

LADIES AND SCHOOLMISTRESSES: EDUCATING WOMEN IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY UPPER CANADA¹

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In November 1824, a "Lady having lately arrived from England" proposed to establish "a Seminary of respectability" in Kingston. In notices distributed widely throughout the colony, she solicited "the patronage of those Ladies who [felt] disposed to place their Daughters where the most useful & polite Branches of Education are taught." "Having been accustomed to the best established methods of Tuition," she trusted that "an assiduous and unremitting attention to her Pupils and their Interests [would] ensure her success."²

At first glance, this brief notice is unremarkable. In Upper Canada in the first half of the nineteenth century, as in Great Britain and the United States at that time, teaching the children of others was an accepted and respectable way for a gentlewoman to earn her living.³ Caring for and instructing children was,

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Short Forms:

Brockville Recorder	BR
Christian Guardian	CG
Cobourg Star	CS
Colonial Advocate	CA
Farmers' Journal	FJ
Kingston Chronicle	KC
Kingston Gazette	KGaz
Niagara Gleaner	NG
Upper Canada Gazette	UCG
Upper Canada Herald	UCH

2. *KC*, 19 Nov. 1824; *UCG*, 14 Oct. 1824; *NG*, 6 Nov. 1824; *UCH*, 22 Feb. 1825. A similar notice appeared two years earlier in the *KC*, 4 Jan. 1822.
3. See for example, Laura Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Random House, 1991); Nancy Coit, *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New York: Yale University Press, 1987), 105-23; Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 204; M. Jeanne Peterson, *Family, Love and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1989), 123. Philip W. Gard-

after all, "women's" work. As wives and mothers, almost all Upper Canadian women, at some time in their lives, had assumed the responsibilities of governess, nurse, or teacher. Exchanging those skills considered inherent in persons of their sex for a home, and/or a wage or income, was not particularly remarkable. Between 1800 and 1840, colonial newspapers frequently included notices from young girls looking for a position in a good family as a child's nurse or governess, or from older widowed women who offered to take a few children into their home and to teach them the rudiments of literacy.

The circumstances of this lady from England, however, appear to have been somewhat different. Though we do not know her name, her age, or her particular situation, or whether or not she actually opened her school, her notice suggests that she was not a young girl entering the labour market for the first time or a "poor lady obliged to work for pay."⁴ This lady apparently had training and experience in "the best established method of Tuition." She aspired and, one might presume, had sufficient financial resources to establish a "Seminary of respectability." In fact, she appears to have been one of that small, though growing, number of women in Upper Canada who would have considered themselves "professional" teachers. For her and a few others in post-1815 Upper Canada, being a teacher was more than a desperate attempt to help survive financially. Teaching the children of others was for these women a viable and perhaps preferable alternative to marriage or remarriage. And owning and operating one's own School or Academy for Young Ladies was a goal which promised at least the possibility of relative independence, financial security, and personal fulfilment.⁵

ner notes in *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984) that teaching "offered a source of independent remunerative employment for the woman who was progressively denied an outlet for her labour other than through its complete constriction into 'housework'": 111. For Canadian examples, see *Women Who Taught*, ed. Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); *Gender and Education in Ontario*, ed. Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1991); R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar, *Inventing Secondary Education* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); Alison Prentice and Susan Houston, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

4. Joyce Senders Pedersen, "Schoolmistresses and Headmistresses: Elites and Education in Nineteenth Century England," in *Women Who Taught*, ed. Prentice and Theobald, 39. Pedersen asserts that there were relatively sharp distinctions between these two groups of teachers. This paper suggests that this was not always the case.
5. The use of the term "professional" is quite deliberate. Though there was no "professional" training available to women during this period, many women who taught in the colony did have specific expertise and experience in the classroom. Within the context of the early nineteenth century, they considered themselves

This is not to suggest that between 1800 and 1840 most women who taught in Upper Canada would have considered themselves or wanted to become professional teachers. As Alison Prentice notes, during this period “domestic or private teachers...predominated in most parts of Canada.”⁶ Most women who offered to teach for wages did not profess to have any specific expertise. Few claimed previous experience in a classroom. And many intended to teach only until they married, remarried, or their financial circumstances improved sufficiently to permit them to leave the labour market. But there seems little question that increasingly, Upper Canada attracted women who did look to teaching as a profession and who were able to make their living in the classroom.

In the first four decades of the nineteenth century, Upper Canada offered increasing opportunities for women to teach and it supported a wide variety of schools and particularly schools for girls. The women who taught in the colony came from incredibly diverse backgrounds and at times had sharply differing expectations of their work. Some wanted or only had to work part-time; others never managed to own their own school. Many lady-proprietor schoolteachers were unsuccessful; a few, however, gained both fame and relative prosperity. Moreover, as the colony matured, the differences between the professional lady teacher and at least some of those who would initially have considered themselves amateurs gradually blurred. A number of widows and spinsters discovered in teaching a way to gain financial independence and personal satisfaction. And though they never professed to having professional expertise, after a number of years of owning and operating a seminary for young ladies, a few “poor ladies” inevitably acquired both the experience and the skill normally associated with a professional.

