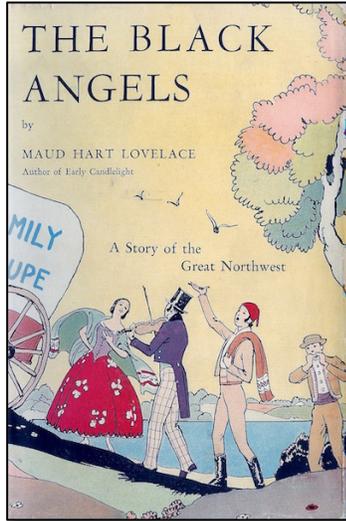


Maud Hart Lovelace's Historical Novels

Excerpts from a letter written by Maud to her step-cousin Marjorie Austin Freeman in 1964:

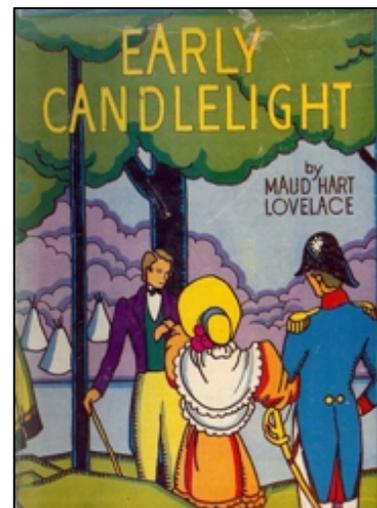
"***The Black Angels*** (John Day Co. 1926, later reprinted by Grosset and Dunlap.) It was laid in Minnesota from the 1850s through the '80s and the town I called Cloudman was, in my mind, Mankato. The plot idea had sprung from the family legend of Uncle Frank, who did not get on well with his step-father, running away from home with an opera troupe and marrying an actress as old as his mother. The character I call Alex was based on Uncle Frank, and mother's memories of his looks and temperament as a boy were helpful to me, as were the yarns he himself had told me in California about his barn-storming days.

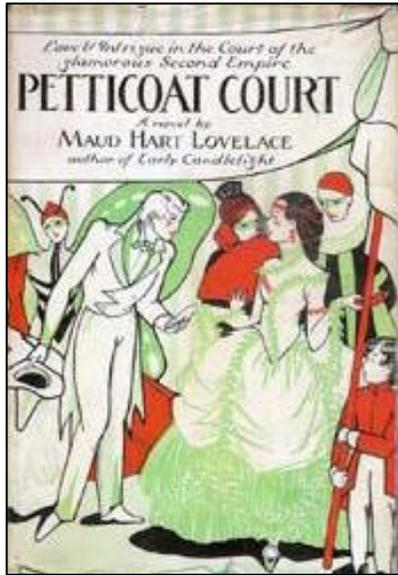


My fictional opera troupe was based on the Andrews Opera Company. The Andrews family had lived near Mankato in the early days. All the sons and daughters were musical but one. They were bell ringers at first, then started off in a covered wagon to give concerts and later opera through the middle west. In due time, of course, they took to railroad trains. I am sure the music-loving Randalls must have heard them, especially in the bell ringer period.

The one Andrews who stayed at home became a doctor who practised [sic] in Mankato and brought me, and probably some of you Austins, into the world. Uncle Frank did, actually, sing with this company for a time. However "The Black Angels" was a novel, and so fiction, and although my hero did run away from a stern stepfather, as Uncle Frank had, I did not model my fictional stepfather on Grandpa Austin. Oh, there were a few resemblances, such as Grandpa Austin's dislike of the theater and dancing. As with all my historical novels, I did for this one a very thorough research job, reading newspapers, magazines, and memoirs of the period, as well as working in Historical Societies and Museums to check costumes, furniture, popular music and so on. This procedure continued, in fact, even with the Betsy-Tacy books. For stories of a period after the turn of the century, Sears Roebuck Catalogues were helpful."

"My second novel was ***Early Candlelight*** (John Day Co. 1939, later Grosset and Dunlap and the Minnesota Historical Society Press.) In the course of my research for "The Black Angels", I had read Folwell's *History of Minnesota* and was fascinated by the life at Fort Snelling in the early decades of the Nineteenth Century... with its gay routine of dinners, balls and picnics in the midst of Indian country. The story includes the founding of St. Paul. The love scene in the next to last chapter takes place at the meeting of the Minnesota and Blue Earth Rivers, where Mankato's Sibley Park would later be built."



