

“THUS FAR THOU SHALT COME AND NO FARTHER”: DOMESTIC SCIENCE
AND THE LIMITS OF WOMEN’S EDUCATION AT THE ACADIA LADIES’
SEMINARY, 1878-1926

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the evolution of the education provided at the Acadia Ladies' Seminary from its establishment in 1879 to its integration with Acadia University in 1926. Specific focus is placed on the role of Household Science, a course that was founded in 1901 amidst a social reaction against the industrialised world. Household Science at the Ladies' Seminary began as a small department with few courses and teachers but grew in enrolment and classes until it was deemed large enough to separate into a school and be considered a Bachelor of Science. Changes in the Household Science course reflected transforming opinions on the appropriate role of women. From the push for the return of women to the home, to the appreciation for women to be present in only certain careers the first decade of the 20th century was one of subjugation and categorisation. However, the Great War offered the opportunity for women to enter more scientific fields and Household Science was a vehicle by which women could start careers that would push the boundaries of traditional gender roles. This thesis will use primary source material from the Acadia University archives to explore the attitudes towards women's education both within the Acadia Ladies' Seminary and in the campus as a whole.

Introduction

Acadia University, located in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, prides itself on being one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Canada and has a rich history that runs parallel with that of the province and country. Acadia College, as it was first known, was founded in 1838 in response to a religious movement that demanded higher education in the Annapolis Valley. From secular debates to the Great War effort, Acadia has reacted to contemporary events in a multitude of ways. Women were not initially part of the university; however, in 1879 the Women's Seminary was built as a residence to accommodate females, who could be as young as 13 and as old as their early 20s, with classrooms on campus to provide them with advanced education.¹

Prior to this, the first instance of girls' education in Wolfville came in 1858 when Reverend J. Chase opened a school for girls. In 1862 the school was known as the Grand Pre Seminary and then became home to the women of the Horton Academy.² Reminiscing about this school, Annie Blackadder, a pupil of the Seminary who graduated in 1867, recalled that it began as a boarding school for young ladies, with four other students graduating in the same year as she did. Annie writes: "the teachers did all they could for us in the early days and with limited means".³ Just three years after the Grand Pre Seminary became part of Horton Academy, control of both institutions was handed to the Acadia College Board of Governors. In 1877 the Seminary and Horton Academy became part of Acadia College, the precursor to Acadia University, and in 1879 the new

¹ Acadia Ladies Seminary Collection, Esther Clark Wright Archives, Acadia University, 2002.

² Acadia Ladies Seminary Collection, Esther Clark Wright Archives, (2002), 22

³ Annie Blackadder, *Grand Pre Seminary Historical Reminiscences* 1900.006-ALS/2/1, Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

Seminary was built to hold the growing population of women. As a result of its involvement with the Acadia College, it became known as the Acadia Ladies' Seminary.



Figure 1. Acadia Ladies' Seminary. Source: Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1903-04

Despite being a place of higher learning, the Seminary in its early years was hardly a liberating experience for young women as school officials strictly regulated their time in compliance with moral codes of the era. Women were not allowed to walk around the campus without chaperones and had to enter buildings through a different set of doors than their male counterparts.⁴ Nevertheless, in the decades following the establishment of the women's residence, young women were allowed to attend the courses offered at the university rather than just the Seminary, and in 1884 Clara Belle Marshall became the first woman to graduate from Acadia with a Bachelor of Arts.⁵ There followed a much

⁴ Tom Sheppard, *Acadia University* (Halifax, N.S.: Nimbus Publishing, 2013), 118. Barry Moody, *Give Us an A: An Acadia Album*, (Wolfville, N.S.: Acadia University, 1988), 34-35

⁵ Sheppard, *Acadia University*, 118.

greater trend toward the inclusion of women at Acadia University but it took many more years before it resulted in any significant change for the role of women. The introduction of a Domestic Science course at the Seminary allowed women to study a subject that could potentially lead to a career, but would not take women far from the home. It is for this reason that Domestic Science was a revolutionary course for women at Acadia.



Figure 2. Acadia College Graduating class 1884, including Clara Belle Marshall who was the first female graduate. Source: “Archives Tell Acadia Alumni Story”, Acadia Bulletin, (Wolfville N.S.: Acadia University, 1980), 1

The journey of the young women from the Acadia Ladies’ Seminary to the University itself is a rarely told story; early female students were treading new paths in their quest for modern education, but little is said of their experiences. The earliest history of Acadia University was written by Ronald Stewart Longley, entitled *Acadia*

University, 1838-1938, and covers the formative years in the foundation of the college.⁶ With such a vast period to cover it is perhaps no wonder that Longley's account includes little on women. However, this oversight does diminish the importance of women's role and the founding years of co-education at Acadia. Tom Sheppard's recent book on Acadia University dedicates a great deal more to the women of the institution.⁷ Sheppard writes in an informative albeit general manner of the history of these female graduates and uses archival sources to draw an interesting picture of life on campus. Dr. Barry Moody, who is currently Professor Emeritus at Acadia University, is one of the leading scholars on the school having written works that focus on the history of Acadia, with an emphasis on the Great War.⁸ In 1988 Moody published a compilation of memoirs, articles, and images in his book *Give Us an A* that provided a comprehensive and yet succinct insight on the history of Acadia. Following this publication, Moody's "Acadia and the Great War" recognised the importance of the Great War on the campus of Acadia, arguing that students made a "remarkable contribution" to the war.⁹ This article pays a great deal of attention to the contributions of female students to the war effort.¹⁰ For example, a high number of female students during the war years would go on to become doctors and missionaries after they graduated.¹¹ Moody attributes this change to

⁶ Ronald Stewart Longley. *Acadia University, 1838-1938*. (Kentville, N.S.: Kentville Publishing Company, 1939)

⁷ Sheppard. *Acadia University*, 13

⁸ Barry M. Moody, "Acadia and the Great War," in *Youth University and Canadian Society*, ed. Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 122-143

⁹ Moody, "Acadia and the Great War", 144

¹⁰ Moody, "Acadia and the Great War", 153

¹¹ Moody, "Acadia and the Great War", 153

the “circumstances of the moment, the crisis of the war” that were giving women a sense of duty that spurred them into action outside of traditional gender roles.¹²

Drawing upon the source work of these historians I wish to more fully explore the early years for women at Acadia. This article will focus on the way in which Acadia responded to the rising demand for female education and the early feminist movement. I will argue that the Seminary and the University were subject to the influence of changing attitudes regarding the content of women’s education and women’s appropriate roles in society. The Seminary responded to the demand for higher education for women, but it was a response proscribed by the prevailing gender ideologies. Studying Household Science opened up opportunities for women but clearly segregated them from the male student body. The impacts of these voices on gender roles were present in the courses, activities, and voices of women who attended the Seminary until its dissolution in 1926.

