

obvious, even though I said nothing. However, I noted that the judge gave much the same opinion at the end of the trial.”

warp on the beams: Warp threads run lengthwise and are wound around a beam at the back of the loom. When warping, every thread must be of even tension and length: “Back and forth across these stretched threads a shuttle is passed carrying the weft threads. The interlocking of these two threads forms what is called the cloth or the web” (Mary E. Black, *The Key to Weaving: A Textbook of Hand Weaving for the Beginning Weaver*. 2nd edn. New York: Macmillan, 1980).

weigh and sort the yarn: Sorters examine the wool to determine the fineness, elasticity, and strength of the fibers.

gorse: A prickly shrub also called common furze or whin.

jackeen: “A contemptuous designation for a self-assertive worthless fellow,” the term is of Anglo-Irish origin (*OED*).

washer . . . spinner: Wool is covered in lanolin when first taken from the sheep and must be washed and carefully dried. It is then combed into rolls by a carder and spun into yarn. Missing from this list is a picker, who would remove burrs and twigs by hand, or a machine picker, which breaks them up and distributes them throughout the yarn.

shuttles . . . beater: Shuttles carry the weft thread. The beater is used to “beat” the weft thread back into place in the cloth.

Leinster: The largest of Ireland’s four provinces: Leinster comprises twelve counties (including Wicklow) and has a population of over two million.

bracken: A fern; also an orangey-brown shade resembling the color of turning bracken (*OED*). Bracken can be used to dye yarn a warm yellow green.

mad midsummer’s bonfire: One of the four Irish Quarter Days, Midsummer is traditionally celebrated on June 24, though this has ceased to be the longest day of the year, with fairs, concerts, and fireworks.

Offaly: Another county in Leinster, separated from Wicklow by County Kildare.

*The Recorder: The Journal of the
American Irish Historical Society 20.2-21.1
(Spring & Fall 2008)*

“What With the Moving and the Children”: Betty Wahl in Ireland and America, 1951–1958

CASSANDRA NELSON

A NOVELIST AND STORYWRITER who published her first short fiction in *The New Yorker* in 1947 at the age of twenty-three and continued to write until her death in 1988, Betty Wahl has yet to receive the recognition achieved by her husband, writer J. F. Powers, and her daughter, printmaker and artist Mary Earl Powers. Given that roughly half of the modest body of fiction Wahl published during her lifetime is set in Dublin and environs, where she and her family lived, off and on, for thirteen years between 1951 and 1975, those with an interest in Ireland and Irish-American relations may find her a sadly neglected figure.

Wahl’s own relationship with Ireland was a complicated one. She and Powers moved there – to the seaside, to Greystones and Dalkey – to write and raise their five children in a place where religion, culture, and tradition were alive and well, and to escape what they saw as changing values and declining standards in the United States.

But with Old World values came Old World inconveniences. For every striking view of the sea, there was a cold draught that tore through their rented houses without mercy. Wahl was often impatient with Irish attitudes toward work and punctuality, which were sharply at odds with her own Saxon work ethic. Most perplexingly, perhaps, Ireland offered inspiration for her fiction while endlessly complicating and slowing her attempts to write.

In letters to her parents and relatives in her hometown of St. Cloud, Minnesota, Wahl chronicled the daily delights and frustrations of life abroad. These letters – which her daughter Katherine Powers, as trustee of the family papers, has generously allowed to be excerpted at length here – form the basis of the account that follows, which centers on the Powers family’s first two sojourns to Ireland, in Greystones, County Wicklow, from 1951 to 1952, and in Dalkey, County Dublin, from 1957 to 1958.

First, a brief summary of Wahl’s early life and her marriage to Powers may be helpful. She was born Elizabeth Alice Wahl on 16 January 1924,

the eldest of four children. Her parents, Arthur and Romana Wahl, were devout Catholics of German descent, and she herself was a practicing Catholic throughout her life. Theirs was a relatively well to do family, thanks to the success of Art Wahl's business, the Wahl Construction Company.

After graduating from Cathedral High School in 1941, Wahl studied English and French at the nearby College of St. Benedict. She found a mentor in Sister Mariella Gable, a charismatic teacher as well as an influential editor and critic, who encouraged her student's early interest in fiction. Wahl began writing a novel entitled *To See the Stars* while still an undergraduate, loosely based on her own experiences.

Though the novel was never published – and indeed, so far as can be known from the remaining manuscripts, never actually completed – chapters from it showed considerable promise. In the fall of 1945, a few months after Wahl's graduation, Sister Mariella sent excerpts to J. F. Powers, then a little-known storyteller working as a hospital orderly in St. Paul, Minnesota. He rated them highly, and agreed to come to St. Benedict's for a more thorough review. Powers arrived at the campus on 10 November 1945 and proposed to Wahl the next day.

They wed the following spring and immediately began a series of moves that would set the tone for much of their married life. In 1946 and 1947, the couple went back and forth between St. Paul, where Powers had an apartment, and Avon, Minnesota, a town about a dozen miles from St. Cloud where Wahl's parents had purchased land for them to build a house (though actual construction progressed only as far as the basement). They also stayed temporarily in Brewster, Massachusetts, and at Yaddo, a writers' retreat in upstate New York.

On 11 November 1947, Powers and Wahl welcomed their first child, Katherine Anne, named after Katherine Anne Porter, who had been an early supporter and constructive critic of Powers's stories. Just over a year later, on 29 November 1948, a second daughter, Mary Farl, was born. Meanwhile, Wahl's career as a writer had gotten off to a slow but auspicious start. Only four days after Katherine's birth, her debut story, "Martinmas," appeared in *The New Yorker*; Evelyn Waugh called it "a brilliant sketch of convent school life which I read with relish."¹ Wahl sold a second story, "Gingerbread," to the magazine in late 1949. Both were derived from chapters of *To See the Stars*.

That year, she and Powers moved to Milwaukee, where he had accepted a two-year appointment as a creative writing instructor at Marquette University. Wahl felt lonely and homesick, and two small children in a small house made writing difficult. On a later house-hunting mission she vowed that the experience would be "our last horrible lesson in impossible housing, since the house is really part of our business equipment, no peace, no work done."²

In May 1951, they returned to Minnesota, staying with her parents at their newly built home on the Mississippi about eight miles "up the river" from St. Cloud. Where they would go next was unclear. That Powers and Wahl would have to move was obvious, and preferably somewhere with an affordable cost of living, but without a teaching appointment or another obligation to circumscribe their search, the possibilities were overwhelming. After considering places as diverse as Cape Cod, Ireland, Mexico, Nova Scotia, and Quebec, the couple made their decision. On 25 October 1951 they sailed with Katherine and Mary on the *S.S. America*, bound for Cobh.

