

June 19th 1942

Dear Bess Oakford Hunter, it was deep satisfaction to have your recent letter come in to me and I thank you for writing it. It meant much to me. Lately I have been thinking a great deal about you and your good husband, wondering very intimately just how you and your children were being affected by this ghastly war, fearing to hear that your Tom might be in service, yet really wishing to know, because of my frequent and intimate thought of you and your dear family. Somehow, I didn't quite realize that both your children were married--and now you have told me of them and of the active part they both are bearing directly in this war. I cry out to God that it has to be; yet of course, with dire threats against freedom pressing as they have been in the world, and pressing against us--you both would have it no other way. I pray for you and Jay--and I pray for them. My heart is beaten sore with it all, especially pained when it touches so directly those for whom I care with personal depth. Your right thoughts in verse were moving and poignant and I appreciate sensitively your copying out the "rhythm" for me--even if it does sear and pain the mind and heart.

No, I hear very little from old Peoria contacts, and rue the fact. Occasionally I used to hear from Lena Belsley but of late years not--just because of immediate life is so crowded with hourly demands, other interests need to be put aside. I used to hear occasionally from Lena's mother, Mrs. Ulrick, but not for a number of years now, so I judge she has passed on ahead of us, although I was not told so directly at the time. Sometime if you think of it, settle my thoughts on this score. You know I had some sad differences with the Julia Bourland Clark family a number of years ago (once my most intimate friends) --although she has refused to recognize it and even called here a year or two ago but I still hear of them occasionally through Julia Maria Bourland Smith of Pontiac, who has kept up the friendship and of whom I am deeply fond. Did you know "Julia Maria" ?

It is good indeed to have you write how you still love my sugar house on the steep hill. I especially loved that canvas and think of it often indeed. "The Steaming Sugar House" is its official title as entered on my records. Possibly the children might like a little print or two extra to use as a bookmark or to stick in the mirror edge--to remind them a bit of home. I have a few extra ones cut from an exhibition folder--which I enclose.

Yes, I admire **Hovsep Pushman's** work very much. It is interesting to know you have one of his prints. Sometime tell me just what the print is. Did you know about his recent law suit (last year, I think) because one of the western art museums published publically a print from one of his canvases owned by the museum? He claimed they had no right to do it without his permission--but the museum won out in the courts! Possibly you have that print!

As to news of myself--I guess none in this letter--but perhaps I'll send you a dirge later! For several years I have had a most terrible inside "trouble" which keeps me in grueling pain most of the days of the week. I have had two sieges with operations by specialists in the Boston hospitals---but to no relief--except that of my last dollar! I force myself through the daily work most of the time--but of course inspiration is blunted. I wish you could both see my Buckland home and studio. It is rarely beautiful and of great interest with inspiring out look on valley and mountain. Perhaps you will come someday--I do wish for it. My affection goes out to you both in Peoria--and my prayers and hope turn often to Tom and Betty in their "part" of this nation's fight. May God preserve them!

Bob

Address me, Shelburne Falls and not Buckland; I eventually get the latter although not as directly as S. F. --even if I do live in the village of B.

Enclosed a clipping or two of my Boston exhibition. Some of them were mere critics twaddle and chatter to fill up space but the one from the Boston Globe by Philpott, is really worthwhile. Aside from the unfortunate word "photographic" (which he really explains away) it is a worthwhile realization of what I am doing with New England-- a worthwhile appreciation. That's the only one worth reading but I send the others for the illustration interest

Bob

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Jan. 26, 1946

Dear Bess O. H.

Your graceful Christmas card gave me great cheer and did me no end of good. Warm thanks for it! I did not forget you, out here, at Christmas time as circumstantial evidence might indicate, but instead thought of you and your family about you very affectionately. Just prior to Christmas, at the time greeting cards had to be sent, I was ill and was kept from my desk--hence, the ceremony of sending out cards this year--which means much to me, was impossible. But, my thoughts were with you--and in fact you might be surprised how very often they are, down through the year! I hope " The Steaming Sugar House" is behaving itself well!

It is nice to hear of your boys and girls! How thankful to God we are that both your Tom and Dave, in the very thick of the fight, were saved from harm to come home to you! What a nice thing Harvard law did for Tom! It is very cheering to hear of such a thoughtful, dynamic episode; there seem so few of them in the bickering world of men, at present!

I have little to say of myself, without having to say more than I have time and strength for tonight, but I do hope to write you one of these days. During the war I wrote few friendly letters: I have a huge business correspondence as all my active business life is carried on away from home--and all during the war I wrote actively and constantly to some 12 or 14 boys in Service as one thing I could do--which made the hours of every day and evening all too long for my strength. Gradually I hope to get back to more friendly living and friendly writing.

This is just a billet doux to thank you for your Christmas card with its note. I want you to know it meant a lot to me.

More anon!

Bob