Who Says It's a Man's World: Women's Post-Secondary Education in the Maritime Provinces to 1930

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Higher education of women – What is it? It is the higher education of women to fit them for the higher spheres of action, whether they be political, professional, or social – the same education that men need under the same circumstances.

Grace Annie Lockhart
Address, Mount Allison Ladies' College, 1896

Table of Contents

Abstract

Grace Annie Lockhart was the first woman in the British Empire to gain a bachelor's degree from Mount Allison University in 1875. Despite the importance of the Maritime Provinces as an early site of women's achievement in higher education, historians have yet to explore the women's experiences in any great depth. This thesis considers four institutions within the region: Dalhousie, Mount Allison, St Francis Xavier, and Mount St. Vincent Universities until 1930. Dalhousie offers insight into one of the region's first co-educational and non-denominational universities in the region. Mount Allison, a deeply Methodist institution, first offered by the women's college then as a co-educational institution. St. Francis Xavier, in partnership with Mount St. Bernard. Finally, Mount Saint Vincent offered Catholic women comprehensive education through teaching convents. By examining across the region, we can identify trends in women's higher education. This thesis relies heavily on archival materials such as scrapbooks, letters, and official university documents, including calendars. Student memories have been used as far as possible to bring women's voices into the scholarship. This thesis explores these questions by identifying three key areas in a student's educational journey: academics, residence life, and social experiences. While the question of women's education affected all Canadian institutions, the regional approach will allow for a more detailed examination of women's experience in the Maritime Provinces. Ultimately, researching women's entry into higher education allows us to better understand the gender differences in present-day higher education.

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Introduction

In 1875 the Acadia student newspaper, a column "A Plea for Women," argued that women's access to higher education was inevitable, "The women of the last [generation] were content with sitting at home, doing a great amount of needle-work, tending to household duties &c; their descendants on the other hand, are knocking at the doors of our colleges."[1] Its author may have been unaware that in nearby Sackville, New Brunswick, Grace Annie Lockhart was to be the first woman in the British Empire to receive a degree when Mount Allison awarded her a BSc. The Maritime Provinces of Canada were a significant location for women's advancement in higher education. The region provided opportunities in higher education for white Protestant and Roman Catholic women, which eventually extended to a few Black students. Although the region can be recognised for its many 'firsts', it is important not to simply celebrate these milestones or assume that what followed were success stories. The achievements of women in the Maritime Provinces were a steppingstone in part of a broader struggle for recognition and acceptance in post-secondary institutions.

The Maritime Provinces offered women the opportunity to pursue further education from as early as 1854 with the establishment of the Mount Allison Ladies' College. From then, the opportunities and institutions expanded in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Further education was available to women in Prince Edward Island as the Prince of Wales College opened its doors to women in 1879. Scholar Heidi MacDonald argued that as this was the same year as the amalgamation with the normal school, students overwhelmingly pursued teacher training rather than a general education until the 1930s.[2] Maritime women had opportunities that were not available to women of other provinces.

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[1] *The Acadia Athenaeum*, vol. 1, no. 4, (February 1875), 29-30.
[2] Heidi MacDonald, "PEI Women Attending University Off and On the Island to 1943," *Acadiensis* 35, no. 1 (2005): 107. St Dunstan's University did not open its doors for women until 1942.

Historical Context

The ideal woman of the nineteenth century was expected to be both finer and weaker than man. Scholar Mary Ann Stankiewicz compared this image of a woman to a fine china teacup, if one had too much contact with the world, she would shatter.[1] The idea of women being like ornamental objects was deeply rooted in society, so much so that scholar Lorna Duffin argued that Victorian women became "invalids".[2] This theory argued that men saw women as incapable of navigating society without shattering and thus needed protection from the world. Women were expected to stay in the women's sphere, the home. The home was a protected space, and it became synonymous with women's role as child-bearer and -rearers.[3] The ideal woman was ultimately linked to her biology and thus her biological purpose. This image of women as delicate mothers and homemakers was at the forefront of debates as women attempted to push the boundaries of the women's sphere and expand their opportunities in higher education.

The debate on women's access and capabilities to succeed in higher education was long and heated and American psychologist, G. Stanley Hall named it "The Holy War" in 1905.[4] There were several principal issues regarding female access to higher education. First and foremost, educators debated the suitability of single-sex colleges versus co-education. Supporters of single-sex education advocated for the introduction of single-sex colleges as the system and curriculum could be tailored to women and would be more appropriate. This education system would allow women to prepare for their future roles as wives, mothers, and

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[1] Mary Ann Stankiewicz, "The Creative Sister: An Historical Look at Women, the Arts and Higher Education", *Studies in Art Education* 24, no. 1, (1982): 49.
[2] Lorna Duffin, "The Conspicuous Consumptive: Woman as an Invalid" in *The Nineteenth Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, eds. Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin, (London: Routledge, 1978), 26.
[3] Stankiewicz, "The Creative Sister", 49.
[4] Sue Zschoche, "Dr Clarke Revisited: Science, True Womanhood, and Female Collegiate Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1989): 545. G. Stanley Hall made the "holy war" comment in his chapter on "Adolescent Girls and Their Education", in *Adolescence* (New York, 1905). Written three decades after Dr Edward Clarke's publication of *Sex in Education*, Hall was still an avid supporter of his work.

teachers and, therefore, would not upset traditional gender roles. These institutions would be less threatening to men and the structure of society.[5] Institutions across the United States and Britain adopted this system with the development of the Seven Sister Colleges, Newnham College at Oxford University, and Lady Margaret Hall at Cambridge University, for example.[6] In Canada, however, advocates of co-education pushed for this model as they believed it to be the most effective way to achieve equality in education.[7] Co-education was eventually adopted by Canadian universities, some instantly and others after the development and amalgamation of women's colleges. One of the most common reasons for universities adopting co-education was financial incentives.[8]

The arguments against co-education were vast and complex. The first argument against co-education was the fear of changing gender roles. If women were educated in the same sphere as men, and succeeded, then women would be capable of competing with men in the job market. This change would upset traditional gender roles and potentially threaten the future of motherhood. The second argument was one on moral grounds. Universities were part of the masculine sphere, and as previous historians, such as Sara Z. Burke, have argued, the concepts of undergraduates and masculinity were inseparable.[9] By entering this sphere, women were in danger of corrupting their femininity as it was not considered a suitable environment for a respectable woman. The third and arguably the most difficult argument to refute was the impact of strenuous studying on women's health. This argument was hard to

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[5] Sara Z. MacDonald, *University Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in Canada*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), 130-140.
[6] See Nancy Weiss Malkiel, *"Keep the Damned Women Out": The Struggle for Co-Education*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016) for the shift from single-sex to co-education at these institutions in the USA and Britain.
[7] MacDonald, *University* Women, 84.
[8] MacDonald, *University Women*, 84.
[9] Sara Z. Burke, "Becoming Undergraduates: Women and University Culture in Nineteenth Century Canada" in *Women in Higher Education, 1850-1970: International Perspectives* eds. Lisa Euthalia Panavotidis and Paul James Stortz, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 99.

discredit as health problems could come at any point after studying.[10] Dr Edward Clarke was one of the most influential people in spreading this argument. Clarke was an American physician. He gained his MD in 1846 from the University of Pennsylvania and held the position of Professor of Materia Medica in the Medical School of Harvard University from 1855 to 1872. Clarke's book *Sex in Education; or A Fair Chance for the Girls* was published in 1873 and circulated widely throughout North America and Britain. The first edition sold out in the first week and an additional sixteen editions were published over the course of fifteen years.[11] His work argued that women were incapable of undertaking the same educational systems as men and should follow a less rigorous path; one which the female body could cope with. *Sex in Education* was focused on seven case studies of female patients who became unwell during intense studying or work.

Clarke's research formed the foundation of arguments against women's access to higher education. He stressed the importance of a physical link between the female brain and the reproductive system: when the brain was overworked, it negatively affected the functions of the reproductive system. His word was trusted as a doctor, and his arguments quickly became accepted. Clarke shifted the argument from one of moral nature to one of biology and science. Historian Elizabeth Seymour Eschbach argued that by bringing science into the debate, people were more willing to accept his views as he had "scientific proof."[12] Despite some serious concerns about his work, Clarke's book received significant attention.[13] Ultimately, Clarke's work confirmed nineteenth-century suspicions that women were delicate and therefore incapable of higher education. Eschbach argued that due to the widespread influence of Clarke's ideas, parents became worried that their daughters would become ill

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[10] Dorothy Gies McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment: 100 Years of Women at the University of Michigan*, (Ann Arbor: Centre for Continuing Education of Women, 1970), 53.
[11] Zschoche, "Dr Clarke Revisited", 547.
[12] Elizabeth Seymour Eschbach, *The Higher Education of Women in England and America, 1865-1920*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 83.
[13] Eschbach, *The Higher Education of Women in England and America*, 83.

and would be undesirable to suitable bachelors.[14] This made parents some of the worst opponents of their daughters' continued education. Scholar John L. Rury also commented on Clarke's ability to exploit women as the weaker sex. By placing their body at the centre of the debate, it made it near impossible for women to publicly counter this while remaining respectable. Their sexuality and femininity were central to this issue.[15] Historian Rosalind Rosenberg noted that people took Clarke's work seriously as some high schools and colleges developed their programmes based on his recommendations to counter negative side effects.[16] It was difficult to argue that men and women should have identical education as this carried the implication that men and women could have the same roles in society, and this was too radical a proposition for middle-class society to accept.[17]

Advocates of women's education argued against Clarke in force. One of the most notable and earliest responses was *Sex and Education. A Reply to Dr E. H. Clarke's "Sex and Education"* (1874) edited by Julia Ward Howe.[18] The rebuttal attempted to discredit Clarke's evidence by suggesting other causes for women's poor health such as restrictive dress and lack of fresh air and exercise compared to young men.[19] Eschbach argued that the most effective "antidote" to Clarke's work was American physician Dr Mary Putman Jacobi's 1876, *The Question of Rest for Women During Menstruation*. Jacobi discredited Clarke's thesis that women needed rest during this period as her research found that menstruation did not disable women mentally and physically.[20]

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[14] Eschbach, *The Higher Education of Women in England and America*, 86.
[15] John L. Rury, "'We Teach the Girl Repression, the Boy Expression': Sexuality, Sex Equity and Education in Historical Perspective." *Peabody Journal of Education* 64, no. 4 (1987): 49.
[16] Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 12-17.
[17] Rury, "We Teach the Girl Repression, the Boy Expression", 50.
[18] Julia Ward Howe, ed., *Sex and Education: A Reply to Dr E. H. Clarke's "Sex in Education"*, (1874 Reprint; New York: Arno Press, 1972).
[19] Howe, *Sex and Education*, 26-29.
[20] Eschbach, *The Higher Education of Women in England and America*, 85; Mary Putman Jacobi, *The Question of Rest for Women During Menstruation: The Boylston Prize Essay of Harvard University for 1876*, (New York: Putman, 1886), 223-232.

Despite the attention Clarke's work received, some scholars have highlighted the weakness of his work. Stankiewicz argued that Clarke's argument was so full of flaws that it would not withstand the test of time. For example, Clarke recommended that each woman take a break during menstruation which would make any uniform female education impossible due to the irregularities in female bodies.[21] Moreover, Nancy S. Niemi argued that even though Clarke's work was popular, it did little damage to women's education, but it did raise some unfortunate questions about women's role in society. Women themselves were not deterred.[22]

It was not only scholars who were apprehensive, male students at universities were also uncertain about studying alongside women. Student newspapers in the Maritime Provinces reveal that Canadian students were tracking the increasing numbers of female students in the United States and Great Britain, and articles often referred to women studying in higher education as an experiment. When Dalhousie University first admitted women in 1881, there was a general acceptance from the students. Before this, however, students were concerned that women's inferiority to men (intellectually and physically) would render them unsuitable for university life.[23] These debates were communicated in the *Dalhousie Gazette*, mainly as it closely followed the 'experiment' of women's education in the United States. In 1871 an article announced that four "leading" institutions in New England had enrolled women: "This is an experiment, and those who are interested in higher education will anxiously await the result."[24] Despite some positive results from these forerunners, the author ended on an ambiguous note: "The experiment is not yet fully tried, and it would be

[21] Stankiewicz, "The Creative Sister", 51.
[22] Nancy S. Niemi, *Degrees of Difference: Women, Men, and the Value of Higher Education*, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 51-52.
[23] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 4, issue 7, (February 1872), 52.
[24] *Dalhousie Gazette* vol. 4, issue 1, (November 1871), 7.

premature to and visionary to indulge in any prophecies concerning the future of woman's education."[25]

Like Dalhousie University, the student magazine of Mount Allison can be helpful in depicting the views of male students towards having female colleagues. In April 1884, almost ten years after Lockhart received her degree from Mount Allison, the *Argosy* published an article titled "Co-education." In this piece, the author sets up both sides of the argument and asserts that both sexes should have access to "equally sound training."[26] As men's and women's paths in life were different, men as the breadwinners and reliant on receiving an education, and women as homemakers, the education they received should be different and, most importantly, separate. The author concluded, "There is little room to doubt, however, that in order to do this successfully, separate educational buildings are needed; in other words, co-education is undesirable."[27] Students at Mount Allison were still apprehensive about co-education several years after the institution committed to the change.

Despite these facts, it would not be enough to halt women's progress. Although women's enrolment numbers seemed low, Canada's overall student population was also low. In 1901, women constituted 12 per cent of the student body which increased to 23 per cent by 1930. The increase was not just in women, there was a significant increase in the Canadian student population. In 1871-72, 1,561 students enrolled, but only 240 graduated (112 in arts and science, 106 in medicine and twenty-two in law). By 1930, there were 34,119 full-time students.[28] Women steadily increased their presence at institutions over this period.

Thesis Overview

[25] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 4, issue 7, (February 1872), 52.
[26] *Argosy*, vol. X, no. 7, (April 1884), 80.
[27] *Argosy*, vol. X, no. 7, (April 1884), 80.
[28] MacDonald, *University Women*, 6.

Students of the Maritime Provinces were accustomed to the idea of educated women through religious communities focused on teaching and the popularity of women's colleges. Women often went to the same institutions as siblings and family members. The Maritime Provinces have a rich history of higher education, and Nova Scotia now has the most academic institutions per capita in Canada.[29] It is outside the scope of this thesis to review them all. Included in the study are institutions from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Prince Edward Island did not have many options for women and so Islanders travelled to the mainland to further their education. The four institutions selected are Dalhousie, Mount Allison, St. Francis Xavier (St.F.X.), and Mount Saint Vincent. These institutions were selected for several reasons. Dalhousie was one of the first co-educational institutions, Mount Allison and St. Francis Xavier had women's colleges before amalgamation, and Mount Saint Vincent was a single-sex college. This thesis examines the experience of female students at these institutions to 1930 as this decade marked a shift in student culture and historical context. These institutions represent three different sectarian traditions: Dalhousie was non-denominational; Mount Allison was Methodist; and St.F.X. and Mount Saint Vincent were both Roman Catholic institutions. Other institutions such as Acadia University and the University of New Brunswick could have been included; however, travel and archive restrictions from the pandemic excluded them. These institutions highlight different structures of women's education and provide a foundation for future regional studies of women's higher education in the Maritime Provinces.

Where possible, this thesis attempts to highlight the voices and memories of students. This research has drawn on collections primarily from university archives. The personal collections of students include items such as letters, scrapbooks, and autograph books.

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[29] Brian D. Christie, "Higher Education in Nova Scotia: Where Past Is More Than Prologue," in *Higher Education in Canada: Different Systems, Different Perspectives*, ed. Glen A. Jones (New York: Garland Pub., 1997), 223.

University documents such as student magazines, catalogues, letters, and publications offer insight into student life where there are gaps in personal collections. The archival evidence has provided great insight into the experiences of university women; however, one must be mindful of those not present in the archives. Without a paper trail, the lives and experiences of those students are unknown but must not be forgotten. Moreover, the information available from each institution varies. For example, Mount Saint Vincent lost many archival documents in a fire in 1951. Some students, therefore, will be more visible throughout the thesis, so it is not necessarily representative of all students. It is hoped that this broad approach from several institutions will fill these gaps to an extent and provide some insight into the larger picture of women's education in the Maritime Provinces. Most importantly, this thesis attempts to bring the voices of female students into the scholarship on women's experiences in higher education.

This thesis is organised thematically rather than chronologically with a focus on female students' activities and experiences. The first chapter introduces the four institutions included in this study and provides a brief overview of each institution. The second chapter explores the academic experiences of women studying in the Maritime Provinces. It examines the educational offerings to female students, such as the availability of art and music, academic and practical subjects, and highlights key student memories. The third chapter focuses on women's experiences in residence. One of the institutions initially did not offer institutional residence whereas the other three housed students on campus. This chapter considers the types of residences and the relationships that developed between students while living there. The final chapter is structured thematically rather than by institution and explores the clubs, social engagements, and displays of friendship. Throughout this thesis, similarities and comparisons are identified and made to complete an insightful analysis of women's experience in higher education in the Maritime Provinces.

Literature Review

Women are largely absent from the history of higher education, even more so in the Maritime Provinces. The scholarship in Canada rapidly expanded in the 1970s and 80s as the canon for the field was first established. During the 1990s, more research emerged on women's experience in higher education, and since the 2000s, particularly after 2010, there has been an increased interest in the history of women's higher education. While the historiography of higher education in Canada is too vast to consider here in full, a brief account of some of the works that directly informed this study will provide important context for this thesis's approach, tone, and style.