What is perhaps most ironic is that as opportunities for women to teach expanded and the number of women who earned their living in a classroom grew, schoolmistresses were increasingly circumscribed in who they could teach, where, and what. By 1840, social norms restricted lady teachers to instructing the very young and adolescent girls, preferably within a secure domestic setting. Moreover, in response to the demands and sensibilities of middle-class patrons, women who opened “ladies’ academies” were obliged to provide a curriculum that met the needs of the “true” woman of the nineteenth century—the virtuous and discrete wife⁷ and the wise, discerning, and compassionate mother. In short, the emergence of the cult of true womanhood,⁸ which established increasingly

professional teachers.

6. Alison Prentice, “From Household to School House: The Emergence of the Teacher as Servant of the State,” in *Gender and Education in Ontario*, ed. Heap and Prentice, 43.
7. *FJ*, 15 Dec. 1827.
8. Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” *American Quarterly* 18 (1968):

narrow standards of what was appropriate for a young girl to learn and where she could or should learn it, also promoted specialized education for girls and professionalization among some of those who taught them.

I

Colonists had been concerned about the education of their children since the arrival of the first settlers to Upper Canada in the 1780s and 1790s. The general acceptance of the need for a literate and educated citizenry was paralleled by a growing concern, particularly amongst the colonial gentry, about what type of education was appropriate for their daughters. Almost since the foundation of the colony, Upper Canadians had debated whether women could, let alone should, be formally educated. Women, after all were different from men. They were timid, feeble, and, some suggested, "their minds are not so strong and they are less capable of reasoning."⁹ Others however, emphatically defended a woman's intellectual capabilities. A brief article on "Female Education" published before the turn of the century observed that "a woman's senses are generally as quick as ours, their reason is as quick...and their judgement as secure and solid."¹⁰ "It has never been proved to me that women are in any respect inferior to men," an anonymous Acetum explained to the residents of Kingston in 1812, "except in a few particulars connected with their Physical texture."¹¹ One young woman,

151-74. See also Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*; Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Social Etiquette and the Season* (London: Croom Helm, 1973); Peterson, *Family, Love and Work*; Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Croom Helm, 1982).

9. *KGaz*, 12 May 1812. This view was also reflected in *ibid.*, Letter to the Reckoner, 16 Apr. 1811; *Gore Gazette*, 17 Nov. 1827. For further discussion of this, see Jane Errington, "'Hidden' Women in Early Upper Canada: A Preliminary Probe," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, 1988.
10. *UCG*, 25 Nov. 1797.
11. Acetum continued that these physical differences did have "a peculiar influence on their nerves," making them "more liable to irritation," but it did not impair a woman's ability to reason. *KGaz*, "Letter to the Reckoner," 12 May 1812. It is presumed that the Reckoner was the Reverend John Strachan. For a discussion of how this attitude came to affect the medical profession and others throughout the nineteenth century see Barbara Maas, *Helpmate of Man: Middle Class Women and Gender Ideology in Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1990), 46-56; Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of Their Bodies: Women and Their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

vehemently replying to charges that women were intellectually weaker than men, asserted, "Believe me, Sir, the natural ability of the sexes are equal." Apparent differences, she observed, were the result of "their different education." It was the specific "purposes for which [men and women] are destined in life which accounted sufficiently for these distinctions."¹² One commentator went so far as to assert that barring women from "the privilege of ingenious education" was an inhuman tyranny.¹³

Certainly, girls, like their brothers, were expected to be able to read and write. Girls also had to be well grounded in the "domestic arts,"¹⁴ and all those skills which they would need as future wives and mothers. As the nineteenth century unfolded, however, the skills required of particularly middle-class Upper Canadian girls expanded considerably. In Upper Canada, as in Great Britain, women, the home, and the domestic sphere were becoming important symbols of middle-class values. Increasingly, it came to be assumed that women had a special role to play in maintaining and advancing the new social order. A woman's God-given vocation, her work in life, was still to be the keeper of the hearth and wife and mother of a happy and productive family. But it was also asserted that from the security of her home, woman, as society's moral arbiter, keeper of the faith, and promoter of virtue inevitably influenced the shape and beliefs of the wider world.¹⁵ To properly fulfil these new responsibilities associated with the dictates of domesticity required skill and training.

12. *KGaz*, 18 Feb. 1812. See also *ibid.*, 16 Apr. 1811. An extract from Ledyard's "Celebrated Elegy on the Talents and Disposition of the Fair Sex" noted that there was "no deficiency in the female mind." And, it continued, "if the delicacy of their constitution and other physical causes allow the female sex a smaller share of some mental powers, they possess others in superior degree." *UCG*, 23 Aug. 1828. See also *FJ*, "Respect for Females," 14 Mar. 1827.
13. *UCG*, 25 Nov. 1797.
14. *KGaz*, 3 Dec. 1811. The domestic arts were important, for among other things, they taught a girl the advantages of hard work and discipline; and as one matron noted, they prevented the nation's daughters "from forming improper attachments" as youths. See also *UCG*, 19 Oct. 1805.
15. Leonore Davidoff and Catharine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1870-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 74. Note that in Great Britain, an emerging middle class was beginning to assert a life-style and social and moral values which placed considerable emphasis on the family and the importance of women in providing "proper moral order in the amoral world of the market." This rests on the assumption that "identity is gendered" (29) and their chronicle of how middle-class women became both creators and the "bearers of status" (30). For a discussion of this as it pertains to a number of middle-class immigrant women in the nineteenth century, see Maas, *Helpmate of Man*. Maas discusses the issue of "cultural transference" of such an ideology from particularly Great Britain to Upper Canada (41-45).