Research into the history of women in education gained life in the 1980s when feminist historians began re-evaluating the foundations of women’s roles within society from a perspective of change. Institutions of higher education were brought into new light when examining the female experience. Historians such as Nicole Neatby and Diana Pederson began studying the education of female students at universities in order to understand the involvement and progression of female education.¹³ Both Neatby and Pederson found increasing female enrolment in higher education as a result of women seeing the university as a vehicle for change and improvement. At Queen’s University,

¹² Moody, “Acadia and the Great War,” 152

¹³ Nicole Neatby. "Preparing for the Working World: Women at Queen's During the 1920s." *Historical Studies In Education* 1, no. 1 (1989): 53-72. Diana Pederson, “‘The Call to Service’: The YWCA and the Canadian College Woman, 1886-1920” in *Youth University and Canadian Society*, ed. Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 187-216

Ontario, Neatby found that women in the 1920s were attending university in increasing numbers with the intention of not finding just a job, but the best career possible with a higher level of education.¹⁴ Pederson found that the increasing enrolment at Canadian universities allowed women to interact and join organisations such as the YWCA that could broaden their social and moral interests.¹⁵ Following in their footsteps, recent studies by Heap, Gidney, and Burke have focussed on a single institution.¹⁶ Burke specifically studied the introduction of women into the classrooms at the University of Toronto and the struggle that they experienced. Her research examines the non-linear fashion of women's progression and involvement at the university in which women experienced varying levels of acceptance. At some points women were welcomed into the classroom by their male counterparts, and yet later it was feared that their presence would disrupt the "manliness" of male students. This is certainly consistent with what was occurring at Acadia University at the time. Appreciating that progression is not always smooth sailing, gives a new perspective to the study of Acadia which shows the progression of equality as hindered.

The study of women's presence as students in the science disciplines follows a similar transformation in that it received a great deal of focus following the second wave

¹⁴ Neatby. "Preparing for the Working World", 68

¹⁵ Pederson, "The Call to Service", 187

¹⁶ Ruby Heap. "From the Science of Housekeeping to the Science of Nutrition: Pioneers in Canadian Nutrition and Dietetics at the University of Toronto's faculty of Household Science, 1900-1950" in *Challenging Professions: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Women's Professional Work*, ed. Elizabeth Smyth et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1999). Ruby Heap. "The Only Girl in Such a Big Class": Women Students at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering During the 1920s and the 1930s." *Scientia Canadensis* 29, no. 2 (July 2006): 45-73. 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 (2007): 138-160. Sara Z. Burke, "New Women and Old Romans: Co-Education at the University of Toronto, 1884-95" in *Schooling in Transition*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 177

of feminism. Most research into the history of female scientists has focussed on the individual. In the book *Creating Complicated Lives: Women and Science at English-Canadian Universities, 1880-1980*, Marianne G. Ainley and editors, Geoffrey and Marelene F. Rayner-Canham, focus on the lives and work of individual female scientists in order to develop a larger picture of the experience of women in these fields. Ainley et al, compares women's history to the discovery of the sun's centrality in the solar system, in that feminist historians highlight the story of women and investigate their roles within the larger system of gender and power relations.¹⁷ Ainley et al. conclude that the experiences of female scientists sat on a broad spectrum from acceptance to contempt, and that choice of relationship status provided many women with the difficult choice between having a home and family or their career. Ruby Heap also studied the inclusion of women in science and engineering classes in the University of Toronto, and the treatment of these students by both their male colleagues and the administration.¹⁸ Heap recognises that they worked under different pressures and expectations, and yet they continued to persevere. R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar revealed that women in medicine at Toronto were few in numbers and were certainly subordinated, but they were the first pioneering women to move out of the prescribed gender roles.¹⁹ In this same vein of an intense focus on pioneering women, Terry Crowley's study of Adelaide Hoodless uses unique and personal sources to paint an illuminating image of this Household Science

¹⁷ Marianne Gosztonyi Ainley, Geoffrey Rayner-Canham, and Marelene F. Rayner-Canham. *Creating Complicated Lives: Women and Science at English-Canadian Universities, 1880-1980*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. 2012), 4

¹⁸ Heap. "The Only Girl in Such a Big Class", 45

¹⁹ W.P.J Millar and R.D. Gidney, "'Medettes': Thriving or Just Surviving? Women Students in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, 1910-1952" in *Challenging Professions: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Women's Professional Work*, ed. Elizabeth Smyth et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1999)

activist.²⁰ Crowley argues that the Home Economics movement was a middle-class response to the disruption of industrialisation; the leading figure of this crusade was Adelaide Hoodless.²¹ Crowley was not the first to study the life of Adelaide Hoodless; historians Robert Stamp and Cheryl MacDonald also attempted to understand the motivation behind the Household Science movement.²²

While the focus on individual activists and pioneers is fascinating, this article will attempt to move beyond this, to include the women who did not, against the odds, become professors or scientists. Drawing on the primary sources held in the Acadia University archives this article will examine the women of the Seminary who were caught in the gap between the past and the future as they struggled to reconcile Victorian ideals and 20th century optimism.

From the Opening of the Ladies' Seminary to the Introduction of Domestic Science, 1878-1901

Laying the foundation of the new Ladies' Seminary on the Acadia campus represented the next step towards coeducation and the expansion of female schooling. These early years of women's higher education were fraught with public debate about the propriety and content of what girls should be learning. The Acadia Ladies' Seminary represented the early ideals for female education as well as the arguments for and against it. Opposition to the higher learning of women was predicated on the idea that

²⁰ Terry Crowley. "Madonnas before Magdalenes: Adelaide Hoodless and the Making of the Canadian Gibson Girl." *Canadian Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (December 1986): 523-547

²¹ Crowley. "Madonnas before Magdalenes", 522

²² Robert M. Stamp, "Teaching Girls their "God Given Place in Life" *Atlantis* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1977) 18-35. Cheryl MacDonald. *Adelaide Hoodless Domestic Crusader*. (Toronto, Ont.: Dundurn Press, 1986), 6

“scholarship interfered with women’s natural intuitive judgement, or instinct” as a wife and mother.²³ Those in favour of female education saw universities as a vehicle by which women could improve these skills of motherhood, but also find a gender suitable career in the industrialised world.²⁴ In the midst of this debate, young women began receiving an advanced education at the Acadia Ladies’ Seminary and building a community within its walls. Debates over the inclusion of women in higher learning were prevalent in society. The conversation over co-education was present in many homes, universities, and government branches. I intend to outline the temperament of these discussions and historians’ interpretations of how the introduction of women was felt at universities throughout Canada.

In the late 19th century throughout Canada the need for and interest in female education was increasing following the demand by women to enter the workforce. The School Act of 1871 made secondary education compulsory and therefore created an increased demand for teachers who needed an advanced education.²⁵ This demand was evident at Acadia as in October of 1877 the writers of the Acadia College student newspaper, *The Athenaeum*, began calling for the expansion of the Ladies’ Department of the Horton Academy, saying it was an “urgent need”²⁶ due to the increasing number of admissions. Comments like this in the student-run paper show the increasingly progressive level of acceptance by male students of the education of women.

Opinion and conversation on co-education predated the introduction of women onto the Acadia campus. Even before the Ladies’ Seminary had been erected, the

²³ Burke, “New Women and Old Romans”, 167

²⁴ Neatby. "Preparing for the Working World", 54

²⁵ Susan Gelman, “The ‘Feminization’ of the High Schools?” *Women Secondary School Teachers in Toronto: 1871-1930.* *Historical Studies In Education* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1990), 120-121

²⁶ “Horton Collegiate Academy” *Acadia Athenaeum*, October, 1877

potential new building was put under the control of the Acadia Board of Governors until the schools own Board of Governors was convened.²⁷ This effectively brought the University into the movement for women's education. However, the Seminary was not envisioned as a purely academic institution. In the prospectus for the new building it was stated that the shareholders had the "purpose of providing for young women a sound and religious education of a high order, on moderate terms".²⁸ Nevertheless, some saw a wider purpose. In January 1878 the *Athenaeum* published an article by "outsider," who contended that the notion to build a new home for female students "must certainly commend itself to every enlightened and liberal minded person".²⁹ The use of the non-de-plum suggests that there was debate over the education of women; while some perceived it as a change to be embraced, others disagreed.