The 1970s saw the publication of two of the most influential works in the field. The first was Laurence K. Shook's *Catholic Post-Secondary Education in English-Speaking Canada* in 1971, followed by Robin Harris's 1976 *A History of Higher Education in Canada, 1663-1960*. Shook's work traced some of the most influential Catholic institutions and their contribution to the academic world in Canada. This was a vast project and many of the universities lacked substantial archival sources. Shook openly discussed the inequality of sources and how this influenced their treatment in the book. The book grouped the institutions by region, giving the reader a focused view of institutions and a broader regional overview.[30] The research focused on the institutions themselves and dedicated little space to the students and staff. Harris's book follows a different structure by analysing the chronology of higher education more broadly. This scholarship is still considered one of the staples in the field as it looks further than the institution. Harris examined the changes in curriculum and the development of graduate studies.[31] Both these works provided strong foundations for the

[30] Laurence K. Shook, *Catholic Post-Secondary Education in English-Speaking Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).
[31] Robin S. Harris, *A History of Higher Education in Canada, 1663-1960*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

history of many Canadian universities; however, they do not offer insight into the student experience. They provide a framework to assess the differences between English-speaking Catholic and non-Catholic institutions.

Following these works, the 1980s saw further expansion of innovative scholarship. Margaret Gillett's *We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill* was the first of its kind. Gillett challenged tradition by writing a history that focused solely on the progression of women at McGill University.[32] Gillett argued that the women's movement for university admission has not received the scholarly attention it deserved compared to other women's movements. The book examined nineteenth-century ideas about women and their educational capabilities and general issues of women's access while also analysing micro details relating to McGill University. The focus was not only on ideas and arguments but also on people and events. The book received much support but also scepticism and criticism. According to Gillett, one person remarked, "So you're writing a history of women at McGill! What are you doing in the afternoon?" and the Vice Principal of McGill University accused the project of reverse sexism.[33] Notwithstanding, *We Walked Very Warily* brought women to the forefront of educational history and forced scholars to take them seriously. John G. Reid's 1983 article, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison", served as a precursor to his book *Mount Allison, A History* which was published the following year. Reid argued that Mount Allison University paved the way for women's education in the Maritime Provinces and the rest of Canada.[34] Furthermore, he emphasised the role the women's college played in encouraging further education for women. The research explored the tensions between academic and 'ornamental' courses and how the institution adapted to the changing role of educated women

[32] Margaret Gillett, *We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill*, (Montreal: Eden Press Women's Publication, 1981).
[33] Gillett, *We Walked Very Warily*, ix.
[34] John G. Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison, 1854-1905," *Acadiensis* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 3-33; John G. Reid, *Mount Allison University: A History, to 1963*. volume I, 1843-1914, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

in society. This work is an excellent example of how institutional histories can still include and highlight the progress of women in higher education.

Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid's 1989 edited collection *Youth, University and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education* brought students to the forefront of the historiography.[35] It aimed to introduce readers to recent scholarship on the social history of higher education and examine issues such as gender and class. Most relevant to this study is Judith Fingard's chapter "College, Career and Community: Dalhousie Coeds, 1881-1921." Fingard's work draws upon first-hand accounts of Dalhousie students. By writing to alumnae, Fingard collected a substantial database of information that formed the essay's foundation. This research brought the voices of female students into the scholarship. Fingard uses this information to trace changes in the experience of first- and second-generation students. This data revealed the participation rates of students, student relationships, and their experience at Dalhousie. Fingard analysed the two generations and ultimately concluded that Maritime women overall were the first in Canada to have a real choice between marriage and motherhood or a career. Both works contribute to the scholarship by focusing on the student experience rather than on the institution. Their analysis revealed trends in class influences, family backgrounds and student experience.

Moving into the 1990s and early 2000s, the history of higher education saw an expansion of female-orientated studies. Enid Johnson MacLeod's 1990 *Petticoat Doctors: The First Forty Years of Women in Medicine at Dalhousie University* was a series of biographical essays on the first female medical students at Dalhousie.[36] There was little information on the students' experiences, but as a collective, MacLeod's work gives us an excellent insight into the women who attended the university. The biographical approach

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[35] Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid, eds., *Youth, University and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).
[36] Enid Johnson MacLeod, *Petticoat Doctors: The First Forty Years of Women in Medicine at Dalhousie University*, (Lawrencetown Beach: Pottersfield Press, 1990).

brings women to the centre of the literature.[37] *Petticoat Doctors* illustrated the background of these women and highlighted the obstacles they had to courageously overcome. Lee Stewart's 1990 book *It's Up to You: UBC Women in the Early Years* brings western Canadians into the conversation. Unlike MacLeod's biographical approach, Stewart opted for an institutional history that focused on the admission of women and the development of their place at the University of British Columbia (UBC).[38] As with other research, Stewart placed the experience of women at UBC in the wider context of women's access to higher education before analysing the specifics in western Canada and the problems women encountered there. Like John Reid's research, Stewart examines the institution's response to the changes in women's education and how women perceived the changes in their education.

The 1990s saw the completion of two important dissertations.[39] Paula LaPierre's research focused on the first generation of female students in Ontario. Unlike other work that focused on the admission of women, LaPierre aimed to analyse the wider dimensions of female students' experience and attempted to illustrate a thematic coherence that had been unexplored in existing scholarship. Alyson E. King's work acted as a follow-up to LaPierre's dissertation. Like LaPierre, King moved away from the early debates on women's education and focused on the female experience of second-generation students in Ontario. Women were becoming more comfortable in this sphere and King explored what this looked like in terms of female student participation and pushing the boundaries of societal expectations. The research of LaPierre and King moved away from the admission process and early debates to

[37] Biographical studies of women in education was a growing genre. One of the earliest and most notable publications is Margaret Gillett's 1984 *A Fair Shake: Autobiographical Essays by McGill Women*, (Montreal: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1984).
[38] Lee Stewart, *'It's Up to You.' Women at UBC in the Early Years*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990).
[39] Paula LaPierre, "The First Generation: The Experience of Women University Students in Central Canada" (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1993); Alyson E. King, "The Experience of the Second Generation at Ontario Universities, 1900-1930" (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1999).

the lived experience of female students, thus laying the foundations for a new area of research in the history of higher education.

In a similar fashion, Heidi MacDonald's 2005 article, "PEI Women Attending University" sought to bring Prince Edward Island (PEI) women into the scholarship. MacDonald argued that previous scholars, such as Edward MacDonald, author of the history of St Dunstan's, had neglected PEI women from higher education scholarship. PEI scholars had argued that local women did not pursue further education as there were no Island institutions. MacDonald's article examined the registers of five Maritime universities and proved that Island women were present throughout.[40] The research attempted to break the stereotype of PEI portrayed in historiography that illustrated it as isolated and poverty-stricken. Instead, MacDonald illustrated Island women had more to offer and did seek educational opportunities despite their limited options. This is an excellent example of the scholars demanding that women be included in research and that their presence is significant in the history of higher education, particularly in the Maritime Provinces.

Recently there has been a significant expansion of the scholarship on women in higher education. E. Lisa Panayotidis and Paul Stortz's 2016 book, *Women in Higher Education, 1850-1970: International Perspectives*, is a compilation of articles highlighting how women's experiences in higher education could be both diverse and familiar.[41] Sara Z. Burke's contribution, "Becoming Undergraduates: Women and University Culture in Nineteenth-Century Canada" argued that women created female spaces on campus that emulated the traditional undergraduate experience. By doing so, Burke concluded that women redefined what it meant to be a university student by challenging the connection between undergraduate experiences and masculinity.[42] Marilla McCargar also considered the

[40] MacDonald, "PEI Women," 94-112.
[41] Lisa Euthalia Panavotidis and Paul James Stortz, *Women in Higher Education, 1850-1970: International Perspectives*, (New York: Routledge, 2016).
[42] Burke, "Becoming Undergraduates," 97.

experience of being an undergraduate in her 2016 PhD "Femininity and Higher Education: Women at Ontario Universities, 1890 to 1920." McCargar took on a new perspective and explored women's experiences in how they were restricted and monitored during their time at university. The work argued that due to the heavy restrictions that second-generation female students encountered, they formed unbreakable bonds and vital support groups. Moreover, women were not deterred by the hostile environment of academia, and many opted to pursue a career over marriage.[43]

Regional studies have proven to be popular throughout the scholarship but an overall study of women and higher education in Canada was missing. Sara Z. MacDonald filled this gap in 2021 with her book *University Women: A History of Women and Higher Education*. This book was the first comprehensive study to compare universities across Canada from 1870 to 1930. MacDonald's book followed a chronological structure introducing the main arguments against women's entry to higher education and follows the progression of women into higher education across Canada. The philosophy of the book was based on the reasons women wanted to pursue higher education and the reasons why they could not. MacDonald warned that women's entry into higher education should not be seen as a celebratory story of equality. The book concluded that the promise of equal education was never fulfilled, and the modernisation of universities has further marginalised women in academia.[44]

A comprehensive regional study for the Maritime Provinces has not yet been undertaken. This thesis attempts to create space in the scholarship for women in this region. My research will focus on the experience of the first female students attending university in the Maritime Provinces and aims to expand this field by bringing women to the forefront of the history of higher education.

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[43] Marilla McCargar, "Femininity and Higher Education: Women at Ontario Universities, 1890 to 1920" (PhD Dissertation, The University of Western Ontario, 2016).
[44] MacDonald, *University Women*, 286-293.

Chapter One

Setting the Scene: An Introduction to Four Institutions in the Maritime Provinces

The Maritime Provinces provide a dynamic place to study women's post-secondary education. Of course, not all Maritime women who attended higher education remained in the region as there were also national and international options. The institutions in this study provide three different local models of education: single-sex, co-education, and hybrid before 1930. They also provide insight into three different religious denominations: Roman Catholic, Methodist and non-denominational (mostly Presbyterian community). Most female students of this period and region came from middle-class backgrounds and were white and archives and publications reflect this. There was at least one exception as Lalia Halfkenny was the first identified Black woman to graduate from Acadia Ladies' College in 1889. Little is known about other Black women in the region and their experience as a collective. More research is needed to understand the experience (or exclusion) of Black women in higher education in the Maritime Provinces as the sources represent blanket whiteness. This chapter highlights some pivotal points of each institution's history and the women of its past. As previously stated, some institutions have a wealthier bank of sources than others, therefore, there is an imbalance in information and data relating to students. Each institution will be considered individually.

Historians have emphasised the importance of women's colleges in providing valuable career and educational opportunities for women.[1] These institutions are most often

[1] See Marjorie Theobald, "'Mere Accomplishments'? Melbourne's Early Ladies' School Reconsidered" in *Women Who Taught: Perspectives of the History of Women and Teaching*, Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 71–91; Marjorie Theobald, *Knowing Women: Origins of Women's Education in Nineteenth Century Australia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 29–54; Margaret A. Nash, "A Means of Honorable Support: Art and Music in Women's Education in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *History of Education Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2013): 45–63; Margaret Milne Martens and Graeme Chalmers, "Educating the Eye, Hand, and Heart at St. Ann's Academy: A Case Study of Art Education for Girls in Nineteenth Century Victoria," *BC Studies*, no. 144, (Winter 2004/2005): 31-59.

referred to as women's colleges throughout this thesis. Historians Kim Tolley and Roger Geiger found that the names of women's institutions – seminary, academy, normal or college – reveal very little about the institution including how it was run and whom it served. They argued that writers use these terms interchangeably.[2] These colleges provided respectable career advancements for women and offered students the chance to study academic and practical courses. By offering both curriculums, scholar Johanna M. Salles argued that women's colleges were caught between the progressive and the conservative.[3] The colleges attempted to meet the demands of families who believed women's education should remain separate and prepare them for life in the women's domestic sphere. In the early twentieth century, colleges provided practical classes in subjects such as business and domestic science. In addition to providing academic, cultural, and vocational education, women's colleges affiliated with universities took on numerous roles such as preparing students for matriculation and providing female residences.[4]

Protestant ladies' colleges aimed to appease middle-class families by preparing future intellectual wives and mothers and equipping students with skills for respectable vocations.[5] Catholic women's colleges were developed to provide women in their community with exceptional education without disturbing Catholic universities who were preparing men for futures as priests or lay leaders.[6] Historian Sara Z. MacDonald argued that as Catholic women's colleges were run by female members of the religious community, they were more successful in the separatist model.[7] At institutions with both college and university students,

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[2] Kim Tolley, "Mapping the Landscape of Higher Schooling, 1727-1850," *in Chartered Schools: Two Hundred Years of Independent Academies in the United States, 1727-1925*, eds. Nancy Beadie and Kim Tolley (New York: Routledge, 2002), 19-43; Roger L. Geiger, "The 'Superior Instruction of Women,' 1836-1890," in *The American College in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Roger L. Geiger (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), 183-95.
[3] Johanna M. Selles, *Methodists and Women's Education in Ontario, 1836-1925*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), 7-8.
[4] MacDonald, *University Women*, 104.
[5] MacDonald, *University Women*, 92.
[6] MacDonald, *University Women*, 100.
[7] MacDonald, *University Women*, 104.

the dynamics were complex. As the women's colleges often served as residences, there was tension between students. Female university students did not want to live under the same rules as those at the women's college. They wanted to be offered the same freedoms as their male peers.[8] Women's colleges were also at risk of being considered inferior to men's education, so these institutions had to compete to attract students. Co-education was appealing to institutions and women for different reasons including giving women a chance to study as equals to men. For institutions, the promise of funding was appreciated during periods of financial instability.

Dalhousie University

One of the best sources to explore an in-depth history of Dalhousie University is Peter B. Waite's *The Lives of Dalhousie University*.[9] As much as this is an excellent source on the 'lives' of Dalhousie, women are secondary characters. Judith Fingard completed extensive research on the early women of Dalhousie. Fingard's methodology included reaching out to many first- and second-generation women via mail, and their responses are now in the Dalhousie archives. Fingard also created fact files for each woman on record that include personal details such as address, father's occupation, and student's degree path. These sources are invaluable in providing a background on the university and several key facts about students and professors. Dalhousie College was founded in 1818 but was not in full operation until 1863. The college was founded on the grounds of providing a non-denominational education; however, it was supported by the Presbyterian Church and many of its students and staff were Presbyterian.[10] The first women to enter Dalhousie were

[8] MacDonald, *University Women*, 105.
[9] Peter B. Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, Volume One, 1818-1925, Lord Dalhousie's College, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); Peter B. Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, Volume Two, 1925-1980, The Old College Transformed, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).
[10] Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, vol. I, 94.

Margaret Florence Newcombe and Lillie B. Calkin in 1881, around fifteen years after the first classes of male students received their diplomas. Prize-winning Newcombe graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1885, while Calkin did not graduate.[11] Thereafter, women slowly but surely started filing successful applications to the university.

Female students were attracted to Dalhousie due to its location in Halifax, Nova Scotia, its Presbyterian culture, and its academic programmes. The first-generation (1881-1901) of women studying at Dalhousie were predominantly from Halifax and the surrounding areas, with less than 2 per cent being non-Maritimers.[12] These students were self-driven and highly independent, often having worked for several years to afford their education. The second-generation (1901-1922) were also independent but were much younger and used their education to pursue careers.[13] These women were mainly from middle-class families with their father's occupations ranging from businessmen, bankers, and shopkeepers. The most common occupation was clergyman.[14] The second generation of women had similar backgrounds to their predecessors. The ties to Scottish Presbyterianism increased from 15 to 20 per cent, and there was a significant increase of women from Cape Breton, from 1 to 7.5 per cent. Despite this increase, Fingard suspected only 2.5 per cent of second-generation women came from outside the Atlantic region. One change between the generations was a drop in clergymen's daughters studying and an increase in businessmen's daughters to over 30 per cent of students. Fingard also identified that 12 per cent were daughters of farmers and workers.[15]

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[11] Judith Fingard, "College, Career and Community: Dal Coeds,1881-1921" in *Youth, University and Canadian Society*, eds. Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 29.
[12] Fingard, "College, Career and Community," 27.
[13] Fingard, "College, Career and Community," 27.
[14] Fingard, "College, Career and Community," 27.
[15] Fingard, "College, Career and Community," 34. As still 30 per cent of the fathers' occupations is unknown, a fully accurate assessment is impossible.

According to Fingard's research, from 1881-1921, 1,270 women started formal study at Dalhousie University.[16] Although this study extends beyond this period, it gives a sense of the number of women who walked the grounds at Dalhousie. It is estimated that by 1900, 25 per cent of students in the general arts and science courses were women. In some classes, women were the majority. For example, Professor Archibald MacMechan's Shakespeare class was said to be made of 80 per cent women.[17] Despite women still being underrepresented in total enrolment, they did not fall short academically. They outperformed their male peers as disproportionately half of the Avery Prize recipients (the highest standing students in the graduating class of the general degree programme) were women.[18]

Unlike other institutions in the Maritime Provinces, Dalhousie did not offer feminine courses, such as art, music, or domestic science but an affiliation with the Halifax Ladies' College in 1887 provided women with the opportunities to pursue these avenues. When the first women enrolled at Dalhousie their options were limited to the general arts and science programmes. Options expanded to medicine 1881, dentistry 1914, law 1915, commerce 1920 and engineering 1921. Therefore, by 1921, women theoretically had the same academic opportunities as men. Dalhousie University was appealing based on several factors such as its location, religious stance, and academic programmes.

Mount Allison

Mount Allison was founded in 1843 to provide Methodist men with the opportunity to pursue higher education. According to scholar, Raymond Clare Archibald, the Methodist community realised the lack of educational opportunities for young women and so in 1854

[16] Fingard, "College, Career and Community," 26.
[17] Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, vol. 1, 181.
[18] Fingard, "College, Career, and Community," 26.

the female academy opened.[19] In 1886, the institution was renamed the Ladies' College.[20] Despite being a proud Methodist institution, students could attend whichever church their parents wished them to attend but there was mandatory attendance at church twice every Sunday.[21]

When it initially opened, the women's college boasted 142 boarders and day students during the first year, coming from all parts of the Maritime Provinces and Ontario.[22] The majority of students came from the immediate surrounding areas. In the second year of the Academy, more than one-third came from Sackville and almost half were from the county of Westmorland where Sackville was located.[23] Information on the women's fathers is available for the years 1903 to 1909. During this period, the majority of women were daughters of retail or wholesale merchants. The next largest category was farmers, followed by industrial and commercial proprietors, and managers. Daughters of clergymen were also high in attendance.[24] These family backgrounds were not dissimilar to the women at Dalhousie. The first preceptress, Mary Electa Adams had a significant influence on the curriculum at the women's college. Adams ensured that the curriculum featured both academic and traditionally feminine courses but gave priority to academics.[25] In 1857, John Allison became principal and his wife, Martha Louisa (Knight) Allison, preceptress. Martha Allison was the first woman to hold a professional position at Mount Allison as Professor of Natural Sciences, Ancient and Modern Languages within the women's college.[26]

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[19] Raymond Clare Archibald, "Historical Notes on the Education of Women at Mount Allison," (1954), 2000.1, 12/7/2, Ladies' College Celebrations, 1904-1954, Pickard, Dickson, Godfrey Family fonds, Mount Allison University Archives [MAUA], 1.
[20] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 3.
[21] Archibald, "Historical Notes on the Education of Women at Mount Allison," 3.
[22] Archibald, "Historical Notes on the Education of Women at Mount Allison," 2.
[23] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 7.
[24] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 23-24.
[25] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 9-10.
[26] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 11.

