

# Private Education For Women In Early Nova Scotia: 1784-1894

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## ABSTRACT

Gwendolyn Davies considers the content of, and the ideologies behind, female education in Nova Scotia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

## RÉSUMÉ

Gwendolyn Davies examine le contenu des programmes conçus pour l'éducation des femmes, dans les Maritimes des 18<sup>e</sup> et 19<sup>e</sup> siècles, de même que l'idéologie qui les inspire.

Writing to an anonymous male editor in the *Novascotian* in 1826, the fictional Patty Pry archly abnegates responsibility for her actions by identifying herself as a mere “giddy girl”.<sup>1</sup> What with “dress, dancing, and parties,” she argues, she scarcely has time to scribble him a note. Yet Patty’s casual allusions to Edgeworth, Shakespeare, Le Sage, and Dr. Johnson—and her cynical remark that “love is the article in which we deal and by which we hope to make our bread”<sup>2</sup>—belie her claim to vacuity. Beneath the flirtatious chatter of her epistolary fiction, there lurks an intelligence stifled by the demands of social expectation. A generation before, she would, like her Aunt Tabitha in Ireland, have been minimally educated “at the reading and writing and sewing school” before being “brought home by her mother to be instructed as was usual in those days in the mysteries of housekeeping.”<sup>3</sup> Now, schooled to please, converse, and entertain in the drawing room as well as to

manage a kitchen and servants, she has the power to propel her education into a marriage marketability and economic security befitting the upwardly mobile in a new world and the demands of a nineteenth-century view of middle-class womanhood.

Fictional as they are, the Patty Pry letters are instructive in revealing the social imperatives of female education in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Nova Scotia. From the beginning, social custom and economics dictated that marriage was to be the desired end of women’s instruction. Early references in the province’s letters, diaries, and school advertisements stress the practical and decorative accomplishments befitting efficient domestic management, the moral upbringing of children, and the creation of a pleasingly aesthetic home. When Anna Green Winslow was sent from Chignecto, Nova Scotia, to Boston to study in 1771, she kept dutiful account in her journal of the number of shifts she sewed, the days she at-

tended Madame Smith's sewing school, the point at which she learned to knot lace, and the progress of her cookery. As befitting the moral education of a young woman destined to shape the religious lives of her children, she regularly read the Bible to her aunt or paraphrased the Sunday sermon of the Old South Church in Boston.<sup>4</sup> Where her education differed from that of previous generations of women was in her attendance at one of the famous Boston Writing Schools run by the Holbrook family. Writing, once considered secondary in importance to reading in enhancing the religious lives of women, was to have enormous implications for the relationship of the sexes in the late eighteenth century, notes historian Linda Kerber.<sup>5</sup> Whether it was the capacity to sign one's name on a legal document or the ability to read difficult prose, literacy expanded women's worlds, allowing them to communicate with those outside their own circle. It also exposed them to other viewpoints, and, as Kerber argues, helped them "bridge the gap between male and female experience, since the spoken word—depending as it does on the physical presence of the speaker—conveys the speaker's gender in a way that the written word cannot."<sup>6</sup> In America, the 1775 War of Independence was to hasten the process by which women were catapulted into the modern print world, creating in the post-war period a recognition of the role that women could play in consolidating a vision of the new republic. "Motherhood was discussed almost as if it were a fourth branch of government," notes Kerber, and "if the Republic indeed rested on responsible motherhood, prospective mothers needed to be well informed and decently educated."<sup>7</sup>

The situation in post-war Nova Scotia was understandably somewhat different, although many of the Planter women and all of the Loyalist women who inhabited the province had been as much catapulted into the modern political world by the American Revolution as had their republican sisters. Planter women in communities such as Liverpool, Chester,

Maugerville and Chignecto had sometimes lost their husbands to long periods of service in the revolution. Those on the coast had lived with the constant threat of siege from privateers, and, in the case of Chester where the women had donned red cloaks and had paraded the ramparts holding upright brooms, had even defended their unprotected communities from attack.<sup>8</sup> For Loyalist women, the war had particularly, in the words of a song of the day, "turned their world upside down." Often forced to run their husband's farms or businesses during hostilities, frequently uprooted from their homes, and eventually exposed to a new, inhospitable land, Loyalist women brought with them to the Maritime provinces their American standards of education without the accompanying debate on women's improvement that informed Benjamin Rush's "Thoughts Upon Female Education" (1787), Judith Sargent Murray's *The Gleaner* (1798), or numerous other essays on the topic in the United States.<sup>9</sup> While male education was to be discussed in Nova Scotia in a series of essays by William Cochran in *The Nova-Scotia Magazine* in 1789,<sup>10</sup> and while the classical curricula of King's Academy and the University of King's College at Windsor were constantly to be under scrutiny at public encaenia exercises, there was little overt theorizing about the importance of women's schooling in Nova Scotia until well into the 1820s. In that decade, the Patty Pry letters, editorials on the subject, a series of essays on "Female Education," the Club papers, and various satirical sketches began to bring the topic to the forefront of discussion.<sup>11</sup>