In the ensuing months, the *Athenaeum* editors continued to discuss the establishment of this new building so close to the Acadia College. From its rooms and walls to the students it would house, the Seminary was a topic of much interest among the college men. An article simply entitled "Co-Education" written in 1878 suggests that the proximity of the new Ladies' Seminary would allow women to become a greater part of the College. "Graduate", the author, writes,

Shall the Seminary be so located as to allow the young women *all* the advantages which Acadia has afforded to young men in the past, or must young women feel that their education must be limited on account of sex or want of mental calibre to a curriculum far inferior to that which the young men enjoy.³⁰

²⁷ *Prospectus for the Erection of a Female Seminary at Wolfville*, 1900.006-ALS/1/1. Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

²⁸ *Prospectus for the Erection of a Female Seminary at Wolfville*, 1900.006-ALS/1/1.

²⁹ "The New Buildings" *Acadia Athenaeum*, January 1878

³⁰ "Co-Education" *Acadia Athenaeum*, February, 1878

The author believed that the education of “young women” was beneficial, as they would “eventually become women and mothers, and to educate a people without educating the women is practically impossible”.³¹ “Graduate” was writing in response to arguments about the limited mental capabilities of women, and his opinion advocating for women to have equal opportunity shows defiance of a society in which women were subject to strictly enforced gender roles. In the same year another article announced that co-education would bring out “the true manhood that lies too often mournfully hidden in every rustic block of humanity”.³² Here “true manhood” refers to the idea of “muscular Christianity”, in which “physical fitness, conformity to the needs of the team, and discipline” were encouraged in young men.³³ Such ideologies only further repressed women in society as they made femininity an undesirable characteristic in men. This would therefore perpetuate the weakness of women. The ideas of these men reflect the suffrage movement that was taking place in Canada at the time. Rather than fighting for equality, maternal feminists believed that achieving the vote would allow them to continue to support the interests of the home and family, therefore continuing to keep women within the domestic sphere.

Despite the differences in size between the University of Toronto and Acadia, a similar story played out in both institutions as the debate over coeducation took place in the journals and newspapers of both universities.³⁴ Male students feared that “scholarship interfered with women’s natural intuitive judgment, or instinct” which was a distinctly

³¹ “Co-Education” *Acadia Athenaeum*

³² “Co-Education” *Acadia Athenaeum*

³³ Jan Graydon, “‘But It’s More Than a Game. It’s an Institution.’ Feminist Perspectives on Sport” *Feminist Review* No. 13 (Spring, 1983), 5

³⁴ Burke, “New Women and Old Romans”, 169

Victorian idea.³⁵ At both universities, the early days of female education caused great concern over propriety and the best way to deal with the possible mixing of the sexes. Similarly, Burke's study shows that female students were excluded from classes and this also occurred at Acadia, as women were allowed only limited inclusion in scholastic courses. However, at Acadia, the presence of the Seminary allowed women the opportunity to create their own community more easily than was possible in Toronto. The Seminary offered a location in which women lived and worked, and it was therefore a tightknit community. At the Acadia Ladies' Seminary, women had the opportunity to form societies, such as the YWCA, and attend social gatherings because of their proximity to other women in an environment that was safe and accepting.

So it was in the midst of these debates over women's education and their attendance at the university, that the new Acadia Ladies' Seminary opened in 1878 with 25 female students.³⁶ The Acadia Ladies' Seminary was intended to provide a residence for women so they could live and learn at a distance from male students attending Acadia College. Articles in the *Athenaeum* indicate that the new buildings on campus were designed to allow men and women to live and work separately, which would have assuaged the fears of those who believed women's presence would be detrimental to male education. Provisions were also made to separate women from men in the new Academy Hall being built at the same time. One observer wrote,

The young ladies of the Seminary can enter the Academy Hall by the front entrance...and the Mathematical department by the end entrance. Thus two entrances will be used exclusively by the ladies. The entrance for the youth of the academy will be in the rear. Thus the young men and ladies

³⁵ Burke, "New Women and Old Romans", 167

³⁶ *Register – 1879 – 1896*, 1900.006-ALS/1/4/1, Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

of the Academy will associate only under the eye of the teacher, and we confidently trust there will be no collusions or collisions.³⁷

Here we can see that the very foundations of the early years of female involvement at the university were built on the idea of separation. As many classrooms as possible were housed in the Seminary, so that the “young ladies...will not have to go out of doors at all in order to attend the most of their classes”.³⁸ One disgruntled student commented on the fact that a number of male students would wait for their female colleagues to exit the classrooms, thus creating clusters around doorways and disruption in the hallways.³⁹

Victorian ideals of propriety and gender roles were still rife here and played a key part in the establishment of the Seminary. Such subjugation was solidified in the quote that was written on every textbook and over every doorway in the Seminary: “thus far thou shalt come but no farther”.⁴⁰ This antiquated ideology continued as a theme in a number of articles and items published within the *Athenaeum* as male students commented on the problems raised by the increased number of women both in the Ladies’ Seminary and those who were attending Acadia College itself as of 1882.⁴¹

³⁷ “The New Buildings”, *Acadia Athenaeum*, November 1878

³⁸ “The New Buildings” *Acadia Athenaeum*, October 1879

³⁹ Untitled Article, *Acadia Athenaeum*, May 1894

⁴⁰ Mrs. T. Trotter, “Results of the Higher Education of Women”, *Acadia Athenaeum*, February, 1900, 132

⁴¹ Untitled Article, *Acadia Athenaeum*, January 1882



Figure 3. An early class of the Acadia Ladies Seminary and shows the students ranges in age and dress. Source: Acadia Seminary Collection

President Artemus Sawyer oversaw the introduction of women into Acadia University, both through the move of the Seminary from the Grand Pre Seminary onto the Acadia campus, and also through the attendance of women in university classes. When women requested permission to attend lectures with B.A. students at Acadia University Sawyer allowed it, but told women “you must not consider yourselves members of the college young ladies”⁴². Mrs T. Trotter, who was a student in the 1880s and went on to marry President Thomas Trotter, who would serve as Sawyer’s successor, recorded this statement. President Sawyer reportedly wrote and spoke about the power that education could provide women; speaking to the graduating class of 1883 he expressed the idea that “in whatever community, in whatever circumstances of life, their

⁴² Mrs. T. Trotter, “Results of the Higher Education of Women”, 132

influences as educated women must be felt”.⁴³ This progressive idea and positivity toward the education of women represents an important transition at the Acadia Ladies’ Seminary and shows the growth in opinion of Sawyer himself. However, while women were achieving steps towards equality throughout Canada, gaining further educations and becoming academics in their own right, at Acadia women would not quite go as far. Clara Belle Marshall and Alice Fitch were two of the first women to graduate from Acadia University in the 1880s, however, both of these graduates only went as far as the Seminary as they began teaching there soon after they achieved their degrees. From 1884 to 1894, eleven women graduated from Acadia College, eight of these became teachers.⁴⁴ Many of these women considered Acadia Ladies’ Seminary as a preparatory school, which they attended before taking classes and eventually graduating from Acadia College. One notable early graduate was Annie MacLean who attended the Seminary as a preparatory school and then started working towards her Bachelor of Arts at Acadia College, graduating in 1893. MacLean went on to become a Professor of Sociology after getting her PhD from Chicago; she taught at many universities in the United States and published numerous articles in her field.⁴⁵

The curriculum in these early years of the Seminary changed little from when the women’s school had been elsewhere in Wolfville, exhibiting an overarching theme of religious duty. In the first course catalogue for 1879-80, a document that intended to advertise the Seminary, the goal of the school was to “unite refinement and Christian culture with strength of mental development and discipline”.⁴⁶ Classes were offered in

⁴³ “Acadia Seminary”, *Acadia Athenaeum*, May 1883

⁴⁴ *Acadia Record, 1838-1953* (Wolfville, NS: Acadia University 1953), 26-53

⁴⁵ *Acadia Record, 1838-1953*, 53

⁴⁶ *Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia*.

