

The Bell Club: One Hundred Years of Women's Cultural and Literary Life In Baddeck, Nova Scotia

Sharon MacDonald

ABSTRACT

The Bell Club (originally the Young Ladies Club) of Baddeck is one of the region's most long-lived institutions. Sharon MacDonald examines the ways in which the club meshed with women's broader interests and aspirations and asks if the example of the Bell Club is relevant to contemporary Maritime women.

RÉSUMÉ

Le <<Bell Club>> (originellement le <<Young Ladies Club>> de Baddeck) est une des plus anciennes institutions de la région. Sharon MacDonald examine de quelles manières le club en est venu à s'intéresser, à un niveau plus général, aux problèmes et aux aspirations des femmes. Elle se demande si l'exemple du Bell Club peut encore inspirer les femmes des Maritimes, de nos jours.

On October 10th, 1891, in the small village of Baddeck in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, a group of women were gathered together to form the Young Ladies' Club of Baddeck. The objects as set out in the Constitution were: "To stimulate the acquisition of general knowledge and to promote sociability..."¹

This club was initiated by Mabel Hubbard Bell who had recently taken up partial residency in Baddeck with her husband Alexander Graham Bell and their two children. The Bells, whose permanent residence was in Washington, D.C., had been coming to Baddeck over a period of six years and by 1891 had established their household on a point of land not far from the village. Coupled with the desire as a newcomer to make friends with her neighbours, Mabel Bell had been inspired by the club idea after having been present as a

guest at the formation of a women's club in Washington. The women who founded the Washington Club had been meeting regularly over a period of years and had finally decided to establish themselves as a formal entity. These women, many of whom were connected to political, artistic, literary and military circles, were certainly in different social circumstances than the women in Baddeck but, as Mabel Bell was to recount twenty years later in an anniversary talk to the club on its origins: "It seemed to me that if women at the heart of things with all the sources of information and entertainment offered them by a large city felt the need of coming together and talking over things among themselves, how much greater must that need be, how much greater the benefit to be derived by association to women who, like ourselves, were so far from things and so dependent on our own resources



Figure 1. Board of Young Ladies' Club of Baddeck at Beinn Braegh, 1921. Left to right: Emmeline Anderson, Mrs. Elizabeth (G.W.) MacKeen, Beth MacAskill, Mrs. Edith (Duncan) MacRae, Mrs. E.G. MacAskill, Mrs. Mabel (A.G.) Bell, Catherine MacKenzie - courtesy of the A.G. Bell Club.

for all our information and entertainment.”²

Over one hundred years later this club in Baddeck still exists although it is now known as the Bell Club or just ‘Club’ to its members. From the beginning, the name, “Young Ladies’ Club”, had never adequately described the composition of its membership for there were always at least two generations of women as members. By the time the club had celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, it was even less appropriate, for the charter members were either middle-aged or elderly. In the early days, the club met once a week, and while membership was restricted to women, one meeting a

month was an open meeting. Generally the meetings were held in members’ homes; however, when well-known guest speakers were available to speak to the club, a community hall was used so that the general public could attend. Dr Bell, always supportive of the club, was often a speaker at these meetings. In 1922 he died, and because of the esteem that members felt for both their club founder and her husband, the club was renamed, The Alexander Graham Bell Club, to honour Dr Bell’s memory.

It still has a membership of women ranging in age from their mid-twenties to mid-nineties and has been

true to its original aims of stimulating the acquisition of general knowledge and promoting sociability. For most members, "Club is forever", and is not just a club they join for a brief period in their life. Even those who move away often maintain their membership. Within the club there are both professional women and homemakers, those with little or no post-secondary education and those with post-graduate degrees. The content of the evening meetings may be serious or light. According to testimonials of club members, this mix of the sublime and the ridiculous gives the club its enduring appeal. Club members go there to be refreshed. They know they will be expected to take their part in contributing to programming, but they will not be expected to raise funds or pay exorbitant dues and they need not espouse any special cause. It is non-denominational and non-political. Yet, in spite of its lack of direct espousal for public causes, in many respects, the club has acted as a catalyst within the community. Over its long history, club members have been instrumental in initiating many cultural, social and educational projects and institutions that are ongoing in present-day Baddeck.