IT WAS NOT EASY TO EXPLAIN

WHAT WE HAD COME FOR: 1951–1952

Their reasons for choosing Ireland were several. The country had some distinct advantages: a lower cost of living, beautiful scenery, more rigorous schools, and a respect for culture and tradition. But the act of moving to Ireland "was also the act of quitting the United States," as Katherine Powers notes in the introduction to a selection of her father's letters from Ireland.³ In the United States, Powers – a pacifist who spent thirteen months in Sandstone Federal Penitentiary for failing to report for induction during World War II – saw himself surrounded by "a general decline in the quality of books, music, clothing, conversation, and architecture" and was put off by the "materialistic optimism, yea-saying, and team-playing" of the postwar years.⁴ Life in Ireland had its frustrations – perhaps more than Wahl at least had bargained for – but to the country's credit there was "no one building fallout shelters or running around with clipboards designing a fluorescent-lighted future and a better life through chemicals. Not in the 1950s, that is."⁵

While Wahl mentions politics in her letters only rarely, the few occasions when she does generally show little patience for the U.S. govern-

ment and American materialistic values in general. In a 1952 letter she criticizes what she sees as its wasteful, arrogant, and ignorant foreign policy and the complicity of wider consumer culture:

All the steel Harry gave to Churchill isn't going to make up for one-twentieth of the ill-will caused by insisting that the North Atlantic fleet commander – or whatever it was – be an American. Churchill gave in because England is quite literally on the edge of absolute nothing. They're in the last inning ten runs behind, two men out, no one on base, two strikes and no balls on the batter. No body's going to really love the U.S. as long as we put beer and peanuts and tennis balls in metal cans while the rest of the world hasn't got enough metal for bottle caps. As long as the U.S. press prints full-page ads while the small newspapers in Europe close because there isn't any newsprint to be had, good-will isn't going to grow. . . . So I really haven't got any good complaint against the Irish, they're only pulling three million people or five million, I forget which, into trouble, but Washington's taking the world down with it. The difference is, that you feel in Ireland it's small enough for something to be done about it.⁶

To be fair, Wahl was not uncritical of the Irish government – this is perhaps her warmest statement about it on record – whose bureaucratic inefficiency became a source of constant frustrations in their first year abroad.

Wahl was aware that their move to Ireland went against the prevailing trend – wryly acknowledging it in the opening of “A Shorter History of the Irish People” when the man explaining the difference between immigration and emigration interrupts Rafferty's question about someone moving *into* Ireland with “Ah, you'll find none of that.” She was sensitive too that their preference for Ireland's old-fashioned ways could be easily misinterpreted: “It was not easy to explain what we had come for without seeming to say that obviously Ireland was far behind the times.”⁷

So, too, there were reasons that did *not* factor into the couple's thinking. Powers and Wahl had not come as tourists in search of an “authentic” Ireland, nor was their move an attempt to get back to their roots. Wahl was pleasantly surprised when she was several times mistaken for Irish, though this was something of a backhanded compliment: passing for a native, she concluded, was also a way of saying she looked somewhat disheveled. Shortly after their arrival the local chemist (that is, pharmacist, and in this particular case, jack-of-all-trades) suggested, as he photographed the Powers family for their alien registration cards, that they might enjoy a trip to Waterford, a touristy area in the southeast, where

“everyone will be most helpful.” Wahl related his comment with impatience in a letter home: “Helpful for exactly what, I don't know, for searching out the ancestral fields I suppose.”⁸ But she was fascinated by the chemist's name – Mr. Power – and though she looked, never came across anyone else with the surname Powers in Ireland.

Her first two Irish stories, “Tide Rips in the Tea Cups” and “The Lace Curtain,” show clearly how Wahl's surroundings provided the raw material for her work. The former follows Wahl's search for a “nursemaid” so closely that she later referred to it parenthetically as an article: the name of the employment agency and of the girl hired as a babysitter, the wages paid to her, the man in the stairwell, the route through Dublin – all is as it happened. In a rare deviation from her pen and maiden name, she agreed to use her married name in the piece, warning her aunt in advance of its publication that the “story (article) will be out the last week in Nov. or the first week in Dec. Will be signed ‘Betty Wahl Powers’ for reasons too complicated to mention, but the New Yorker insists (for this story only).”⁹

“The Lace Curtain” gives another stylized – and again barely fictionalized – account of their first week abroad, as well as the attendant “cultural shock and the trials of settling as Americans who were neither rich nor tourists” in Ireland.¹⁰ While the title may simply refer to the lace curtains ubiquitous in Irish windows, it could also be seen as an ironic reference to “lace-curtain satire,” a genre of early twentieth-century songs, vaudeville skits, and plays about the Irish-American community. In it, the lace curtain came to symbolize the “yearning for respectability and social status” of the upwardly mobile Irish immigrant who, having grasped such fundamentals of American life as “assimilation and making money, and who, having achieved some degree of success, sought to take his rightful place on a higher rung of the social ladder.”¹¹ Often the plot is propelled by the wife's upwardly mobile ambitions, only for the family to find that “gaining a lace-curtain status” makes them feel like “greenhorns” again, having snubbed their working-class neighbors without achieving complete acceptance from middle-class WASPs. The situation in Wahl's story inverts this process: having moved from a richer country to a poorer one, the Powers are assumed to be overtipping opportunists, and each time they begin to feel comfortable find that they have once again displayed their American largesse by breaking some unwritten rule.

In both “Tide Rips in the Tea Cups” and “The Lace Curtain,” the search

for a house is an ever present, if slightly off-stage, concern. The Powers began their own search for a home even before they had reached their hotel in Dublin. The *S.S. America* landed at Cobh and from there they traveled to Crosshaven, “a very beautiful town on the sea at the entrance to Cork Harbour,” to look at the first potential house.¹² Like many of the houses to follow, it differed greatly from the description they had been given beforehand; Wahl quickly came to expect a certain amount of disconnect between the ad copy and the actual house. In letters to her family she often went into detail about the methods and materials of Irish construction. Such descriptions would of course have been of particular interest to her father.

From time to time she sent Art Wahl newspaper clippings on the subject as well, typically with disapproving comments in her accompanying letter. In January 1952 she enclosed a photograph of a building under construction, asking, “What is the man doing on the ladder?” Indeed, one worker in the picture is inexplicably high up – and still climbing – on a ladder that extends at least ten feet above the point where construction has stopped, heading nowhere apparently or toward the sky. About another article outlining union demands for codified daily tea breaks, she writes: “The enclosed clipping is for Pop. . . . What would he think of a tea break twice a day on the job?”¹³

But in her description of the house at Crosshaven, Wahl’s tone is more bemused than frustrated:

The house had, we were told, a lounge (l.r.) dining room with serving hatch to the kitchen, which had tiled floor, electric stove, sink, hot water heater, a bath and W.C. (water closet) and three bedrooms with hot and cold water in each one. The chamber maids stayed with the girls while Jim and I took a bus out. It was a beautiful ride down narrow winding roads with very high stone walls on each side. Trees and vines growing everywhere, very very green. . . . There was a gate, and then, besides the usual hedge along the road there was another hedge running diagonally down the hill concealing the house, which was right on the sea. At last we saw the house. The one wooden house in Ireland, plywood, one layer, with a corrugated roof on the kitchen and bath, and at every up swing of the corrugations we could see the light from outside, up to an inch of it. The view was beautiful, the grounds were wonderful, the price was right (\$28 per mo.) but we couldn’t take it. And so we went on to Dublin.¹⁴

In Dublin a hotel strike was in full swing.¹⁵ After several unsuccessful

inquiries elsewhere, the Powers family managed to find a room at the Standard Hotel on Harcourt Street, not far from the high school attended by Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw.¹⁶ They deliberately stayed away from the Gresham Hotel, which they saw as too ostentatiously American.