Ethics and Bible and attendance of at least one church service was mandatory.⁴⁷ In their study of the population of Queen's University, Chad Gaffield, Lynne Marks, and Susan Laskin found that the women who attended the university were largely the daughters of middle-class parents who were aiming for "domestic ideology" and sent their daughters to a school with a religious faith compatible with their beliefs.⁴⁸ Judith Fingard found the same was true of Dalhousie University, where the majority of the girls' fathers were clergymen, and so religion was an important factor in the education of young women.⁴⁹

This was also true of Acadia University; in the register of students a number of "patrons" were listed as clergy.⁵⁰ So we can expect that the religious component of their education would be important to their families. This is especially poignant at Acadia College given the religious grounds on which it was founded. In the early 19th century there was a call for an institution that would educate young ministers of Nova Scotia so they would not have to travel to New England.⁵¹ As a result of this desire for a local theology school, Horton Academy, which later became Acadia College, was born. As at Queen's and Dalhousie, close ties to religion influenced Acadia Ladies' Seminary. Many of the girls were studying music and the Bible and so the overarching atmosphere of the

1879-80, 3

⁴⁷ *Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.*

1891-92, 14

⁴⁸ Chris Gaffield, Lynne Marks, and Susan Laskin, "Student Populations and Graduate Careers: Queen's University, 1895-1900" in *Youth University and Canadian Society*, ed. Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 10-12

⁴⁹ Judith Fingard, "College, Career, and Community: Dalhousie Coeds, 1881-1921) in *Youth University and Canadian Society*, ed. Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 27

⁵⁰ *Register – 2 September 1896 – 1903*, 1900.006-ALS/1/4/2, Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

⁵¹ Longley. *Acadia University, 1838-1938*, 13

Seminary was one of a finishing college or preparatory school rather than a serious institute of education.



Figure 4. A corner of the Acadia Ladies' Seminary dining hall. Source: Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1903-04

From its opening until 1903 the Seminary administrators kept only brief notes beside the name of the student on the courses women were taking and their grades.⁵² However, from these records it is clear that the courses taken by these women certainly corresponded to Victorian middle-class gender ideology. The Acadia Ladies' Seminary was advertised in 1894 as charging “minimum costs” however, this claim seem to be inconsistent with the records of the school. Figure four shows the well-furnished dining room the students used. Additionally, the personal letter of Seminary student Mary Kinley Ingraham, who wrote to her sister in 1893, counteracts this statement as they

⁵² *Register – 1879 – 1896*, 1900.006-ALS/1/4/1, Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

highlight the middle-class nature of the institution. Ingraham comments on the expensive clothes that her fellow students are wearing and her difficulty in keeping up with such wealth. Ingraham writes,

My “street dress” the gray, is rather plain alongside the others, and my hat would not suit, if I wore my other. I try to put my pride in my pocket – but it is hard. There are some girls here who spend as much in a year as pa’s entire salary upon their own sweet selves. There are few, if any, as poor as I am. But it is, I believe, the general verdict there are few as studious.⁵³

By 1893 some changes were occurring: courses offered by the Seminary included languages, musical instruments, and elocution. While science and mathematics were offered, most subjects pandered to the Victorian ideals of womanhood.

Besides regular classes, the girls attended lectures given by professors to the entire Seminary and University student body that advanced their knowledge in various fields, although many of these spoke to the propriety of socially enforced gender roles. *The Athenaeum* published several lectures that were given to students pertaining to the education of women. For instance, at the Seminary closing in 1883 Dr. Parker, a guest speaker, reportedly congratulated the graduates on their achievements before noting,

There were other needs beside that of mental culture. He meant acquaintances with domestic duties, -- familiarity with the use of “the darning needle and the ball of yarn,” as well as with the “ins and outs” of kitchen work. He sincerely hoped that the ladies now leaving school would not devote their time so exclusively to mental training as wholly to neglect these apparently minor but really most important duties⁵⁴

Following Dr. Parker, in October 1884, Professor R.V. Jones gave a lecture entitled “Is it worth while to educate girls” in which he argued that women should receive an education but that it should be for the benefit of the home. Jones, who appears to have been a

⁵³ Mary Kinley Ingraham, *Letter to Sister While Attending Acadia Ladies Seminary*, 1984.004, Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

⁵⁴ “Seminary Closing”, *Acadia Athenaeum*, May 1883

visiting professor, admitted that women were capable of deep thought but that “home is the place for woman to expand the riches of her mind”.⁵⁵ This limited support of education for women illustrated the physical and academic seclusion and control of female students. Thus the message about the rightful place for women was being reinforced by authority figures both within Acadia University and outside of it.

From these instances it is clear that women who attended the Seminary and Acadia University in these early days were subject to an audible undercurrent of voices and religious teachings that spoke of domesticity and the proper place for women. Women such as Clara Belle Marshall, who made the journey from the Seminary to Acadia University, were exceptional as they managed to travel against the path that society dictated for them.

It is difficult to know the opinions of the women who were the subject to this societal privileging of domesticity. What few pieces of information we have come from the *Athenaeum*. On December 12th, 1879, the students of the Seminary formed the Pieran Society, a “literary and musical association”.⁵⁶ In 1880 the Pieran Society published a report of its activities in the *Athenaeum* in which they spoke of a debate over the statement “that a knowledge of house-keeping is a greater requisite to womanhood than a knowledge of books”.⁵⁷ Apparently the team opposing this resolution won the debate. This shows a great deal about the attitudes of the women themselves towards their situation in life and the value they placed on education, despite hearing such a great deal to the contrary.

⁵⁵ “Is it worthwhile to educate girls”, *Acadia Athenaeum*, October 1884

⁵⁶ “Pieran Society”, *Acadia Athenaeum*, January 1880

⁵⁷ *Acadia Athenaeum* (January 1880).

The Emergence of Domestic Science, 1901-1914

In 1901 and 1902, courses in Domestic Science were introduced at the Acadia Ladies' Seminary. Domestic Science is the term used in student and course registers, however, I will follow contemporary usage and use Domestic Science, Home Economics, and Household Science interchangeably.⁵⁸ The introduction of these courses corresponded with a much larger educational movement responding to the Industrial Revolution and the perceived disintegration of the family in industrial society. So, before understanding how the Domestic Science movement affected the Ladies' Seminary, it is vital to know where it came from.