In 1862, the degree-granting Mount Allison Wesleyan College opened a site connecting the two academies. Ten years later, in 1872, a change was proposed to admit women to degree programmes. The change was proposed to the college board by Professor James Robert Inch, later President of Mount Allison from 1878 to 1891, and seconded by theological professor, Charles Stewart.[27] The 1872 catalogue explicitly stated that both sexes would be accepted as students; however, there was no influx in female enrolments. Grace Annie Lockhart was the first student to graduate from Mount Allison with a BSc in 1875. As such, she was the first woman in the British Empire to receive a university degree. Lockhart had enrolled in the women's college in 1871 and received her Mistress of Liberal Arts (MLA) diploma in 1874 before enrolling in the degree programme.[28] It was another seven years before Harriet Starr Stewart graduated with a BA in 1882. In 1885, Stewart was awarded a Master of Arts, and became the first woman to receive a MA from a Canadian university.[29]

Saint Francis Xavier

Saint Francis Xavier (St.F.X.) was founded in 1853 as a place to offer Catholic teachings and grew into a university for Catholic men in the Antigonish region of Nova Scotia. For Catholic women, Mount St. Bernard Convent, fondly known as 'The Mount', was established in 1883. The convent was established by the Congrégation de Notre-Dame (CND). The CND in Canada grew out of the work of Marguerite Bourgeoys who arrived in Quebec on 22 September 1653 and taught local women to read and write before establishing her first school in Ville Marie in 1658. Bourgeoys hoped to establish a religious community

[27] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 15.
[28] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 18.
[29] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 27.

of women who lived among the people rather than be confined to a cloister.[30] Bourgeoys' teaching included religious and secular education and placed great emphasis on manual training. For women, domestic science featured heavily in her curriculum.[31] The presence of the CND sisters in Nova Scotia pre-dated the establishment of the Mount St. Bernard convent. The first CND sisters in Nova Scotia were sent to Arichat in 1854 to educate children and adults alike and by 1854 they had created a convent to serve the Arichat community. In 1880, the CND provided staff for the first convent school on mainland Nova Scotia, Stella Morris Convent in Pictou.[32] Mount St. Bernard Convent was established three years later.

On opening day, eighty-six day pupils and four residents were registered and by December, the number had increased to 108 and nine respectively.[33] Sister Margaret MacDonell (Mount St Bernard historian) claimed that the Mount attracted women from all over North America, with students coming from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Arizona and Quebec.[34] Mount St. Bernard focused on courses in art and music and in the early 1900s, it offered courses in secretarial science and home economics. Catholicism was central to the institution: one Protestant woman who applied to the BA programme in the early 1890s was refused and directed to Dalhousie University.[35] The year 1894 marked the beginning of formal affiliation between Mount St. Bernard and St.F.X., allowing women to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree. By June 1897, four women had graduated with degrees. In

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[30] Patricia Simpson, *Marguerite Bourgeoys and the Congregation of Notre Dame, 1665-1700*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 5.
[31] *A Tercentenary Sketch of the Venerable Marguerite Bourgeoys, 1620- 1920*, (Montreal: publisher not identified, 1920), 12.
[32] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 16.
[33] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 18.
[34] Laura Cote, "A History of Mount St. Bernard From 1883 to 1939: To 'Make and Mark The True Woman'" (BA Thesis, Saint Francis Xavier University, 1999), 24. Student Interview with Sister Margaret MacDonell, MSB Historian.
[35] James Cameron, *For the People: A History of St. Francis Xavier University*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 96.

partnership, these institutions became the first Catholic institutions in North America to grant degrees to women.[36]

A publication for the Mount St. Bernard centennial claimed that support for the affiliation between the Mount and St.F.X. was unanimous. The proposal was presented to the administration of St.F.X. by Reverend Dr D. A. Chisholm (Rector) and Reverend Dr Alexander Thompson (Vice-Rector) who appealed to the Bishop of Antigonish John Cameron. However, not all members of the university were supportive of the proposal of co-education. Professor Alexander MacDonald wrote on several occasions to Bishop Cameron with his concerns. MacDonald expressed strong views against having women in the same classes as male students. His main complaint was that St.F.X. was founded with the intention of preparing young men for priesthood and co-education would impede this. MacDonald urged the bishop to advocate for an alternative system, similar to the previous one, as co-education was ruining the reputation of the institution.[37]

The first women admitted to the Bachelor of Arts programme were Florence MacDonald from the 1895 class and Lilian MacDonald, Margaret MacDougall, and Mary Bissett from the 1896 class. Based on their previous education at the Mount, these women gained their bachelor's degree in one year (soon after, it was a mandated four-year programme with grade twelve contributing to the first year). On 24 June 1897, these women were awarded their degrees at Mount St. Bernard.[38] In 1902, the Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education reported thirty-three women and eighty-four men in the arts programme at St.F.X. University.[39]

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[36] Cameron, *For the People*, 96-97.
[37] Letters from Professor Alexander MacDonald to Bishop John Cameron, N.d. MG45/2/111-156, William X. Edwards fonds, St. Francis Xavier University Archives [StFXUA]. One letter was dated by the archivists as June 1901. John Cameron was Bishop of Antigonish between 1886 and 1910 so the letters would be from this period.
[38] *The Excelsior*, vol. 2 no. 8 (1897), 8.
[39] Cote, "A History of Mount St. Bernard From 1883 to 1939," 27.

Teaching for the post-secondary programme was split between the two institutions. Classes including Christian Doctrine, mathematics and natural sciences were taught by the Sisters of the CND and male professors from St.F.X. were responsible for classes in English literature, physics, and chemistry.[40] This structure was in place for many years to keep the sexes separate. The graduation exercises were also separate until well into the 1920s and it was not until 1928 that women competed for the same academic prizes as men.[41] In the 1960s, demand became too high to run two separate programmes, and the institutions had to combine the students. As one of the first Catholic universities in North America to establish a women's college and to present the first degrees to Catholic women, St.F.X. University offers a Catholic perspective on women's education in the Maritime Provinces.

Mount Saint Vincent

Mount Saint Vincent was established in 1873 as an all-female academy by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. Situated in Bedford, Nova Scotia, the primary purpose of the institution was to train and educate young novices and young sisters.[42] The American branch of the Sisters of Charity was established by Mother Seton in 1812.[43] In 1848, Bishop Walsh of Halifax applied for sisters for his diocese in Halifax and the following year the first sisters arrived in Halifax. A novitiate was established at Saint Mary's on Barrington Street.[44] The sisters took to educating the community and helping the sick and poor. The building for Mount Saint Vincent was purchased in 1872 and the academy opened in 1873.[45] As the Motherhouse and teaching convent, classes to prepare novices and young sisters were held at Mount Saint Vincent, and in 1895 the Nova Scotia Legislature recognised the academy as a

[40] Cote, "A History of Mount St. Bernard From 1883 to 1939," 22.
[41] *Mount St. Bernard Centennial*, 22.
[42] Sister Maura, *The Sisters of Charity, Halifax*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1956), 34.
[43] *Sisters of Charity Halifax, Nova Scotia: 1849-1949*, (Halifax: [s.n], 1949), 15.
[44] *Sisters of Charity Halifax, Nova Scotia: 1849-1949,* 17.
[45] *Sisters of Charity Halifax, Nova Scotia: 1849-1949,* 20.

provincial normal school.[46] This opened opportunities for women as the only other normal school in the province was in Truro and as boarding options were limited, Catholic women were deterred from attending.[47]

Most students came from Halifax or elsewhere in Nova Scotia, with only a handful coming from outside the province. Several catalogues from Mount Saint Vincent give an overview of the academy and include lists of students. From here, we can understand the number of students and where they came from. For example, 1903-04 had 102 students with seventeen coming from outside Nova Scotia, such as New York City, Cuba, and Newfoundland.[48] In the academic year 1915-16, there were 114 students in total. Again, they were predominantly from Nova Scotia and other regions in the Maritime Provinces. There were still several students from Newfoundland, one from Ontario, and another from Manitoba.[49] These numbers tell us that the enrolment was predominantly from local young women and was extremely consistent at Mount Saint Vincent. Academy classes included English, French, mathematics, science, and history, with optional courses in music, painting, stenography, and Greek. Later, commerce courses were introduced.

The demand for post-secondary education became prevalent and the Sisters of Charity Halifax endeavoured to provide for their students. In 1914, Mount Saint Vincent entered a partnership with Dalhousie University, allowing students to study for degrees. This partnership was popular with novices and in 1933, twelve of eighty-four second-year novices were enrolled in Dalhousie and this partnership continued until 1942.[50] In 1925, Nova Scotia

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[46] Sister Maura, *The Sisters of Charity,* 34.
[47] Theresa Corcoran, *Mount Saint Vincent University: A Vision Unfolding, 1873-1988*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999), 13.
[48] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent" 1903-04 booklet, UR-008, Mount Saint Vincent Academy fonds, Mount St. Vincent University Archives [MSVUA].
[49] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent" 1915-16 booklet, UR-008, MSVUA.
[50] Heidi MacDonald, "Entering the Covent as Coming of Age in the 1930s" in *Changing Habits: Women's Religious Orders in Canada*, ed. Elizabeth Smyth (Ottawa: Novalis, 2007), 95.

Legislature awarded them the right to grant their own degrees. This change is said to have made it the only independent women's college in the British Commonwealth. [51]

By 1951, the college offered degrees in subjects ranging from arts, secretarial science, music, economics, library science, nursing, and education. In 1966, the college became Mount Saint Vincent University and the following year, the institution began admitting male students. Catholicism was at the heart of the institution and thus Catholic women were drawn to the institution; however, being Catholic was not a requirement for admission.

Mount Saint Vincent is an interesting institution as it started as an academy for religious sisters and progressed into the first independent women's college in the British Commonwealth before becoming a mixed university in the 1960s. This model of education provides an alternative to the more traditional universities. Furthermore, as it was single-sex and not in direct partnership with a larger institution, Mount Saint Vincent provides insight into the experience of an all-female Catholic higher education institution in the Maritime Provinces.

The aim of this chapter was to provide brief context of the institutions to better understand the student experience in the Maritime Provinces. These institutions were selected as they provide a range of educational models and confessions. A broader, more regional survey of women's experience in higher education can be achieved by using these models. The following chapters will examine the female student experience in three of the main spheres of student life: academics, residence, and social experience. The first place that will be examined is the students' academic endeavours.

[51] MacDonald, *University Women*, 158.

Chapter Two

In the Lecture Hall: The Academic Experience of Women

Introduction

In debates surrounding women's education, one of the main questions at hand was what constituted "respectable courses" for women. An 1872 issue of the *Dalhousie Gazette* wrote, "Whether the higher education is necessary for women, would be an absurd question now… and man could only prevent her from obtaining this instruction by barbarous exercise of his superior physical force."[1] The article discussed the subjects considered suitable for women to study. Not all courses were seen as appropriate and many vocational courses such as medicine, law, and engineering were not open to women for many years.

In the nineteenth-century women's education focused heavily on arts and music. One school of thought, endorsed by scholars Margaret Milne Martens and Graeme Chalmers, argued that this curriculum was reserved for the upper classes to teach them their role in society. Instruction in art and music was for "young ladies' instruction" and was clearly a marker of social difference.[2] These subjects were often referred to as "ornamental" courses. Scholar Margaret A. Nash disagreed with this argument and instead argued that these subjects were more complex than the word ornamental suggests. Nash argued that art and music did not result in a passive education or a lack of skills and one should not presume that these subjects meant "a frilly pursuit for women that coded a particular class-based definition of femininity."[3] According to Nash, education in art and music could result in career opportunities for women in teaching fine arts and also for normal teachers as it was becoming an increasingly common requirement for teaching with a background in fine arts. Protestant

[1] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 4 issue 7, (February 1872), 52.
[2] Martens and Chalmers, "Educating the Eye, Hand, and Heart at St. Ann's Academy," 38.
[3] Nash, "A Means of Honorable Support," 58.

churches increased their music programmes and began to hire women as organists and soloists.[4] Receiving an education in art and music could increase women's options and for some, made independence possible. Furthermore, Nash argued that studying art and music did not mean a lesser commitment to academic subjects as earlier historians contended. In actuality, providing instruction in art and music was pragmatic for both women and the institutions.[5] It provided further income for institutions and increased opportunities for women. There was a complex relationship between art and music and women's education, but these subjects were often central to women's education.

The four institutions in this study offered women four alternative routes of education. Dalhousie University offered women the chance to study alongside men in a full co-educational environment. Mount Allison first presented women the opportunity to study at their women's college then opened classes at the university as co-educational. St. Francis Xavier gave women a chance to study at the women's college and then at the university but as single-sex institutions until recently (1960s). Mount Saint Vincent awarded women the prospect to study in a small, single-sex institution offering academic, and art and music courses. This chapter will explore aspects of academic life including course offerings, student experiences and memories at each institution separately.

Dalhousie University

Dalhousie University was one of the few co-educational institutions in the Maritime Provinces. As well as offering women the chance to study an academic curriculum, the affiliation with the Halifax Ladies' College prepared women for their academic endeavours and facilitated studies in practical courses.

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[4] Nash, "A Means of Honorable Support," 58.
[5] Nash, "A Means of Honorable Support," 52.

In 1892, the Halifax Ladies' College, under the leadership of Margaret S. Kerr, offered women a pathway into Dalhousie and the chance to study practical courses. The college expanded its collegiate curriculum to provide a three- or four-year course in modern languages, mathematics, science, and Latin, with an optional course in Ancient Greek. Women who completed the collegiate course could be admitted directly to the first- or second-year arts and science programme at Dalhousie.[6] In 1902, the college established the School of Domestic Science and by 1906, the school's graduates were recognised by the province as being qualified to teach household science in Nova Scotia public schools.[7] In 1926, Dalhousie offered a diploma for household science with two years of classes at the women's college and two years at the university in arts and science. The programme became a four-year bachelor's degree offered jointly by the women's college and the university until it was discontinued during the Second World War.[8]

Academic life for Dalhousie University students was in some respects made memorable by the standards of their professors. One of the most loved professors was Archibald 'Archie' MacMechan. He was described by Annie I. Fraser ('17) as teaching English "superbly" and the students were invited to his home for tea once a year which was greatly anticipated.[9] Another student, Margaret G. Covert ('25) wrote that MacMechan would read from Joseph Addison's *Spectator* essays and she recalled that he made them "come alive."[10] Covert reminisced about some of her other professors such as George Wilson who taught history, writing that he "saw much interest in his subject, but he did not ever seem to lift his head from his notes." Her French professors also received much praise for showing her the beauty of the French language. Not all memories were positive. Fraser's philosophy

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[6] MacDonald, *University Women*, 96.
[7] MacDonald, *University Women*, 97.
[8] MacDonald, *University Women*, 97.
[9] Letter from Annie Fraser to Judith Fingard, 6 March 1987, Female Students First Voice Accounts [FSFVA], box 4, no. 36, Dalhousie University Archives [DUA].
[10] Letter from Margaret G. Covert to Judith Fingard, 17 January 1986, FSFVA, box 4, no. 34, DUA.

professor, Herbert Stewart, was described as "a stout, greasy looking man with spotted, untidy clothes", and her Latin professor, Howard Murray, "was a terror to all who failed his rigid tests. Whatever subject we might let slide occasionally it was never his…"[11] She complained that the geology walks always fell on the day of a dance. This was inconvenient as the students were then *almost* too tired to attend. Fraser and Covert's memories offer examples of female students having strong views of their professors and impressions that endured.

Women in medicine and dentistry constructed their memories differently. Student Roberta Forbes ('24) was one of the first dental students at Dalhousie.[12] As a student in a male-dominated course and profession, Forbes recalled that "It was a bit challenging working in a male environment, but my classmates were very tolerant and treated me equally."[13] Anna Creighton Laing ('22), Eva Mader MacDonald ('27), and Anna Murray Musgrave ('29) were all medical students. Musgrave wrote that she was always treated well by teachers and fellow staff. Moreover, as a student, she claimed the only discrimination she saw was that male students could not intern at the children's hospital.[14] After graduation was when Musgrave experienced discrimination as did her cousin, Anna Creighton Laing.[15] MacDonald also noted that male students were not allowed to intern at the children's hospital. As there were no female students in the year before her, MacDonald interned there for two years. With regard to discrimination against women MacDonald stated, "It was not until after I graduated [and] found things were refused me because I was a woman. Then I realised we were different. In Nova Scotia [and] at Dalhousie I did not feel this. In other parts of Canada, it was much more

[11] Letter from Annie Fraser to Judith Fingard, 6 March 1987.
[12] Arabel Catherine MacKenzie was the first female dental graduate in 1919, followed by Hazel Alice Thompson in 1923. Mabel Angela St. John Magee graduated the same year as Forbes.
[13] Letter from Roberta Forbes to Professor Judith Fingard, 26 February 1986, FSFVA, box 4, no. 37, DUA.
[14] Letter from Anna Murray Musgrave to Judith Fingard, 10 June 1986, FSFVA, box 4, no 55. Men were not allowed to intern at the Children's Hospital and women were not allowed to intern at the Victoria General Hospital until after the Second World War.
[15] Letter from Judith Fingard to Anna Murray Musgrave, 26 June 1986. Fingard was replying to comments made about discrimination and is referring to a previous conversation between herself and Anna Creighton Laing.

difficult to get the education you wanted if you were a woman."[16] At least in their memories, these Dalhousie women felt they were treated equally until after graduation when they experienced discrimination.