Their room at the Standard Hotel was large and difficult to heat, with ceilings at least ten feet high. Two remedies had been devised to combat the cold:

The fireplace has been converted to a gas burning one and works with a shilling (15¢) in the slot. For this, it burns from 1½ to 5 hours, depending on unknown circumstances. . . . They put a hot water bottle in the bed for you to warm it. It is about the size and shape of a two quart milk bottle, lying on its side, but is made of heavy grey pottery, like a butter crock. The cap is on the top (which would be the side of the milk bottle) and on the end (would be the top of the milk bottle) there is a knob which looks much like the cap, and which has a short cord tied to it. I think they heat them in an oven and pull them out with the cord.¹⁷

The Powers soon learned that such hot water bottles were a fact of life in Ireland, where large rooms, inefficient fuel, and a lack of insulation combined to make houses “as cold as the grave, and far draftier.”¹⁸ Wahl must have figured out the method of warming them, for once they moved into their rented house she needed to prepare four bottles almost every night.

Her letters are full of small horror stories about the draughty old house they stayed in for a year: Mary and Katherine in tears at the prospect of putting on their freezing pajamas; Wahl inching painfully into ice-cold sheets when her hot water bottle broke and hadn’t yet been replaced; coal and turf fires that needed constant tending but never seemed to give off enough heat to reach her desk at the other end of the study. The temperature inside was generally as low as the one outdoors, sometimes lower, and it was often cold enough to see one’s breath in the house. Wahl took to wearing heavy sweaters indoors, several at a time, but had trouble finding warm clothes for the girls. A search for long underwear for Katherine and Mary was in vain:

At one store the lady was very helpful but her “long woolies” ended about four inches *above* the knees. At the other store the saleslady was angry about my asking. No, they didn’t have any long underwear. No, they didn’t have any long pants whatsoever. “What, then,” I asked, “do little children wear?” “They don’t wear anything,” she said. And I’m afraid it’s true. Everywhere in Dublin you see little children’s bare legs, all blue and cold

looking. The boys have on short pants. The theory about children is to harden them.¹⁹

In some sense, the theory must have been a sound one. Wahl was baffled by the Irish response to warm weather. To her consternation, sun-bathers drank hot tea in the sun and temperatures in the sixties were deemed suitable for swimming. In the seventies, she marveled, “everyone is standing around gasping for air and eating cream ice (which is only vaguely like ice cream) by the gallon.”²⁰

Worse than the cold, to her mind, was the food. As she admits in “The Lace Curtain,” Wahl took to bringing outside food into the Standard Hotel, a practice frowned upon by the management:

Irish cooking is the main reason why we’re going to have to find a house. The raw materials are very good, not particularly cheap though, but most things become thoroughly ruined in the cooking process. Anything boiled is ruined, boiled too long, and then served dry and tasteless. Fried is inedible because of whatever they use to fry it in. The grilled meats and roast meats are the best we’ve had anywhere. The bacon is very good, though it would be better if fried crispier. Bread, butter, cheese and tea are very good. And that’s about the end. And one cannot exist without salads, vegetables, and fruits, which is what it would come to. I buy tomatoes and fruits and feed them to the girls, so they’ll survive until we’re settled.²¹

Even after they found a house, vegetables were in short supply. The market in town sold only “the tireddest looking vegetables in captivity” and their yard was too small for a garden.²² Wahl looked forward to the day when she could return to Minnesota and grow her own produce.

While the lace curtains at the Standard Hotel seem not to have disintegrated on Wahl’s watch, she and Powers did set the phones ringing off the hook: “Ran an ad in the Irish Times, and people do read the ads, it seems. The elevator men ran their legs off calling us to the phone, and we got an awful lot of mail. Everyone was trying to unload the houses too expensive to rent to the native Irish, and not with too big a regard for truth.”²³ Almost all of the responses were disappointing. Several trips out to the countryside turned up houses with the wrong number of bedrooms and baths, houses lacking the requisite view (the distance between one house and the sea was “the longest and most populous 50 yards you ever saw”), houses for sale not rent, and houses well outside of their price

range (“It’s a wonderful bargain for someone though \$210 per mo. for castle and four servants”).

But by the second week things were looking up. They settled on a place in Greystones, a town two bus rides away from Dublin in County Wicklow. For \$37.50 per month, they rented a ten-room house with four bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen and scullery, maid’s room, and a separate bathroom and toilet room. The house was called Dysart – “a fancy name about London,” as they learned from one of the more cosmopolitan locals, “Lord and Lady Dysart are big socially” – and enjoyed an almost unblocked view of the sea.²⁴

Unfortunately, Dysart also had only one electrical outlet per room (both Wahl and Powers referred to one plug per room as “about par” for Ireland) and a very primitive kitchen. Surveying the lack of modern appliances, she felt that her grandmother would have been perfectly at home among the “coal range, the sink with a wooden drainboard in the scullery, the larder, no ice box or refrig.”²⁵ Still, Wahl preferred to struggle in these conditions rather than trust the cooking to Irish hands.²⁶ At one of the Powers’ few opportunities for entertaining, Wahl served black bottom pie to the two couples in attendance: “a brave thing to do considering that the temperature was over 70, and it was a gelatine pie with no ref. to set it in. I just doubled the gelatine and hoped.”²⁷ She was delighted when one of the husbands helped himself to three pieces.