At the end of the 19th century, as Acadia first began accepting female students, middle-class women across Canada came together in clubs and groups to address many social issues that had arisen alongside industrialisation, such as poor sanitation, poverty, homelessness, and alcoholism. These social reform organisations had religious, medical, and domestic foundations, such as the Young Women's Christian Association, a branch of which was started in the Seminary, and the National Council of Women of Canada.⁵⁹ As groups investigated the reform of social problems, Adelaide Hoodless emerged as the founder of the Domestic Science movement. The death of her youngest child inspired Hoodless to help her fellow Canadian women care for their children and educate them about the importance of nutrition and hygiene.⁶⁰ Robert Stamp writes that "when she learned that her baby's death had been caused by the drinking of contaminated milk she felt personally responsible, that she should have known better".⁶¹ Seeing the harsh and

⁵⁸ Acadia Ladies' Seminary. *Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1903-04*, 47

⁵⁹ Gail Cuthbert Brandt. *Canadian Women: A History*. (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2011), 228

⁶⁰ Brandt. *Canadian Women: A History*, 233

⁶¹ Stamp, "Teaching Girls their "God Given Place in Life", 20

turbulent conditions that many rural women were facing as a result of the downturn in the countryside economy, Hoodless championed Home Economics as a way to teach women how to provide nutritional health for their families.⁶² Given the rural landscape in Nova Scotia, the problems of inadequate freezer boxes and open milk containers would have been evident to many women in the community of Wolfville.⁶³



Figure 5. Graduating class of Household Science, Acadia Ladies' Seminary, 1913. Source: Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1914-15

Hoodless initially focussed on using her leadership role in organisations such as the YWCA to further the Domestic Science crusade. Early classes in Domestic Science were run from YWCA facilities as they coincided with the groups' message of community support and social rejuvenation.⁶⁴ After the success of these classes in the YWCA, Hoodless campaigned for the establishment of independent domestic schools in

⁶² Terry Crowley. "Madonnas before Magdalenes: Adelaide Hoodless and the Making of the Canadian Gibson Girl." *Canadian Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (December 1986): 523

⁶³ Stamp, "Teaching Girls their "God Given Place in Life", 21

⁶⁴ MacDonald. *Adelaide Hoodless Domestic Crusader*, 43

which girls from the age of 16 could be taught about nutrition, textiles and laundry. This work was seen as vital by Hoodless as it had the potential to create a generation of young women who were able to sufficiently care for their homes and the health of their families. She later began reaching out to ministers of education to communicate the importance of Domestic Science for young women and to urge classes be started in schools. Despite some interest by the board of education in Ontario, no moves were made to establish a school of Home Economics, so the YWCA made the decision to open one itself, naming their institution the Hamilton School of Domestic Science in 1900.⁶⁵ One of the final steps in Hoodless' Home Economics crusade came with the creation of a school for the teachers of Domestic Science, since Hoodless believed that educating future teachers could spread Home Economics even further across the country.⁶⁶ Thus the Ontario School of Domestic Science and Art opened on February 1st, 1900.⁶⁷ Educating intelligent women who would fulfil the increasing demand for Home Economics education was Hoodless' ultimate goal.

As an important figure in the history of first wave feminism, Adelaide Hoodless has been the subject of numerous debates as historians attempt to understand the motivations behind her crusade for Home Economics. Robert Stamp argues that Hoodless saw Home Economics as a way of “countering the unfortunate threat to the home”⁶⁸ that had arisen with the Industrial Revolution. Terry Crowley also argues that Domestic Science was a vessel to restore domestic roles to their pre-industrialised state. Using letters written and speeches made by Hoodless, Crowley demonstrates her desire to re-

⁶⁵ MacDonald. *Adelaide Hoodless Domestic Crusader*, 55

⁶⁶ MacDonald. *Adelaide Hoodless Domestic Crusader*, 112

⁶⁷ MacDonald. *Adelaide Hoodless Domestic Crusader*, 109

⁶⁸ Stamp, “Teaching Girls their “God Given Place in Life”, 20

establish the home as a place in which women could dominate at a time when women increasingly were working in stores or factories to supplement the family income.⁶⁹ Crowley portrays Hoodless as a woman who was unable to accept the evolving emancipation of women. She saw Home Economics as a way to teach working-class women and middle-class “working girls” the skills of being a mother and a wife so they could adequately play this role when they were married. From this point of view Home Economics appears detrimental to the women’s movement, as highlighted by Hoodless’ own opposition to female suffrage. Crowley argues, “Hoodless ... thought that women most effectively influenced the state through the sons they raised”.⁷⁰

Hoodless was part of the “new education” ideology that championed a change in the schooling of young Canadians in the early 20th century.⁷¹ There was a demand for a shift of focus from philosophical schooling to a more diversified vocational education that could allow students to prepare for their future roles. Home Economics was seen as complementing the male-focused agricultural education that would allow for a rejuvenation of the farming community.⁷² This is important as it shows that Home Economics was part of a larger quest for a return to the more simple life and gendered values of the previous century.

In the decade that followed the establishment of the Hamilton Domestic Science School a movement began for Home Economics to be offered in universities. Home Economics was slowly introduced into first the secondary and then higher education systems as it was seen as the best way to teach girls how to care for their families at an

⁶⁹ Crowley. "Madonnas before Magdalenes", 520

⁷⁰ Crowley. "Madonnas before Magdalenes", 532

⁷¹ Crowley. "Madonnas before Magdalenes", 522

⁷² Crowley. "Madonnas before Magdalenes", 537

early age. It was considered a “vocational skill designed...to prepare them for marriage and motherhood and for careers that complemented these roles”.⁷³ There is a debate as to how true to Hoodless’ vision this was. Some, such as historian Cheryl Macdonald, believe that this was always part of Hoodless’ aim, to continue Domestic Science onto an even higher level.⁷⁴ Others, however, believe that Hoodless was doubtful about university courses in Domestic Science and was unwilling to allow Home Economics to develop beyond her control. Crowley, for example, commented that, “unfamiliar with post-secondary education other than teacher training, Hoodless had little appreciation of the role of the university”.⁷⁵

Not everyone espoused the value of Domestic Science. Lee Stewart’s article “The Politics of Women’s Education: Establishing Home Economics at the University of British Columbia” illustrates the opposition campaigners faced in bringing Domestic Science to colleges and universities. Like Burke, Stewart concentrates on a particular institution that was affected by a movement for social change and, like Crowley, Stewart focuses on the contradictory approach to Home Economics made by early feminists, who argued that the subject was liberating even as they used it to enforce strict gender roles.⁷⁶ A leading figure of opposition to the introduction of Home Economics at the University of British Columbia was Evlyn Farris, an 1898 graduate of Acadia University,⁷⁷ who believed that “the tendency to introduce practical training for women imperilled their

⁷³ Brandt. *Canadian Women*, 344

⁷⁴ MacDonald. *Adelaide Hoodless Domestic Crusader*, 116

⁷⁵ Crowley. “Madonnas before Magdalenes”, 544

⁷⁶ Lee Stewart, “The Politics of Women's Education: Establishing Home Economics at the University of British Columbia, 1914-1949.” *Historical Studies In Education* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 262

⁷⁷ *Acadia Record*, 1838-1953, 63

intellectual development and endangered the value of philosophical learning”.⁷⁸ Stewart goes further and contends that “far from being an attempt to accommodate women, this program ensured that the university could better accommodate men”⁷⁹ as it was only introduced when veterans began returning to education in large numbers. By siphoning women off into a separate vocational program, they made space for men and preserved the prestige of the academic classes.