In at least some families, women's education was seen as less essential than for male siblings; therefore, women were the first to be recalled home if needed. Eva Mader MacDonald, class of 1927, took seven years to complete her medical degree. As the only "healthy woman" at home, MacDonald was often relied upon to help. Her two brothers also studied medicine, the first went to McGill and the other entered Dalhousie the same year as MacDonald and graduated in 1924. In later years, MacDonald was able to move out and dedicate herself to her studies. She wrote that her academic progress significantly increased when she was no longer needed at home.[17] Gertrude Henderson MacLean had a similar experience to MacDonald but was unable to return to her studies due to family expectations. MacLean enrolled at Dalhousie in 1919 and during her second year, her father pulled her from the course. She was required to nurse her mother, and then remain to help with her father's business unlike her brother who continued his studies.[18]

Dalhousie gave some women the opportunity to study the same courses as men and compete with them on equal grounds throughout their education. By giving women the opportunity for co-education, the university prepared them in many ways for working alongside men. Women also had the opportunity to pursue practical courses and prepare for university education through the partnership with the Halifax Ladies' College.

Mount Allison

[16] Letter from Eva Mader MacDonald to Judith Fingard, 4 June 1986, FSFVA, box. 4, no. 47, DUA.
[17] Letter from Eva Mader MacDonald to Judith Fingard, 4 June 1986.
[18] Letter from Gertrude Henderson MacLean to Judith Fingard, 27 January 1986, FSFVA, box. 4, no. 40, DUA.

The curriculum of the Mount Allison Ladies' College was largely influenced by its first preceptress, Mary Electa Adams.[19] When the academy first opened, the trustees expected it to be an institution to learn social graces and train respectable young women. Adams, however, opted for a more academic curriculum that largely resembled the education of young men in the Methodist community.[20] The *Mount Allison Academic Gazette* assured parents that their daughters would still be educated in "the cultivation of refined taste and lady-like manners."[21] The academy continued to offer instrumental music and fine art, and according to scholar Raymond Clare Archibald, these classes were popular and offered a high standard of education. The music classes offered students instruction in piano, organ, voice, and the theory of music.[22]

When the men's college moved adjacent to the women's college in 1872, the women's college assumed various new functions. The college started to place more emphasis on older students and offer more practical subjects. In 1900, the women's college continued to offer its MLA and art and music diplomas but now offered a university preparatory course and a business course including shorthand and typing.[23] In 1904, the Massey-Treble School of Household Science was established and it was facilitated by the women's college and the School of Engineering that offered students a two-year diploma.[24] In 1924, the programme was expanded to a four-year BSc with the first graduate in 1925.[25] Historian John Reid argued that by 1914, with the introduction of these new practical courses, the women's college had strayed further from the strong academic values implemented by Adams.[26]

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[19] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 9.
[20] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 10.
[21] *Mount Allison Academic Gazette*, (December 1855), 5-6.
[22] Archibald, "Historical Notes on the Education of Women at Mount Allison," 11.
[23] MacDonald, *University Women*, 94.
[24] MacDonald, *University Women*, 94.
[25] Archibald, "Historical Notes on the Education of Women at Mount Allison," 13.
[26] Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison," 3.

One 1909 student report (a university student but printed on Ladies' College paper) offers an insight into the grading system at the women's college. The first half of the report had space to manually insert the courses of the student (in this case, university classes). The second half of the report had nine courses printed. These included elocution, violin, and general carriage. This suggests that the students had compulsory classes and were assessed on behaviour. The report gives a definition for "Deportment" and "General Carriage." The former is explained as "reference to Punctuality and Obedience to all the Regulations of the School" and the latter as "lady-like manners and attention to the properties of social life."[27] Students' behaviour was considered as important as class grades, thus female students had to uphold certain standards of behaviour.[28] As much as the women's college tried to maintain its original values and offer women academic, cultural and practical courses, historian Sara Z. MacDonald argued that ultimately the institution became a junior college for the university.[29]

[27] Clementina Pickard Student Scrapbook, Accession no. 2000.01, 12/7/3, Clementina Godfrey Student Memorabilia, Pickard, Dixon, Godfrey family fonds, MAUA, 126.
[28] As these sections are not filled out for a university student, it is likely that they were not graded on their behaviour. However, they would be expected to uphold the same standards of behaviour.
[29] MacDonald, *University Women*, 104.

At the university, women had the option to enrol in classes alongside male students. Harriott Olive was a student at Mount Allison around 1890 and her letters to home provide an interesting insight into academics at the institution. All students could take subjects such as English, modern languages and science. Olive chose to study chemistry and physics as she thought she would achieve good grades in them and expected to pass botany as she had "done so much with Mr. Shay that I ought to."[30] Olive expressed to her parents that she had worked hard and expected this would be reflected in her grades. Olive was also a student of Ancient Greek and was the only female student in that class. She claimed that ordinarily she would not have minded a class of men, but these students were all theologues, people she did not know. Nonetheless, she was positive and worked hard despite the difficulty of the subject.[31] Rather than the issue being the sex of the students, the main problem, at least for Olive, seemed to be that they were people she did not know and could not relate to.

Figure 1. Harriott Scammell Olive. 1894 or 1897.

Clementina Pickard was also a student at Mount Allison University several years later. Pickard's report cards give an overview of the classes she was enrolled in from March 1909 to May 1910.[32] Over this

[30] Letter from Harriott Olive to Mother, 7 December 1890, Accession no. 8607, Olive Family Letters, 1860-1904, MAUA.
[31] Letter from Harriott Scammell Olive to Papa, 14 October 1891.
[32] Clementina Pickard Student Scrapbook, 126-27. Dates for the report cards: 24 March 1909, 22 December 1909, 24 March 1910, 28 May 1910.

year, Pickard's classes remained consistent. The classes included: English, Latin, French, Bible, essays, geometry, algebra, and physics. The transcript provided gave the grades of class and written exams. These report cards were over a short time span, and for only one student; however, they give us valuable insight into the classes taken by female students and how they were graded.

Exam seasons were intense periods for female students at Mount Allison. In a November 1890 letter, Olive wrote to her parents about the upcoming exams. She was studying Horace and Roman history, geometry, physics, and English. Olive put pressure on herself to succeed and framed this desire as wanting her father to be proud of her achievements, "I want for your sake, Papa, to do well in these exams, but you must not be too disappointed if I do not lead."[33] She expected to lead in Latin, do very well in English but not in her other subjects. Most interesting of all, were her comments about her Latin instructor, Dr Smith. Olive wrote that she felt she deserved to be near the top of the class; however, Smith did not award female students top marks. According to Olive, Smith did "…not approve of a girl leading in classes, so my paper will need to be awfully ahead of the next ones before he will let me take first place."[34] As such, Olive was aware her professor's bias and knew that she had to work harder than her male peers to achieve the results she wanted. Although it looks like women were on an equal footing academically, they may have had extra barriers, such as discrimination, to face. Written exams were universal, although there was some flexibility for sitting them. During the December 1891 exam schedule, Olive's English instructor, Professor William Morley Tweedle, suggested that she should take the honours exam after Christmas rather than before. This left Olive with just four exams and gave her more time to prepare for the others. At least one professor may have been sensitive

[33] Letter from Harriott Scammell Olive to Papa, 23 November 1890.
[34] Letter from Harriott Scammell Olive to Papa, 23 November 1890.

to her mental and physical stress as her tone in letters home gave the impression that she was tired from the semester and was looking forward to heading home for the break.

Outside of classes and exams, the university ran lectures on specialised topics. In a December 1890 letter, Olive told her mother about the lectures on evolution, delivered by Professor Andrews. She expanded in great detail about her interest in the subject but admitted that there were some points she did not understand.[35] Reconciling science and religion may have proved a particular challenge for some university women. In this set of lectures, Andrews claimed that "God made man out of the dust of the earth…evolution simply shows us how he did it."[36] Religion was central to the university, and this was reflected in teachings. Olive wanted to make links between the ideas she was being exposed to in Sackville and her birth family and stated her intention of sending her mother a copy of the lecture notes.

The women of Mount Allison had the opportunity to choose the educational path that suited them best with both the women's college and university options. Female students could pursue academic and cultural subjects to prepare them for lives in the public and private spheres.

St. Francis Xavier

St. Francis Xavier offered Catholic women the chance to further their education through Mount St. Bernard before opening classes at St.F.X. for women. Due to their proximity, Mount St. Bernard worked closely with the main institution. As it first opened as a teaching convent, then an academy, it sought to train students to be exemplary Catholic women. As the community was embedded in the Marguerite Bourgeoys philosophy of education, the curriculum included family studies and the home arts.[37]

[35] Letter from Harriott Scammell Olive to Mamma, 7 December 1890.
[36] Letter from Harriott Scammell Olive to Mamma, 7 December 1890.
[37] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 16.

Mount St. Bernard offered practical courses such as secretarial science and home economics programmes. The 1896-97 calendar included "type-writing, including use of type-writer," which was listed as $3.00 per term.[38] In later years, St F.X. introduced a commercial programme that offered business and shorthand courses allowing students to obtain a diploma at the end of their study. This course was short-lived, only being advertised from 1903-09.[39] In 1907, the Antigonish newspaper, *The Casket*, reported that six students of the Mount had successfully completed the stenography course.[40] It was not until 1920, with the appointment of Sister St Catherine Palma that Mount St. Bernard developed a business programme.[41] In 1911, the curriculum expanded to allow for practical courses, including lectures and practical work in areas such as cookery, household management, laundering, and sewing. It was not until 1924, however, that the college started to consider a degree programme for home economics, and it was a further eight years before the first degrees in BSc Home Economics were awarded in 1932.[42] The women at the Mount had the opportunities to learn and refine skills that would be practical to them in the home sphere as well as in the business world.

Courses for personal development rather than for credit towards a diploma were encouraged. There were opportunities for private art classes and music instruction. These lessons were considered essential to the "well-rounded education" provided at the women's college.[43] As early as 1903, private instruction for music was available for piano, organ, harp, guitar, mandolin, and voice. There was also instruction on general theory and weekly lectures and monthly recitals were available to students.[44] The institution was committed to expanding the skills and education of these young women to prepare them for future roles.

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[38] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 35.
[39] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 35.
[40] *The Casket*, (May 1907), 8.
[41] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 35.
[42] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 36.
[43] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 34.
[44] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 34.

Once in partnership, the college worked with the university to create an appropriate arts programme. In the academic year 1894-95, a small number of female students enrolled in degree studies and arrangements were made for staff from St F.X. to teach at the Mount. This included the services of Reverend Dr Alexander MacDonald to teach philosophy, Reverend Dr Alexander Thompson for physics and Reverend Dr D. A. Chisholm for classics. The CND Sisters at Mount St. Bernard took responsibility for the instruction of the remaining classes.[45] Enrolment continued to grow and soon the college had to expand its physical teaching capacity. The institution built Immaculata Hall in 1917 and this became a central hub for female students with residence space, classrooms, laboratories, a gymnasium, and an auditorium.[46] In the 1920s, it became more common for women to attend classes at the university rather than at the Mount; however, the main courses in the arts programme continued to be duplicated for freshmen until the 1960s when it became unsustainable.[47]

The women from the Mount were chaperoned at the request of the priests for classes at the university. Women who were not residents at the Mount but were university students were not required to be chaperoned but were expected to act appropriately. This meant that female students were expected to move around in groups and never be alone, especially after dark. Perhaps not surprisingly, female students did not always abide by these rules. As noted earlier, Professor Alexander MacDonald complained to the local Bishop that female students "do not always enter the College building in a 'body' – unless indeed two and even one at a time can be described as a 'body'; and they come at any and every hour."[48] In one particular instance, student Eileen Boyd Donahoe ('32) recounted how one day she arrived at class early and began talking to some of her male peers. When the Mount residents arrived with their chaperone, Donahoe was scolded for talking with the men, and allegedly was told not to

[45] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 21.
[46] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 27.
[47] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 34.
[48] Letter from Professor Alexander MacDonald to Bishop James Cameron, n.d.

associate with the Mount women as this was unacceptable behaviour.[49] In the nineteenth century, it was common practice for female students to be chaperoned and for females to enter at a different entrance and use different staircase such as at McGill University.[50] At Catholic institutions these practices continued much, much longer. Rules like these were to be taken seriously. Like Mount Allison, female students were expected to uphold certain behaviours, and students could be disciplined for disobedience.

The education at St. F.X. and Mount St. Bernard offered Catholic women the opportunity to pursue different avenues of higher education. Catholicism was at the centre of the institutions, and prepared women for their future as respectable women in society. These institutions gave Catholic women the opportunities to study before anywhere else in North America and developed a stalwart environment for doing so.

Mount Saint Vincent

At Mount Saint Vincent Academy, the Sisters of Charity provided a high standard of education for young Catholic women, novices, and sisters. The students had compulsory courses that were included in tuition and the choice to enrol in optional courses for an additional fee. The courses for each grade were very similar such as English, Latin, French, maths, science, and history. The particular focus of these classes changed as each cohort progressed. In the upper two years, extra courses were added such as logic and psychology. Optional courses included Ancient Greek, German, music (private lessons), painting, stenography, and typewriting. The institution's prospectuses emphasised the high standards of courses offered. Science classes were provided with modern equipment so pupils could, as far as possible, perform experiments themselves.[51] Extra courses in stenography and

[49] Cote, "A History of Mount St. Bernard From 1883 to 1939", 28. Information from Eileen Boyd Donahoe, "Affiliation Centennial."
[50] Gillett, *We Walked Very Warily*, 76.
[51] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent" 1903-04 booklet, 12.

typewriting included bookkeeping at no extra charge and were described as important skills for the professional and business world.[52] Mount Saint Vincent students also had the opportunity to study arts and music courses. The courses included music instruction and several types of painting, for example, oil or watercolour, pastel or crayon drawing, and on china. The availability of these extras was interesting as drawing and "fancy and plain" sewing were part of the basic tuition. Students had access to a sewing room as this skill was considered "women's most useful art."[53] Instruction in plain sewing was to teach students skills including how to construct full dresses, and there was also instruction in embroidery. By offering instruction in both styles, students would be equipped for economical or household sewing. Mount Saint Vincent Academy provided a comprehensive education for Catholic women by preparing them for futures in either the public or private spheres.

A 1939 quarterly report card for a student shows the courses available and the grades awarded to the pupil thus far in her semester. While this falls outside the temporal scope of this study, it still provides valuable information. The card shows percentages for both class and exam performance. For example, in biology, "Rose" scored eighty-eight in class and eighty-two in the exam. At the bottom of the report card, it stated that the pass mark was 60 per cent. Most interesting about the card, however, were the scores at the bottom of the page. The categories were conduct, politeness, diligence, and order and neatness. The card stated that a mark here below eighty was unsatisfactory.[54] This report demonstrates how intertwined the students' academic performance and their personal performance were as the pass mark for behaviour was higher than for formal classes. Moreover, the academy held weekly meetings on Sunday mornings that included orally reviewing each student's behaviour from the week

[52] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent," 1903-04 booklet, 12.
[53] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent," 1903-04 booklet, 15.
[54] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent, Quarterly Report," June 1939, UR-008, Mount Saint Vincent Academy fonds, MSVUA.

and their academic performance.[55] At Mount Saint Vincent students could not succeed academically without upholding the highest standards of personal conduct.

Students were able to receive diplomas in certain courses. The stenography diploma was awarded by Sir Isaac Pitman & Son, Company of England, the publisher who developed the most common form of shorthand. Pitman also awarded a Bronze Medal for pupils of the commercial class. Diplomas for typewriting were awarded by the Underwood Typewriter Co., for speed and from the Degan Co., Chicago, for speed and accuracy. The direct involvement of these private companies funding recognition of female accomplishments informs us to how uncontested these skills had become. The institution also awarded medals for classes in arts and domestic skills and for "observance of rules." Ideal femininity brought together academic achievements, practical skills, and "amiable and correct deportment."[56]

Students were required to take courses that would promote qualities to cultivate well-rounded young women. The 1915 prospectus required classes in physical training and elocution. Moreover, importance was stressed on completing domestic duties each morning to learn the "invaluable lesson of perfect housework."[57] Lectures and practical lessons were also included in housekeeping, especially cooking, health, and nursing the sick.[58] The student newspaper, *The Folia Montana,* reported on one supplemental lecture series available to the students. For the year 1921-22, the lectures were centred on health topics. Many of these lectures were preparing women for working with children and the sick.[59] These studies were considered essential by the institution. The academy wanted to educate their students to be young women of society and future wives and mothers who would represent the institution and their religion well.

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[55] Sister Marie Agnes White, "Memories", FSFVA, box 4, no. 68, DUA, 6-7.
[56] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent," 1915-16 booklet, UR-008, Mount Saint Vincent Academy fonds, MSVUA. 16.
[57] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent," 1915-16 booklet, 27.
[58] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent," 1903-04 booklet, 17.
[59] *Folia Montana*, (June 1922), 28-29.

In 1914, Mount Saint Vincent reached an agreement with Dalhousie University for some of their students to pursue degrees. Mount Saint Vincent students were taught in small groups at St. Mary's Convent by Dalhousie professors until the final year when they had to attend classes in person. The upper-year courses in Latin, French, English, chemistry, and biology were taught by Dalhousie faculty. As the number of Mount Saint Vincent students increased in the 1920s, it became feasible to transport Dalhousie professors to the academy.[60] Sister Monica Nearing was one student who had this opportunity in 1921. She recalled that she felt privileged to have an excellent Ancient Greek teacher, Dr Alexander, who then went on to teach at the University of California, Berkeley. The students travelled daily to Dalhousie and this was particularly taxing on days with geology field trips as they often went to "difficult areas" but nonetheless it was a rewarding experience.[61] As a Mount Saint Vincent student at Dalhousie in the late 1920s, Sister Francis d'Assisi recalled how the sisters in habit always caused a stir on campus.[62] This was an opportunity for Mount Saint Vincent students to further their education while within a Catholic institution and this partnership was vital for women who did not want to travel away from the area.