In spite of the absence of public debate on the matter, however, there is evidence that the curriculum of women's private education in late eighteenth-century Nova Scotia reflected many of the rudimentary shifts taking place in the United States. At the same time, it retained a core emphasis on the domestic and drawing room values that conservatives demanded as part of woman's sphere. Thus, one finds that on the 25th of May, 1789, Mrs. J. Proud of Halifax offered

to teach “plain Needlework, Marking; knitting (plain and ribb’d); Draper and Damask darning; Point and Dresden Filligree; Fruit in Clothwork shaded in Cranes, or Silks; Tambour and Embroidery in Gold, Silver, Spansel, and Silks, with Spangling for Ornament or Washing.” Her curriculum for young ladies also included English Grammar, Writing and Accompts, Drawing, Painting and Geography. Of these subjects, account-keeping and geography were among those being encouraged for girls in the United States. However, a comparison of what her husband was teaching boys in another room of the Prouds’ Halifax home is instructive in emphasizing the limitations still being imposed on women scholars. The young men had reading as well as writing, arithmetic in all its branches, book-keeping in single and double entry (to suit the currency of Nova Scotia if required), elements of geometry, measurement of superfcials and solids, land surveying and guaging, elements of plain and spherical trigonometry, altimetry, longimetry, and navigation.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, young men who studied under Mr. Proud went into business or navigation. Those enrolled in the classics at King’s College in Windsor were destined for law, medicine, teaching, or the church. In either case, the male curriculum contained more substance than did that of the women, although Rebecca Byles of Halifax may well have come close to the real truth when she wrote cynically to her Boston aunts in 1784 that “our Boys are all intended for the Army or Navy; or some post under Government where neither knowledge or Honesty are required. Indeed they retard a person’s advancement; to Dance, make a genteel Bow, fill up a printed message card, and sign a receipt for their pay compleat their education and they step forth accomplished Gentlemen.” By contrast, she argued, women—presumably those studying under her own schoolmistress, Deborah Cottnam—had “the best Education the place affords and the accomplishment of their minds is attended to as well as the adorning of their persons.” With such

an education behind them, Rebecca Byles expected “in a few years . . . to see women fill the most important offices in Church and State.”<sup>13</sup> Judith Sargent Murray expressed similar sentiments in Boston in 1798 when she predicted in The Gleaner, “I expect to see our young women forming a new era in female history,”<sup>14</sup> But in both cases the optimism was to prove premature. As Linda Kerber notes of the United States, “More than two generations passed before women began to press at the boundaries of ‘the Church, the Bar, and the Senate,’ a delay understandable only in the context of the nearly united hostility that greeted those who encouraged women to learn the skills needed for public life. The prediction that intellectual accomplishment would unsex women was regularly coupled with the warning that educated women would abandon their proper sphere, that the female pedant and the housekeeper were never found in the same person.”<sup>15</sup>

Nowhere was this fear better illustrated in nineteenth-century Nova Scotian literature than in the 1889 Halifax play, Culture, published anonymously but later credited to Dr. William Tobin.<sup>16</sup> In it, the mother defends the traditional education of her daughter, Bella, in sewing, cookery, household management, hygiene, and care of the sick in order “to make her a perfect housewife.” However, her son-in-law, Henry, finds himself embarrassed by Bella’s naiveté and feels that people sneer at his wife’s deficiencies. “Such ignorance,” he pontificates, “mortifies a husband and makes him dread taking his wife into society.”<sup>17</sup> She is, he claims, a wife out-of-step with modern progress and is ill-fitted to be the escort of “a man of culture.” However, when Bella secretly enrolls at Dalhousie College and eventually learns to outshine Henry on every topic from history to science, he beats a hasty retreat. Pleading, “a little more learning, and I should be in dread of you!,” he persuades her to return to the private sphere, thereby enabling traditional forces to conclude the play on a vindicated note.

