature*

NORTHWEST PASSAGE chronicles a hero of gargantuan proportions and brings alive scenes and people from the forgotten pages of history. It is an enormous tale in every sense of the word—in length, in breadth of action and in intensity. The pages that describe the raid on St. Francis are as tense and lyric as a taut harp in a gale. *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* is a memorable and impressive book—a tremendous story.

FANNY BUTCHER, *Chicago Tribune*

NORTHWEST PASSAGE glows with life. It is adventure with a capital A. Apparently Kenneth Roberts doesn't write on schedule, but waits until he has plenty to say, and then says it with such conviction that one novel from his pen is worth about three or four of the usual kind.

MARIAN HOWE BROADDUS, *El Paso Times*

It is vivid, living history that Kenneth Roberts writes. Anyone interested in the making of the nation, the Indians of the continent, ought to read NORTHWEST PASSAGE, present-day Indians included.

B. E. BETTINGER, *New Republic*

Kenneth Roberts' ARUNDEL proved that he was the best historical novelist now practicing in America. Its sequel, RABBLE IN ARMS, continued the proof. Consensus of critical opinion still is that each of these books should have received the Pulitzer Prize. NORTHWEST PASSAGE proves him to be not only the best historical novelist now practicing in America; but as far as American readers are concerned, the best historical novelist who ever practiced anywhere, used any subject matter.

ELRICK B. DAVIS, *Cleveland Press*

Let Kenneth Roberts write the history of the United States and history will be the favorite course with every boy in this country. Lecture rooms will have to be enlarged and quiz sections will be enthusiastic gatherings. Roberts has a theory of American history which is epic in its scope, and yet under his talented hand comes down to the ultimate individual. It is the history of this continent as you or you or you could have lived it had you been a man of action in those early stirring days. In NORTHWEST PASSAGE, Roberts' talent and grasp of fundamental ideas make his description of America's early economic struggles as thrilling as his pictures of war and death.

JOHN E. McMANIS, *Detroit News*

IN ENGLAND

"It is a big, sweeping picture of a nation in the making; a book to be proud of, whether you are English or American, for its natural vigor and bold narrative power. The central figure, Major Robert Rogers, is a great character, built on bold lines: a vast, masterful, splendid, coarse, unconquerable piece of humanity, and Mr. Roberts has shown him in his full stature."

Birmingham Post

"We are in the company of giants, not men: creatures of such force, and of such qualities of endurance that one shudders at the thought of their reality. No words of the reviewer could adequately describe the importance or the brilliance of this novel."

Evening News (London)

"Anyone who shares my prejudice against very long historical novels should forget it and start *NORTHWEST PASSAGE*, a story of the mid-eighteenth century in America and London. No intelligent reader who starts will stop. The London scenes are brilliantly vivid and the book abounds also in humour. Mr. Roberts has the Dickens knack of making every character, even those who make momentary appearance, live by some oddity of look or speech."

Reynolds Illustrated News (London)

"A magnificent epic which will not easily be forgotten. You could not wish for a more vivid, more thrilling, or more picturesque record of human endurance in the face of the ghastliest dangers and hardships. Mr. Roberts is a born story-teller. His vignettes of the statesmen, soldiers, Indians, traders, servants, and women who crowd his pages are painted in with a sure brush. Incidentally, English readers will be particularly interested in the picture of an America slowly breaking away from the mother-country. It is a fine piece of work: an absorbing romance."

RALPH STRAUS, *Sunday Times* (London)

"Will sweep you on in breathless excitement from page one right to the end. It will make you agree with others who have said that Kenneth Roberts is America's greatest historical novelist."

The Daily Mirror (London)

"*NORTHWEST PASSAGE* is superb. I reckon it superior in every way to *The Citadel*, *Turning Wheels*, *Gone With the Wind* and *Anthony Adverse*."

Daily Telegraph (London)

"A tale of superhuman endurance and achievement. The London scenes are brilliantly done. The great strength of the book lies in its magnificent central character; a man unprepossessing in stature, but in spirit and daring a Colossus; a man cast in the mould of heroes; striding over the full length of the tale. What a hero for a novelist!"

Book of Today (London)

"Few more thrilling episodes have been written than Mr. Roberts' graphic and intense description of the expedition led by Major Rogers against the French and Indians and the assault on St. Francis. Teeming with incident, the book is no less valuable for its pictures of the London of Hogarth and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and life in small American towns that are now amongst the great cities of the world."

St. Andrews (Scotland) *Times*

"*NORTHWEST PASSAGE* is one of the best novels that I have ever read."

LLOYD GEORGE



From the mezzotint of Major Robert Rogers which appeared as the frontispiece in the limited deluxe edition of NORTHWEST PASSAGE.

My Robert Rogers Esq^r Agent to the western Indians
and Governor-Commandant of His Majesty's Garrison of
Mikilimashine and its Dependencies

To Captain Jonathan Carver Esq^r

Whom as it will be to the honour and dignity of the
Nation, as well as for the good of His Majesty's Service to
have some Good Success of the Discovery made of North
America especially to the West and North West from this
Garrison

I do by Virtue of the Authority given me appoint
you for that purpose wth Light Shells, 2000 lbs of
Say, 2000 lbs of Powder, and you are hereby directed
to set out from this Garrison immediately and proceed
along the North Side of Lake Michigan to the Bay
and from thence to the Falls of St Ignace on the
Mississippi, taking an exact plan of the Country by
the way marking down all Indian towns with their num-
bers and also to take surveys of the highest good Lakes
and Rivers as also the mountains -

and at the Falls of St Ignace
valleys and about that as far as you can explore
this winter, and make your Reports to me early in
the Spring should you receive orders from Me to march
further to the westward with any other detachment that
I may send this fall or winter you are to do it and
send back your Journals by the first opportunity or some
other safe way - but should you not receive any orders
to return by the direct way thence send from hence
by the first opportunity

Major Rogers' Commission to
Captain Jonathan Carver to
search for the Northwest
Passage.

rections. The scribbled-over pages shown in the photostatic copies were strong arguments in favor of revising "that weekly theme before handing it in". Incidentally, they were greatly interested in Mr. Roberts' essay "The Truth About A Novel,"* in which he quotes from his own diary regarding the time and labor involved in writing ARUNDEL.