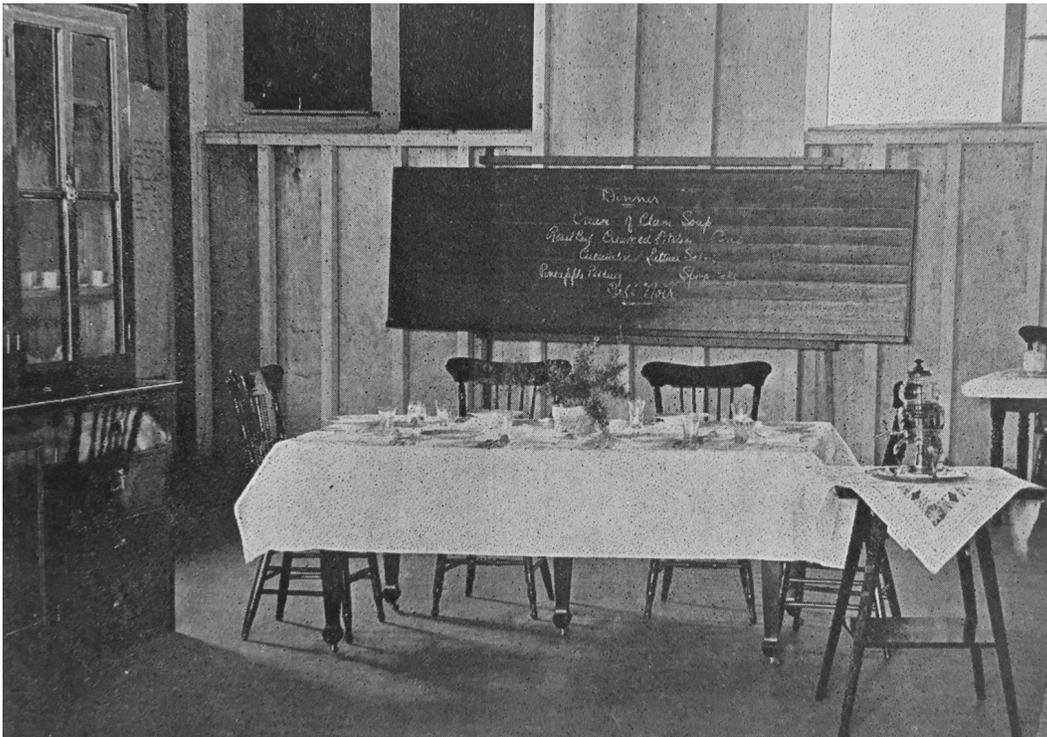


Figure 6. The Household Science Department at the Acadia Ladies Seminary, 1910. Source: Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1910-11

Despite Hoodless’ reservations and other opposition, Home Economics did make its way into university course calendars across Canada, including at Acadia Ladies’ Seminary in 1901. Located in rural Nova Scotia, Wolfville would have had many of the same problems of sanitation and nutrition that Adelaide Hoodless believed could be

⁷⁸ Stewart. "The Politics of Women's Education", 261

⁷⁹ Stewart. "The Politics of Women's Education", 261

solved through Domestic Science. Historians such as Terry Crowley argue that the intentions of Adelaide Hoodless were derived from a restrictive view that “the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker were God-given”.⁸⁰ These same views dictated the early restrictions on women’s education. At the Ladies’ Seminary, “Domestic Science” was introduced in 1902 and taught by Cora P. Archibald. In the 1903 course catalogue the intentions of this new course were said to be to “prepare the students for all household duties, and for doing these in an intelligent and scientific way”.⁸¹ Given the segregated buildings that the women were in and published opinions written by male students noted above, it seems that the introduction of the course at this crucial time came from a number of influences, but Hoodless’ Domestic Science crusade was clearly vital in the growth of the subject throughout Canada, including institutions such as Acadia.

Enrolment in Domestic Science was not particularly high in the decade following its introduction indicating that the female students were not persuaded by Hoodless’ arguments. Figure 7 shows the levels of enrolment in any Domestic Science course from 1903 (when records of this sort began) and 1910. In these early years Domestic Science was offered as just one course, taught every semester by a single teacher. However, in the winter of 1908 the course was divided into a theory and a practical class. Neatby comments on the arguments that the post-war period was one of stagnation for women, however she believes that the increase in women’s post-education work prospects instead indicated a time of great change for female equality⁸². This is evident to some extent at the Ladies’ Seminary as, in the 1907-08 Catalogue, Domestic Science offered was split

⁸⁰ Crowley. "Madonnas before Magdalenes", 523

⁸¹ Acadia Ladies' Seminary. *Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1903-04*, 47

⁸² Neatby. "Preparing for the Working World", 54

into two course options, the “Home-Makers Course” and the “Teacher’s Course”.⁸³ The latter course included subjects such as “Practice Teaching” and was introduced so that women could improve their post-graduation work prospects in a field that was appropriate for their gender. After graduating with diplomas in Household Science, women who had taken the teaching course could go begin a career, and so this new course reflected the Seminary’s understanding of the change in the expectation of women outside the home. This new course also indicates the further regression of Household Science to Hoodless’ original image of women’s role in society.

This change indicates the beginning of the transformation of Domestic Science and from 1908 until 1926 the curriculum continued to grow into a multi-faceted and extensive subject, encompassing scientific studies such as bacteriology as well as the traditional study of textiles and sewing.

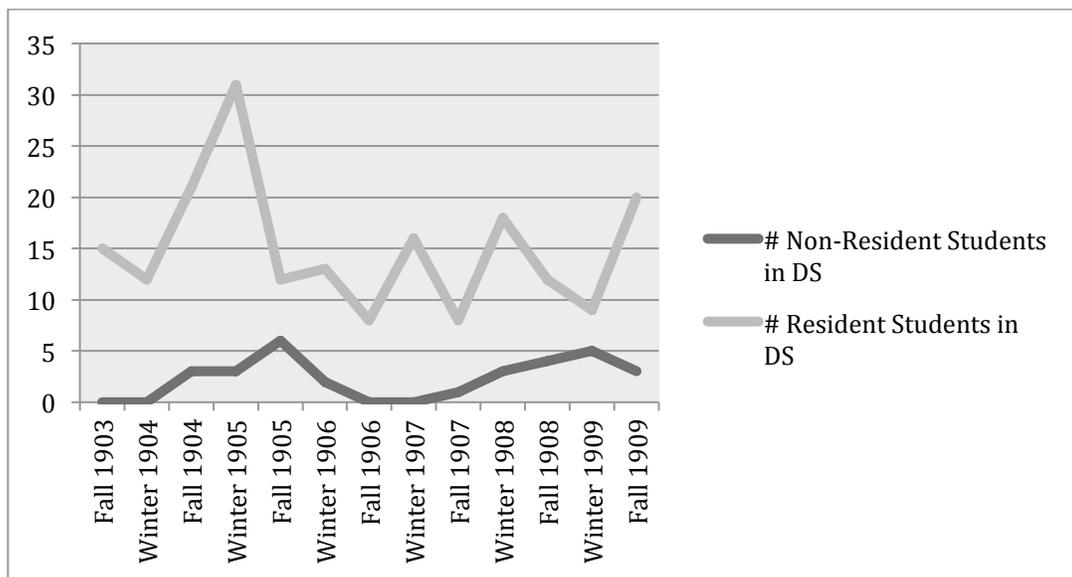


Figure 7. Enrolment in Domestic Science, 1903-1910. Source: Various Registers – 1903-1926

⁸³ Acadia Ladies' Seminary. *Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1907-08*, 46

From 1901 to 1914 it seems the Seminary was attempting to understand its place within the university and within the wider community as its course catalogue continued to change alongside transformations in female education. Between 1903 and 1910 no fewer than 50 different courses were offered with differing levels of success.⁸⁴ Geography, for example, was taught until 1905 before being taken off the curriculum, and geology featured only once in the winter of 1907. Some courses such as Arts and Crafts were so successful that the Fine Arts offerings grew to include various media such as Painting and Drawing. During this period, science courses were popular at the Seminary as Chemistry, Biology, Physics, and Psychology were offered with some regularity. This openness to women receiving education in the sciences is especially significant given the contraction that occurred at the Seminary in its final post-war years.