"Girls...require much more care and attention in bringing up than parents generally suppose,"¹⁶ articles in local newspapers frequently asserted. Mothers, who bore the primary responsibility for ensuring that girls received training appropriate to their rank and vocation, were reminded that "the education of your daughters is of the first importance," for the "very character of the country was at stake."¹⁷ Increasingly, however, a number of Upper Canadians came to believe that home education for middle-class daughters was not sufficient. "Nothing short of the refinement of education [could] give dignity and elevation to the female character," an article in the *Farmer's Journal* explained. "Nothing can so well qualify them for participating to advantage in all pleasures desirable for mutual intercourse with the polished circles of life."¹⁸

It is obvious from comments in the colonial press that this conclusion met some if not considerable resistance, however. As a result, proponents of formal education for women went to considerable lengths to reassure opponents. Men need not "fear to lose [their] empire" over women by "thus improving their natural abilities," it was explained. Rather, "where there is most learning, sense and knowledge, there is observed to be the greatest modesty and rectitude of manners."¹⁹ An educated woman was an asset to a discerning man, to his home, and to the future of their community. "Men of sense naturally seek companions possessing corresponding qualifications,"²⁰ it was asserted. An address by a teacher to her pupils printed in 1829 in the *Farmers' Journal* explained, "She whose mind has been expanded and feeling so elevated will have neatness, economy and regularity in all her domestic avocations; she will never debase herself by associating with the vulgar and the mean; she will cheerfully discern that her dwelling is the centre of her companion's happiness."²¹ In short, a

16. *KGaz*, 3 Dec. 1811. See also *ibid.*, 18 Aug. 1812; *FJ*, 26 Sept. 1827; *UCG*, 3 Aug. 1805.

17. *KGaz*, "From the Desk of Poor Robert the Scribe," 18 Aug. 1812.

18. *FJ*, "Of Female Education," 9 Apr. 1828. Moreover, it was stated that "by concentrating the power of their minds" through education, "the cares and anxieties evident in the connubial state are consequently diminished and the union is attended with all those happy results which characterise it above all others as the most felicitous."

19. *UCG*, "Of Female Education," 25 Nov. 1797; see also *FJ*, "The Female Character," 9 Apr. 1828; *KC*, "Why Should Females Have a Good Education," 14 Sept. 1833.

20. *FJ*, "The Female Character," 9 Apr. 1828; see also *KGaz*, "Desk of Poor Robert the Scribe," 18 Aug. 1812.

21. *FJ*, "A Women Teacher's Address to Her Pupils," 16 Dec. 1829. See also "On the Education of Young Ladies," 26 Sept. 1827; *CG*, "From Brief Hints to Parents on the Subject of Education," 5 Feb. 1831; "Influence of Education by a Young Lady," 13 Mar. 1830; *FJ*, "The Female Character," 9 Apr. 1828. An article in the *KC*, 9 Apr. 1836, noted specifically the importance of educated women as mothers. See also *CA*, "Female Education," 28 May 1828; "Ladies Department," 22 Oct. 1831.

well-educated girl made the best wife and mother; she was in fact far more valuable to her husband than a wealthy or beautiful spouse.

Though even as late as 1840, not all Upper Canadians were convinced of the efficacy of formally educating their daughters, a growing number were. Elite families had been sending their daughters to school for some time. Increasingly, members of the middling ranks of colonial society began to believe that having their daughters attend a lady's academy was both a sign of their family's growing affluence and a way to help promote her social mobility. Moreover, many, like Anne Powell, wife of a Justice of the King's Bench, considered that sending girls to school was only practical. Formal schooling would not only educate a girl to be a good wife and mother, but the training she received there would enable her "to obtain a respectable support" if "a future emergency"²² should arise.

The opportunities available to women to earn their living teaching in Upper Canada were directly influenced by the changing expectations middle- and upper-class families had for their daughters' education. Opportunities were also dictated by economic and social circumstances within the colony. During the first generation of settlement, Upper Canada afforded little opportunity for anyone, let alone a woman, to make her living teaching. The population was too small and there were too few families who could afford or had the inclination to send their daughters to school. After 1815, however, as the population grew, towns and villages developed, and disposable income increased, more and more women turned to teaching to help support their families and themselves.²³ And a number consciously catered to the growing demands of middle- and upper-class parents for specialized training for their daughters, the future "true" women of Upper Canada.

II

In 1802, Mr. and Mrs. Tyler took "the liberty of informing" the readers of the *Niagara Herald* that they intended to open a school for young men and ladies,

22. Anne Powell to George Murray, 9 July 1816, quoted in Katherine McKenna, "The Life of Anne Murray Powell, 1755-1849" (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1987), 336.