Unquestionably, NORTHWEST PASSAGE has been the most popular book of the year among my boys.

*In *For Authors Only* by Kenneth Roberts.



Tecnológico
de Monterrey



Kenneth Roberts, about sixteen years old, with a hunting party on the Height of Land near Lake Megantic. At an early age Mr. Roberts was traveling to the country whose history he was to re-create so brilliantly.

KENNETH (LEWIS) ROBERTS, 1885-

Based on Checklist Compiled by Frank Stone which
appeared in *The Publishers Weekly*

BOOKS BY KENNETH ROBERTS

- EUROPE'S MORNING AFTER. Harper & Brothers, New York [1921]
Code letters B-V on copyright page.
- WHY EUROPE LEAVES HOME. Bobbs-Merrill Co. [Indianapolis, 1922]
- SUN HUNTING. Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis [1922]
- THE COLLECTOR'S WHATNOT. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1923
With Booth Tarkington and Hugh McNair Kahler. Published pseudonymously, boards, paper label.
- BLACK MAGIC. Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis [1924]
- CONCENTRATED NEW ENGLAND: A STUDY OF CALVIN COOLIDGE. Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis [1924]
- FLORIDA LOAFING. Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis [1925]
Boards, paper label.
- FLORIDA. Harper & Brothers, New York, 1926
- ANTIQUAMANIA. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1928
With illustrations by Booth Tarkington. First edition so stated on copyright page.
- ARUNDEL. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1930.
First edition so stated on copyright page. Various reissues of which the following have definite collector interest: *Fifth Edition*, Garden City, 1931, of which 15 copies had inserted an 8-page biography of the Nason family, numbered and signed by the author. *Sixth Edition*, Garden City, 1933, entirely rewritten and replated, embodying some 25,000 changes. English Edition, London, 1936, entirely rewritten.
- THE LIVELY LADY. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1931
First edition so stated on the copyright page. The *fifth edition*, Garden City, 1935, was rewritten and replated.
- RABBLE IN ARMS. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1933
First edition so stated on copyright page.
- CAPTAIN CAUTION. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1934
First edition so stated on copyright page.
- THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN. Samuel French, Inc., New York, [1934]
One-act play with Robert Garland. Wrappers. First appeared *Saturday Evening Post*, Aug. 30, 1919.

FOR AUTHORS ONLY. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1935

First edition so stated on copyright page. A book of essays containing:

FOR AUTHORS ONLY, AN INQUIRY INTO DIETS, A FEW REMARKS ON EXERCISES, THE HALF-BAKED PALACE, WHEN IN ROME—, COUNTRY LIFE IN ITALY, DOGS IN A BIG WAY, THE TRUTH ABOUT A NOVEL, HOROSCOPE BY EVANGELINE ADAMS, CONFESSIONS OF A SMALL INVESTOR: I, CONFESSIONS OF A SMALL INVESTOR: II, CONCERNING EDUCATION, AN AMERICAN LOOKS AT OXFORD, OXFORD ODDITIES, THE LITTLE HOME IN THE COUNTRY, THE CIRCUMSPECT 'SEVENTIES, GOLF, THE LURE OF THE GREAT NORTH WOODS, ROADS OF REMEMBRANCE.

IT MUST BE YOUR TONSILS. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1936

First edition so stated on copyright page.

NORTHWEST PASSAGE. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1937

Special first edition so stated on colophon page: 1,050 sets, numbered, signed, boxed, 2 Vols., Vol. I the novel and Vol. II an Appendix of the more important source material on which the novel was based, together with author's comments. First trade edition so stated on copyright page.

TRENDING INTO MAINE. Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1938

With illustrations by N. C. Wyeth. First edition so stated on copyright page; 1,075 copies numbered, boxed and signed by author and illustrator. First trade edition states "Published June 1938" on copyright page.

MARCH TO QUEBEC. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., New York, 1938

First edition so stated on copyright page.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BOOKS

AMERICAN HISTORICAL SCENE. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1935. Limited, trade and reprint editions.

"Morgan's March Through Maine" by Kenneth Roberts, pp. 56-58.

MODERN BOOK COLLECTING FOR THE IMPECUNIOUS AMATEUR by Herbert Faulkner West. Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1936.

First edition states "Published September, 1936" on copyright page.

Letter by Kenneth Roberts, pp. 179-182.

LET ME SHOW YOU NEW HAMPSHIRE by Ella S. Bowles. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1938. First edition so stated on copyright page.

Introduction by Kenneth Roberts.

BOOKLETS ABOUT KENNETH ROBERTS

KENNETH ROBERTS: A Biographical Sketch, An Informal Study, His Books and Critical Opinions. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., Garden City, 1936

KENNETH ROBERTS: AN AMERICAN NOVELIST. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., New York, 1938

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