The village lived up to its name. Referring to the black-and-white postcard of Greystones she had enclosed with a letter to her aunt and uncle, Wahl wrote:

It’s not colored, but it is really much closer to the truth that way. Greystones, except for the green, green grass, is literally grey, grey sand, grey cliffs, grey stone walls, grey concrete walls, grey houses, concrete or stone, grey slate roofs. There is one wonderful yellow house, concrete, I think, painted a brilliant yellow, with a touch of orange to it, but it is not in the picture. Also some of the newer houses have red tile roofs. For the rest the whole town is grey, a bluish, greenish grey, sort of olive color.²⁸

Fortunately, the dynamic view from Dysart went some way toward countering the monotony of the town. In the spring, their landlady (a Miss Moran) took the Powers on an afternoon tour of the countryside. While the family enjoyed idyllic scenes of vivid green grass, bright yellow hills covered in gorse, and sheep with their lambs,

we decided when we returned home, after four hours driving, that our particular view of the sea and mountains, and the bay, and yellow house, was the most beautiful thing we'd seen all day. The wonderful thing about it is that it isn't at all static. We have maybe fifty different combinations of light, and each one changes the view entirely. Sometimes the sea is black, or navy blue, or olive green, or grey, or a very brilliant blue-green. Sometimes the farthest bit of land across the bay is an island 25 miles off, sometimes it's Howth, which is 16 miles away, on the other side of Dublin (D. is hidden in the bay) sometimes it's Dalkey, which is ten miles away, sometimes it's Bray Head, which is about 2 miles away, maybe three, but in the morning mists even Bray Head can disappear, and even, like this morning, the yellow house two blocks away is gone. That is only a *very* rough idea of some of the changes.²⁹

Wahl took to painting amateur watercolors of the view, an accidental hobby that began when she and Powers tried out the paints Mary and Katherine had received in their Easter basket. While the girls napped, their parents discovered they "liked it so well that we've got our own box of paints now. . . . I can't paint at all, but it's a relaxing thing to try."³⁰

The inside of the house was less inspiring, aside from the occasional still life of a Guinness bottle. The decorations were mismatched, the furniture shabby. Efforts to tidy up for a guest's visit were strenuous at first, but ultimately declared futile:

Father [George] Garrelts comes next week, and after much work around here we've decided that we can't make the house look like anything, so why try. The living room has a flowered rug, a different kind of flowers on the curtains, another kind on the davenport, and still another kind on the chairs. The wallpaper looks like lumpy oatmeal, and the best we've been able to do is clean the room up good and put a lot of new pictures into the old frames.³¹

The Powers hired a maid, Breda, to help with everyday cleaning and to watch the girls.³² She was young, only fifteen, and came daily from 9:30 to 6:00, giving Wahl the better part of each day to write, run errands, and prepare dinner.

Breda was evidently good with the children – endearingly, a crayon drawing of a house she made remains among the colored pictures Katherine and Mary sent to their relatives in Minnesota – but her housekeeping left much to be desired. Wahl even set aside her literary work to pen a series of short informational tracts on the subject:

My latest endeavour, however, has been a one page work entitled "How to Wash Dishes." This will probably be followed by "How to Clean the Bathroom," "How to Make Beds," and on for quite an extended series. I've suddenly become very tired of Irish housekeeping and see that the only way I can counteract it is to promulgate all the rules in writing and just keep checking up.³³

Perhaps she would have felt more kindly toward Breda if she had known that Lorna O'Malley, the maid they were to have during their second stay in Ireland from 1957 to 1958, would be much worse. Nicknamed "the undomestic," Lorna O'Malley had a difficult time understanding American accents and handling the children. "The girl" singular in the passage that follows is the maid; "the girls" plural are Mary and Katherine, then aged ten and eleven:

The girl, though very pleasant and willing to work hard, is all but a complete failure. . . . The girls, of course, set themselves completely above her, and she takes them at their own estimation, says nothing when they decide to crawl out the window or run on top of the chair seats. And the whole matter of clean dishes, solved once, I thought, remains to be solved again and again. I find myself popping through the door like a detective in a cheap movie: "Did you put soap in that water?" I ask. "I was just going to," is the usual answer. And then I say my line about being able to see the suds from the beginning to the end of the dishes. I've said that so often that I think we ought to embroider it and put it above the sink.³⁴

Or another time:

I'm now conducting a course in Food & Garbage, How to Differentiate and the Differing Treatment Thereof. She is incredible. If I put orange peels & egg shells in a bag as a preliminary to throwing them out, she puts the bag in the larder. She throws away the soup and keeps the juice from the baked beans. Last night there was some gravy left in the pan from the round steak & I told her to put it in with the soup, which was boiling on the next fire. A few minutes later I was waiting for the tea water so I scraped the gravy into the soup & filled the pan with water to soak. Fortunately I caught her just before that quart & a half of water went into the soup. And so on.³⁵

Wahl's impatience with Breda and Lorna O'Malley was part of a larger grudge against the Irish service industry as a whole.

Deliveries from the butcher and grocer never quite corresponded with the order she had placed, and shops and offices sent her from one blank-faced clerk to another until she was driven to distraction. Workmen

showed up at least several hours (sometimes several days) late and could be counted on to take more than the allotted two tea breaks per day:

Pop should come and watch the Irish workmen, and he'd be just overjoyed to get back to his own men. . . . The first two times they were here one of the men had to spend quite a bit of time in our kitchen while Lorna O'M. boiled the water for their tea. . . . And then Monday a Postes & Telefons truck pulled up down there, and I was wondering whether they were doing something to our line, which still doesn't function quite right, sometimes you have to dial twice before the phone works. So I told the kids to go see what the men were doing, and they came back and said, "Eating lunch." This at 10:15 A.M.³⁶

The supermarket was a novelty – to the Irish, that is, not to a housewife from the American Midwest. Many items were “sealed into plastic, unsized, unweighed, unidentified, only priced.”³⁷ Wahl's attempts to comparison shop without knowing the amounts and in some cases the contents of the items she was comparing aroused suspicion. When a clerk would swoop down to ask if she needed help, “I tell them what I'm doing, but they aren't familiar with the habit, and I think they think I'm planning to shoplift.”³⁸ In a teasing letter to Wahl's family, Powers reported that his wife was having “her customary troubles with clerks in stores (as in St Paul, Milwaukee, and everywhere else we've lived, which only shows you what a small world it is and that people are pretty much the same everywhere, clerks and Betty anyway).”³⁹

A more serious source of frustration had to do with a recently created agreement between the United States and Ireland to relieve cases of double taxation. Trying to determine how the new treaty applied to the Powers family proved difficult: “though they have a copy of the law at the embassy, no one can quite figure out just what it provides, so carefully worded is it.”⁴⁰ Government officials sent her from one office to another in search of answers: “I'm always being sent to a back room, behind the garden in the embassy, where there is a Miss Doyle, who knows nothing about anything.”⁴¹ Eventually she was able, with some help from her literary agent Henry Volkening, to find the information they needed, which precipitated the family's return to Minnesota in the fall of 1952.

What the Irish lacked in customer service skills, they made up for in creativity. A night out required a rugged disposition as well as a taste for the arts. Each venue had its own unsavory idiosyncrasies. Theatergoers

brought blankets to ward off the cold and tolerated the occasional rat in the aisles. Outdoor plays put on by traveling troupes were a good place – as were trains in the summer months – to catch lice. At the cinema, where patrons were allowed to smoke, the screen was viewed through a fog and between shows attendants walked around with water pistols, extinguishing abandoned cigarettes. Even so, Powers and Wahl went to dozens of plays and listened to more on their radio at home and her letters are peppered with brief, informal reviews.