23. This paper presumes that generational rather than chronological time frames are most appropriate when studying the social and economic development of Upper Canada. It should be noted, however, that the War of 1812, which falls at the end of the first generation of settlement, did have a significant influence on the evolution of Upper Canada. See Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987).

four years of age and older. In addition to teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic, "the young ladies will be instructed in all that is necessary for persons of their sex, to appear decently and be useful in the world, and of all that concerns housekeeping, either for those who wish to live in town or in country."²⁴ The notice for the Tylers' school provides some insight into what Upper Canadians at the turn of the century expected of their daughters' education and of the women who taught them. Practicality seemed to be the watchword. The girls' training was to be useful. And no one presumed that Mrs. Tyler had any special qualifications to teach or that she and her husband would be able to rely solely on income from the school. In fact, the notice ended with the announcement that Mrs. Tyler, "having been bred in the line of *mantua makers*," also sought work as a seamstress and she offered "to execute her work in the neatest manner, to the satisfaction of those who may honour her with their custom."²⁵

Mrs. Tyler was what one might classify as a wife-teacher. Her expertise as a teacher rested on her sex; her role in the classroom was secondary to her responsibilities as a wife. In the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of other colonial women found themselves in similar circumstances. In the post-1815 period, however, some of them, together with their husbands, consciously tried to take advantage of the growing demand for special education for the colony's daughters.

In October 1814, Mr. and Mrs. Pringle announced that they intended to open a school in Kingston for young ladies of the community. By 1820, Mr. and Mrs. Wolf of Kingston²⁶ and Mr. and Mrs. Roberts in Niagara²⁷ had established similar businesses. And over the next twenty years, a number of other couples entered the education market. In many of these family enterprises, it was clearly the husband who had experience and some expertise teaching. However, this was not always the case. When Mr. and Mrs. Maitland opened an academy in York in 1832, both apparently "had long experience in the instruction of youth."²⁸ In one noted instance, it was clearly the wife who was the professional teacher. The advertisement of Mrs. Twigg and her husband, who opened a girls' school in Kingston in 1825, stated openly that it was Mrs. Twigg who had both the

24. *Niagara Herald*, 13 Feb. 1802.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *KC*, 10 May 1817.

27. *UCG*, 19 June 1817. After Mr. Roberts' death in 1819, Mrs. Roberts continued to teach. *Niagara Spectator*, 2 Mar. 1820. See also schools run by Mrs. MacIntosh, who started an academy with the Reverend R. Fletcher in Ernestown, *KC*, 8 Oct. 1818; Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, who opened a school in York, *UCG*, 9 Apr. 1824; and Mrs. Spilsbury, who opened a school "under the conduct of Mr. Leech" at Colborne, *CS*, 31 May 1831.

28. *CG*, 10 Oct. 1832; see also *ibid.*, 23 Jan. 1833. The same seems to have been true of the Pringles.

academic credentials and "long experience" in the profession. No mention was made of Mr. Twigg's profession.²⁹

In situations where it was "his" school, the presence and active involvement of the master's wife was nonetheless essential to the success of the business. When the Reverend M. Marcus opened a district school in Picton in 1833, he observed that Mrs. Marcus³⁰ would superintend all "the domestic arrangements," including ensuring "regularity and discipline" and providing students with "the care and comfort of a private family."³¹ In those schools which accepted girls, the master's wife also taught needlework and superintended the "ladies department." And in exclusively ladies' academies, it was Mrs. Roberts, Mrs. Pringle, and Mrs. Wolfe who oversaw all the domestic arrangements of the school and taught many if not all the "ornamental" arts. Many wife-teachers probably also gave classes in other subjects, like reading and writing, where they had some particular expertise.³²

The viability of family schools and particularly those for girls in Upper Canada is unclear. Certainly, before 1820, there was little likelihood of a woman making a career out of teaching. After the War of 1812, however, as the local population increased and the economy grew, the opportunity for aspiring schoolmistresses clearly improved. The Twiggs and the Pringles, both of Kingston, were in business for more than five years. For the Maitlands, like the Tylers, subsistence may nonetheless have been precarious. Advertisements in local newspapers suggest that most small girls' schools in Upper Canada did not survive for more than two years.³³ Moreover, most couples were unable to rely

29. *KC*, 8 Sept. 1826. The same may also have been the case for the Roberts.

30. *BR*, 11 Apr. 1833.

31. *Hallowell Free Press*, 30 June 1834. See also advertisement of Mr. Johnson, for Lancasterian School, *KGaz*, 22 Sept. 1818, which noted that his wife would teach needlework and superintend the "Ladies Department." A "MARRIED MAN" looking for a position in a "respectable neighbourhood in the country" noted specifically that he would "be assisted by his wife in the female department if necessary": *The Patriot*, 31 Mar. 1835. Parents in Ancaster in 1837 advertised for a married couple to teach at a Boys' and Girls' school. The wife was to teach in the Girls' School and would also look after a few boarders. *The Patriot*, 30 May 1837.

32. This was specifically referred to in the case of the Tylers and Maitlands. *Gore Gazette*, 10 Oct. 1832. See also advertisement of W. Ward, 28 Mar. 1831, *CG*, which noted that his wife would teach needlework.

33. Gidney and Millar, *Inventing*, 65-66. For a more detailed examination of the ephemeral nature of Upper Canadian schools, see Gidney and Millar, "From Voluntarism to State Schooling: The Creation of the Public School System in Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review* LXVI, 4 (1985): 443-73. Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, quite rightly question Gidney and Millar's conclusion, 67-68. Given the nature of the Upper Canadian economy and of those women who taught, it is very likely that many did not advertise in local newspapers, but rather

on the income they earned from their business for a living wage. Some wife-teachers were more fortunate. Their income was intended to supplement that of their husbands. While Mrs. Sturdy taught school in Port Hope in 1830, for example, her husband worked as a weaver.³⁴ Mary O'Brien taught in exchange for help in the house. A few women could even teach part-time, offering specialized skills to students.