Because the Bell Club is perhaps the oldest, continuously running active women's club in Canada, it is worthy of study. For the purposes of this paper, four questions will be addressed:

1) How did the club, in its very beginnings, fit into the more general cultural and literary aspirations of women at the time?, 2) How did the club combine traditional women's culture and literary expression with new opportunities for growth?, 3) What contributions has this club made to regional women's cultural and literary development?, and finally, 4) Is the Bell Club merely an archaic holdover from another era or does its example offer anything to contemporary women who are seeking 'a place of their own', embracing both tradition and change?

The Women's Club Movement

The year 1868 is considered the birth date of the women's culture club movement.³ Women had undoubtedly gathered together in small groups in pockets here and there to discuss matters of interest before this date, but the founding of the Sorosis Club of New York and the New England Woman's Club in Boston established models and a precedent for what was to become a massive development of women's clubs throughout North America.

Historian Karen Blair in her book, The Clubwoman as Feminist, states that Jane Cunningham Croly, the founder of Sorosis, was "the single most important figure in the woman's club movement".⁴ Croly was a successful journalist in New York and the specific incident that spurred her to begin a women's club was the exclusion of women from a New York Press Club dinner for Charles Dickens who was on a lecture tour at the time. Croly had been refused when she applied for a ticket for the event and this precipitated much debate among the members of the press. Although the committee eventually agreed that "if a sufficient number of ladies could be found willing to pay fifteen dollars each for their tickets, to make a good showing, and prevent each other from feeling lonely",⁵ they could attend, Croly declined because the women were not being treated equally with the men. She decided at that point to form an organization where women could come together to talk, socialize and work in ways to improve the status of women.

Croly's career in journalism was precipitated by the necessity of having to support her family of four children. Writing under the pen name Jennie June, she used her position to articulate an analysis of women's oppression. She was an ardent feminist; however, within the framework of the women's club, Croly wished to create an environment that would foster unity rather than disagreement, so she discouraged discussion of potentially divisive political or religious topics. While this was not in accordance with all mem-

bers' wishes, she did lay down the basic framework and model for the many thousands of women's clubs that were to develop over the years.

Between the time of the first clubs and well into the twentieth century, women's clubs proliferated at a great rate. Each club had its own style and emphasis, but the common thread was that women were daring to want something more for themselves. Club life provided them with opportunities to develop skills, stretch intellectually and enjoy the company of other stimulating women. Non-political, non-denominational, the club provided a meeting ground for women with diverse interests and backgrounds.

Victorian men's reactions to the club phenomenon were mixed. As historian Annette Baxter wrote in the preface to *The Clubwoman as Feminist*: "Men had barely sanctioned escape from the kitchen and nursery for the more compelling reasons of missionary work, educational endeavors, and health care. How could they be expected to tolerate such desertion for a closer familiarity with the poetry of Robert Browning?"⁶

Club women were subjected to a certain amount of ridicule especially by cartoonists in the press,⁷ but, in general, women found that so long as they did not neglect their domestic duties, the clubs were not perceived as threatening, especially in comparison with the more forthright feminist groups espousing suffrage, equal pay for equal work and other radical notions. Although many individual members of clubs were active in such reform work, the clubs tried to maintain a more restrained stance in order not to frighten women away. Croly and other like-minded clubwomen felt that once women began to learn more, they would come to their own understanding of needed changes and then be able to act decisively, not necessarily within the framework of the club, but in their communities. The club was to be a haven, an opportunity for women to grow intellectually and engage in meaningful social intercourse. (See Figure #2)

By the time Mabel Bell introduced the club idea to Baddeck in 1891, the movement was already flourishing throughout North America. In 1894, at the first annual meeting of the National Council of Women of Canada in Ottawa, there were reports from various parts of Canada (although primarily from Ontario and Quebec) and women's clubs were well represented. When the Countess of Aberdeen came to Halifax later that same year to organize a Local Council of Women, there were representatives from sixty-nine women's groups already active in the city.⁸ By 1900, the National Council of Women had compiled a book titled *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*. This was prepared as a report for the Paris Exposition held that year. Many women's organizations, clubs, religious and charitable societies were listed, but these represented only a fraction of groups that must have existed in Canada at the time. In spite of Aberdeen's efforts, by 1900, only seventeen federated societies had, in fact, joined the Halifax-Dartmouth Local Council.⁹ The Young Ladies' Club of Baddeck, which had been active for nine years, was not mentioned in this compendium of women's groups. Clubs that did not join larger federations such as the National Council were often unknown outside of their own local areas. In the 1900 report on literary societies and clubs, the writer admits to the incompleteness of the list: "The above [list], among the many literary and reading societies which must exist throughout the Dominion, are the only ones about which any definite information has been received."¹⁰ There is evidence that women's cultural (literary and artistic) clubs existed throughout the Maritimes.¹¹ It is likely that clubs were formed wherever there were women seeking self-expression beyond the home and church.