Mrs. T. Trotter, wife of the Reverend Dr. Thomas Trotter who served as president of Acadia College from 1897 to 1906 and oversaw the introduction of Domestic Science, wrote in the *Athenaeum* in 1900 that higher education produced a number of positive consequences for women, such as their ability to work in the wider world and to choose husbands who would be the best providers. However, despite the general positivity of this opinion, Mrs Trotter ultimately believed that

When educated women shall more generally realize the importance of the home as a field for work, and when educated men who are seeking wives shall have entirely rid themselves of the old prejudice that broad mental training is incompatible with true womanliness, happy marriages, where brains as well as hearts are wedded, will be multiplied, and will fill the land with happy cultured homes⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *Various Registers – 1903-1926*, 1900.006-ALS/1/4/, Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

⁸⁵ Mrs. T. Trotter, “Results of the Higher Education of Women”, *Acadia Athenaeum*, February, 1900

While we cannot know the personal opinion of the President, the view of his wife is very telling of the position of society and the atmosphere in which he would have made the decision to introduce Domestic Science to the Acadia Ladies' Seminary.

Scrapbooks, diaries, and photographs collected by the Acadia University Archives bring life to the women who attended the Acadia Ladies' Seminary in this period. These sources give these girls a voice within the strict social atmosphere. For example, a scrapbook compiled by Mamie Ingraham indicates that life in the Seminary included frivolity and humour. Around 1912 she writes the following poem;

I know I am a Sem girl,
And I know you are a cad
But nobody knows that I know you
And nobody knows that you know me
And if you care we'll go walking, off the limits
everyday
But sweetheart if your roommate is a fool
goodnight! Don't give it away

This shows that, despite the continuing control imposed by the Seminary and the Acadia College, students still engaged in youthful activities. While life at the Seminary was imposing, it was a place where young women could enjoy themselves and gain an education.

From the First World War until the Dissolution of the Seminary in 1926

One of the most significant events of this period was the Great War of 1914-1918; it affected the campus of Acadia University in a myriad of ways. Not only did Acadia lose many of its students and graduates to the battlefield, but the campus also offered its grounds to the training of these men. For the women on campus, the war offered an

opportunity to take part in organisations and activities to a greater extent than they had previously experienced. In “Acadia and the Great War”, Barry Moody portrays this period in Acadia’s history as one of great ferment, in which women gained a new sense of duty and social consciousness.⁸⁶

In 1914 the women’s residence, Whitman House, was built on the Acadia campus and allowed women to enter the university and bypass the Seminary.⁸⁷ For women who attended Acadia University itself and not the Seminary, Moody explains that “traditionally male-dominated offices and honours now passed to the hands of the females”, including the editing of the *Athenaeum* and valedictorian addresses.⁸⁸ While the Acadia Ladies’ Seminary was a world away from the battlefields of Europe, it is through the Great War that the influence of external forces can be seen on the schools curriculum. During the war, the Seminary added “Invalid Cookery” and “Home Nursing” to the growing list of courses that were covered by the umbrella of Household Science.⁸⁹ This is particularly important as it reflects the Seminary administration’s assumption that its students would be caring for those who had fought in the war.

Previous work on this period shows that the development in Household Science at the Seminary was part of a larger movement throughout Canada that saw women partaking in more rigorous scientific pursuits. Ruby Heap’s work examines this important period of change.⁹⁰ Heap found that Nutrition and Dietetics was the most underrated subject of Domestic Science to those unfamiliar with the field, but for a few pioneers

⁸⁶ Moody, “Acadia and the Great War,” 152

⁸⁷ Sheppard. *Acadia University*, 56

⁸⁸ Moody, “Acadia and the Great War,” 153

⁸⁹ *Register – 2 September 1896 – 1903*, 1900.006-ALS/1/4/2, Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

⁹⁰ Heap. “From the Science of Housekeeping to the Science of Nutrition”, 141

such as Annie Laird, who was head of Domestic Science at the University of Toronto, and Clara Benson, a scientist who worked within the department, it represented the most promising development of the field.⁹¹ Ainley et al also examine this changing period for women. World War I created various opportunities for attention to be drawn to the importance of nutrition and sanitation in Canada. Following the War a conscious effort was made to protect the health of Canadian infants after having lost such a large portion to the war and the outbreak of the Spanish flu in 1918. It is as a result of this enlightenment about the importance of health that the Division of Child Welfare was formed in 1919 with the intention of addressing the high infant mortality rates that were in Canada, in part because of malnutrition. Aleck Ostry's book, *Nutrition Policy in Canada*, offers insight into early ideas about nutrition and the discipline's development from basic understanding into an important science. He shows that, in this post-war climate, there was an overhaul of medical practices in response to the difficulties that had been faced while attempting to maintain sanitary conditions in military hospitals.⁹² Alongside attention to germs and wounds was an increased consideration of the overall care patients received, including their nutritional intake while in hospitals.⁹³

Improved awareness of bacteriology, sanitation, and the importance of nutrition was reflected in changes to the courses that were included in Household Science programs. From 1914 to the dissolution of the Seminary in 1926, the Fine Arts and Household Science diploma courses experienced the most significant transformation. By 1926 the school of Household Science had been formed indicating that the enforced

⁹¹ Heap. "From the Science of Housekeeping to the Science of Nutrition", 160

⁹² Ostry, *Nutrition Policy in Canada*, 27

⁹³ Eleanor Brownridge, and Elizabeth Upton. *Canadian Dietitians: Making a Difference, Rejoice in the Past, Reflect for the Future*. (Toronto: Canadian Dietetic Association, 1993), 62

gender roles of the 19th century were diminishing and women were free to enter into a scientific field, albeit one that still subscribed to some of those ideals.

During the war and in the few months after its conclusion, students in Household Science benefitted a great deal from the positive attitudes towards women and increased openness to what professions and courses they could be a part of. The existence of science courses such as Bacteriology and Sanitation, Chemistry of Food, and Invalid Cookery indicate that some students were expected to work in hospitals and the voluntary forces as part of the war effort.⁹⁴ Female scientists such as Clara Benson advocated the teaching of Chemistry in order for those taking Household Science to help patients in the most effective way.⁹⁵ Ruby Heap recognises Benson as a founding element in the transformation of Household Science into a more scientific program. Benson found a home and a laboratory at the Faculty of Household Science at the University of Toronto at which she could study the chemistry of nutrition.⁹⁶ It was the work of great female scientists such as Benson that transformed the face of Household Science, however briefly.