The opportunity for women to tutor on a part-time basis or to teach only one of the ornamental arts was very limited, however. Most private tutors or proprietors of "specialty schools" in Upper Canada were men. Only men, for example, offered tutoring in the classics and penmanship. Male tutors also predominated in teaching dancing and French.³⁵ Madam Harris, who owned a dancing school in York in the late 1820s,³⁶ was apparently the only woman in her field. And though she offered lessons to both young ladies and gentlemen, classes were segregated and only came together once a week to practise.³⁷ In even the most basic of the "accomplishments"—teaching instrumental and vocal music and drawing—the number of women offering private lessons was fewer than men.³⁸ It appears that middle-class women in Upper Canada, like their sisters in Australia, were expected to acquire the ability to dance, to sing, or to play the piano. To

relied on word of mouth and their reputation within the community to gain pupils.

34. *CA*, 23 Sept. 1830. Mrs. Crombie and her daughters could depend, to some degree at least, on Mr. Crombie, schoolmaster of a local district school: *The Patriot*, 3 Jan. 1840.
35. The women who ran French schools included Mrs. Goodman, *UCG*, 24 Dec. 1818; Mrs. Harris, *United Empire Loyalist*, 9 Sept. 1826; Mrs. Kingman, *Niagara Spectator*, 29 Jan. 1819; Miss Merrill, *KGaz*, 3 Aug. 1816. Jennifer Monaghan notes in "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," *American Quarterly* 40, 1 (1988): 18-41, that in the early colonial period, women taught reading and men taught penmanship. "Writing," she notes, "was considered a craft" and "writing was largely a male domain" (24). Similar attitudes appear to have prevailed in Upper Canada 150 years later.
36. *UCG*, 9 Sept. 1826; *United Empire Loyalist*, 30 Aug. 1828.
37. Madam Harris, like many dancing masters, was also engaged to teach dancing at one of the local ladies' academies, Misses Purcell and Rose. She appears to have been replaced by Mr. Whale: *CA*, 10 Dec. 1829.
38. Madam Walther, *The Patriot*, 29 July 1836; Mrs. Butler, *NG*, 5 Oct. 1833; Miss Taylor, *CS*, 29 Oct. 1834; Miss Williams, *BR*, 28 June 1833; Mrs. Bickerton (also landscape painting), *KC*, 24 May 1834; an anonymous lady from England, *The Patriot*, 8 Dec. 1840, 22 May 1838. There were about a dozen schools run by men in the province, some of which, like Mr. Hill's "A Young Ladies Singing School," *KGaz*, 21 Dec. 1816, taught both boys and girls, or like Mr. Colton's, had a female assistant, *KC*, 5 July 1834.

display their talent publicly, or to offer to sell these skills openly, was not socially acceptable.³⁹

The restrictions placed on what were appropriate subjects for women to teach were compounded by limitations of who and where they could teach. Though it was acceptable for male tutors to have both boys and girls as students, women tutors usually could not. Social mores dictated, and middle- and upper-class parents determined, that wage-earning women teachers were suited, by reason of their sex and their ability, to instruct only young children and adolescent girls.⁴⁰ And it was expected that self-respecting middle-class or aspiring to middle-class women teachers preferred and should earn their living within the confines of their own home.

Thus, the few women able to trade their special skills for a part-time income were clearly fortunate. Many were obviously wives or daughters who were not totally dependent on the tuition they received for their work. Most women who wished or had to earn their own living and continue to maintain some semblance of independence were under increasing social and economic restrictions. For though the demand for formal education for Upper Canada's daughters grew in the period after the War of 1812, many prospective teachers were forced to sacrifice their privacy and open their homes to potential pupils. They also had to provide a curriculum that reflected the growing acceptance of the cult of true womanhood.

III

Many and perhaps most gentlewomen who turned to teaching had little choice in the matter. And many were limited in what they could offer. In 1827,

39. McKenna notes in "The Life of Anne Murray Powell" that though Anne Powell senior was pleased that her daughter, Anne, took an active part in educating her nieces (p.423), William Dummer Powell refused to permit his daughter to establish a school of her own. Apparently, he claimed that she was not sufficiently educated to be a schoolteacher, and suggested that teaching was not suited to a woman of her status (432-3). See also, Marjorie R. Theobald, "The Sin of Laura: A Pre-History of Women's Tertiary Education in Colonial Melbourne," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 1 (1990): 257-72. One group of women did display such skills publicly: actors and performers on the Upper Canadian stage. Colonial attitudes to these women varied considerably. Most, however, believed that no self-respecting "lady" engaged in such activity.

40. Gidney and Millar, *Inventing*, 1, 19-20. They note that coeducation posed moral dangers as well as problems with the curriculum. Boys and girls needed different training and were expected to be taught separately. See also *Schooling and Scholars*.

Mrs. Margaret Powell, widow of Major Powell, announced to the residents of York that she was opening a school for children three to ten years old.⁴¹ Eight years later, "the Widow of a Clergyman...of Belleville," Mrs. Campbell, notified local residents that she was willing to take six young ladies "into her house...to educate with her own children."⁴² Mrs. Powell and Mrs. Campbell apparently had relatively limited means. They may well have also been somewhat hesitant about their own abilities. To resolve their financial difficulties, each proposed to open what appears to have been the equivalent of an English dame school.