For example, the Tennysonian Club in Port Medway, Nova Scotia, met weekly for a number of years, beginning in 1903. The eclectic mix of the serious and the lighthearted is in evidence in club records written in 1904 and reported by E. Marguerite Letson in her

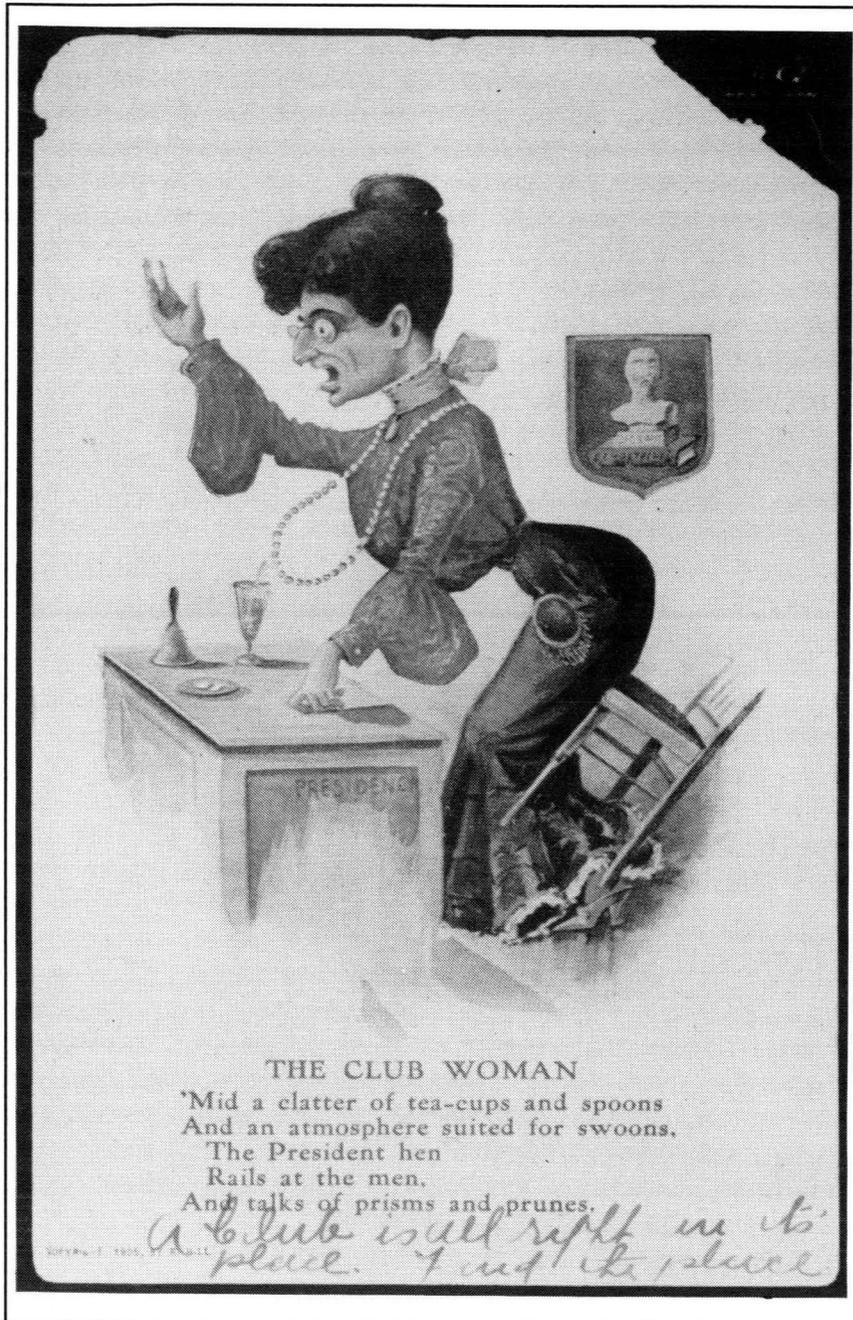


Figure 2. 'The Clubwoman', 1913 postcard. Courtesy the Canadian Women's Movement Archives, University of Ottawa Library Network, photo #0090. (Acknowledgement to the authors of Canadian Women: A History for bringing this to my attention.)