The academic programme at Mount Saint Vincent was a hybrid system between the academic courses at universities and preparing women for a gender-segregated workforce and lives in the domestic sphere. Religion played a central role in their education and these traditions such as obedience and conduct were just as important as the women's performance in class. Students could pursue academic courses and take optional classes in art and music. This gave women an opportunity to further their education and also refine skills needed as a woman in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century society.

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[60] Letter from Sister Francis d'Assisi to Judith Fingard, 25 February 1986, FSFVA, box. 4, no. 43, DUA.
[61] Letter from Sister Monica Nearing to Judith Fingard, 21 February 1986, FSFVA, box. 4, no. 57, DUA.
[62] Letter from Sister Francis d'Assisi to Judith Fingard, 25 February 1986.

Conclusion

From these four institutions, women in the Maritime Provinces had the opportunities to undertake academic training and prepare for life in the private sphere. Through the partnerships between women's colleges and universities, institutions offered classes in academic subjects. These institutions also appealed to middle-class families by offering courses in art and music that would cultivate respectable young women. At Mount Allison, Mount St. Bernard, and Mount Saint Vincent, students' behaviour was closely monitored and was as important as their academic performance. At the turn of the century, most institutions offered practical courses to equip women with skills for the workforce. This signifies a change in the purpose of education as women were now looking to enter the workforce.

Chapter Three

Home Away from Home: Life in Residence

Introduction

Student residence was the bridge between the academic pursuits and the social lives of students. For women of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it offered a home away from home and a community. The residences had to replicate the ideal Christian middle-class home to guide and protect students.[1] White, middle-class Christian women were usually hired to oversee the protection of the students, and this was said to emulate a mother figure. Other scholars have argued that residences were necessary for women's protection and supervision.[2]

Out of the four institutions in this study, Dalhousie University was the last to provide an official university residence for women. The female students of Halifax lived in residences including boarding houses, family homes, and small residences such as at the Halifax Ladies' College. At the other three institutions in this study, official residence was provided for those studying away from home. Religion played a significant role in daily life, particularly for Catholic students. Their schedules included time for prayers, and domestic duties. This chapter will explore the experience of selected female students in the Maritime Provinces as they lived in residence throughout their student years. The research identifies many similarities and striking differences between these experiences.

Dalhousie University

Women from outside of Halifax had to source their own accommodation while at Dalhousie until the 1920s. When the first generation of women entered university, they were

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[1] Catherine Gidney, "Dating and Gating: The Moral Regulation of Men and Women at Victoria and University Colleges, University of Toronto, 1920-60," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 41, no. 2 (2008): 141.
[2] Alyson E. King, "'Centres of 'Home-Like Influence': Residences for Women at the University of Toronto," *Material Culture Review/Revue de la Culture Matérielle* 49, (Spring, 1999): 40.

low in numbers; hence, there was no demand for official student accommodation. The first official, purpose-built women's residence of Dalhousie, Shirreff Hall, opened in 1923 and accommodated over eighty women. Prior to this, women lived in boarding houses, temporary university residences and other community accommodations including the Halifax Ladies' College and the Young Women's Christian Association of Canada (YWCA). Peter B. Waite argued that female students boarded collectively and thus experienced some form of institution-based collective life; however, this cannot be applied until the 1920s.[3] Women formed communities in their residence, but they did not all reside in the same building or stay in continuous residence. Initial students resided at the YWCA (opened 1874), the Halifax Ladies' College (opened 1887) or in private boarding houses.

Early students were apprehensive about staying in boarding houses as other residents would be single, working women. This created a mix in classes as many students were from middle-class backgrounds. The phenomenon of single working women was new to society, and these women were often not viewed as respectable as they lived outside the confines of the path expected of women. Organisations such as the YWCA stepped up to provide women with support and housing. The YWCA wanted to house only respectable women, but many middle-class parents were sceptical about their daughters living with single women.[4] This did not stop all female students. Emelyn Laura MacKenzie ('15) resided there during her first year. She commented that there were only a few "college girls" and most of the residents were working women. MacKenzie selected this residence as room and board was only $3.00 a week. Despite the affordable price, most women opted to stay either at the Ladies' College or in a private boarding house.

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[3] Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, vol. I, 136, 213, 240-44.
[4] Wendy Mitchinson, "The YWCA and Reform in the Nineteenth Century," *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 12, no. 24 (1979): 370.

Boarding houses offered women a chance to study at university while living in a small, 'homely' environment. Some students boarded with relatives or family friends. Bessie A. Turner ('20) lived with her two aunts and Gertrude Henderson ('23) resided with family friends in Halifax. In one extraordinary case, Mabel Morrison's father found work in Halifax and moved the family there as he did not think the living conditions would be suitable for his daughter to live alone.[5] These examples highlight the support that women received from their families so they could pursue further education.

For some widowed mothers, boarding houses were an option to support their daughter's education and make an income from student boarders. Emily Joyce Jamer ('24) stayed at a boarding house for two years before her mother moved to Halifax and established her own boarding house. In 1922, her mother moved from their home in Victoria County, N.B. and found a house in Halifax and took in college women as boarders.[6] Phebe K. Thompson's mother moved with her to university and opened a boarding house. Thompson enrolled at Dalhousie in 1918 and graduated in Medicine in 1923. For the first two years, Thompson resided at the Halifax Ladies' College; however, her father died in the fall of 1920, and she was recalled home. Upon her return to Dalhousie, she boarded with the Thompson family at 24 Church Street.[7] The next year, her mother sold their house in Sydney Mines and rented a house on nearby South Street, Halifax. Thompson remembered many "Dalhousie girls" who lived with them such as classmate Margaret Chase and described them as "a congenial group and had many happy times together."[8] These boarding houses could provide students with a comfortable and safe environment while studying.

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[5] Letter from Mabel Morrison to Professor Judith Fingard, 15 May 1986, FSFVA, box 4, no. 56, DUA.
[6] Letter from Emily Joyce Jamer to Judith Fingard, 26 January 1986, FSFVA, box 4, no. 41, DUA.
[7] No information given on who the Thompson family was. Thompson only says: "they kept me in touch with many student activities", perhaps family or family friends.
[8] Letter from Phebe K. Thompson to Professor Judith Fingard, 12 March 1986, FSFVA, box 4 no. 32, DUA.

The Halifax Ladies' College opened in 1887 and offered women the chance to board together. This was a popular choice with female Dalhousie students and in 1892 the college's calendar stated that any female student enrolled in Dalhousie could reside at the college. The 1897 calendar reinforced the college's position as the residence for female Dalhousie students.[9] Lucy Maud Montgomery, of *Anne of Green Gables* fame, resided at the Halifax Ladies' College during her year at Dalhousie University in 1895. Montgomery did not care for the restrictions on her freedom.[10] In a journal entry in December 1895, Montgomery complained that if she were a "Ladies' College girl" they would be within their rights to police her behaviour, but as a "[student] of Dalhousie and merely a boarder here, I rather resent their 'bossing.'"[11] In the novel, *Anne of the Island* (1915), based on Montgomery's university experience, Anne stays in a boarding house in her first year. Much like her own experience, Anne resented the landladies (two elderly sisters) and their rules, so she moved into a house with her friends for the rest of her studies. The only supervision came from Anne's friend's aunt, Jamesina, who kept the house.[12] The experience in residence was so profound for Montgomery that it influenced her writing several years later.

Jean L. Ross ('18) resided at several institutions while a student, including the Halifax Ladies' College. Ross's memories were more positive than Montgomery's and provide insight into the comradery at the residence. The students enjoyed staying out late and helped each other to avoid getting caught. Ross explained that a student on the first floor would be designated to let in latecomers, and Ross was one of those unlucky first-floor students. One time, a young man tried to push his date through Ross's window, but the window could not

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[9] Sandra MacLeod, *A History of the Halifax Ladies' College, Established 1877*, (Halifax: publisher not identified, 1973), 43.
[10] Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterson, eds., *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery*, vol. I; 1889-1910 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1985), 390-1.
[11] Montgomery, journal entry, 24 December 1895, in *Selected Journals*, vol. I: 151.
[12] Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of the Island*, (1915; Reprint. Toronto: Seal Books, 1996), 66.

be opened far enough.[13] The community formed at the college could also be found at Forrest Hall.

Forrest Hall was a temporary measure enacted by the Alumnae to provide Dalhousie women with accommodation. In 1911, there was demand for a women's residence to be built. Dalhousie's Eliza Ritchie advocated for a place to "provide a pleasant and comfortable home where girl-students may enjoy proper food and lodging together with congenial companionship and conditions favourable to intellectual work."[14] This demand was partially met by Forrest Hall, a large house on nearby South Park Street rented by the Alumnae Association in September 1912. It is significant that the Alumnae took the initiative to ensure female students had adequate housing rather than the university. There is some dispute over the number of students in the house. In 1914, the *Gazette* reported that Forrest Hall housed twelve students when it first opened.[15] In fall 1914, student Annie I. Fraser moved into her room at Forrest Hall with roommate Clara Smith from Merigomish, and Fraser named twelve other women, making fourteen residents in total.[16] In the 1915-16 academic year, three students claimed that there were sixteen residents in the house.[17] It is possible that as demand increased, Forrest Hall tried to accommodate more students. In her letter, Fraser reminisced about the personalities and memories of their time as boarders. These recollections demonstrate that female student residences could foster strong relationships and community among students. The house provided a more central residence for university women but still did not offer accommodation to all.

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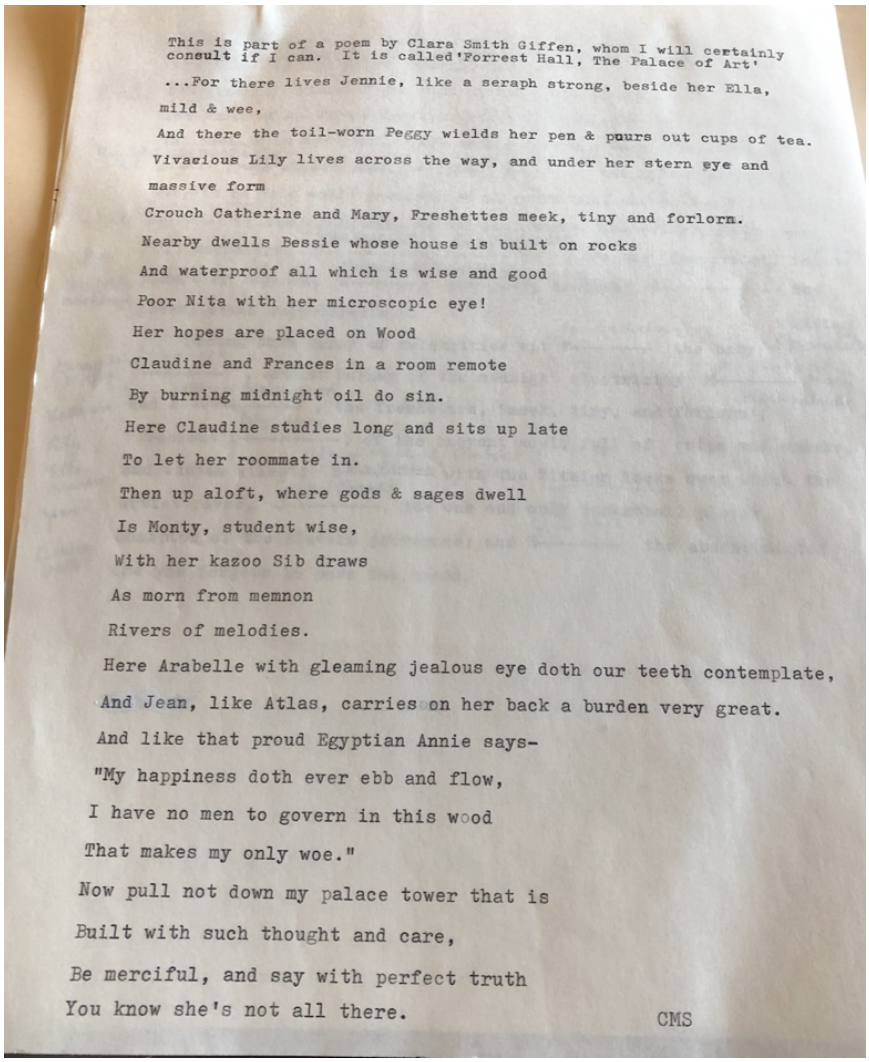
[13] Letter from Jean L. Ross to Judith Fingard, 29 October 1986, FSFVA, box 4 no. 62, DUA.
[14] *Dalhousie Gazette* vol. 43 issue 4, (January 1911), 138-146.
[15] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 46 issue 5, (February 1914), 176. In *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, vol. I, Waite referenced eleven students and two maids in Forrest Hall, 213.
[16] Annie I. Fraser "Recollections" sent to Judith Fingard, 6 March 1987, FSFVA, box 4 no. 36, DUA.
[17] Fingard, "College, Career, and Community", see footnote 15. Three students from 1915-16 claimed there were 16 students: Bessie Hall, "Life at Forrest Hall," Dalhousie Gazette, 14 January 1916; Annie I. Fraser, "The Girls at Forrest Hall", (poem); Clara Smith, "Forrest Hall: The Palace of Art" (poem).

Jean L. Ross had fond memories of her time as a student at Forrest Hall. According to Ross, there was no shortage of activities and entertainment for the residents. There were plays, silent movies (usually on a Saturday afternoon) and 'Dal' nights at the skating rink. Ross described these events as "boy meet girl" events.[18] One popular courting activity was church. As a rule, women attended church services regularly and on Sunday evenings, Forrest Hall hosted a 'hymn sing.' According to Ross, young men escorted women to the evening services and would often come back to the residence for music, hot cocoa, and cookies.[19] Women in residences had many opportunities to socialise with their housemates and with their male peers whilst within the confines of respectable behaviour. As with most students, women at the larger residences found ways around the rules. Forrest Hall had a curfew of 10 pm. Although one could request a late pass, Ross wrote it was a "point of honour" to not ask for the pass. Roommates took turns staying out late and the other would let them in once they came home. This was similar to the system at the Halifax Ladies' College. A poem written by one of the students, Clara Smith Giffen, aptly demonstrates their comradery. The poem titled, "Forrest Hall, The Palace of Art", named all the residents and revealed something about each of their personalities. It also mentioned the roommates helping each other when the other was out late.[20]

[18] Letter from Jean L. Ross to Judith Fingard, 29 October 1986.
[19] Letter from Jean L Ross to Judith Fingard, 29 October 1986.
[20] Letter from Jean L. Ross to Judith Fingard, 29 October 1986. "Forrest Hall, The Palace of Art" poem by student Clara Smith Giffen.



This is part of a poem by Clara Smith Giffen, whom I will certainly consult if I can. It is called 'Forrest Hall, The Palace of Art'

...For there lives Jennie, like a seraph strong, beside her Ella,
mild & wee,
And there the toil-worn Peggy wields her pen & pours out cups of tea.
Vivacious Lily lives across the way, and under her stern eye and
massive form
Crouch Catherine and Mary, Freshettes meek, tiny and forlorn.
Nearby dwells Bessie whose house is built on rocks
And waterproof all which is wise and good
Poor Nita with her microscopic eye!
Her hopes are placed on Wood
Claudine and Frances in a room remote
By burning midnight oil do sin.
Here Claudine studies long and sits up late
To let her roommate in.
Then up aloft, where gods & sages dwell
Is Monty, student wise,
With her kazoo Sib draws
As morn from memnon
Rivers of melodies.
Here Arabelle with gleaming jealous eye doth our teeth contemplate,
And Jean, like Atlas, carries on her back a burden very great.
And like that proud Egyptian Annie says-
"My happiness doth ever ebb and flow,
I have no men to govern in this wood
That makes my only woe."
Now pull not down my palace tower that is
Built with such thought and care,
Be merciful, and say with perfect truth
You know she's not all there.

CMS

Figure 2. "Forrest Hall, The Palace of Art" poem by student Clara Smith Giffen.

Despite the fun, the women were supervised closely. Ross claimed that the remarkably named Miss Manners, who oversaw the female students at the residence, had the title of warden. Miss Manners was warden when Annie I. Fraser was a resident in 1914. Fraser complained that she was "a rather grim English lady who treated us as if we were in boarding school. She was greatly annoyed if we were late for meals, and for breakfast she served us coffee so nearly boiling in cups that it was difficult to swallow it before rushing off to class at Dalhousie, about half a mile away."[21] Like at private boarding houses and the Halifax Ladies' College, female students were subject to rules.

[21] Letter from Annie I. Fraser to Judith Fingard, 6 March 1987.

In 1918-19 academic year, female students accounted for 31 per cent of the student body and demand for accommodation was growing.[22] Forrest Hall was abandoned in 1917 and for two years, students had to board in private houses or at the Halifax Ladies' College.[23] The university rented, and eventually bought, 121 South Park Street, near Forrest Hall. It was called Marlborough House and accommodated around twenty students.[24] Several students stayed at this residence such as Marian Cantley (1921, Cantley's only year at Dalhousie)[25], Nettie MacKenzie ('22), Catherine Hawkins ('24), and Margaret E. MacKay Sawyer ('24). The *Dalhousie Gazette* described the house as a social hub for students where many "budding romances burst into full bloom." The students were under the watchful but genial matron, Miss Blakney.[26] This seems to be one of the few instances that students appreciated their guardian. This house remained as a residence until 1924. By then, Shirreff Hall was opened and served as the primary residence for female Dalhousie students. Construction began on Shirreff Hall in 1919 and it was the first purpose-built residence for female students and officially opened in 1923. This residence continued to foster the relationships built in the previous residences. Catherine Hawkins ('24) resided in Shirreff Hall in her final year and had many fond memories. One of her favourite times were the dress parades before dances.[27] This residence provided space for female students to reside and gather, and it gave them the collective experience that other women experienced.