Dame schools were undoubtedly a common feature in many Upper Canadian villages and towns, as they were in Great Britain and the United States.⁴³ It is difficult to estimate how many there were in the colony, for most widow proprietors probably did not advertise their schools. They had little need to. Students were drawn from the immediate neighbourhood and arrangements were informal. Yet dame schools may well have predominated in Upper Canada in the first half of the nineteenth century. Particularly after 1815, however, a woman with some means and some education probably preferred to take advantage of the growing demand for specialized education for girls by opening a school for young ladies. And though like Mrs. Campbell, they had no special training, they and indeed many Upper Canadians assumed that their sex and life experience as gentlewomen, wives, and mothers fully qualified them to teach.

Most girls' schools established in Upper Canada before 1840 were small, and probably resembled traditional dame schools. The classroom was the proprietor's parlour; the number of students was limited and lessons may have been informal. Yet a growing number of women teachers were obviously conscious that to gain parents' approval and patronage, they had to attempt to provide the structure and formality indicative of a "real" school. As a result, Mrs. Farrand of Brockville was probably not alone in demanding the "punctual attendance of each scholar...during the hours of Instruction and no allowance...for occasional absences."⁴⁴ It is likely that many teachers tried to establish a school routine, with scheduled class time and periods of relaxation. Some teachers divided their students into primary, junior, and senior "departments."⁴⁵ Lessons in English,

41. *UCG*, 11 Aug. 1827. See also advertisement of Mrs. Scott of Colborne, who opened an "infant school" for children between the ages of 2 1/2 and 7. *CS*, 9 July 1834. Misses Savigny of Toronto offered to teach young ladies until the age of 12: *The Patriot*, 13 Nov. 1840.

42. *The Patriot*, 10 Nov. 1835.

43. See Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools*; J.H. Higginson, "Dame Schools," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 22, 2 (1974); Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 33-35; E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England."

44. *Brockville Gazette*, 27 Oct. 1831.

45. *The Paris Female Seminary, CG*, 7 Oct. 1840.

reading, grammar and composition, arithmetic, history, and geography were scheduled and taught by age and academic ability, with more advanced students helping the juniors. Most girls' schools in the province had very little "specialized" equipment. Texts for reading were either provided by the students or were part of the teacher's private library.⁴⁶ Though a few schools advertised that they used globes or maps in the teaching of geography, other subjects, like history or natural science, were undoubtedly taught by lecture or by having students gather local flora and fauna.⁴⁷ Many Upper Canadian parents undoubtedly considered that elaborate equipment was unnecessary. What their daughters needed was a secure environment, the company of social peers, lessons in basic literacy, and training in the "useful accomplishments."

In Upper Canada, as in Great Britain and the United States, the accomplishments, or what many termed "the ornamental branches of Female education,"⁴⁸ were emerging as "the dominant mode of education for middle-class girls."⁴⁹ This included modern languages, geography, history, and biology, subjects that would form the basis of a liberal education at the turn of the century.⁵⁰ In addition, upper- and middle-class girls in Upper Canada needed to acquire the social skills necessary for everyday life—dancing, painting, music, and needlework.

The success of a school in part depended on the ability of its proprietor to provide instruction suitable for daughters of the middle- and upper-classes. Certainly, plain and fancy needlework were standard subjects at all Upper Canadian girls' schools. Then, depending on the school and the skill of its mistresses or her assistants, young Upper Canadian women could also take lessons in dancing, embroidery, drawing and painting (of various kinds), instrumental and vocal music, French, Italian, German, and sometimes Latin. Many of these accomplishments were taught privately for an extra fee, or in small groups, by an assistant engaged specially for that purpose. Not every student could afford or would have the time or inclination to take more than one or two extra subjects.

Teaching many or all of the accomplishments did not guarantee a school's success, however. This also depended on the owner's financial resources, her social and business contacts, her reputation, and a number of other factors, some

46. Both Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, and Gidney and Millar, *Inventing*, note the difficulty of obtaining textbooks in Upper Canada at the time.

47. See for example Prentice, "From Household to School House," 25-50.

48. From notice of Mrs. Fraser's school, *The Patriot*, 4 Sept. 1835.

49. Marjorie Theobald, "Mere Accomplishments? Melbourne's Early Ladies' Schools Reconsidered," in *Women Who Taught*, ed. Prentice and Theobald, 73.

50. *Ibid.* See also Theobald, "The Sin of Laura"; Gidney and Millar, *Inventing*, 13-19; Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 77-79.

of which she could not control. Most girls' schools in Upper Canada appear to have been owned and operated by single proprietors.⁵¹ Inevitably, these schools were small and enrolment was limited. To try to increase their income, a number of women teachers opened day schools⁵² and some rented rooms especially for this purpose. Teaching day students did not, however, assure the teacher a regular income. Students' attendance was often erratic and the teacher's income fluctuated accordingly. To try to resolve this dilemma, a few teachers of day schools offered to board one or two pupils in their own homes;⁵³ others offered to make arrangements to have students board with neighbouring families.⁵⁴ Most women teachers taught in their own homes, however, and an increasing number aspired to the more prestigious and potentially lucrative situation of owning a boarding school.