book, *Port: a short history of Port Medway, Nova Scotia*, 1985: “ ‘ Our studies have included The Idylls of the King, In Memoriam, The Princess and Maud. These poems have given rise to discussions on various subjects, Evolution, Radium, Christian Science, Darwin’s Theory, Theology, Mythology, Women’s Rights, and occasionally we hear such questions as these, “ What shall I do for my poor sick cat? What is the matter with the springs on this sofa?...” ”

It may never be known how many clubs existed, but more research on the subject could provide important clues as to the intellectual development of women from small rural villages in the region. As well, it could be revealing to trace the life paths of club-women to discover who stayed in the region and who left, for, undoubtedly, out-migration from the Maritimes to other parts of Canada, the United States and abroad was a reality.¹² Within the Bell Club there were considerable numbers who moved away for professional and other reasons¹³ but most maintained connection with the club because of deep-felt affection and gratitude for its place in their personal development. Perhaps other clubs in the Maritimes gave similar service and support to women who eventually ‘went down the road’. Any future study of women’s cultural and literary history in the region must inevitably take into account this fact of exodus.

Although it had its own unique character and may be unusual in its longevity of existence, the Young Ladies’ Club of Baddeck, when it began, was but a small part of the club phenomenon. In the late nineteenth century, the yearning for something more was ‘in the air’. They may not have been aware of it at the time, but the women of Baddeck shared similar aspirations with women in tiny villages, towns and large cities throughout North America.

Combining Traditional Women’s Culture and Literary Expression With New Opportunities

While the act of coming together for the more ‘selfish’ reasons of learning and socializing was a new ‘club’ idea, the tradition of women coming together for the double purposes of practical work and social interaction was common. Quilting and other work parties allowed them to get a job done, help their neighbours, and have a good time, all at once. Combining forces and purposes was common in church and other charitable work as well.

When the members of the Young Ladies’ Club of Baddeck first began to meet, none had experience in the research and writing of papers or public speaking. These women were not like the first members of Sorosis or The New England Woman’s Club who, for the most part, either had professional careers or were activists in various causes, some of them being writers and lecturers of note.¹⁴ One might wonder how a group of village women with hitherto no opportunities for higher education dared begin, not only to learn but also to endeavour to share their newfound knowledge with others, especially in a social climate that did not encourage women to speak in public.

Without doubt, the club founder, Mabel Bell, inspired her sister club members. The women in Baddeck may have had little experience in pursuing intellectual goals but they did not have to contend with deafness, as was the case with their honorary president. In spite of her disability, Mabel Bell was able to lead a remarkably outgoing life, partly because she had strong support from her family and partly because of her own keen and wide-ranging interests and her desire to participate as fully as possible in what the world had to offer. Although Mabel Bell was an excellent lip reader, the club established a practice of having written presentations, so that when a club member was presenting her talk, as each page of the paper was completed, it was handed to Bell so that she would ‘hear’ every word and be able to participate in the discussion period fol-



Figure 3. The Tennysonian Club, Port Medway, Nova Scotia. 'Out For a Sail, circa 1905.' Clockwise from left: Edna Hebb, Lottie Clements, Lennie Manthorne, Addie Forbes, Lil Wylde, Ethel Manthorne, Bertie Bowlby, Dessie Leaman, Hattie Manthorne, Edith Atkins. In centre : Viletta Wolfe. - courtesy Herbert Manthorne.

lowing. Coupled with gaining skill in speaking out, this practice of writing out their talks helped the women develop their writing skills.

Many women had gained their first experiences in making formal records through women's religious organizations. However, the more traditional and personal forms of recording were letter writing and diary keeping. In Nova Scotia, as elsewhere, these outlets were a woman's chief form of literary expression. While such expression was mostly private and rarely found a larger audience than family or close friends, letters, in particular, were very important for women in this period. Once they were married, women were

often separated from family members and their only way to keep in touch on a regular basis would be through letters. Unmarried women, if they were not required to stay at home to tend house, often had to go elsewhere for employment, to supplement or even provide an essential portion of the family income. Letters were the connecting link between family and friends.