Resident options for female students varied in size and location until the 1920s. Students did not stay in the same residence for the entirety of their studies or with the same people. Jessie MacDougall ('14) lived in the Halifax Ladies' College for her first two years

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[22] Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, vol. I, 240.
[23] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 68, issue 16, (February 1936), 2.
[24] Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, vol. I, 240.
[25] In her letter to Judith Fingard on 15 February 1986, Marian Cantley does not give the exact year of her studies but a *Dalhousie Gazette* issue from March 1921 lists Marian Cantley as a solo performer, this matches the dates of Marlborough house opening.
[26] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 68, issue 16, (February 1936), 2.
[27] Letter from Catherine Hawkins to Judith Fingard, 15 March 1986, FSFVA, box 4 no. 60, DUA.

then lived in boarding houses. Catherine Hawkins (’24) lived in a boarding house, Marlborough House and Shirreff Hall, and Margaret E. MacKay Sawyer (’24) also lived in these three residences. As much as women did form communities and strong bonds in all the residences, they did not have a collective experience. Once Shirreff Hall opened, it could be argued that this residence fostered a collective experience for Dalhousie women.

Mount Allison

Unlike Dalhousie University, the women’s college at Mount Allison had a designated residence for women. The women at the college were able to select their own roommates and while they had some freedom, they were also subject to strict rules to ensure proper conduct. The women’s college was located close to the main buildings of the institution and therefore there were opportunities for students to mix. Women were under strict supervision when leaving the college and male students were forbidden from going into (or near) the grounds. As women could enrol in university classes early on at Mount Allison, the residences had to accommodate both college and university students. University students resented that they had to follow the same rules as the women’s college students and thus tried to claim special privileges.[28] The most likely point of contention was the extensive rules for female university students compared to their male peers. Male students were allowed out until 11:30 each evening and had few restrictions on their freedom. Meanwhile, the female students referred to their residence as “the penitentiary.”[29]

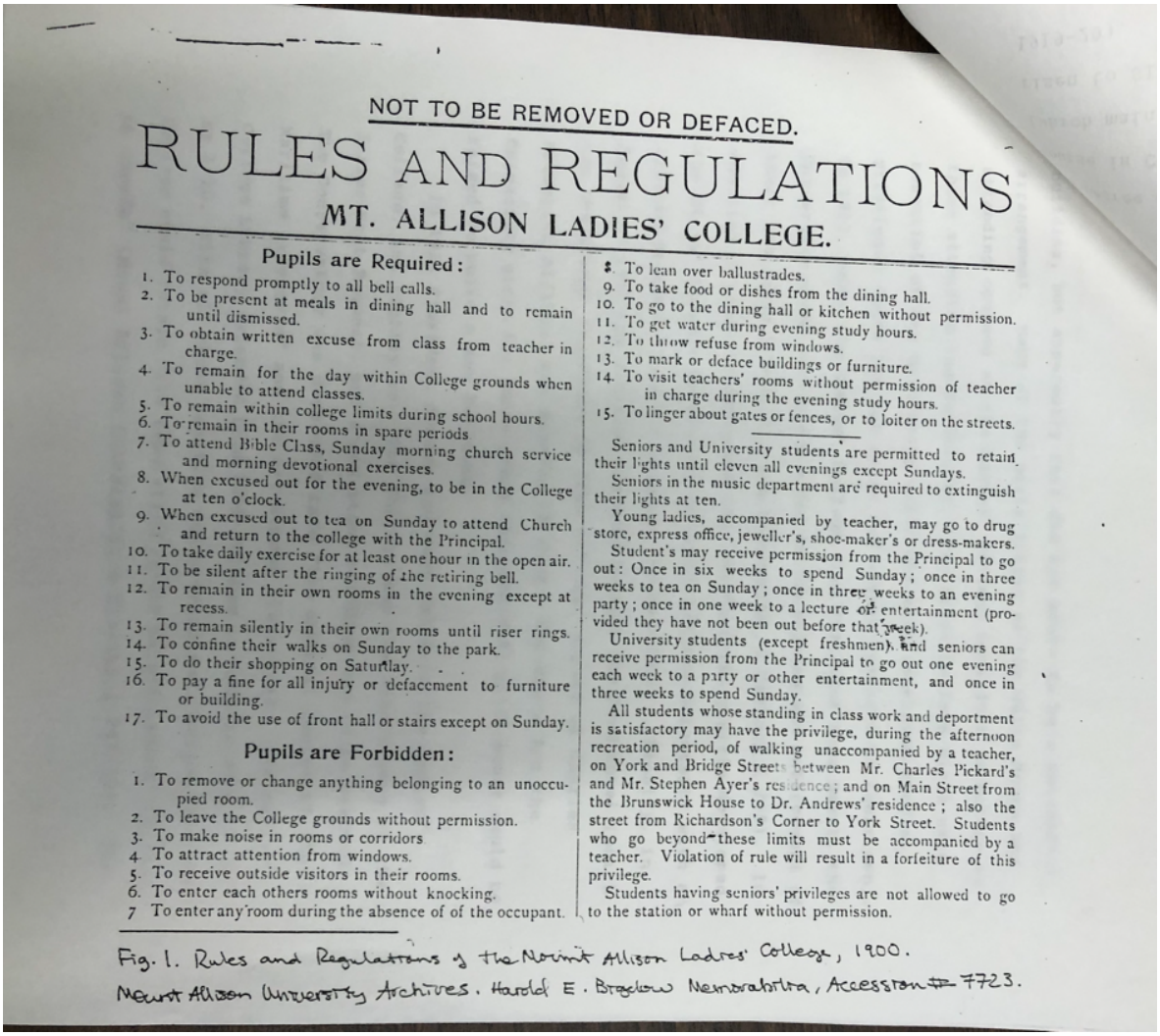
Discipline was a core concern for the women’s college. They had a duty to uphold the moral behaviour of its students and took measures to ensure this. The women’s college had

[28] Archibald, “Historical Notes on the Centennial Education of Women at Mount Allison,” 8-9; MacDonald, *University Women*, 95.
[29] Reid, *Mount Allison, A History*, vol. I, 268.

thirty-one rules in 1900.[30] While the college took the behaviour and conduct of their students extremely seriously, the fact that the top banner read "Not to be removed or defaced" suggests that students may not have always been so compliant. One of the main concerns was unsupervised heterosexual activity. When going to church or other outings, the young women were required to walk in large groups with faculty supervision and when daily walks were taken, the young men were forbidden from going in the direction of the women's college. Moreover, female students were not allowed male callers unless it was a brother or cousin. However, a 'cousin' became a very flexible category for someone with any remote affinity to the young woman.[31] On alternate Saturdays, students were invited to public receptions where they could mingle. The entertainment was purely conversation and walking back and forth along the ground floor in the women's college building.[32]

To solve the disagreements between female students, the university students were moved to a different section of the women's college building under the supervision of the Vice Principal. This did not work well (for reasons that are unknown) and the university students were moved to a separate building in 1920 with a 'Dean of Women' supervising students.[33] As the university students and some women's college students were of similar ages and maturity, it was unfair to provide the university students with special treatment, therefore Mount Allison assumed it better to separate the students.

[30] "Rules and Regulations of the Mount Allison Ladies' College, 1900," Accession no. 7723, Harold E. Bigelow Memorabilia, MAUA.
[31] Archibald, "Historical Notes on the Centennial Education of Women at Mount Allison," 6.
[32] Archibald, "Historical Notes on the Centennial Education of Women at Mount Allison," 6.
[33] Archibald, "Historical Notes on the Centennial Education of Women at Mount Allison," 8-9.



NOT TO BE REMOVED OR DEFACED.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

MT. ALLISON LADIES' COLLEGE.

Pupils are Required:

1. To respond promptly to all bell calls.
2. To be present at meals in dining hall and to remain until dismissed.
3. To obtain written excuse from class from teacher in charge.
4. To remain for the day within College grounds when unable to attend classes.
5. To remain within college limits during school hours.
6. To remain in their rooms in spare periods.
7. To attend Bible Class, Sunday morning church service and morning devotional exercises.
8. When excused out for the evening, to be in the College at ten o'clock.
9. When excused out to tea on Sunday to attend Church and return to the college with the Principal.
10. To take daily exercise for at least one hour in the open air.
11. To be silent after the ringing of the retiring bell.
12. To remain in their own rooms in the evening except at recess.
13. To remain silently in their own rooms until riser rings.
14. To confine their walks on Sunday to the park.
15. To do their shopping on Saturday.
16. To pay a fine for all injury or defacement to furniture or building.
17. To avoid the use of front hall or stairs except on Sunday.

Pupils are Forbidden:

1. To remove or change anything belonging to an unoccupied room.
2. To leave the College grounds without permission.
3. To make noise in rooms or corridors.
4. To attract attention from windows.
5. To receive outside visitors in their rooms.
6. To enter each others rooms without knocking.
7. To enter any room during the absence of of the occupant.
8. To lean over ballustrades.
9. To take food or dishes from the dining hall.
10. To go to the dining hall or kitchen without permission.
11. To get water during evening study hours.
12. To throw refuse from windows.
13. To mark or deface buildings or furniture.
14. To visit teachers' rooms without permission of teacher in charge during the evening study hours.
15. To linger about gates or fences, or to loiter on the streets.

Seniors and University students are permitted to retain their lights until eleven all evenings except Sundays.

Seniors in the music department are required to extinguish their lights at ten.

Young ladies, accompanied by teacher, may go to drug store, express office, jeweller's, shoe-maker's or dress-makers.

Student's may receive permission from the Principal to go out: Once in six weeks to spend Sunday; once in three weeks to tea on Sunday; once in three weeks to an evening party; once in one week to a lecture or entertainment (provided they have not been out before that week).

University students (except freshmen), and seniors can receive permission from the Principal to go out one evening each week to a party or other entertainment, and once in three weeks to spend Sunday.

All students whose standing in class work and deportment is satisfactory may have the privilege, during the afternoon recreation period, of walking unaccompanied by a teacher, on York and Bridge Streets between Mr. Charles Pickard's and Mr. Stephen Ayer's residence; and on Main Street from the Brunswick House to Dr. Andrews' residence; also the street from Richardson's Corner to York Street. Students who go beyond these limits must be accompanied by a teacher. Violation of rule will result in a forfeiture of this privilege.

Students having seniors' privileges are not allowed to go to the station or wharf without permission.

Fig. 1. Rules and Regulations of the Mount Allison Ladies' College, 1900.
Mount Allison University Archives. Harold E. Bragdow Memorabilia, Accession # 7723.

Figure 3. Rules and Regulations of the Mount Allison Ladies' College, 1900.

Regardless of the consequences, students often broke the rules. There was a scandalous case of a female student who was refused readmittance in the fall of 1911 for violating community standards of decency outside of term. The student had spent one night that summer in a cottage with two other students, who had been secretly married, and a male friend of the groom.[34] Gossip did not suggest any impropriety, but appearances and reputation mattered. The sexual reputation of female students could reflect badly on the entire institution.

Some students broke more minor rules. The letters of one student, Marjorie Jean Johnstone, reveal how one student and her parents manoeuvred around the rules in 1919. As per college rules, parents were not allowed to send packages of food and treats to their

[34] Reid, *Mount Allison, A History*, vol. I, 265.

children; however, Johnstone encouraged her mother to do so, who obliged. In a December 1919 letter Johnstone wrote, "I received your box and was tickled pink with it… We had a little feed in our room… They all fell in love with the cake. It was awfully sweet, I hated to cut it… Thank Rol for the chox [chocolate] too, they were great."[35] Johnstone and her friends were clearly grateful for the treats but knew they had to be consumed discreetly. She also asked her mother for permission for extra days off and admitted her misdemeanours. Johnstone told her mother that one evening her friend was visiting when she was supposed to be in her room. When a superior came by to check, Johnstone's friend hid in the closet to avoid being seen. If caught, the young women would have been prohibited from attending the rink the following week.[36] Johnstone's confessions demonstrate that students such as herself were willing to risk the consequences of breaking the rules. In this case, Johnstone was comfortable telling her mother about her escapades.

Harriott Olive's letters to home help us understand daily life in residence and what she communicated to her parents about her experience. In 1890, Olive described her new roommate, and offers us insight into relationships in residence. Olive's new roommate was called Laura Heartz and was described as "very nice and lady like…she is well known and well liked. She visits all the nice houses…there are girls I would sooner room with, but as they are all engaged, Laura is very well." Clearly the social reputation of one's roommate was an important factor. The physical room seemed like a secondary thought to Olive. She described it as small but comfortable with two windows.[37] The social standing and personality of the roommate was a bigger priority than the room itself.

[35] Marjorie Jean Johnstone to Mother, 6 December 1919, Accession no. 8919, Marjorie Jean Johnstone Papers, MAUA.
[36] Marjorie Jean Johnstone to Mother, 4 November 1919, and 15 January 1920.
[37] Letter from Harriott Scammell Olive to Mama, 7 December 1890.

Olive did not have many complaints in the letters to her parents but the lack of clothes shops in Sackville concerned her as "Sackville is awfully hard on clothes.[38] Fashion was an important part of Olive's life and she often commented on her clothes and those of her fellow residents. In December 1890, Olive wrote she needed a new apron as the young women wore them when they returned from class and over their "pretty dresses" on Sundays. She also declared needing a new school dress and a jacket. In addition to the women's choice of clothes, the college enforced dress codes. Olive mentioned not being allowed to wear her wrapper to dinner or tea.[39] A wrapper was an informal, full-length, cotton housedress worn over undergarments before getting dressed for the day. Female students were expected to present themselves more formally at meals.

In 1895, the extravagance of women's dress at Mount Allison made the local paper. It was being criticised as excluding young women whose families came from limited means. Another resident disagreed, exclaiming that a father of moderate means would find comfort in knowing that morality and education were primary concerns. The letter of reply highlighted the benefits of modest young women receiving a societal education as well as an academic one. John G. Reid, author of *Mount Allison, A History*, highlighted how an education at Mount Allison could elevate the social standing of women by receiving an academic education as well as becoming a woman of society.[40] The fashion at Mount Allison was not merely a schoolgirl concern, it held much importance for the students and for societal views of female students.

Harriott Olive had nothing but praise for the food at the women's college. According to Olive, the best part was meals did not go by a set rotation; except for Sunday when cold

[38] Letter from Harriott Scammell Olive to Mama, 7 December 1890.
[39] Letter from Harriott Scammell Olive to Mama, 7 December 1890.
[40] Reid, *Mount Allison, A History*, vol. I, 212.

meals were served, likely as domestic staff had the day off. She described herself as "pretty well fed."

> We have fowl, at least once a week, and always have jelly or cranberry or apple sauce served with it, and sometimes they give us elegant beef steak and onions – fried and steamed in milk. Sunday, of course the meat, whatever kind it is, is always cold, and we always have custard pudding, a blancmange, or tapioca, or trifle, some of those sweet cold things you know. And then we have the loveliest preserves. We have had pear several times, and lovely crabs. Just think what a heap of fruit they must do up. They make their own pickles here and twice a week there are sweet peaches or crabs. We have milk toast occasionally too.[41]

The variety and abundance of food was appreciated by Olive and the menu was shared in family letters.

The students at female Mount Allison had strict rules to follow. Through student letters, we can conclude that women, unsurprisingly, did not always follow the rules. Students took risks and formed strong connections with other residents, either by sharing midnight feasts or taking inspiration from their fashion. Despite the difficulties between college and university female students, from these examples, the Mount Allison residences facilitated communities and friendships.

St. Francis Xavier

At St.F.X., Mount St. Bernard Convent eventually came to serve as the female academy. The institution was the home of classes and residence for the junior girls' school and come 1894, female college students. The students followed a strict schedule of "prayer, religious instruction, and other practices of a nature to build a strong knowledge and appreciation of the Christian Faith, and mould characters and wills to habits of virtue."[42] The

[41] Letter from Harriott Scammell Olive to Mama, 7 December 1890.
[42] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 38.

college students had more flexibility in their schedules than the junior students. The institution was designed to foster a strong community of educated Catholic women.

The academy itself was described as "heated throughout with hot water, and its spacious and well-ventilated dormitory has a bath-room attached." Moreover, the grounds were described as having "healthful surroundings which included a tennis court, a croquet lawn and ample roads for walks around the town."[43] Students were also not allowed to leave the grounds without permission and there were strict rules regarding evening outings and penalties for breaking curfew. Students quickly learned that 'evening permissions' were extremely rare. Even senior students were only permitted one late evening (11 pm) per week.[44] The strict scheduling and obedience were part of the full educational experience to become a respectable Catholic.

College students living in residence at Mount St. Bernard had to abide by the rules of the sisters. It does seem that they had more freedom than the academy students, but they had to uphold certain practices and behaviours while under the care of the sisters.

Mount Saint Vincent

As a small institution on the outskirts of Halifax, Mount Saint Vincent created a close-knit Catholic community through its residence and the Sisters of Charity. The institution welcomed day and boarding students but due to their teachings, they preferred students to board. Like St. F.X., as a Catholic teaching institution, religious values were at the core of residence life. The partnership with Dalhousie and the expansion of a post-secondary curriculum resulted in the presence of college students on campus.

[43] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 38.
[44] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 38.

Sister Marie Agnes White was an academy student from 1908-12. Sister White entered the congregation in 1913 and dedicated her life to the institution. While achieving her BA, MA, and PhD, Sister White taught from 1920-1970. Sister White wrote extensively about the institution as she watched it change over time, including the influx of college students. The first college students resided on the top floor of the Mount Saint Vincent Academy. The living arrangements included one large dormitory and several private rooms. No room was completely private, and some 'private' rooms housed as many as four students. As numbers increased, a room on the ground floor was fashioned into a dormitory.[45] The academy itself was described as prioritising the health and comfort of its residents. The building was heated, provided hot and cold water, and boasted modern appliances.[46] Academy students were expected to adhere to strict schedules which started with mass at 6:30 am. Sister White commented on the sight of college students "flocking" in their caps and gowns to attend mass.[47] The college students, like at Mount St. Bernard, were expected to adhere to some sort of schedule and were fully integrated into the community at Mount Saint Vincent.