But taking in boarders created its own problems. Not only were most Upper Canadian homes small but beds and household equipment were limited. To attempt to gain some security and predictability in the numbers of pupils, many boarding-school mistresses required that students register for at least a quarter and then provide at least a month's notice before leaving.⁵⁵ In addition, almost all colonial boarding schools required pupils to provide their own beds and linen and in some cases cutlery.⁵⁶ Taking in boarders also demanded that even the smallest school had to have a maid, or students or other household members had

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51. A cursory search of the local newspapers between 1815 and 1835 indicates that two dozen schools were opened by women on their own.
 52. See among others, the Misses Skirvings, *The Patriot*, 22 Sept. 1840; Miss Parsons, *KC*, 9 June 1832; Miss Farrand, who ran the Brockville Seminary, *Brockville Gazette*, 27 Oct. 1831; Miss Greenland, *KC*, 10 June 1825; Miss Dennison, *KC*, 14 Mar. 1833.
 53. See for example, Mrs. Hill's School in Kingston, *KGaz*, 22 Sept. 1818.
 54. Miss R.A. Charlton, who ran the Paris Female Seminary, *CG*, 7 Oct. 1840. In addition to the previous references, see also Miss Currier, in Peterborough, *CS*, 13 Nov. 1833; Miss Crombie, *The Patriot*, 11 Aug. 1840; Mrs. Hamilton, who announced in *The Patriot*, 7 Jan. 1840, that she provided "the advantages of public school....combined with private education"; Miss Mary McNeighton, *British Whig*, 10 Jan. 1834; Miss Currier had a school in Peterborough and took in a few "parlour boarders," and according to the *CS*, 13 Nov. 1833, had just extended her facilities for out-of-town students; Miss Leah, in Kingston, *KC*, 17 Aug. 1833; Misses Kile, in the *BR*, 18 Oct. 1832; Mrs. Haines, *KC*, 25 July 1835; Mrs. Black, *FJ*, 12 Aug. 1829.
 55. See for example, Mrs. Acland, of Perth, *BR*, 9 June 1831; Mrs. Scott of Sandwich, *Canadian Emigrant*, 29 Nov. 1834.
 56. Miss Mossier, *NG*, 9 Mar. 1833; Mrs. O'Brien, 27 Jan. 1831; Mrs. Fraser, *The Patriot*, 16 Aug. 1836; Mrs. Scott, *Canadian Emigrant*, 27 Dec. 1834; Miss Acland, *BR*, 9 Jan. 1831. Even at the Upper Canada Academy, students were expected to bring linen and towels: *CG*, 29 Aug. 1838.

to assume some of the domestic responsibilities. To cope with the day-to-day operation of the school, a number of these women turned to members of their family—daughters, sisters, and mothers⁵⁷—or joined with friends or associates in similar circumstances, to share costs, to help with the teaching, and generally to share the many responsibilities and work related to running a school.⁵⁸ Only those schools operated by a husband and wife team, or teachers whose mothers or sisters were living-in to act as housekeepers, could hope to avoid hiring paid help.⁵⁹

In addition to coping with the day-to-day work of teaching and housekeeping, owner/teachers of private-venture girls' schools also had to manage in an increasingly competitive academic world. Thus proprietors often felt obliged to point out those features of their schools which made them worthy of patronage. Almost all schoolmistresses offered references as to their character and respectability. Some also managed to gain and made sure to advertise that they had the public patronage and support of prominent local residents. In keeping with the

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57. See school begun by Mrs. Taylor and her daughter, *CS*, 13 Mar. 1833. The school was forced to close when Miss Taylor left: *CS*, 12 Nov. 1834. A second school in Cobourg was run by the Butchers, 12 Dec. 1832, and it was still going in 20 Nov. 1833. See also school run by Mrs. Crombie and daughters, *The Patriot*, 3 Jan. 1840. It should be noted that her husband ran the local district school. Another example of a similar school was that run by the Misses Wellstead, *UCG*, 9 June 1825. See also advertisement of Mrs. Montjoy of Hallowell, who in 1832 announced she and her daughter were opening a small day school for young ladies. *Hallowell Free Press*, 9 Oct. 1832. The school was obviously intended to supplement the family income. Two years later, a brief obituary notice marked the death of Mr. Montjoy, a clock and watch maker, *The Patriot*, 5 Sept. 1834. In "A Card" to the public of York (where the family had obviously moved), Mrs. Montjoy expressed her "heartfelt gratitude" to those kind friends who had supported her and her family through "their last afflicting trial." She and her daughters (it appears that at least one more had entered the business) also trusted that the patronage of the inhabitants of York for their school would continue. And obviously to supplement their income, Mrs. Montjoy offered to take in a few boarders.
58. See for example, Mrs. Haines of Kingston, who was assisted by Mrs. and Miss Johnson in 1818: *KGaz*, 15 Sept. 1815; Mrs. O'Brien's school had an assistant, in Prescott, *NG*, 21 Jan. 1831. Mrs. Roy and Mrs. Driscoll jointly announced the opening of their school in Toronto in 1839: *The Patriot*, 11 Jan. 1839.
59. Mrs. Wynne certainly had servants: *The Patriot*, 27 June 1834. Family operations were not guaranteed success. Mrs. Horton Scott and her daughters started a Young Ladies' Institute in 1834, offering young ladies "a finished education": *Canadian Freeman*, 29 Nov. 1834. Though Mrs. Scott employed "the most approved teachers" and offered a wide variety of subjects, within three months the Scotts were forced to lower their fees "on the advice of friends." *Canadian Emigrant*, 13 Dec. 1834. And there is no mention of the school in the local press after 1835: *Canadian Emigrant*, 28 Mar. 1835.