Letter writing between women may not have been widely regarded as a form of literature in the larger masculine world; however, women, themselves, valued their worth. When the National Council of Women of Canada held their first Annual Meeting in the spring

of 1894, one of the presentations was made by a Miss Shenick of Ottawa entitled "Literary Clubs and their Influence in Canadian Literature". She recognized letter writing in this way: "In Canada I have received accounts of Women's Literary and Reading Clubs from London, Niagara, Toronto, Quebec and Montreal ... and if time would allow me to read the replies, letters of interesting matter, concise ... bright, sparkling, sometimes very humorous, always earnest, you would agree with me, that in Canada, Literary Clubs already influence that very important branch of literature - letter writing."¹⁵

Building on this traditional form of literary expression, Young Ladies' Club of Baddeck members began to expand their writing skills through the preparation of papers to present to club meetings. In the earliest days of the club, each meeting generally followed a format which included minutes being read and approved, musical pieces being performed, reading of papers with a five-minute discussion after the paper, roll call, which involved some sort of creative involvement from every member, then, a News of the Week encapsulation, based on information gleaned from the newspapers and magazines to which the club subscribed. The subscription papers were circulated among all the club members, but one person each week would be responsible for preparing a news summary for meetings.

While it could be argued that this format was far too densely packed to give anything but a superficial treatment to subjects, it did provide a range of possibilities. Those who were most competent and confident in their writing and speaking abilities were able to delve as deeply as they wished into their fields of research and they not only were able to derive intellectual and creative stimulation from their efforts, but they also provided good models for others who were just beginning to develop their skills. As members' skills in writing and speaking developed, their level of involvement in the club rose as well as the level of

sophistication of their work.

Building on tradition, the handing down of skills from mother to daughter was practiced but modified. Whereas traditionally women had been handing down domestic skills, within the club they were handing down writing and presentation skills. The daughters of the charter members exceeded their mothers in education and professional and literary accomplishments, largely due to the older generation's help and encouragement.

The existing records of the Young Ladies' Club of Baddeck are housed in an old wooden filing cabinet that Mabel Bell's daughter, Elsie Bell Grosvenor, donated to the club in her mother's memory almost seventy years ago. While the material saved does not begin to account for all the work done under the auspices of the club, the research papers, some of which dealt specifically with women's history, political and cultural activities and literary achievements, in addition to the letters from club members and the minute books, all attest to the way in which the club encouraged both the retention of traditional women's literary expression as well as encouraging new forms.

Contributions to Regional Women's Culture and Literary Development

The Young Ladies' Club of Baddeck, like many of its sister clubs throughout North America, was not set up to act directly in the community. However, women dedicated to self-improvement were not operating in a vacuum. These same women cared about their communities and understood that their own self-nurturing through the club was a step in improving their abilities to act in a more competent, public way. They began to use their new skills of research, writing and speaking for the greater benefit of the community.

There are many examples of club members initiating cultural, literary and community development as a direct result of their research findings for club papers. The public library in Baddeck grew out of club

members' efforts. When the club first began, the paucity of research and support materials within the community was evident, so the club subscribed to a number of newspapers and journals of the day and these formed the nucleus of a lending library within the club membership. It did not take long for club members to realize the need to expand the availability of reading materials within the broader community. While not directly a responsibility of the club, the public library was initiated by club members and most of the first officers of the board and the volunteer staff came from club membership.

The Bell Club's initiative in setting up a public library was in keeping with trends across North America, wherever there were women's groups. Prior to the era of women's clubs, access to books was severely restricted for those without means. Most libraries were private rather than public and privileged men were generally the owners of these libraries. According to Blair, "the American Library Association reportedly credited women's clubs with the responsibility for initiating seventy-five percent of the public libraries in the United States in 1933."¹⁶ In Canada, too, women's organizations were very often responsible for the development of local public libraries¹⁷.

Another education-related accomplishment initiated by Mabel Bell and club members was the establishment in 1895 of the first parent-teacher association in Canada. As for cultural contributions, the club has produced or sponsored a range of events such as theatricals, musical events, flower shows, art exhibitions and public lectures over their hundred year history. It has encouraged young people by sponsoring essay and public speaking contests. According to club records, the entrants were almost exclusively girls, so club members must have been providing role models in the community.

Individual club members also contributed to the public world of letters through published works. In 1928, Alexander Graham Bell: The Man Who Con-

tracted Space was published.¹⁸ The author was Catherine MacKenzie, a second generation club member. She had worked as Alexander Graham Bell's secretary in his last years and her book concerned his experimental work. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, MacKenzie also was a columnist for the New York Sunday Times. Although she wrote under her own name, she occasionally served as a ghost writer with others taking byline credit. However, for some articles, she used the pen name of 'Maude Dunlop' which had been her mother's maiden name.¹⁹ Maude Dunlop MacKenzie had been one of the original club members. The fact that Catherine MacKenzie signed some of her columns with her mother's name is an indication of the maternal influence in her own literary development.