Conclusion

Residence life was at the centre of women's experience. It was their home while studying and often the hub of their social activities. The female students of Dalhousie had several different resident options until the opening of Shirreff Hall in 1923 which offered a permanent residence for women. Local students lived at home while studying, and students from afar were in different residences throughout the city, some in several different residences during their studies. There was not a collective experience for all female

[45] Sister Marie Agnes White, "Early Beginnings: Mount Saint Vincent College, 1925-1951," *Insight*, vol. 4 no. 2 (January 1975), FSFVA, box 4 no. 68, 6. Copy of article,
[46] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent" 1903-04 booklet, 3.
[47] Sister White, "Early Beginnings," 8.

Dalhousie students, but they did form small pockets of communities and created strong bonds. This was transferred and replicated when students moved to Shirreff Hall. Although Dalhousie students did not have rigorous schedules, they were closely supervised in residence, and were expected to uphold proper behaviour. The boarding students of Mount Allison, Mount St. Bernard, and Mount Saint Vincent stayed in official institution residences. Post-secondary students were expected to abide by the same rules as the junior students and were fully integrated into the community. Rules were enforced and behaviour was closely monitored. Less is known about the lived experience of college students at Mount St. Bernard and Mount Saint Vincent, but at Mount Allison, the university students resented this control and advocated for a separate residence to secure their freedom. It was a commonality for all female students across the four institutions to continue to uphold the behaviour expected of a woman in society as a student; however, there was some pushing of boundaries as students broke the rules to stay out late for example. The residences allowed post-secondary women to establish permanent female spaces on campus and create support networks with their peers. Despite the differences in style and religion, women staying in residence shared a remarkably similar experience.

Chapter Four

Ascending the Rostrum: Clubs, Sports, and Friendship

Introduction

The male undergraduate's identity, through its rituals and misbehaviours was an assertion of his masculinity. Much of this was expressed through extra-curricular activities. In 1893, the University of New Brunswick's *University Monthly* published an article mocking the idea that women could be part of the literary and debating society specifically. "Imagine readers, if you can, a young lady student ascending the rostrum to expound her views on the subject of debate to the assembled students of the opposite sex. Carry the illustration farther…Imagine her taking part in the varied festivities of smoke-out night or Hallowe'en or scrambling for apples in the lower hall."[1] This letter suggested that women could not assume the full identity of an undergraduate and ridiculed them for thinking so. The ability to debate, conduct student affairs and play was untouchable for female students; however, these attitudes did not stop women for participating fully in college life.

In academics, women expanded their opportunities. In residence, women fostered strong bonds and support networks. In the social sphere of higher education, women embraced social opportunities and reshaped the college social calendar. As their numbers grew, women sought to have an active role in institutions they attended and as they were not allowed in many of the men's clubs, they created their own. As many of the activities and clubs overlap, this chapter will endeavour to examine them thematically. The chapter is split into two sections, first clubs and sports and secondly, friendship and social life. The former will examine the groups that women created on campus and across the region, and the latter explores social engagements, such as dances, and how sources such as autograph books can

[1] *University Monthly*, vol. 13, no. 2, (November 1893), 29.

show us the intensity of the friendships made as students. Women found like-minded peers and created space for themselves in this male sphere.

Clubs and Sports

Clubs and sports teams allowed women to find friends with similar interests and create communities on campus. There were clubs for every student including drama, music, sports, literature, and religious study. The limited numbers of the first-generation students did not have the same opportunities as later students. As numbers expanded, clubs and sports teams grew in popularity and were visible on campus, particularly after the First World War.

In 1899, Dalhousie women founded Delta Gamma as a place to express their ideas and discuss shared interests in topics such as science, philosophy, and literature.[2] All female students were included in the society and in the 1920s, it expanded to provide opportunities for dramatics, music talents, and debating. It held social events with its annual dance being the last of the season. Delta Gamma worked in partnership with other societies such as the Glee and Dramatic Club. In 1927, Delta Gamma directed one of the Glee and Dramatic Club's productions which earned them the title of "Dalhousie's all-powerful society" in the 1927 yearbook.[3]

[2] The *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 33, issue 1, (October 1900), the 1927 Pharos Dalhousie Yearbook, and Fingard, "College, Career and Community," 38. All claim that Delta Gamma was established in 1899, however, Waite in *The Lives of Dalhousie*, vol. I, 137, marked the establishment in the late 1880s.
[3] Dalhousie University Yearbook 1927, Pharos Yearbooks, MS-1-Ref, box 194, DUA, 13.

Figure 4. Photograph of Delta Gamma Society Officers, 1911.

While the Glee and Dramatic Club were welcoming to women, debating was not. Women at Dalhousie were active in the debating club from 1914 as they were required to substitute for the decline in male members. It is unlikely that they were debating competitively as the *Dalhousie Gazette* reported they were completing tasks previously relegated to "their brothers".[4] By 1917, however, the Dalhousie Girls debating team was competing and by 1919, the team was co-educational.[5] The senior students at Mount St. Bernard College were also enthusiastic debaters. The club was not officially organised until 1924, but prior, debating skills were taught and practised in-house.[6] The initial meeting was coordinated by Sister St. M. Aloysius who continued to be moderator for many years to come. By 1925, the club was debating in the Maritime Intercollegiate League and Mount St. Bernard faced Acadia University with the topic "That the Provincial and Federal Governments Should Cooperate to Promote a Large Influx of Agricultural Immigrants into

[4] *Dalhousie Gazette* vol. 49, issue 7, (March 1917), 7.
[5] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 51, issue 15, (November 1919), 4.
[6] *Mount Saint Bernard Centennial*, 26.

the Maritime Provinces."[7] Debating quickly became one of the most respected clubs on campus in the 1900s. Initially, debating was restricted to male students, but when given the opportunity, women proved themselves skilful and worthy.

Throughout education, women's participation in sports, particularly competitive, vigorous sports was limited. Physical education was characterised by drills and calisthenics for discipline and disease prevention.[8] In higher education, concerns over women's health and respectability limited their options. It was believed by educators and social critics that participating in vigorous sport would have serious physiological consequences.[9] Moreover, during menstruation, women were urged to conserve their energy.[10] Christian principals discouraged white, middle-class women from engaging in sports that endangered their respectability. Competitive sport was not seen as respectable for a woman, they were encouraged to partake in more feminine sports such as swimming or gymnastics. Sport scholar Helen Lenskyj argued that the feminine ideal was rarely challenged by influential women in sport.[11] Measures were taken to adapt sports to make it more suitable and less demanding for women. For example, the length of a basketball court would be shortened.[12]

Despite these views, female students participated in competitive sport and views slowly began to change into the twentieth century. At Dalhousie, there are pictures of young women performing gymnastics outside. These photos are labelled as "Dalhousie University gym show" and there are ten pictures that show the young women performing different

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[7] Acadia University Athenaeum Society, Finding Aid, Acadia University Archives, accessed 22 July 2022. https://archives.acadiau.ca/islandora/object/lists%3A48

[8] Nancy R. Francis and Anna H. Lathrop, "'Children Who Drill, Seldom Are Ill.' Drive, Movement and Sport: The Rise and Fall of a Female Tradition in Ontario Elementary Physical Education – 1850s to 2000," *Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'education* 23 no. 1 (2011): 75.

[9] Colleen English, "Separate Spheres and Separate Roles: Christian Beliefs, Medical Ideolog, and Women's Sport and Physical Activity in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century United States," *The International Journal of Sport* 39, no. 4 (2022): 351.

[10] English, "Separate Spheres and Separate Roles," 358.

[11] Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality,* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1986), 63.

[12] English, "Separate Spheres and Separate Roles," 358.

pyramid shapes and balances. [13] Gymnastics was seen as a feminine sport and thus acceptable for women; however, advanced gymnastics and tumbling was reserved for male students only.[14] Both the academy and college students at Mount Saint Vincent were mandated to take gym class to ensure they were getting an appropriate amount of exercise. Mary Dulhanty recorded in her diary on 12 January 1927 that her gym class had changed and would now take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays.[15] It is likely this was a mandated class to maintain the health of female students.

Figure 5. Dalhousie Gym Show, 1926.

[13] Dalhousie University Gym Show, Photograph, PC1, box 11, folder 4, Dalhousie University Photograph Collection, DUA. Some of the photos are dated 1925 and others 1926.
[14] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 33, issue 2, (November 1900), 1-3.
[15] Entry on Wednesday 12 January 1927, Diary 1926-27, 1998-16, Mary Dulhanty fonds, MSVUA.

As much as women were discouraged from playing competitive sports, in the early twentieth century, women in higher education across the Maritime Provinces were engaging in team sports. As early as 1895 senior students at the Mount Allison Ladies' College were participating in baseball.[16]

Basketball was especially popular with female students. At all the institutions examined in this study, there is evidence of female students playing competitive basketball. At Mount Saint Vincent, women played against each other and rotated sports in accordance with the seasons. The students were split into four teams: reds, blues, yellows, and greens for sports such as basketball and baseball. Mount Saint Vincent had its own tournaments for team sports and actively encouraged the students to take part.[17] College students also participated in sports at Mount Saint Vincent, Mary Dulhanty was part of the basketball team during her studies.[18] It is likely the college students played with the seniors as they were less in numbers. The students of Mount St. Bernard organised their own games and tournaments. Each year cohort had a team and they played against each other. For example, in January 1916, the Sophomores played the Freshmen. The score was 1-0 in favour of the Sophomores.[19] Like male students, some women played in regional competitions. The women's basketball team at Dalhousie was active from approximately 1919.[20] In February 1920, they played against the women's team from Mount Allison, and Mount Allison won 40 to 29.[21] By the 1920s women were fully integrated into sporting life in higher education and were breaking gender boundaries by playing competitive sport.

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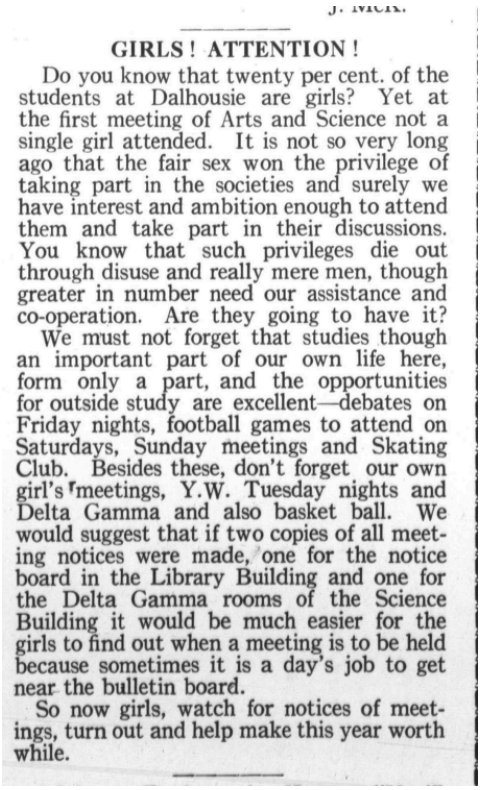
[16] Ladies' College Baseball Team 1895-1896, Photograph, Accession no. 5501, series no. 9, subseries no. 2, file no. 4, item 42, Raymond Clare Archibald fonds, MAUA.
[17] "The Academy of Mount St. Vincent," 1915-16 booklet, 25.
[18] Entry on Tuesday 14 December 1926, Mary Dulhanty diary.
[19] *The Memorare*, vol. 2 no. 2, (1916), 45.
[20] Dalhousie Women's Basketball Team 1919, Photograph, PC1, Box 36, Folder 16, Item 3, Dalhousie University Photograph Collection, DUA.
[21] Mount Allison Women's Basketball Game Versus Dalhousie University, February 1920, Photograph, Accession No. 10, Series No. 1, File No. 10, Will Campbell Collection, MAUA.

Figure 6. Mount Allison Women's Basketball Game Versus Dalhousie University, February 1920.

Outside of the organised sports, female students were active in all seasons. In the spring/summer, students spent a lot of time outdoors playing sports and, in the winter, they took great advantage of winter activities. Skating was a favourite pastime among students. At Dalhousie, students created the Dalhousie Skating Club in 1911 where students attended a Dalhousie skate night weekly. This was a co-ed club with a female student as the Vice-President.[22] Mount Allison students frequented the pond outside the women's college during winter. Photos from 1901-02 show students, male and female, skating on the ice together.[23] At Mount Saint Vincent, more is known about the activities of the academy students than the college women. The *Fortnightly Flashlight* reveals the extent of their outdoor activities, sledging and coasting were favourites.[24] From Mary Dulhanty's diary, college students were involved in the sports teams at Mount Saint Vincent, however there were no references to recreational activities in this diary. Dulhanty, however, often wrote about visiting town (presumably Halifax) on the weekends. The students would go in large groups, accompanied

[22] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 43, issue 6, (March 1911), 249.
[23] Winter Scene – [between 1901 and spring 1902], Picture Collection, 2007.07, item 58, MAUA; Mount Allison Ladies' Skating Pond – [between 1901 and spring 1902], Picture Collection, 2007.07, item 59, MAUA.
[24] *Fortnightly Flashlight*, various issues, (1919-20), 2006-19, MSVUA.

by a sister.[25] Initially, physical exercise was through mandated classes such as calisthenics. By the late 1910s and 1920s, women were fully integrated into sporting life.



GIRLS ! ATTENTION !

Do you know that twenty per cent. of the students at Dalhousie are girls? Yet at the first meeting of Arts and Science not a single girl attended. It is not so very long ago that the fair sex won the privilege of taking part in the societies and surely we have interest and ambition enough to attend them and take part in their discussions. You know that such privileges die out through disuse and really mere men, though greater in number need our assistance and co-operation. Are they going to have it?

We must not forget that studies though an important part of our own life here, form only a part, and the opportunities for outside study are excellent—debates on Friday nights, football games to attend on Saturdays, Sunday meetings and Skating Club. Besides these, don't forget our own girl's meetings, Y.W. Tuesday nights and Delta Gamma and also basket ball. We would suggest that if two copies of all meeting notices were made, one for the notice board in the Library Building and one for the Delta Gamma rooms of the Science Building it would be much easier for the girls to find out when a meeting is to be held because sometimes it is a day's job to get near the bulletin board.

So now girls, watch for notices of meetings, turn out and help make this year worth while.

Figure 7. Excerpt from Dalhousie Gazette, November 1919.

With all this being said, it may be that women were not participating as fully as the sources depict. In November 1919, the *Dalhousie Gazette* ran a column that called for more participation from women in college life.[26] The column highlighted the significant number of female students in the arts and science course but the lack of participation from them outside of academics. The author encouraged the students to pursue non-academic pursuits as it would enhance their experience. The author wondered if part of the problem was the lack of accessible advertisements. This poses an interesting question as many of the archival documents show a lively scene for women outside of academics, particularly during the time of this publication. It is possible that this call for further participation reflected a more realistic view of female student life. Perhaps only a small number of women participated in the activities of student life, while many others shied away from this aspect.

Social Life and Friendship

In addition to the clubs and sports on campuses, female students had busy social calendars. With the emerging presence of both sexes on many college campuses throughout North America, mixed social events quickly became popular. Mixed events required

[25] Entry on Sunday 19 December 1926, Mary Dulhanty diary.
[26] *Dalhousie Gazette*, vol. 51, issue 5, (November 1919), 4.

supervision and restrictions from institutions. Despite the restrictions, scholar Raymond Clare Archibald suspected that there was more socialising between the sexes than the authorities permitted or suspected.[27] Students often found ways around the rules to interact with the opposite sex. Dances were one of the most anticipated events on the social calendar but not the only one. Mixed events at universities were often dances and performances where students were supervised by faculty. Other events included suppers, small gatherings in rooms, and fresher initiations. One of the best sources for measuring the connections and bonds made in education is autograph books.

At Dalhousie University, one of the first main mixed events took place on 13 January 1891. The 'At Home' event included concerts from students and experiments from professors. There was no dancing allowed at this event and when law students in October 1893 requested an 'At Home' with dancing, the Senate voted against it. Dancing was growing in popularity, and on 2 February 1900, Dalhousie held its first event with dancing.[28] Mixed-sex dances quickly became one of the most anticipated events on campus. Catherine Hawkins ('24) remembered the excitement of the dances and filling dance cards, "The boys circled greedily to fill their cards and the girls were a little more passive."[29] These dances were always supervised by the faculty. Helene S. Bennet graduated with a BA from Dalhousie in 1923. While studying, she met her husband who joined Dalhousie as an English professor in 1922. After moving away for a short while, the couple returned to Dalhousie as Bennet's husband was offered a job as head of the English department. It was then that they were heavily involved in university life and often the ones selected to be chaperones for the dances.[30] The 'At Home' events were extremely popular and an event in 1910 hosted 300

[27] Archibald, "Historical Notes on the Centennial, Education of Women at Mount Allison," 6.
[28] Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, vol. 1, 184.
[29] Letter from Catherine Hawkins to Professor Judith Fingard, 15 March 1986.
[30] Letter from Helene S. Bennet to Judith Fingard, January 1986, FSFVA, box 4, no. 30, DUA.

guests.[31] The Delta Gamma society's 'At Home' event was always themed. In 1908 guests were welcomed to a night in Scotland. The night began with a welcome song, "Sing we this song to welcome all our gallant brave co-eds, Of Arts and Science, Engineers, Pine Hillers, Laws and Meds, But to our kind Professors, and their wives especially, Sing we welcome to the party of the girls of Dalhousie." In 1910, guests were transported to the "Emerald Isle". Upon entering the venue, guests were welcomed to Ireland and the gentlemen were encouraged to find a guide. The event had dances, refreshments, and hidden treasures for people to find, including the 'Blarney Stone', and the 'Killarney Lakes'. In January 1911, Delta Gamma welcomed guests to Japan with the entrance hall covered in Japanese flags and cherry blossom trees.[32] Other events included walking parties, masquerade balls and moonlight sails. The students of Dalhousie, particularly the women from Delta Gamma, loved to throw extravagant parties.