They also befriended local writers. The playwright W. D. Heppenstall, by then retired, was an occasional visitor to their home. He lived off royalties from his work and, noted Powers, “like so many, it seems, ‘has another source of income.’”⁴² (Heppenstall was also the one who informed them that Lord and Lady Dysart moved in fashionable London circles.) More famous friends included Frank O'Connor and Seán O'Faoláin, both much admired by Powers and Wahl. These two writers and their wives composed, nearly in its entirety, the couple's social circle in Ireland.

In England, Powers paid a visit to Evelyn Waugh, who had favorably reviewed the English edition of his book *Prince of Darkness and Other Stories* a few years before. Waugh had even taken the time to look up Powers and Wahl in Minnesota, where he visited them in 1949. Powers was pleased to hear that he had grown admirably eccentric since that time:

O'C and O'F spoke of Waugh as though he'd lost his mind. Said he had his servants wearing livery, the latest development. I must get something for my man, a cap anyway, who brings me wood, takes away my ashes, works around my demesne. He doesn't work very hard, brings me green wood. Betty says he knows I'm a fool – her exact words. “Fool for God?” I ask eagerly, but I gather she doesn't mean that kind.⁴³

But when he visited Piers Court in the summer of 1952, Powers set the record straight: “All a lie about liveried servants. Carried out his dishes himself. Very nice, but no fun for me.”⁴⁴ He was given a pre-publication copy of *Men at Arms*, which Wahl read and enjoyed.

In 1951 and 1952, Wahl worked slowly but steadily on *To See the Stars*, revising the manuscript and carving out stories. She began her literary work in the morning and continued until suppertime, holing up with Powers in his office, “a ten by ten room, radio, map of Minnesota, electric

fire, a stack of unread London Times, four numbers of Time, and so on.”⁴⁵ Like any other writer, she had good days and bad days. A good day produced about two pages’ worth of material.

Financial considerations loomed large, and distractions – mainly the cold and the children – larger. Within a fortnight of arriving in Ireland, Wahl wrote to her family: “I get very, very lonesome here, especially when I think of Xmas and Thanksgiving coming. But I will work very hard on the book, so we can buy a house when we come and settle down in Minnesota, I hope.”⁴⁶ In early spring, she seems to have had a brief period of productivity. On 25 February 1952 she thanked her grandmother for her prayers, saying that the girls were in good health and “my writing, while not exactly tearing along, has been going better than I had any right to expect.”⁴⁷ The next day she sent her parents a fuller report on her progress:

I have two sections that would make short stories, and they’re almost ready to go, but almost may be two months from finished, or it may mean two days, just depends. I haven’t been able to work on the nearly done parts lately and am just doing what asks to be done, various spots all over the book. I have about 12,000 words now in a rough draft, about one-sixth of the whole.⁴⁸

By April, work had slowed but she remained optimistic: “things aren’t quite working out, I think that I can work a story out of some of the novel, and then find I can’t. Then go to a new spot and try the same thing again. But now I think I have one that will work, really.”⁴⁹

After that Wahl was silent about her writing in letters to her family until September. By then it was becoming clear that she and Powers would need to return to the United States if they were to avoid being taxed twice. As they prepared to give up their maid and the spare room they had used as an office, Wahl took stock of what they had accomplished in their year abroad: “stories, novels, maybe even a play. J.F. has a couple of baited hooks dangling in New York. I’m still tying the bait on mine.”⁵⁰ She must have cast her reel relatively quickly, for less than a month later “Tide Rips in the Tea Cups” was accepted by *The New Yorker*. News of its acceptance arrived in mid-October and proofs followed two weeks later. “It’s a pretty short one,” she told her family, “but it will pay my fare here and back anyway.”⁵¹

By the time she returned the proofs, preparations were well underway

for the family’s return. Ironically, a quick trip to London while they still had the chance gave Powers and Wahl a new appreciation for Greystones just before they left: “We’re very glad to be back in Ireland. Everything seems extra beautiful and wonderful. And the air smells perfect.”⁵² On 27 November 1952, they sailed for New York.

A PLACE FOR NEARLY EVERYTHING AND OVER HALF THE STUFF IN ITS PLACE: 1952–1957

It must have been a great relief to be back in Minnesota in time for the holidays. The year before had seen Wahl anxiously checking her watch on Thanksgiving and Christmas and calculating the time difference between Greystones and St. Cloud, trying to guess what her relatives were doing at that moment. She and the girls stayed with Art and Romana Wahl while Powers traveled to see his own parents in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He joined his family up the river in late January.

In the fall, Powers and Wahl moved to St. Cloud, where their third child, James Ansbury Powers, was born on 13 November 1953. A second son, Hugh Wahl Powers, followed on 25 November 1955 – making November a busy month for the Powers household, with all four children celebrating birthdays within a span of two and half weeks. The following May, the family learned that they would have to move yet again.

In St. Cloud they had been living as caretakers in a large house situated on a generous plot of land. Their time in “the red house,” as they called it, was a period of relative stability and productivity: “we had gradually worked out almost all our problems, a place for nearly everything, and over half the stuff in its place, Irma [a cleaning lady] for me, and his office for Jim.”⁵³ The house itself contained many happy memories and was the inspiration for Powers’s story “Look How the Fish Live.” In the spring of 1957, it was seized by eminent domain.

They were given until the end of the year to leave but with school-age children the deadline was actually much sooner. Powers and Wahl were livid – and heartbroken. The day after they moved out was difficult for her: “Every red barn left me feeling just awful.”⁵⁴ A month later the feelings had not subsided. Powers admitted:

It isn’t often that I think about the old house. I don’t like to think about it. I get upset and angry when I think that a year ago I missed the autumn there, and little knew that that was the last one for me and for us there. We

would all be happy back there, I know, but that chapter has ended. We did not end it – and I trust whoever was responsible (aside from the circumstance of the college expanding, an incidental to the swift kick we got) is now satisfied. I still say you don't tell people with children in school, in May, they'll have to be out by January (which means, in fact, September), and escape the consequences of ill-feeling. . . .⁵⁵

The nearby St. Cloud Teachers College, now St. Cloud State University, was to blame for the eminent domain seizure. The red house was torn down to make way for a parking lot; much later, a dormitory was built on the site. Even ten years after their removal from the red house, Wahl's muted anger over the move and its effects on her productivity as a writer was discernible in an autobiographical blurb on the dust jacket for her novel *Rafferty and Co.*, which expands the story begun in "A Shorter History of the Irish People": "We have moved around quite a bit, trying to get out of the path of highways, colleges and other landgrabbers, and what with the moving and the children my output has been only half a dozen published short stories."⁵⁶

In the fall of 1957, they turned to Ireland a second time to escape frustrations in the United States. But the act of getting there produced its own set of headaches. Tickets had to be purchased for the voyage, belongings packed for a year abroad, and arrangements made to sell or store the possessions they elected not to take. Preparations for the move were in full swing in October, shortly before the burst of birthdays. Within a month of their arrival in Ireland, Katherine turned ten; Mary, nine; Boz, as James was nicknamed, four; and Hugh, two.