In 1947, club member Nancy Bell Fairchild Bates' book East of the Andes and West of Nowhere was published.²⁰ Bates was a third generation club member and also a granddaughter of founder Mabel Bell. Because of her husband's work as an epidemiologist, she and her family lived in a number of different countries throughout the world. Nancy Bell Bates maintained contact with her sister club members through letters. The following excerpt is a sampling from one of Bates' letters to the club:

Romance and mystery are really more or less attitudes of mind aren't they, often influenced by last night's sleep or what we had for dinner. And so it is here in Egypt; at times I feel we are living ordinary humdrum lives patterned after life at home and well withdrawn from this teeming life of the old Nile Valley. But then perhaps we will drive home in the sunset, slowly, under the pale podded trees, along the river and past the falookas all drawn up, sails furled for the night.

And we shall see the mud houses or the people's fires or the buffalo going to water driven by children that at home would be in a pen almost, the old men chatting along a bench like a row of crows. Or perhaps I shall pass through the crowded bazaars past the mounds of henna and bags of spices and dried beans, down the filthy street where the goldsmiths sell their wares (made mostly in Czechoslovakia) and up into the Musky now haunted only by the ghosts of tourists. And I shall know then that this is no humdrum existence at all and that there is a great deal more to see and learn if only you will take the time. And so I vow again to take the time and for the hundredth time decide to study Arabic more seriously.²¹

Whether or not Bates had time to learn Arabic before moving on to another part of the world where another language was spoken is unknown. However, her fluency in creating vivid imagery in English is evident.

In 1984, *Mabel Bell: Alexander's Silent Partner* was published.²² Written by club member Liliias Toward, the book is Mabel Bell's story, threaded together by Bell's own letters written throughout her life to family members and friends. Shortly after her mother's death in 1910, when Bell was going through her mother's papers, she wrote: "I do not desire that my letters be burnt unread. If any of my descendants are interested enough to wade through them, they are at liberty to do so. I personally cannot bear to destroy letters which are the record of a life and would never willingly do so."²³

Mabel Bell intuitively knew that this 'record of a life' might be a person's only written biography, the

only enduring record of a person's thoughts and experiences. In 1923, after Mabel Bell died, Maude Dunlop MacKenzie, in a written tribute recollecting the Bells' life in Baddeck, expressed the hope that a collection of Mabel Bell's letters be brought together for publication.²⁴ Over sixty years later this was to come to pass, indicating the enduring interest maintained within the club for such an endeavour.

Apart from the specific and direct contributions that the club has made toward cultural and literary development, both within the membership and within the community of Baddeck, there have been indirect influences that must have been felt in other communities. Not all club members remained in Baddeck. Many left, but took with them the skills of intellectual pursuit and also the positive effects of a close social network. Some settled in other towns in the Maritimes and some moved to distant places.

It is impossible to gauge the ripple effect of such influence but, within the club files, numerous letters from members living elsewhere attest to the enduring appreciation members felt for how the club had enriched their lives. Personal interviews with current club members indicate that, without exception, women feel that the club has offered them the opportunity to learn and develop their literary skills and creativity. The club, in its long life, has had both an overt and a subtle influence in women's cultural development.

The Bell Club - Anachronism or Role Model?

The Bell Club, because of its long and active life in the community of Baddeck and its association with the well known Bell family and descendants, would deserve notice, if only from a purely historical perspective. However, the fact of its continued existence raises other thoughts and questions, particularly with regard to women's cultural and literary life in the Maritime region.

In 1891, The Young Ladies' Club of Baddeck, if not a radical organization, was a part of the wave of

nineteenth century domestic feminism. While not in the advance guard of the woman's movement, the women kept themselves informed on the many issues facing women not only in Canada, but internationally. At the time, educational and cultural opportunities in Cape Breton were limited and the club created its own curriculum, cultural life and community projects.

Because circumstances have changed in the last century, the following questions arise: Does the club continue to have relevancy within the context of women's cultural life in the Maritimes of today? Does it still play a catalytic role within its own community or has it become simply a repository of old traditions, meaningful only to club members?

A positive key to the club's enduring appeal for members is that it provides an active rather than a passive form of learning within a supportive environment. In spite of the proliferation of information through television, radio and institutes of higher learning, this is still too rare. Moreover, Baddeck itself is far enough away from a post-secondary institution that the club's educational base still does have relevancy. Club members have acquired knowledge, developed skills, self-confidence and life-long friendships, for as one club member has said, "Club is a lifetime proposition." In both conscious and unconscious ways the club members have created a haven, a place of their own.