The students at Mount Allison University were also fond of dances and social engagements. Clementina Pickard's student scrapbook has an array of invitations and memories from social occasions. Invitations and programmes for events such as 'At Homes', promenades and skating parties numbered over thirty in one scrapbook. Pickard had her first skating party on 27 January 1911. This party was the "Jolly Juniors Skating Party" and had ten dances which included the waltz, march, and two-step. Pickard shared each dance with different partners, for example, she shared the two-step to "Call Me Up Some Rainy Afternoon" with J. D. MacLean. However, over all the invitations it appears Billy was her most loyal companion.[33] As well as mixed events, the female students held events for themselves. These were mainly in the form of suppers. Pickard attended a female Valentine's

[31] Helen Dorothy Armitage Arnell, Dalhousie University Scrapbook 1907-1911, MS-2-389, SF Box 40, Folder 26, DUA, excerpts from *Dalhousie Gazette*. 1907 had 250 guests, 1910 had 300 guests.
[32] Armitage Arnell, Dalhousie University Scrapbook. Excerpts from *Dalhousie Gazette* and event invitations.
[33] Pickard, Student Scrapbook, 9.

supper on 14 February 1911, in her friend's room."[34] Josephine Humphrey, a student at the women's college, and her roommate Jean, also had a Valentine's Supper in their room in 1913.[35] Humphrey's scrapbook from 1913 reflects the busy social life that Pickard enjoyed a few years earlier. Both senior women's college and university students had similar social calendars.

The social expectations of these events were highly important to the students. Students were expected to dress well, and young men would present the young women with flowers. Harriott Olive was mesmerised by the dresses worn to the Seniors' "At Home" reception in 1890. In the letter to her mother, Olive described how lovely they all looked and gave detailed descriptions of the outfits and gloves. She wrote that she was going to wear gloves to her next event. Olive also told her mother about the flowers, "Of course every girl that had a young man got them and they were all so lovely." However, she claimed that when it was her turn, she did not want flowers as few young men could afford them.[36] To Olive, one of the most important parts of these events was the programmes. Supposedly, the faculty's 'At Home' event had the prettiest programmes, but they never attached pencils to fill the dances. She asked her mother to send a "pretty little pencil with a long silk cord on it" so she could attach it to her card.[37] These dances, the traditions, and the material aspects were clearly of the utmost importance to the female students.

At St.F.X. dances were not permitted until the 1920s. In 1923 the annual Junior Prom was established. This was one of the first mixed-sex events at the institution. Allegedly the bishop at the time, Bishop Morrison, was against them and barely tolerated the integrated dances.[38] The process of finding dance partners was more complex than the dance cards at

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[34] Pickard, Student Scrapbook, 9.
[35] Josephine M. E. Humphrey Scrapbook, January-June 1913, Accession no. 8442, MAUA.
[36] Harriott Olive Letter to Mamma, 7 February 1890.
[37] Harriott Olive letter to Mamma, 7 February 1890.
[38] Cameron, *For the People*, 255.

Dalhousie and Mount Allison. The men were not free to ask the women themselves, instead a list of male students wishing to attend the dance was compiled, and a representative of the St.F.X. students presented the lists to the convent who matched them with women wanting to attend. On the night, the sisters would inspect the women's dresses to make sure they were modest, and the young women were not allowed to attend unless they had dance shoes and a partner.[39] As rules started to relax, more co-ed events were added to the social calendar at St.F.X. There were often dances on Saturday afternoon at the Celtic Hall and movies shown at the Antigonish cinema. On Fridays, curfew was extended to 10:30 pm "if you were lucky enough to have a date…"[40] According to student memories, the junior prom was a popular event, but in 1944, students were still complaining about the difficulties of taking a Mount St. Bernard woman to the dance as the rules were strict.[41] Despite the restrictions regarding co-educational classes, there were opportunities for the students to socialise and mix outside of the lecture theatre.

At Mount Saint Vincent, the lack of male partners did not stop the students from having dances. The young women had to improvise and dance with each other rather than with young men. *The Fortnightly Flashlight* and the *Folia Montana* often had nothing but praise for the social events at Mount Saint Vincent. Valentine's was an opportune time to have a dance. *The Fortnightly Flashlight* reported on the Valentine's dance in 1920: "The cocoa began to pour, the cake began to disappear, the valentines met their fate. One by one the boxes of fudge and chocolate found a claimant, and before an hour was past, the tables were clear of all but crumbs. The floor was cleared and dancing began. The valentines found a partner, and all went merry till 6 o'clock."[42] As academy and college students were often

[39] Cote, "A History of Mount St. Bernard From 1883 to 1939," Information from "Hanway Affiliation Centennial", 37. Helen Boylan Hanway achieved her BSc in 1935.
[40] Cote, "A History of Mount St. Bernard From 1883 to 1939," Information from "Hanway Affiliation Centennial", 37.
[41] Cote, "A History of Mount St. Bernard From 1883 to 1939," 37; Cameron, *For the People*, 255.
[42] *Fortnightly Flashlight*, (February 1920).

integrated such as in residence and sports teams, it is likely both groups attended these social events.

Another social event that was a staple in students' social calendars was Freshers. Female first-year students were called 'Freshettes.' Women at Mount Allison were quick to adopt the freshers' traditions of their male peers and adapt them. Clementina Pickard was involved in freshette initiations when she joined the university in 1910. The students were given a list of rules that they had to obey. The list started by saying "Now you Freshies new and green, Must obey these rules, If you don't then you'll be seen, And you will find your fools." The list included eight rules that the girls had to follow and four actions that were forbidden.[43] In addition, they had to wear a baby's bib and hair ribbon to classes the next day that read "Fresh 14." Once an upper-year student, Pickard participated in initiating new freshers. A similar list of the rules she had to obey was handed out and in 1911, the older students wore eye masks.[44] These events show another side of the respectable female students. Freshette events unveiled a more mischievous side to the students, one most associated with male undergraduates.

[43] Pickard, Student Scrapbook, 3.
[44] Pickard, Student Scrapbook, 3.

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UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT ALLISON COLLEGE
SACKVILLE N.B.
LITERÆ SCIENTIA RELIGIO

Freshette rules: —

Now you Freshies new and green
Must obey these rules.
If you don't this and you'll be seen
And you will find yours fools.

1. To take first seats in chapel, Euthetorian, L & B etc.
2. Always prostrate yourself to Professors, Upper class men and especially Sophomores.
3. Make social call on all members of Faculty.
4. Address all Sophomores in French at welcoming reception.
5. Must present a pound of chocolates to each sophette within a week.
6. Have a topic with Prof. Govan and converse in German concerning Logic.
7. To spend last topic together in Beethoven Hall unaccompanied by gentlemen.
8. To rise when Upper Classmen and sophomores enter the room.

You are forbidden

1. To converse with the gentlemen during or between lasses.
2. To write or receive notes from any gentleman at the University.
3. To have any male escorts from social affairs during the first term.
4. To stay away from first promenade.

Figure 8. Mount Allison Freshette Rules 1910-11.

Perhaps one of the most telling signs of female community and integration into university culture was their adoption of autograph books. From the 1850s, autograph books were popular and revealed an intimate side of student life. In addition to recording intimate memories, autograph books served as reminders of the past.[45] Female students were quick to join this historical tradition which illustrates the comradery between students.[46] Autograph books are one of the most valuable sources to historians as it reveals the extent of relationships formed between students. These books were popular with students in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

With the growing popularity of yearbooks in the 1920s, the popularity of autograph books declined. The format of entries was as unique as their authors: some entries simply stated "your true friend" while others had longer, more elaborate entries. Some had general poems and sayings and others were filled with personal memories and anecdotes. For example, one entry in Harriott Stewart's book, a student at Mount Allison, had various words such as "Christmas" and "Bill" written around the edges. The main entry of the page reads "Dear Hattie, Choose not your friends from outward show, the feather floats but the pearl lies low. Lizzie R. Smith, Lunenburg, NS. Mt Allison, April 22nd."[47] It is probable that the smaller messages were personal memories between the friends while the saying in the middle was the main entry and followed the tradition of writing a saying or poem. One entry in Mount Saint Vincent student Alice Egan Hagen's book had a similar sentiment: "To Alice, May all your troubles fly away, As dew before the sun, And when you've nothing else to do,

[45] Thomas J. Balcerski, **"**"Under These Classic Shades Together": Intimate Male Friendships at the Antebellum College of New Jersey," *Pennsylvania History* 80, no. 2 (2013): 176.
[46] For further reading see W. K. MacNeil, "The Autograph Album Custom: A Tradition and Its Scholarly Treatment." There is not much, if any, scholarship in the US and Canada on women's adoption of this tradition in post-secondary education. From these archival selections alone, there were six autograph books of Mount Allison students and one from Mount St. Vincent. It is important to note that these are only the ones that have been catalogued by archives and is not representative.
[47] Autograph Album 1879-1897, Harriet "Hattie" Starr Stewart Autograph Albums, Accession no. 9539, item 2, Harriet Starr Stewart fonds, MAUA.

First Think of me for fun, Your Loving Cousin, Barbara M. Silmay."[48] Students not only wrote words but often included drawings. Sometimes the drawings accompanied a written entry and other times, such as the entry below, the drawing was the main feature.[49] The autograph books and their entries highlight the sense of community and intimacy of female students. Autograph books were sacred traditions for male students and students could spend days and even weeks perfecting their entries. Women adopted this tradition to honour friendships and communities created throughout their studies.

Figure 9. Harriet Starr Stewart Autograph Album, 1879-1897.

Conclusion

There are many aspects of clubs and activities that have not been covered in this chapter such as literary clubs, student newspapers,[50] and drama clubs to name a few. This research provides a small glimpse into the social life of female students in higher education

[48] Alice Egan Hagen Autograph Book, Accession no. 1988-45, Hagen Family fonds, MSVUA.
[49] Autograph Album 1879-1897, Harriet "Hattie" Starr Stewart.
[50] *Fortnightly Flashlight* then *Folia Montana* for Mount St. Vincent, *The Memorare* for Mount St. Bernard, and the *Allisonia* for Mount Allision University. Dalhousie did not have a women's magazine. Women were on the editorial team for the *Dalhousie Gazette* from 1897 and from 1899 were listed as "lady editors".

and, as was said previously, this was by no means representative of all women in the Maritime Provinces. A more extensive study would be needed to fully uncover the extent of the social activities of female students in the Maritime Provinces. Clubs and sports fostered communities in institutions and through college events and tournaments, women created relationships across the region. Women also adopted traditions that male students had formed such as freshers' initiations and autograph books. As universities became more accustomed to women, they were allowed to mould it in some ways. This resulted in social events such as co-ed dances which became some of the most anticipated events on the calendar. Religious differences were particularly prevalent in the social lives of female students. Women had access to clubs, sports, and social engagements whether they were co-ed or single-sex. The social lives of female students across the Maritime Provinces were remarkably similar.

Conclusion

At least certain women in the Maritime Provinces arguably had the most opportunities to pursue further education than their sisters in the rest of Canada. White Christian women who had the economic means could attend women's colleges and co-educational institutions of Protestant, Roman Catholic, and non-denominational teachings. This thesis has endeavoured to understand the experience of women in further education in the Maritime Provinces to 1930. The three main areas of these students' experience were identified as their academics, life in residence, and social experiences. This approach has allowed for a broad regional approach to the field of women's higher education in Canada.

The academic experience in further education was a large part of their time as the focus for students was their studies. As one of the earliest co-educational institutions in the region, Dalhousie University gave women the opportunity to study alongside male students. Although degree programmes were limited to women when they first enrolled, by the 1920s, all courses were open to female students. The partnership with the Halifax Ladies' College offered women the chance to study practical courses including domestic science which was not offered at Dalhousie. From student memories, relationships with professors influenced students and stayed with them throughout their adult lives.

At Mount Allison, initially the women's college offered women the opportunity to pursue further academic education as well as training in music and arts, and eventually in practical courses. Early on, women were permitted to study at the main institution along with their male peers allowing them to achieve degrees. The two institutions worked closely, and both were praised for high standards of education, but as was stated previously, the women's college became a junior institution to the university.

In Antigonish, the teaching convent of Mount St. Bernard offered Catholic women in the region a chance to further their education. The institution offered courses in academic and

practical classes to prepare women for life as a wife and mother. Once in partnership with nearby St. Francis Xavier women could take classes from university professors and earn degrees. The education remained single-sex for as long as possible and this partnership made it the first institution in North America to allow Catholic women to study for degrees.

Mount Saint Vincent remained a single-sex institution until the second half of the twentieth century. Classes included academic subjects, practical courses, and training in music and art. As an academy, students received teaching in various subjects and in the 1910s and 20s, the institution introduced more practical courses and focused its attention on older students. The partnership with Dalhousie in 1914 allowed students, particularly novices and young religious sisters, to pursue a degree and further their education. In 1925, the institution received a college status and could grant their own degrees, welcoming college students to their campus.

Overall, there were remarkable similarities between the academic education received at these institutions in the Maritime Provinces. The three institutions that had women's colleges, or in the case of Mount Saint Vincent as a single-sex institution, offered more varied course options with an emphasis on music and art training. The Halifax Ladies' College partially filled this gap for female students in Halifax. By the turn of the century, there was a push at all the institutions to offer practical courses including domestic science and secretarial science. Again, for female students at Dalhousie, this was provided through the partnership with the women's college.

With the residential experience of women, Dalhousie initially offered a different experience than the other three institutions. As there were low numbers of female students, they had to source their own accommodation. Early students opted to reside at the Halifax Ladies' College or at private boarding houses with only a few opting to stay at the YWCA. This meant that students were spread around the city as opposed to in one main residence.

The experience was not too dissimilar to a larger residence as students were supervised and expected to adhere to certain rules and behaviours. In the 1920s, the university responded to demands and provided female students with one large residence. In each of the residences, students bonded and created small communities of female students.

Mount Allison provided women with a residence at the women's college which served both students at the college and female university students. University students resented the strict rules enforced compared to the freedom their male peers received. This resulted in separating the female college and university students to give them more freedom, although students were still heavily supervised. Like the students at Dalhousie, residents formed strong bonds and found ways around the rules imposed on them.

Female students at Mount St. Bernard and St. Francis Xavier, as with the students at Mount Allison, lived at the one residence. College students had to follow the same rules and schedule as the junior students but received more freedom than them. Mount Saint Vincent also followed a similar model of residence. The college students were given their own floor in the residence but again were expected to adhere to the schedule of the institution and attend religious ceremonies, for example.

Students at Dalhousie had a slightly different experience from students at the other three institutions until Shirreff Hall was built in the early 1920s. Female students were heavily supervised, but they also formed strong bonds with their peers which formed support networks and allowed them to have fun while studying away from home.

The social experience of female students in the Maritime Provinces was extremely similar. Dalhousie women were excluded from many existing clubs and so founded their own including Delta Gamma. This allowed them to participate in activities like their male peers such as debating. Sport was also prevalent among women. Basketball was popular, as it was across all four institutions, and female students took part in other activities such as

gymnastics. As well as being active in sports, women had a busy social life at Dalhousie where numerous dances and courting events were held. These events were popular with students and some of the events, such as the dances hosted by Delta Gamma, were meticulously planned, and executed. The social experience was similar at Mount Allison as female students established clubs and societies that emulated the male undergraduate experience. Basketball was also popular and regional tournaments allowed women to establish themselves in the undergraduate scene and form cross-regional relationships. Social events and fashion were important parts of female student's life when making social connections. Autograph books from previous students reinforce the bonds made as this tradition was adopted from male students highlighting the intensity of the friendships made during their time as students.

At the two Catholic institutions, there were not any significant differences in their social experience. Students at St.F.X. and Mount St. Bernard participated in similar activities such as debating and playing competitive sports, although this was mainly in-house. The debating team participated in regional events in the 1920s. Social events were more restricted and supervised but in the 1920s, rules were slightly relaxed which allowed students to organise dances and mixed-sex events. Students at Mount Saint Vincent also had clubs and sports events in which some college students participated, particularly in sports. Dances were held at Mount Saint Vincent, like those at the other institutions, but instead the young women partnered up with each other rather than having male companions. Autograph books like those from Mount Allison students highlighted the intensity and depth of student relationships.

Female students in the Maritime Provinces had remarkably similar experiences in their education despite differences in religion, location, and educational model. Students had access to a wide range of courses and there was an obvious move from academic and arts

courses to practical courses and vocational training at the start of the twentieth century. This suggests that women in education were studying to enter employment and start a career. Except for a stricter schedule for Catholic students and mixed accommodations at Dalhousie, female students in residence had similar experiences. Students formed bonds with their roommates, were influenced by each other such as with fashion, and sometimes broke the rules to extend their fun. The social life and experience of female students solidified their bonds and created communities on campus. Female students emulated the male experience by starting clubs and sports teams. The push to introduce dances to the social calendar was largely credited to female students and thus they changed the social life of students significantly. Dances and mixed events became highly anticipated and students at Mount Saint Vincent did not miss out completely. Autograph books were vital sources in demonstrating the friendships fostered between students and how impactful their time as students was.

The Maritime Provinces offered women the chance to pursue further education through many routes and the experiences across the region were strikingly similar. Women's access to higher education expanded the barriers of the women's sphere to give them greater opportunities. Women having access to those educational opportunities gave them a chance to study for degrees which in turn led to further career opportunities. The social experiences of female students closely emulated those of male students. This experience allowed women to break away from feminine expectations and participate in activities including competitive sports and freshers' traditions. The world of higher education ultimately led to women's greater freedom, independence, and control of their futures. With that being said, access to higher education should not be glorified. Women did, and still today, face barriers and discrimination in and out of higher education. The process of full, equal access to higher education was a long and continuing process. Notwithstanding, access to higher education

and the experiences and opportunities it offered, facilitated women's progression to professional opportunities and for greater freedom and control of their lives.

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