WE ARE TO MAKE ORDER OF IT ALL: 1957–1958

Two days before their arrival at Cobh Wahl wrote to her parents from the *M.V. Britannic*:

We do have two good-sized cabins, comfortable beds, a crib for Hugh etc. All our luggage arrived in good order with no complications, and clothes in the trunk were wearable. Thus I offset the bad with the good, though it is not really offset. Just too many children. The woman in the playroom is very good, can manage 13 or more children with hardly any of the expected confusion. Only one boy, Eugene, defies all her efforts and has to be kept in the playpen like a lion in a cage. The others keep their distance, though several had to be bitten to learn their lesson. Hugh had his hair pulled, but no bites. There is a rule that food dropped on the floor and

stepped on is to be thrown out, but otherwise everything goes, teething toys from one baby to the next etc.⁵⁷

Perhaps unsurprisingly in light of the lax playroom rules, one by one the Powers children were struck by the flu. Wahl also fell ill shortly before the ship docked, and they remained in Cobh for an extra day while she recovered.

Spirits were low in the first few days of their arrival in Greystones. "Whatever happens from here on can't help being better," Powers wrote in a letter to his aunt- and grandmother-in-law. "Betty has advised against writing to you in our present mood. She is waiting to be moved by a burst of enthusiasm before trusting herself to write."⁵⁸ He makes for a charming son-in-law in his letters to the Wahl family, even if other letters reveal that the charm was sometimes forced. In that vein, Powers joked that they had placed an ad in the *Irish Times* for a house to rent

in possible surroundings for long period by unpopular author and family. Greystones to Dublin. 5/6 bedrooms. Cooker, immersion. View of sea? Require furniture, expect to have to collect it, but would consider furnished house if this would not mean eyesores, radiogram veneers, contemporary. State rent and other interesting details in first letter.⁵⁹

He ends on an optimistic note, confident that "my ad will turn the tide of battle, I know, or else the pen is *not* mightier than the sword."⁶⁰ In a letter to a friend, Powers was more candid: "In short, four children and their neurotic parents in themselves should've been enough, but we had the flu, rough seas, and general woebegoneness."⁶¹

By 15 October, Wahl felt well enough to write to let her parents know that "Look How the Fish Live" was forthcoming in *The Reporter*, though "I'm sure none on newsstands closer than Mpls."⁶² She also enclosed notes from the girls, who were now old enough to compose their own letters. Mary's note is quoted here in full, with one particularly revealing sentence (at least as far as Wahl is concerned) given here in italics:

Dear Birdie Al and Grandma Daddy went to Dublen on Monday I went to the beach and got some shells I was sick on the boat then Boz and Hugh and Katherine at the End we haven't started school yet *this isent what Mama exspted* there is a big crack under the door so that a mouse or a rat could get in we haven't had any rain yet Hugh has a wonderful time looking at the Horses in cork befor He new what Horses were called He called them dogs but now evry time He sees a horse He say HORSE

Love
Mary Powers

Indeed, the second Irish trip was not what Wahl had expected.

There is a sense of excitement and adventure, even amidst complaints, in her letters from the first Irish trip that is nowhere to be found in 1957. In addition to the flu, she and the rest of the family were unable to shake lingering feelings of homesickness. The unjust circumstances of their rushed departure were still painful and Ireland was only too full of the inconveniences they had encountered on their first trip: "A real loneliness for things at home has already set in, for people and central heating and kitchens and bathrooms designed with use in mind."⁶³ Wahl felt the lack of her family in Minnesota most acutely on Sundays, when she thought of everyone gathered for supper at her parents' house up the river.

A month later she wrote to her parents, "our run of bad luck seems to hold."⁶⁴ The house they had decided to rent for the year was not immediately available, and their temporary arrangements in Greystones were completely unsuitable:

If I'd had any idea how simply awful this first step was going to be, I doubt we'd ever have come this far. Our first instincts in this house were to abandon the rent we'd paid and move into anything else – immediately. We decided we could stick it out for three weeks and have been hanging on ever since. It's like having a half-inch hold on a slimy dock in a high sea. Ten rooms and only one is inhabitable, so we're all in here, and none of us very far from the fire of \$30.80 coal. The stove ruins our meals by the dozen.⁶⁵

The Saturday after Thanksgiving, they moved to more permanent accommodations in Dalkey, a town in County Dublin about ten miles south of the city. Their house stood at the top of a steep hill with a group of other homes, including one owned by W. B. Stanford, a distinguished classical scholar at Trinity College Dublin.⁶⁶

Moving twice meant, among other things, that neither Powers nor Wahl accomplished much literary work in their first two months abroad. On 14 November 1957 he wrote from Greystones, "It is seven weeks since we left St Cloud, and there were weeks before that, and they have been a total loss to me as a writer. I have made a few revisions in the coming New Yorker story, that is all, and until we move to Dalkey, probably won't do much."⁶⁷ In the same letter Wahl confesses that with the boys tearing around, the girls at school and therefore unable to share the cooking and cleaning, and no reliable help, "I've begun to feel decidedly unstable."⁶⁸

At the house in Dalkey, writing commenced, but slowly, in fits and starts. The children could be expected to burst into their study at regular intervals "with some doleful fact to announce, usually accompanied by wails and tears and two completely conflicting stories of what happened."⁶⁹ Wahl estimated an interruption every twenty-five minutes while she and Powers were trying to write, and every fifteen minutes while they were trying to eat. The system of order they had established in St. Cloud was completely undone:

... we're back to the beginning in so many things, no real place for either of us to work, the wash a continuous comedy of errors, the stove bad to the extent that I no longer enjoy cooking, a thing I would have thought absolutely impossible, the work and result of the heating system both incredible.⁷⁰

The house was the draftiest yet and, worse than outdated, the kitchen was "diabolical." Constant rain and unceasing damp made keeping the family clothed and Hugh in clean diapers a full-time job. "My kingdom for a clothes drier," she sighed.⁷¹

Still, the house had its advantages. It provided the inspiration for "A Shorter History of the Irish People" and, later, *Rafferty and Co.*, with its striking views and grand drawing room. She wrote to her parents:

It's Georgian with an entrance hall, two living rooms to the right of it, both with magnificent views, a kitchen the length of the house to the left, and beyond that a billiard room, a room maybe 15 X 30 with skylights in the roof and a large window in the front. It's now used as a studio for hand weaving, but had been a playroom in the past and would be again if we took it. Upstairs there's a bathroom suggesting 20th century installation, this on the stair landing, and four bedrooms above that, three with views, and one of the three the size of a gymnasium with a marble fireplace.⁷²

For Wahl as for Alice, the wife of the eponymous Rafferty, the house was both a torment and a delight. Also like Alice, Wahl ended her search for a house where it had begun: it "was the first we'd seen, and which had stuck under our skins ever since, the norm against which we held all other houses."⁷³

Adding to her usual domestic worries was a gardener who had come with the house. "We have our 'gardener' here," she wrote to her parents, "and though I have suspicions about him (old toilet seats allowed to lie about the yard, and a bumper crop of dandelions) we just give him his

head and don't worry about the outside."⁷⁴ He too appears in *Rafferty and Co.*, endlessly raking the gravel in the driveway and otherwise making Alice scratch her head.