While the club still provides a place for women to expand their horizons and also develop meaningful relationships with other women, what of its former innovative role in the community? The club has always insisted that it is not a service club and it does not engage in fund-raising for causes; however, members have spearheaded so many of the cultural and literary initiatives in the community that it is difficult to separate the club from such activities. In the early days of the club, much of the inspiration and leadership came from Mabel Bell. Her foresight and wisdom allowed for the establishment of a format and practices that have served very well over the years.

However, from an outsider's perspective, some of the traditions currently being maintained might seem merely quaint and mannered. Mabel Bell, once a member and role model, has, perhaps, been elevated to the status of an icon. While the club still provides stimulation, camaraderie and a place to go for recharging of energies, one wonders if Mabel Bell were to reappear, whether things would be stirred up a bit. Her 'stirring-up' spirit is reflected in the words of her daughter, Marion Bell Fairchild:

Father used to say that you could tell how old people were by their attitude towards the 'three ds - danger, difficulty and discomfort'. If people were very young they needed all three ds to have a really good time. I know that was true of Mother's interest in our adventures, and she was always a little disappointed if we came home from a camping trip or a cruise without accounts of falling overboard, running aground, getting wet through to the skin, having difficulty making a fire or something of the sort. She loved to camp out herself, and she loved to start off somewhere not knowing exactly where we were going.

... Mother always did her own thinking, and it is interesting as I look back and remember about her to realize what a completely original individual she was. I don't think it was just because her deafness saved her from the endless objections and criticisms that so many of us hear when we have a new idea to put over. She just knew what she thought would be fun or interesting or worthwhile to do

and then tried to do it.²⁵

Finally, one aspect of the club that might well serve as a model for women's groups seeking to honour women's traditions while still engaging in ongoing meaningful cultural and literary activity is the encouragement of multi-generational membership. The oldest Bell Club members today are in their late eighties and nineties, having joined in the 1920s as young women. The youngest members are in their twenties and thirties. The club has always had this diverse age component and what is most surprising, especially now, is the continued tradition of daughters and daughters-in-law joining the club. The Bell Club continues to offer positive older role models for younger women in the community. Knowing older women with whom social and intellectual exchange is possible must also give younger women a more positive modelling for their own inevitable aging.

Alison Taylor, in a paper on mentoring,²⁶ approaches the subject from a business world perspective. She describes the various benefits of the Mentor-Protégé relationship to mentor, protégé, and the organization. All of this is seen in terms of corporate advancement. However, many of the characteristics of the Mentor-Protégé relationship are similar to what occurs in the Bell Club, the difference being that another kind of knowledge and skill is handed on from the mentor to the protégé. The value of the exchange is not weighed in terms of monetary or professional advancement.

Taylor suggests that, traditionally, mentoring has been seen as something men do rather than women. The mentor paved the way for the younger man to rise in the world. Both mentor and protégé derived benefits and this relationship was consciously initiated, usually by the mentor, although it was possible for a protégé to select a mentor. Taylor says, "To be a mentor means to be aware - many women may not realize they are carrying out or have performed the

mentoring role. In addition, how to help others via mentoring has not been part of women's consciousness...."²⁷

Perhaps women are more aware of this handing down of knowledge than is generally acknowledged. It may be that they do not make as much fuss about it; after all, they are used to giving of themselves to others. When women have the opportunity to hand down something especially meaningful to them, it must give a special pleasure. In the example of the Bell Club, surely the club would have died out long ago if women were not interested in handing down something. They were espousing no other cause than "stimulating the acquisition of general knowledge and promoting sociability". Even though these were more or less self-serving aims, the women of the club must have felt, and continue to feel, that this was something worthwhile to give to another generation.

Mentoring is generally seen as a process with a beginning and an end. However, in the most positive terminations of such relationships, what occurs between the two individuals is the development of mutual respect, affection and lasting friendship.²⁸ If reciprocity is one of the keys to any good relationship, it may be that mentoring in women's groups could lead the way to invigorating exchange, allowing women to affirm their own cultural history and also promote new creative activity.

In spite of the greater advantages the present day offers in terms of educational, work and social possibilities for women, it would seem that there is still as strong a need as ever for women to establish places where they can exchange, recover and record the stories of their past as well as continue to make new stories. In Baddeck, The Young Ladies' Club began this process. Whether the Bell Club will explore new ways to keep this ongoing is yet to be determined. The historic precedence, experience and skills are present; it will depend on consciousness, will and creativity to make it happen.