While *Culture* sends mixed messages about women's educational emancipation, it nonetheless captures effectively the defensive note that informed the debate over female schooling throughout the nineteenth century. In this sense it reinforces Robert Sedgwick's address to the Halifax YMCA in 1856 when Sedgwick argued for the addition of biology, geology, entymology, and ethnology to women's curricula. At the same time, Sedgwick clearly saw these subjects not as professional tools but as embellishments to the domestic sphere and the men whom female graduates were to grace. Like Henry in *Culture*, Sedgwick was concerned that "in certain circles of society . . . a woman looks exceedingly small, if, by her silence or the irrelevancy of her remarks, she betrays her entire ignorance and the defective nature of her education." Thus, like Henry, Sedgwick was impelled to make these remarks not out of support for the advancement of female education but because of the embarrassment that uninformed women might cause their upwardly mobile men. Lest women forget their true sphere, Sedgwick warned at the end of his address that

. . . there are other 'ologies as well of which no woman, if she is to move in her sphere as she ought to, can afford to remain ignorant. There is the sublime science of washology and its sister bakeology. There is darnology and scrubology. There is mendology and cookology in its wide comprehensiveness. . . Now, all this knowledge must be embraced in any system of female education that pretends to prepare women for the duties of life.<sup>18</sup>

Faced with the perpetuation of such attitudes in influential circles well into the nineteenth century, how did female education in Nova Scotia respond? The Education Act of 1826 had made a public school build-

ing and school attendance compulsory in each community, although only districts with thirty families need support a school for the whole year. The Education Act of 1845 went further, introducing "superior" common schools with the addition of subjects such as algebra, classics, and practical mathematics. However, the quality of teachers and school facilities varied considerably from community to community in mid-century, as Michael J. Smith has pointed out, with newspapers sporadically exposing the drunken, debilitated state of various members of the teaching profession.<sup>19</sup> The supply of teachers was considerably enhanced after 1838 by the introduction of women into public school classrooms, but even here there were problems. Restricted by poorer pay than that allotted to men, relegated to teaching junior grades, forced to resign upon marriage, and viewed by the educational hierarchy as maternal manifestations of the domestic or private sphere,<sup>20</sup> many women teachers chose to eschew public school teaching in the mid-nineteenth century for the more intimate experience of working in one of the vast number of women's private schools that proliferated and died in the province with astounding rapidity. Most of these private establishments differed little from their eighteenth-century predecessors, although Chronology (History), a key subject in the revisionist curriculum of the United States, had frequently been added to nineteenth-century Nova Scotian course outlines. Often seeming to be the only way that a genteel widow or daughter could support herself, the schools were tentative operations, usually suggesting in their very advertisements their financial precariousness. Typical of this insecurity was the advertisement of Mrs. Purvis and her daughters of Halifax in 1831 when she urged parents to notify her of their intentions by October 3rd "as should a sufficient number offer to justify her in so doing, she intends opening her School on the Monday following."<sup>21</sup> Mrs. Fales, another widow who employed the teaching services of her daughters in her school, ran a simi-

lar advertisement in the same period, adding to the caveat of “sufficient numbers” the offer of providing references from “individuals of the first standing in Society” in Massachusetts where she had previously taught.<sup>22</sup> The commercial vulnerability of such institutions earned them the appellation “adventure schools”<sup>23</sup> in the United States, notes Kerber, particularly when their marginality was often as much to do with quality as with financial viability. Thomas Chandler Haliburton responds to this syndrome in “Female Colleges” when Sam Slick asks his Connecticut childhood friend, Liddy, now the successful head of a women’s seminary, how she manages “to teach all them ‘are things with hard names? For we never even heer’d of ‘em to Slickville. . . . ‘Atween you and me, Sam,’ said she, ‘for you know my broughtens up, and it’s no use to pretend—primary books does it all, there is question and answer. I read the question, and they larn the answer. It’s the easiest thing in the world to teach nowadays.”<sup>24</sup>

