

## Books sent off across Canada

Susan Charlotte Grosvenor, a direct descendant of the Duke of Wellington, was brought up in a house of old-fashioned charm in London where now stands the Grosvenor House Hotel.

Her father was the third son of Lord Edbury and her mother was Caroline Stuart Wortley, an artist of note. Charlotte Arbuthnot Wellesley, niece of the Iron Duke, was her grandmother.

When Susan Grosvenor was introduced to John Buchan, son of a Scottish minister who was to become Canada's 17th governor-general neither was impressed with the other. In subsequent meetings, however, a strong bond developed between them so that after their marriage in 1907 her husband called her "the perfect comrade."

Soon after the Tweedsmuir's arrived in Ottawa in 1935 to succeed the Bessboroughs, King George V died and all social activities halted for a year of court mourning at Rideau Hall. Their Excellencies lived quietly and devoted much of their time to their writing. Susan Tweedsmuir finished her first novel and her husband worked on a biography, Augustus.

Their teen-age son, Alastair, came to Canada with them but their sons, William and John, and their daughter, Alice (Mrs. Fairfax - Lucy) remained behind.

Books and their contents surrounded Lady Tweedsmuir while she was First Lady at Rideau Hall. Wearing a simple, blue smock, marked "Susan Tweedsmuir," the tall, fair chatelaine of government house spent part of each day in a special workroom off the main corridor. Here she sorted, selected and sent off some 40,000 books to hungry readers in remote areas of Canada through the Lady Tweedsmuir Prairie Library Scheme. Queen Mary was among the many from England, Canada and the United States who kept the shelves supplied with books.

Women's Institutes were encouraged to keep track of local history by the First Lady and these Tweedsmuir histories are continuing chronicles of widespread interest today.

She displayed much interest in the awarding of the Governor - General's Literary Awards which were begun by her husband. One of her own plays, "The Maid," was produced at the Eastern Ontario regional drama festival in 1936.

Lady Tweedsmuir was made a Dame of Grace, Order of St. John of Jerusalem while in Canada and also was given an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University of Toronto in recognition of her literary gifts and contributions.

When President Franklin Roosevelt made his first visit to Canada in 1938, Lady Tweedsmuir was hostess at the Citadel in Quebec. She also accompanied her husband to the White House, the first vice - regal representatives to visit Washington officially.

Again, when the first reigning monarch, King George VI, and Queen Elizabeth toured Canada, Lady Tweedsmuir welcomed them to Rideau Hall.

With adventure in their eyes, the vice - regal couple crossed the country.



—Photo by Karsh

### *Lady Tweedsmuir* (1935-1940)

They were the first vice - regal couple to venture into Canada's far north. A two-month trip took them 12,000 miles by train, plane, stern - wheeler, and pack horse over Indian trails and across flowing rivers. They explored Tweedsmuir Park, 3½ million acres of wilderness in northern B.C. and traced the route taken 150 years earlier by Alexander Mackenzie from Athabaska to Bella Coola on the Pacific Coast.

The beauties of nature never ceased to awe the First Lady. The northern lights were . . . "transparent Shetland shawls quivering in the sky." Of Susan Point, named for her in Tweedsmuir Park . . . "a place exquisite and far away, where life goes on as in the morning of the world."

The Peace River district also called them and after a journey to Fort Churchill to meet their son, John, returning from a tour of duty with the Hudson's Bay Co. at Cape Dorset, they flew north from Edmonton.

The Second World War broke out as their term of office was nearing its end. Their son, John, went overseas with the First Canadian Division and Alastair joined the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards.

Sadness ended the vice-regal term when Lord Tweedsmuir died in Montreal, in the winter of 1940 after a fall at Government House.

Always attune to the everyday people, Lady Tweedsmuir saw that special places were set aside at her husband's funeral in St. Andrew's Church, for stenographers, switchboard operators, footmen, messengers and staff who had served them at Rideau Hall.

Today the Dowager Lady Tweedsmuir lives quietly at Hill House, Burford, Oxfordshire, gardening and writing. Her versatile pen is in evidence in her published works which include plays, historical, travel and mystery novels and children's stories.