Powers rented an office in Dublin and Katherine and Mary were enrolled at the Convent of the Holy Child, where classes were held Monday through Saturday. As a result, Wahl spent much of her time at home watching over Boz, Hugh, and "the undomestic," each of whom seemed determined to work against any system of order she tried to establish. Boz had a penchant for tools and spent hours at his makeshift workshop in the basement hammering away on one ambitious project or another, planning to build houses like his grandfather or a boat to take the family back to Minnesota. He also refused to eat or sleep without a pair of pliers by his side, which he eventually used to cut the telephone line to the house. "I spend most of my time sitting on the edge of a chair and listening and then hurrying to check up on Boz," Wahl wrote in April. "He's had me on edge ever since he cut the telephone wire."⁷⁵

The boys, like the girls, followed in their parents' artistic footsteps. That spring Boz decided, after watching a school play at the Convent of the Holy Child, to stage his own at home:

Boz & I went to Killiney to see Mary's form's passion play. Boz disappointed at first because Christ was not actually nailed to the cross. But began thinking about things and spent yesterday A.M. down in his shop hammering away for an hour. Brought up a cross he'd made for *his* play, started assigning parts etc. later that day. "I'm not going to do much, just be God." Assigned M.F. an angel's part. "What do I do?" "Just stand around and talk about Heaven." "Like what?" "Well, say, 'Oh, Lord.'" Hugh was to be the B.V.M. [Blessed Virgin Mary] but I guess he was a flop, for, at last view, they were making one out of pillows.⁷⁶

On Christmas Eve, Katherine and Mary staged their own production, the intriguingly titled "The Last Glimmer of Toes."⁷⁷ At their disposal was a large box of costumes belonging to the owners of the house and their eight children, by then grown.

Wahl was aware that a creative child is often also a sensitive child. "There's no stopping his imagination," she wrote of Boz. "He's the Prince of Fairies, or he's a train engineer, or whatever, and to let him guess that you don't think he is just infuriates him."⁷⁸ Perhaps inevitably, her efforts to support his creativity sometimes fell short. In one instance, she

stopped him as he was dragging several pieces of boarded-together lumber outside "on the grounds that if he went along any further with the boat indoors he wouldn't be able to get it out of his workshop. He is now thoroughly disgusted with me, feels that I don't have the proper faith in him, which, I fear, I don't."⁷⁹

In Ireland Wahl learned that she was expecting a fifth child. The pregnancy came as an unwelcome surprise and the experience of giving birth in a foreign country, far from her family, was understandably frightening. She arranged for a room at the Leinster Nursing Home in Dublin. The unfamiliar surroundings made for a somewhat harrowing labor, not helped any by the fact that the nursing home had overbooked and initially set up her bed in a stairwell on the landing between two floors. But on 2 July 1958 Jane Elizabeth was born a healthy and peaceful baby, "the last product of the red house and my distress at leaving it."⁸⁰

Wahl spent a week recuperating at the nursing home and brought her typewriter with her to take advantage of the time away from the children and the housework. She was anxious about returning:

Relax, relax, a store of strength for the return home and the inevitable rush and crush. How WILL I survive the mornings? The girl must make breakfast. Five, five, five. How did it come about? I keep repeating Fr. Egan – they are, in the end, the only thing that will have mattered. I believe it, I feel it. And yet they defy peace and order and what of art – of Jim's if not mine. Are we to make him into just another man, who will die, his body rot, his possessions be dispersed, and his immortality all in heaven? God *does* intend for there to be man-made beauty on earth. We are to make order of it all. Order and art.⁸¹

By this point, it seems that she was no longer working on *To See the Stars*, though the seeds had already been planted for *Rafferty and Co.* Father George Garrelts – a friend and director of the University of Minnesota's Newman Foundation, who had visited the Powers during their first stay in Ireland – wrote to ask whether he might reprint "Tide Rips in the Tea Cups" in the *Newman Annual* for that year. Wahl offered him "The Lace Curtain," with its similar subject matter, instead.

She and Powers hosted several other visitors during their second year abroad. Wahl had encouraged her family to see firsthand "the hold that Ireland can get upon a person, so that when we come back [to Minnesota] we won't be considered absolutely nuts to have tried to come

back here.”⁸² In July, her aunt and uncle, Birdie and Al Strobel, took her up on her offer. They planned to stay for five days, a good amount of time as long as the weather held up, she said. It was also a length of time that would

hide a number of the true facts from you. If, in five days, you are served cauliflower twice, spinach twice, and baked beans once, it might actually escape your notice. If, however, in 15 days, you are served cauliflower six times, spinach six times, and baked beans three times, you will begin to get the picture on one item anyway.⁸³

A friend of Powers’s, Michael Millgate, visited them in May. Wahl reported to her parents that “the undomestic reached a new and indescribable low in the art of bedmaking in honor of” his stay.⁸⁴ The sloppy housekeeping that so annoyed her went unnoticed by their guest.

Despite always thinking in terms of “going back” to Minnesota – “a phrase that keeps popping up unbidden” – Wahl and Powers took to haunting auctions and estate sales. It was, she realized, an unusual hobby given that they had sold most of their belongings in Minnesota in a spirit of renunciation as much as to lighten the load:

Why all this interest in “things” after our very (almost) thorough divorce from same? Some paradox involved. Cut ourselves off from possessions in which we took only a quiet pleasure & surrounded ourselves with crocks in which impossible to take pleasure & we find ourselves obsessed with desire for beautiful things – for a permanent nest with our own things to cherish and keep in repair. Does not seem anti-spiritual as much as time wasted on being annoyed by ugly things. One must not think about “things” at all? But that is not for us – nor for *any* artist.⁸⁵

They gravitated toward bulky or breakable items, that is to say, things that would be difficult to pack and ship home. Alone or together, they bid or considered bidding on china, dishes, several sets of demi-tasse cups, a large dining room table, a card table, a ship’s lantern, a twenty-volume edition of the works of Jonathan Swift, and enough chairs to fill a house including a “low ladie’s chair,” so named for its height off the ground and not the social status of the sitter. Of this list, the only two items they did not acquire were the tables. An antique barometer that Powers purchased is both fragile *and* heavy:

Meanwhile I went to another auction . . . and came away with six “lots” as we say in the trade: two old prints, a carving set, two Sheraton trays, and a Sheraton barometer: everything we’ll need to set up housekeeping, as you

can see. Lovely to look at though, especially the barometer, which is inlaid with shell designs and of course doesn’t work.⁸⁶

It hangs now on the wall in Katherine Powers’s home. She has written movingly on the subject of her parents’ complicated attitudes toward things:

My parents . . . considered themselves to be unmaterialistic, and my mother was always going on about bringing back sumptuary laws. But both of them were, in fact, obsessed with their material possessions, investing them with moral righteousness: no synthetics, no veneer, no brummagem, nothing mass-produced or as seen on TV. I have inherited this tiresome attitude, and also a lot of their stuff, which oppresses me as much as it pleases me. Where to put it? How to honor it? How not to be plunged into melancholy by these reminders of the longevity of things and the brevity of life?⁸⁷

Though the Powers’ house in Dalkey was furnished with “things we could stand” – no small feat, judging from Katherine’s description – most of them had been hard used by the owners’ children.