If anecdotal history is to be countenanced, Haliburton had some grist for his satire when he wrote “Female Colleges.” Miss Rachel Martin, who taught in Kentville in the 1830s, ran a more academically credible school than did Sam Slick’s Liddy, but she nonetheless followed the questionable practise of chalking her schoolroom floor and literally obliging her pupils to ‘toe the mark’.” Noted for her splendid “black beaver bonnet lined with pink satin, with long handsome plumes, and a veil with sprigs,” she appropriately began each school day with a singing of “Awake my soul and with the sun” and closed it with “Glory to Thee my God this night.”<sup>25</sup> In Halifax in the 1840s, Dame Allan reputedly ran an even more eccentric establishment for the education of both boys and girls by making them memorize the appendices of their grammar books; by maintaining a long row of paper dunce caps, one for each child; by sitting children under her yellow table with the dunce caps on their heads if they were recalcitrant; and by making boys eat the

crumbs from her highly scrubbed floor if they dropped them from their unbuttered bread. As late as 1850, misdemeanours at Dame Allan’s school, and at one run by Miss Ritchie, could apparently be punished by banishment to the wooden stocks that stood on the school premises. The poignant side of the Dame Allan story, however, lies in its illustration of the financial precariousness of female teachers’ lives. Impoverished once she could no longer teach, Dame Allan nearly starved in her Scottish pride until the Halifax benefactress, Miss Cogswell, arranged for her to enter a home for elderly women on Gottingen Street. There, her annual board was paid through the efforts of Mrs. Sweet, one of her former students, who each year collected enough money from Dame Allan’s graduates to cover expenses.<sup>26</sup> Many of the women who ran female seminaries worried about this fate. “Twelve years of unremitted toil in the profession of a teacher have been inadequate to the demands of a large family,” Mrs. Fales was to note in the preface of her anonymously-written 1834 book Familiar Letters On Subjects Interesting To The Minds And Hearts Of Females. Therefore, she added, “not literary fame but emolument, is the object of the present publication.”<sup>27</sup> Near the end of the book, she considers her narrow stipend and harassing pecuniary cares after six years of teaching in Halifax and contrasts her own bleak future as an impoverished teacher with the prosperity and security of her married sister living in the United States. The tone is hauntingly redolent of that of Eliza Cottnam of Halifax and Saint John when in 1791 she writes to her uncle in the West Indies of her concern for her mother, Deborah Cottnam. At sixty-three, Cottnam, is “reduced at her years to the dreadful necessity of earning a scanty subsistence . . . in keeping a school, and with difficulty gaining a sufficiency to live with decency.” Herself faced with “the chilling hand of Poverty, or what is often more distinctive, old maidism,” as she helps her mother run her school, Eliza Cottnam nonetheless keeps “my natural chearfulness”.

“From a desire to keep up my own respectability,” she notes, “. . . I have adopted Sterne’s advice to our sex: Reverance thyself!”<sup>28</sup>

The courage with which many female educators such as Eliza Cottnam, Deborah Cottnam or S.K.P. Fales conducted their lives is sometimes matched by the superior quality of the establishments that they operated. In the vast number of women’s private schools that functioned in Nova Scotia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several stand out because of the quality and imaginativeness of their teaching. Deborah Cottnam was revered by her students. The surviving commonplace book of Maria Ann Smart, one of Cottnam’s students in 1793, indicates that Cottnam had them collect poetry (including her own), presumably for the improvement of penmanship as well as for the development of literary taste.<sup>29</sup> The Mrs. and Misses Best School conducted in Wolfville in the 1831-1855 period was remembered by its graduates for its strict discipline and the figure of its widowed directress, Isabella Playfair Best, who would supervise the formal evening meal in a long-trained, black silk dinner gown. Raised in Edinburgh in the afterglow of the Scottish Enlightenment and reputedly exposed to the literary ambiance of her famous uncle, mathematician and liberal philosopher, Professor John Playfair of Edinburgh University, Isabella Best and her daughters offered young women not only the conventional academic and decorative subjects of the day but also English grammar, history, and chronology. Isabella Best is reputed to have been an excellent businesswoman who made money from her school. Therefore, unlike many of her female colleagues in the teaching profession, she was able to purchase her own home and retire in Wolfville. She died there in 1872, years after the closure of her school and the marriages of her daughters.<sup>30</sup>

By the 1830s and 1840s, curricula in a number of other private schools in the province had begun to reflect the exceptional quality of their founders. S.K.P.