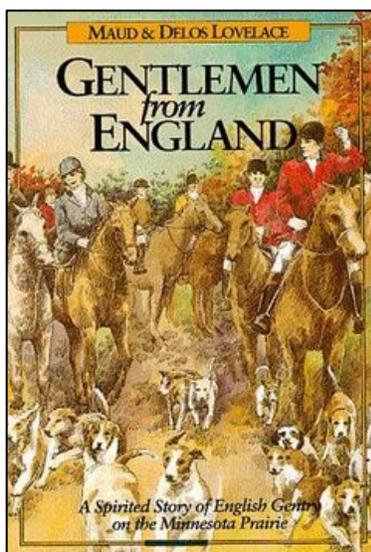
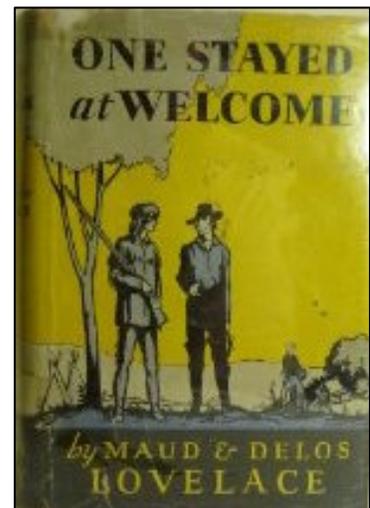


"Novel Number Three was ***Petticoat Court*** (John Day Co. 1930, later Grosset and Dunlap and Sampson Low, Marston and Co. Ltd. of London.) This one is laid in Paris, at the court of Napoleon the Third. It derives something from Minnesota, though. Grandpa and Grandma Austin attended the Paris Exhibition of 1889, and when I was a little girl Grandma used to tell me about Paris and how she had seen the Empress Eugenie, sitting in the Tuileries Gardens. I loved hearing about this old woman in black who once had been acclaimed the most beautiful woman in the world and so, half a lifetime later, I put her into a novel."

"Number four, ***The Charming Sally***, (John Day Co. 1932), tells a fictionalized [*sic*] story of the Hallam Company, the first theatrical troupe to visit North America. The action takes place in Williamsburg, Virginia, Philadelphia, Providence and Newport, as well as New York, where we were living at the

time. These were the cities the real Hallam troupe visited. I named my characters for the actors and actresses on the playbills and did some intensive research on the London experiences of these theatrical folk. Mr. and Mrs. Hallaro were quite well known. After the book was published, a reader wrote to tell me of the death of the last descendent of the Hallams, In Philadelphia, I believe, not long before."

"Number Five, ***One Stayed at Welcome***, was written in collaboration with Delos. (John Day Co., 1934) It deals with two young men who came, one from Vermont and the other from Kentucky, to claim land in Minnesota not long after the Mexican War. They founded a town near Minneapolis and named it Welcome, but due to the demands of the plot, only one stayed there. As was usual in our collaborations, I did the research and Delos did most of the plotting. We shared the writing... amicably, too."



"Number six, ***Gentlemen from England***, was another collaboration of Delos and me. (Macmillan Co., 1937) There is some family background here. As

a little girl, my mother, Stella Palmer, lived in Winnebago City, Minnesota, where her father, Solomon, a Civil War veteran, died and her mother, Albertine, ran a millinery shop until she married Chauncey Austin. However, for a time after Solomon's death, she continued to live in Winnebago City with her children, Frank and Stella. Winnebago City was near Fairmont, which had been founded by a colony of Englishmen. They had been lured across the ocean by a promoter's assurances that they could make a

fortune raising beans. Most of them were wealthy; some were the younger sons of titled persons; and many had brought servants along. Leaving the beans to hired hands, they enjoyed fox-hunting and Mother told us fine stories of the red-coated fox-hunters galloping over the prairie and also loitering around Winnebago City for they particularly liked the Tavern there. Delos delighted in her stories and in time proposed that we do a novel about these English gentlemen. In addition to the usual old American newspapers, I read British sporting journals of my period and the Illustrated London News. I made two trips to Fairmont, interviewing the descendants of the original British settlers, and I went through one of their old mansions and the bachelors' hunting lodge which had doors so tall that, if the whim struck them, the young men could ride their horses inside. Both of these structures have been torn down since then."

(NOTE: Images of the book covers are the from the original dust jackets, except for "Gentleman From England". This cover is from the 1993 edition.)

Betsy-Tacy Society, P.O. Box 94, Mankato, MN 56001
www.betsy-tacysociety.org