⁹⁴ *Various Registers – 1903-1926*, 1900.006-ALS/1/4/, Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

⁹⁵ Ainley, et al. *Creating Complicated Lives*, 60

⁹⁶ Heap. “From the Science of Housekeeping to the Science of Nutrition”, 155

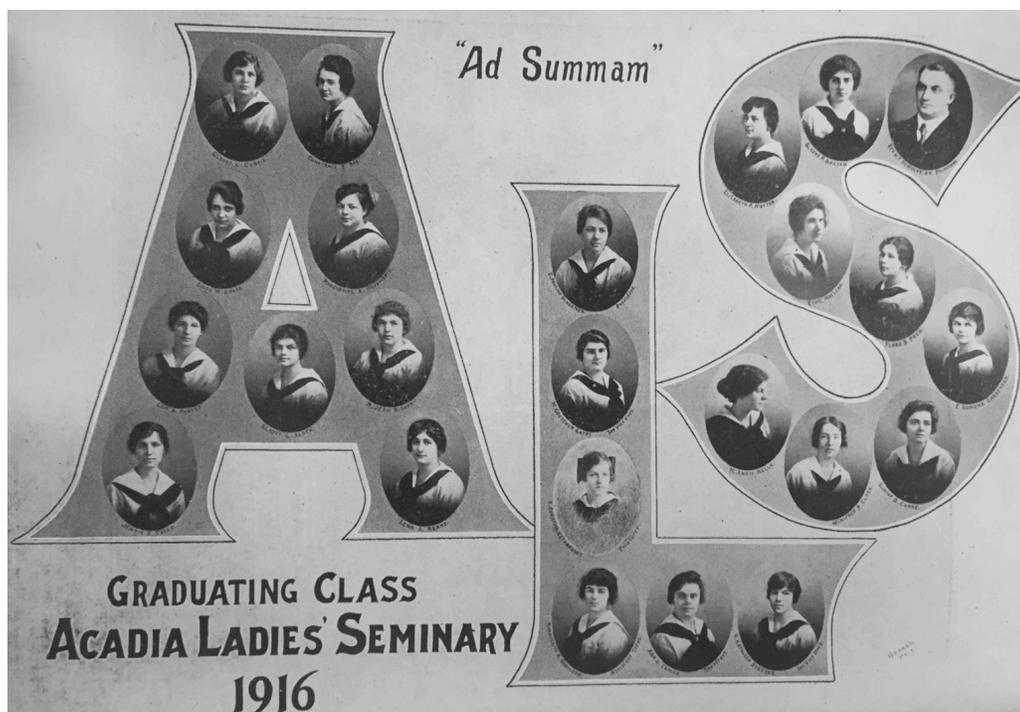


Figure 8. Acadia Ladies' Seminary, class of 1916. The male figure is Principal of the Seminary, Reverend Henry DeWolfe. Source: *Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1917-18*

In the 1920s Household Science began to turn back once more to its domestic origins. Sewing, laundry, and costume design were added to the Acadia course catalogue in quick succession after 1920, indicating a change in the perception of Household Science.⁹⁷ A lecture given at Acadia in 1924 by Miss Faithful, an academic “formerly of Cheltenham Girls School, England”, shows that the introduction saw a dedicated Domestic Science facility did not necessarily mean a positive change in the mentality of society. In comparing the girls of 1926 to those of the Victorian Era, Miss Faithful recognises a number of improvements to the female mentality and attitude. However, she

⁹⁷ *Various Registers – 1903-1926*, 1900.006-ALS/1/4/, Acadia University, Esther Clark Wright Archives. Wolfville, N.S

objects to the “great carelessness among women workers”⁹⁸ who are happier to be entertained by card games than dedicated to work and suggests a need for more maternal subjects in order to aid women in their roles within the home. These subjects and opinions were reminiscent of Adelaide Hoodless’ vision for the subject as one from which women could learn how to adequately care for their homes. These women would be wives and mothers rather than nurses. Moody wrote that this period of a return to repression for women happened as a result of “the climate of unrest and changing standards of the war years”.⁹⁹ This unrest was caused by the return of men from war, who were finding their roles filled by women and began demanding a return to strictly enforced gender roles.

There was little continuity in this period as Household Science courses were added and dropped, apparently with only a vague sense of logic. What was clear however is the growth of enrolment in these courses as well as the expansion of the field. In the fall of 1911, 16 students had enrolled in Practical Household Science; this number increased to 30 just six years later before the subject was split to accommodate for junior and senior classes. Bacteriology and Sanitation was offered as a single course until 1915 when it was divided into two, and each subject was offered in alternating terms to accommodate larger class numbers. From just a single course in Domestic Science offered in 1902, Household Science at the Seminary grew to include 15 different courses in the final year it was offered before becoming its own department of the university in 1926. While enrolment in these courses was increasing, the number of women who were attending the Acadia College remained well below the number of men. Certainly within

⁹⁸ “Lecture by Miss Faithful, March 20, 1925”, *Acadia Athenaeum*, May, 1925

⁹⁹ Moody, “Acadia and the Great War,” 155

the sciences women were still a minority; the first woman to earn a BSc graduated in 1924 and the second, in 1926. In 1926, President Frederic William Patterson announced that Household Science, Music, and the Fine Arts would become the School of Household Science and Fine Arts of Acadia University, due to the growth within these courses.¹⁰⁰ This change was, in part, a result of Patterson's more liberal views on the education of women. In letters written to prospective students in 1923, Patterson makes no distinction between the potential of men and women to achieve within the College.¹⁰¹ The School of Household Science and Fine Arts was housed within the Seminary and represented the end of what had been known as the Acadia Ladies' Seminary. After this course became part of the University, women taking Household Science could work towards a Bachelor of Science in a field that society saw as suitable.

In 1903 the Acadia Ladies' Seminary offered nine classes in Household Science. In the last catalogue before the dissolution of the school in 1926, 27 courses now contributed to a diploma in this subject.¹⁰² Additional courses had been added in textiles, sewing, and interior decoration as well as teaching and practical demonstrations of cookery. By 1926, Household Science had adopted an essentialist view of women's role within society. Those being taught at the Seminary in Household Science would become excellent teachers and capable homemakers, but would struggle to move away from these roles. In the early 20th century, society dictated the appropriate position for a woman and these ideas were reflected in the courses taught at the Seminary.

¹⁰⁰ "Changes in Seminary and Acadia", *Acadia Athenaeum*, November 1926

¹⁰¹ Frederic William Patterson, *Letters to Prospective Students. – 1923 – 1932*, 1979.004/1/2/1. Frederic William Patterson Collection, Esther Clark Wright Archives, Acadia University, 2003

¹⁰² Acadia Ladies' Seminary. *Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1903-04*, 48-49, *Catalogue of Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 1925-16*, 72-76

Conclusion

The history of the Acadia Ladies' Seminary can be seen as an illustration of the changing attitudes towards women's role in society. Attitudes towards higher education for women corresponded to changing societal need for educated teachers and mothers, and the debates and interest surrounding the building of this institution on the Acadia College campus provide insight into these attitudes. Founded with the desire to provide an environment in which women could learn within the confines of Victorian ideals, the Ladies' Seminary was a place that advanced female education but also perpetuated gender stereotypes. The basis of the Household Science movement was not only a desire to return to pre-industrial life, but also to help the malnourished and sick within the local community in way that was compatible to the maternal role of women. Household Science became an important element of Canadian education, and evolved into a more science-based discipline during the war when women were called upon to do their duty for their king and country. In the post-war period the progression of women, as Neatby and Gidney found, was indeed stagnant. For the women of the Acadia Ladies' Seminary, this meant a return to domestic life and an increase in textile and home management studies. Household Science at the Seminary was certainly a course that showed how women experienced a degree of freedom with a science-based education. From their initial foray into higher education, to the freedom of the war and then the stagnation of the post war period, the education of women was subject to changing public scrutiny. Household Science reflects all of these changes and emerged as a full-fledged department that both allowed for scientific growth and ensured the continuing domestication of women. Despite the controlling nature of this course, the transition from the Seminary

into the catalogues of Acadia University itself, represented a huge step not only for Household Science but also for women on campus.

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