Fales’ advertisement for young ladies in Halifax in the 1829-1833 period included not only the conventional subjects taught to women in the best schools of the day but also mythology, natural history, natural and intellectual philosophy, botany, astronomy, chemistry, rhetoric, logic, prose, and poetry. In 1829, she advertised that she had “an intimate acquaintance with modern improvements in education,”<sup>31</sup> reinforcing this claim in an 1831 prospectus by identifying herself as a follower of the Swiss educator and reformer, Johann Pestalozzi. She also offered to introduce Jocotot’s theories of instruction into the curriculum if she had six girls willing to experiment with her. Her de-emphasis on memory and rote as a means of learning, her proposal to lead her pupils through a course of study that developed their “powers of judgment and reflection,” her stress on impressing on students “a just sense of their relation to God,” and her theory that “A boarding school should be a household united by moral obligations and affectionate feelings, not a merely political community” all read as text-book illustrations of the work of Pestalozzi.<sup>32</sup> Pestalozzi had died only four years before Mrs. Fales’ prospectus. His life had been dedicated to developing the whole child, “the head, the hand and the heart,”<sup>33</sup> in a process of balanced, natural progress, an approach very different from the Gradgrindian rote of Dickens’ Hard Times or the dunce cap humiliations of Dame Allan’s 1840s Halifax institution. Mrs. Fales’ educational advances also extended into the offer of flexible class hours for mature women who might want to study one of the branches of learning with her. She established an infant school in 1832 taught by someone else under her supervision and presented a course of six evening lectures on astronomy from 1831 to 1833. In September 1832, excerpts from her book in progress, Familiar Letters On Subjects Interesting To The Minds And Hearts Of Females, identified her as a former student of the famous Massachusetts educator, Susanna Rowson, also one of America’s earliest novelists, play-

wrights, and poets. Rowson has been credited by Kerber and others with advancing female education in America through her Massachusetts schools conducted from 1797 to 1822 and through her educational publications such as Abridgement of Universal Geography (1805), Spelling Dictionary (1807), and Exercises in History, Chronology, and Biography (1822). Rowson unflinchingly supported the independence of women, and although she did not deride the importance of the home and domestic duties, she felt strongly that women should cultivate their intellects above all.<sup>34</sup> Fales, however, has little good to say of Rowson. When she published Familiar Letters in Boston in 1834 in the form of a series of letters to her friends and daughters, Numbers 5 and 6 of Fales' letters presented Rowson's school as spartanly-run and Rowson herself as insensitive and authoritarian. While the boarders consistently drank unpalatable tea from a large tin urn and ate rank butter spread on stale bread, according to Fales, Susanna Rowson dined before them on a table spread with delicacies. Older students advised the young Fales "that Mrs. R.'s success was derived rather from her literary celebrity than from professional ability and self-denial." The whole experience, in spite of the "intellectual and moral sympathy" it generated through student contact, left Mrs. Fales convinced that:

I can imagine but one case, in which an affectionate mother may conscientiously commit her daughter to a boarding-school. And that is, when it is conducted by a lady of strict moral principle, who is no less interested in the happiness and improvement of her pupils, than in her own emolument; of whose family they form a component part, instead of an establishment separate from her own; and who blends maternal care with mental instruction.<sup>35</sup>

It is clear that a rejection of her own educational experience under Rowson shaped Fales's vision of the kind of female institution that she would establish. Obviously, it also drew her to the humane and child-focused pedagogical theories of Pestalozzi once she had begun to direct her own seminary in Halifax.

Only a decade later, yet another book published by a Halifax female educator provided insight into the pedagogy informing a female institution. The novel, Little Grace by Miss Grove, was published in 1846 by one of four Misses Grove who conducted a private school for girls in Halifax and Beaver Bank between 1840 and the early 1890s. Their curriculum included natural philosophy, botany, rhetoric, algebra, and Italian in addition to more traditional subjects. Former pupils recalled that ". . . the imagination was called into action by a few words on the blackboard which had to be woven into a work of fiction—a joy to some pupils, a torture to others. . . ."<sup>36</sup> Little Grace resembles a number of contemporary works for children, including Susanna Rowson's Biblical Dialogues (1822), in being organized around family discussions on a given topic. In this case, stories are generated by questions that arise from the experiences of the eight-year old Grace. The result is that useful lessons about geography, the use of maps, arithmetic, and the calculation of historical dates are worked into the narrative. The most significant structuring device in the novel, however, is Miss Grove's use of Thomas Chandler Haliburton's 1829 An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia as a resource for answering Grace's questions and for initiating dialogue with her parents and her brother, George. The novel encourages readers to respect girls' intelligences by revealing the seriousness with which George and his parents treat Grace's questions, by stressing the inquiring nature of her mind, and by showing her appreciation of Nova Scotian history. However, the book also confirms the value system of white, middle-class Nova Scotians,

thereby revealing—as no doubt did the curricula of all the private schools under discussion—the role of institutions in maintaining the ethnic and social divisions of the province. “Why do we call them savages,” asks Little Grace after her father has taken her to a Mi’kmaq community on the outskirts of Dartmouth:

They do not seem to me to be savage—really savage, like a savage dog, a savage murder. . . . Grace’s father tried to show her that savage is often used in opposition to civilized. He said the Indians were peaceable and honest, but they did not, as civilized people do, build houses and towns, and have shops and manufactures.<sup>37</sup>

As a revelation of the Victorian philosophy of “uplift,” and as an illustration of the marginalization of groups whose priorities were other than “shops,” “business,” and “manufacturing,” this scene stands as a set-piece. Little Grace asks the right questions in the Grove book, but the answers that she is given and that she accepts are ones that do not challenge the comfortable value system obviously represented by the Misses Groves’ educational establishment. Nonetheless, the novel survives as an illustration of the imaginative teaching techniques of the Grove establishment and of its obvious dedication to making Nova Scotian history better known to a school-age constituency.

From the 1850s to the First World War, female education changed dramatically in Nova Scotia. This was partly in response to the technological and economic changes that are raised as issues in *Little Grace*. As “Labor saving machinery and co-operative associations lightened the burden of women’s work in the households,” noted Christina Ross Frame in a special Women’s issue of the *Halifax Herald* in October, 1895, “it was no longer necessary for the girls to remain at

home, and they were not slow in seizing the advantages in the changed conditions.”<sup>38</sup> Advances in the quality of free schools, as well as corresponding changes in private school curricula, also contributed to a spirit of new opportunities. To the litany of good private schools such as those of Caroline Ratchford or Louise Carritt in Amherst in the 1850s could be added the founding of such sectarian seminaries for women as the Methodists’ Mount Allison Ladies’ Academy (1854), the Baptists’ Grand Pre Seminary (1860), or the Anglicans’ Edgehill Church School for Girls (1891). In all of these, academic quality paved the way for women’s eventual entry to university. Not surprisingly, notes John G. Reid, the Baptists and the Methodists took the lead in establishing such institutions, “since both denominations had strong traditions of earnest evangelical zeal that suggested the value of a disciplined education as an antidote to idleness or frivolity in either men or women.”<sup>39</sup> Outstanding and pioneering women teachers often shaped these institutions, as Margaret Conrad and James Davison have illustrated. For example, three young Annapolis Valley Baptists, Alice Shaw, Annie Parker, and Rebecca Chase, went to the United States in 1854 to study at Mount Holyoke and brought back to the Maritimes Mount Holyoke’s curriculum and institutional structure.<sup>40</sup> When Alice Shaw’s Grand Pre Seminary closed in 1872 and women moved in 1879 to the Seminary on the Acadia University campus, they were pushing at the very doors of the university. President Artemus Sawyer’s reluctance (“You must not consider yourselves as members of the College, young ladies.”) could not stem the tide, as Margaret Conrad has pointed out in *Women At Acadia University: The First Fifty Years: 1884-1934*. In 1884, Clara Belle Marshall was the first woman to be awarded a bachelor’s degree at Acadia—just nine years after Grace Annie Lockhart of Mount Allison had become the first woman to achieve a Canadian degree.<sup>41</sup>

The sense of pride that these early graduates felt in

eroding gender barriers in education can be sensed at the grave site of Margaret Florence (Newcombe) Trueman, Dalhousie University's first female graduate in 1885. Buried in the cemetery of the Cornwallis Reformed Presbyterian Covenanter's Church in West Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, she lies under the simple epitaph: "First Woman Graduate of Dalhousie University." Like many of her compatriots who defied the prejudice of their day, Trueman translated her educational opportunities into successful career directions after the death of her husband, ending her professional life as the sixth principal of the Halifax Ladies' College from 1911-1918. Like her, other early woman graduates of Nova Scotian universities pursued varied and satisfying careers. Amongst the first forty-five women to take degrees from Acadia, there were academics, missionaries, doctors, lawyers, journalists, teachers, translators, librarians, secretaries, wives, and mothers. Nearly fifty per cent did not marry, thereby justifying, perhaps, those naysayers who saw education as threatening the domestic and separate sphere of nine-