NOTES

1. The Young Ladies' Club of Baddeck Constitution and By-laws, Beinn Bhreagh, Cape Breton Island. Canada. October 10th, 1891. The complete wording continues "...among the young people of Baddeck."; however, this wording was never subsequently used, in all likelihood, because the club was not exclusively for the young.
2. Bell Club records. Talk given by Mabel Bell in 1911.
3. This is corroborated by first-hand accounts of the founders of the first two women's clubs. Jane Cunningham Croly, founder of Sorosis wrote The History of the Women's Club Movement in America (New York: H.G. Allen 1898) and Ella Giles Ruddy edited The Mother of Clubs: Caroline M. Severance (Los Angeles: Baumgardt 1906), a biography of the founder of the New England Woman's Club.
4. Karen J. Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868 -1914 (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc 1980), p.15.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
6. *Ibid.*, Preface, xii.
7. Blair, p. 26 contains a reproduction of a satiric cartoon titled "Sorosis, 1869" from Harper's Weekly.
8. Phyllis R. Blakeley, "Anna of Siam in Canada", Atlantic Monthly, January 1967, p. 43.
9. Women of Canada: Their Life and Work (National Council of Women of Canada 1900), p.265.
10. *Ibid.*, p.398.
11. Author's ongoing research. Women of Canada lists some, mostly in New Brunswick, and indicates that a number of clubs were known to exist in Pictou, Wolfville, New Glasgow and Springhill, but about which no information was available., p. 398.
12. Isabel B. Anderson, Internal Migration in Canada, 1921 - 1961, (Ottawa: Economic Council of Canada, March 1966), Table 2 on p.9 shows that the population of the Maritimes in 1901 constituted 17% of the total Canadian number; however, by 1961 the Atlantic population (including Newfoundland) was reduced to 10%. Not all, but a significant proportion of this shift was due to out-migration. Economic necessity was a prime motivation for many; nevertheless, others were enticed by intellectual, artistic or professional opportunities. Allan Everett Marble in Nova Scotians at Home and Abroad (Windsor, N.S.: Lancelot Press 1977), compiled biographical notes on 625 prominent Nova Scotians, the majority of whom were born between 1840 and 1910. He found that 34% achieved recognition solely in Nova Scotia, 38% in other parts of Canada, 18% in the U.S. and 10% abroad (p.13).
13. Bell Club files. Membership lists from the early part of the century indicate 'Resident' members and 'Absent' members. Absent members were spread across the continent.
14. Blair , p.21. The women who joined Sorosis were, "by and large, career women who had become keenly aware of sexism in their struggle for professional success." Among the membership of Sorosis and the New England Woman's Club were some of the well known women of the day—Julia Ward Howe, Lucy Stone and Louisa May Alcott, to name a few. pp. 20-33.
15. Women Workers of Canada , pp. 66-67.
16. Blair, p.100.
17. Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1988), edited by Alison Prentice, Paula Bourne et al, cites examples of women initiating libraries, p. 121, 268.
18. Catherine MacKenzie, Alexander Graham Bell: The Man who Contracted Space (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press 1928).
19. Bell Club records. Letter from Catherine MacKenzie, 3 April 1939 from New York City.
20. Nancy Bell Fairchild Bates, East of the Andes and West of Nowhere (New York: Scribners 1947).
21. From an undated letter (c. 1940s) in Bell Club records.
22. Liliias Toward, Mabel Bell: Alexander's Silent Partner (Toronto: Methuen 1984).
23. *Ibid.*, Preface, p. xv.
24. Bell Club records, "Some Recollections of Dr. and Mrs. Bell's Arrival in Baddeck", p. 6. Maude Dunlop MacKenzie was one of the first people in Baddeck to meet A.G. Bell, in 1885, for her family ran a local hotel, the Telegraph House. According to a later account from his daughter, Elsie, Bell had been delighted by his first glimpse of 'the lovely Maude' because she had been immortalized in print earlier in Charles Dudley Warner's Baddeck, and that Sort of Thing, first published in 1874. It is a curious coincidence that over fifty years later, Warner's publisher, Houghton Mifflin, published

Maude's daughter's book on Bell.

25. Letter to Bell Club, 21 April 1944.

26. Alison Taylor, "Mentoring", Women's Networks in Canada (Vancouver: The Centre for Continuing Education, U.B.C. 1982)

27. Taylor, p. 136.

28. Taylor, p. 134.