By the fall of 1958, the house itself was starting to come apart. With little incentive to undertake major repairs to someone else’s home and determined not to suffer through another winter on the hill, the Powers looked in vain for a better house in the Dublin countryside. Nothing acceptable fell within their price range and with nowhere to go when their yearlong lease was up, they began planning their return to the United States.

The usual flurry of activity began around the usual time: tickets, packing, vaccinations, visas. Wahl was horrified by the thought of traveling with five children, including an infant who was “very unoblingly going to outgrow her Moses Basket” before their departure.⁸⁸ When the *Hanseatic* left Cobh on 29 November 1958 – with the Powers family, now numbering seven, aboard – she had no way of knowing that they would make the round trip again twice in the decades to come.⁸⁹ But there were to be five years, three moves, and a half-dozen short stories before Wahl next returned to Ireland, in fiction and in fact.

NOTES

1. Evelyn Waugh to J. F. Powers, 29 February 1949.
2. BWP to Romana Wahl and Bertha Seberger, 11 September 1952.
3. JFP to Father Harvey Egan, 15 September 1951.
4. Katherine Powers, ed., "Suitable Accommodations: A Selection of J. F. Powers's Letters from Ireland, 1951-63," *Eire-Ireland* Spring-Summer 2002, 94.
5. "Suitable Accommodations," 94.
6. BWP to Art and Romana Wahl, 30 January 1952.
7. From "The Lace Curtain."
8. BWP to Wahl family, undated, c. late November 1951.
9. BWP to Bertha Seberger, 9 November 1952.
10. John Hagopian, *J. F. Powers* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1968), 28.
11. William H. A. Williams, "Green Again: Irish-American Lace-Curtain Satire," *New Hibernia Review/Iris Eireannach Nua* 6:2 (Summer/Samhradh, 2002), 9.
12. BWP to Wahl Family, 6 November 1952.
13. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 23 January 1952. BWP to Family, 16 July 1952.
14. BWP to "Family," 6 November 1951.
15. Months later, Wahl would have occasion to mention that the local town council was "having a long dull fight with the Irish Tourist Association, as is everyone else in Ireland, including the Irish Tourist Board, and the Irish Hotel Association" (BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 23 January 1952).
16. JFP to Father Egan, 7 November 1951.
17. BWP to Wahl family, 6 November 1951.
18. "Suitable Accommodations," 100.
19. BWP to Bertha Seberger, 2 January 1952.
20. BWP to Wahl family, 27 June 1952.
21. BWP to Wahl family, 6 November 1951.
22. BWP to Marien Johnson (now Marien Barton), 16 February 1952.
23. BWP to Wahl family, 9 November 1951.
24. BWP and JFP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 3 December 1951. Another letter explains that the name is pronounced "die - sart, accent on the DIE."
25. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 26 December 1951.
26. BWP to Marien Johnson (now Marien Barton), 16 February 1952.
27. BWP to Wahl family, 24 July 1952.
28. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 10 March 1952.
29. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, undated, c. April 1952.
30. *Ibid.*
31. BWP to Bertha Seberger, undated, c. early May 1952.
32. This name and the name of the Powers's second maid in Ireland have been changed for the sake of privacy.
33. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, undated, c. April 1952.
34. BWP to Bertha Strobel and Albert Strobel, 22 January 1958.
35. BWP to Bertha and Albert Strobel, 22 April 1958.
36. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 19 April 1958.
37. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 22 March 1958.
38. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 22 March 1958.
39. JFP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 7 October 1952.
40. BWP to Wahl Family, 16 July 1952.
41. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 9 July 1952.
42. JFP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 3 December 1951.
43. JFP to Father Egan, 8 March 1952.
44. JFP to Father Egan, 22 August 1952.
45. JFP to Father Egan, 9 September 1952.
46. BWP to Wahl family, 16 November 1951.
47. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 25 February 1952.
48. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 26 February 1952.
49. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, undated, c. April 1952.
50. BWP to Romana Wahl and Bertha Seberger, 11 September 11, 1952.
51. BWP to Wahl family, 14 October 1952.
52. BWP to Wahl family, 16 November 1952.

53. BWP and JFP to Bertha and Albert Strobel, 13 January 1958. Irma came in to help with housework and minding the children.
54. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, undated, c. October 1957.
55. BWP and JFP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 19 November 1957.
56. *Rafferty and Co.* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969).
57. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, undated, c. October 1957.
58. JFP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 14 October 1957.
59. JFP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 14 October 1957.
60. JFP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 14 October 1957.
61. JFP to Michael Millgate, 23 October 1957.
62. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 15 October 1957.
63. BWP and JFP to Bertha and Albert Strobel, 13 January 1958.
64. BWP and JFP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 19 November 1957.
65. BWP and JFP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 19 November 1957.
66. Michael Millgate provided this information in an email of 11 May 2007.
67. BWP and JFP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 19 November 1957.
68. BWP and JFP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 19 November 1957.
69. BWP and JFP to Bertha and Albert Strobel, 13 January 1958.
70. BWP and JFP to Bertha and Albert Strobel, 13 January 1958.
71. BWP to Bertha and Albert Strobel, 18 September 1958.
72. BWP to Bertha Seberger, Bertha Strobel, and Albert Strobel, 26 October 1957.
73. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 2 November 1957.
74. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 19 April 1958.
75. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 19 April 1958.
76. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 17 March 1958.
77. "The only confusing thing was that sometimes K.A. played the wizard and sometimes M.F. did, depending on which was free at the moment. But, of course, when one has a big box of costumes clothes are all, and the wizard really was his cloak, if you can follow me through that." BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 26 December 1957.
78. BWP to Bertha and Albert Strobel, 8 February 1958.
79. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 17 March 1958.
80. BWP, journal, 4 July 1958. The journal is in Katherine Powers' collection of her parents' papers.
81. *Ibid.* Father Harvey Egan was a close friend of Powers and Wahl.
82. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 3 December 1957.
83. BWP to Bertha and Albert Strobel, 6 June 1958.
84. BWP to Arthur and Romana Wahl, 8 May 1958.
85. BWP, diary, 23 April 1958.
86. JFP to Father Egan, 1 November 1958.
87. "When Things Are in the Saddle," *Boston Sunday Globe*, 19 November 2006.
88. BWP to Bertha and Albert Strobel, 18 October 1958.
89. *Ibid.* The Powers family lived in Greystones from 1963 to 1965 and again from 1966 to 1975.