teenth-century women.<sup>42</sup> By 1895, Christina Ross Frame could well write in the Special Woman's Issue of the Halifax Herald that: "At college, in competition with their brothers, in the teaching profession, nursing, type-writing, bookkeeping, in other work, and as housewives, our women act well their part in the busy living world. Censorious remarks are often heard in regard to 'woman's sphere,' and there are those who advocate a sort of social repression for the sex in respect to their competitive work in lines that were formerly occupied wholly by men." But "Women's truest sphere," she adds, "is where she is doing her best work, either within or outside of the home. Comparing the culture, the remunerative work and the broader outlook for women in our time," she concludes, "with the narrow round of household duties and the lack of educational advantages in the days of our grandmothers, we may well say that for women 'the former days' were not better than these."<sup>43</sup> Had the Patty Pry of 1826 been privy to the words of 1895, one feels that she would have rejoiced in their revelations.

## NOTES

1. Letter I, The Novascotian (29 June 1826).
2. Letter II, The Novascotian (6 July 1826).
3. Letter I.
4. Alice Morse Earle, ed., Diary of Anna Green Winslow (Boston & N.Y.: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1894), pp. 1, 2, 4, 10, 12, 21, 28, 40.
5. Linda K. Kerber, Women of The Republic. Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), p. 192.
6. *Ibid.* p. 193.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
8. Mather Byles Desbrisay, History of The County of Lunenburg (Belleville: Mika Reprint, 1972 [1895]), p. 271
9. Kerber, pp. 196, 203-209, 211-221.
10. "W" [William Cochran], "A Plan of Liberal Education For the Youth of Nova Scotia, and the Sister Provinces in North America," The Nova-Scotia Magazine, I (August 1789), pp. 105-106; I (September 1789), pp. 199-203; and I (November 1789), pp. 364-366.
11. See, for example: "Education," The Novascotian (19 October 1825), p. 237; The Acadian Recorder (2 September 1826), p.4; "Female Education, No. 1- For The Novascotian," The Novascotian (11 June 1829), p. 185; Lynne Snow, "To Amuse and Please: Girls' Private Education in Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia," unpublished Bell Junior Research Project, Mount Allison University, 1980 (Supervisor: Gwendolyn Davies).
12. "J. Proud," Royal Gazette and Nova Scotia Advertiser (9 June 1789).
13. R. Byles to her aunt, 24 March 1784, Byles Collection, MGI, Vol, 163, Folder 3, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.
14. Kerber, p. 189.
15. Kerber, p. 222.
16. I wish to thank Dr. Patrick O'Neill, Mount Saint Vincent University, for identifying Dr. William Tobin as the author of Culture! and for drawing my attention to The Evening Mail of Halifax, 26 February 1902, concerning a performance of Culture! I would also like to thank Karen Smith, Special Collections, Killam Library, Dalhousie University for her assistance in my pursuit of Culture's author.
17. Culture! (Halifax: Halifax Printing Company, 1889), p. 7.
18. Robert Sedgwick, "The proper sphere and influence of women in Christian society, being a lecture delivered. . . before the Young Men's Christian Association, Halifax, N.S., November 1856" (Halifax: James Barnes, 1856), p. 26. Also quoted in Snow.
19. Michael J. Smith, "Female Reformers in Victorian Nova Scotia: Architects of a New Womanhood" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Saint Mary's University, 1986), pp. 37-45.
20. Janet Guildford, "'Separate Spheres': The Feminization of Public School Teaching in Nova Scotia, 1838-1880," Acadiensis (Autumn 1992), pp. 44-64. Reprinted in Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton, eds., Separate Spheres. Women's Worlds in the 19th-Century Maritimes (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994), pp. 119-143.
21. "Seminary For Young Ladies," The Novascotian (14 September 1831), p. 295. See Snow, p. 9.
22. The Novascotian (8 January 1829), p. 15. See also: "Mrs. Fales, From Massachusetts," The Novascotian (9 September 1829), p. 296. Snow quotes Fales, pp. 7-8.
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40. Margaret Conrad, "Introduction," Women At Acadia University. The First Fifty Years, 1884-1934 (Kentville: Acadia University, 1984), p. 4. See also: Davison, pp. 42-91. John G. Reid also discusses this phenomenon with respect to Mount Allison.
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42. Conrad, p. 5.
43. Frame, p. 6.