sensibilities of the time, lady teachers usually also emphasized that close attention, or as Mrs. Black of St. Catharines noted, "strict regard" would be paid to students' "Moral and Religious instruction."⁶⁰ Moreover, some schoolmistresses consciously tried to make a virtue of necessity. Mrs. Marshall and her sister, Miss Davidson of Belleville, and a number of other lady teachers claimed that they were limiting the number of their students so that the instruction could be almost individual.⁶¹ Others, like Mrs. Fraser, offered to take only a few students at her boarding school in Newmarket, so that "in point of domestic comfort, the young ladies placed under her care [could] enjoy all the privileges of home."⁶²

Some teachers tried to use other factors to induce parents to patronize their establishments. Mrs. Newall announced to the residents in the eastern portion of the province in 1820 that her new location in Brockville, "in respect to health, possess[ed] superior advantages." She explained that compared with her old location in Cornwall (and by implication, the location of other local seminaries) the school now "has the benefit of pure and uncontaminated air, which gives to the necessary exercise an innocent recreation of the students during the intervals of the day."⁶³ The Streets of Niagara Falls emphasized their proximity to two churches (a Scottish church and the Church of England) and the availability of "excellent medical advice."⁶⁴

Whether such inducements were effective is unknown. Unfortunately, very few records remain of any of these schools. Our knowledge of colonial schoolmistresses is largely limited to their advertisements in local newspapers. But it can, I think, be presumed that, throughout the period, the majority of girls' schools were short-lived and there was little to distinguish most single or joint or family proprietor operations from the basic dame school. Most women teacher-proprietors made no claim of particular expertise. They tried to attract students on the basis of their own respectability as gentlewomen and their ability to recreate a

60. *UCG*, 13 Aug. 1829. See also announcement of Mrs. Bullock, *CS*, 18 Dec. 1833. School of Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Davidson, *CS*, 6 Aug. 1834. Specific mention of this was also made by Mrs. Holland, 7 Jan. 1831; Mrs. Gibson, *Hallowell Free Press*, 14 Apr. 1834.

61. *CS*, 6 Aug. 1834. The Montjoy School, *Hallowell Free Press*, 9 Oct. 1832, only took fifteen students. See also advertisement of Mrs. Black, *UCG*, 13 Aug. 1829.

62. *The Patriot*, 16 Aug. 1836; similar sentiments were expressed by Mrs. Acland of Perth, *BR*, 1 Sept. 1831; and Mrs. Hamilton, *The Patriot*, 7 Jan. 1840.

63. *KC*, 25 Feb. 1820.

64. *CS*, 20 July 1834. The importance of location was also emphasized by Miss Savigny, *The Patriot*, 13 Nov. 1840; Mrs. Bickerton, who noted the scenery around Picton, *Hallowell Free Press*, 8 Nov. 1831. Her school continued until at least 14 May 1833. See also Mrs. Marshall and Miss Davidson, who "recommended" their comfortable and "commodious" home in its "elevated and pleasant situation," *CS*, 6 Aug. 1834.

domestic environment at their school. For many parents, such qualifications were sufficient. After 1820, however, some at least began to demand a higher standard of instruction. At the same time, a number of schoolmistresses began to offer parents the services of a professional teacher. There is no evidence that a teacher's training or experience guaranteed her financial success. Many women seemed to believe, however, that this was one important way to distinguish themselves from their competitors. And it is likely that for some it was a significant advantage.

IV

When Mrs. Twigg solicited the ladies of Kingston for their patronage in 1825, she carefully outlined the merits of her situation. "For many years," she wrote, she had "conducted a Boarding and Day School in the North of Ireland, and [had] resigned a large School in that Country"⁶⁵ to come to Upper Canada. Indeed, she observed, she had been "induced" to emigrate to Upper Canada for the purpose of opening a school.

Mrs. Twigg was not alone. Between 1820 and 1840, a growing number of professional teachers came to Upper Canada alone, or with their husbands, sisters, or mothers, with the express purpose of opening a school for girls. And many of these women, including Mrs. Hamilton of Toronto,⁶⁶ Mrs. Bickerton of Picton,⁶⁷ Mrs. Weatherstone of Kingston,⁶⁸ and Mrs. Crookshank,⁶⁹ offered testimonials of their previous teaching experience,⁷⁰ evidence of professional training, and explanations of their "philosophy of education."⁷¹ Mrs. Grattan, who opened a

65. *KC*, 18 Mar. 1825.

66. She noted that in Britain she had taught at "the principal school in the City of Limerick and afterwards one at Ambleside," *The Patriot*, 7 Jan. 1840.

67. *Hallowell Free Press*, 1 Nov. 1831.

68. *KC*, 26 July 1834 to at least 9 Apr. 1836.

69. *CG*, 30 Nov. 1836.

70. See also reference of Mrs. Croan of York, *CA*, 2 Apr. 1829 to 6 Jan. 1831; Mrs. Nash, who had previously been at the Central School of London, *British American Journal*, 13 May 1834; Mrs. Brega, whose mother, who helped her in the school, had previous experience, *CG*, 15 Oct. 1834.

71. Few women explicitly made a point of their nationality, though advertisements of a number of them included that they were "recently arrived from England" or were "British." Whether colonial parents preferred teachers from Britain over those of the United States, or those of a particular religious denomination, needs to be

school in York in 1838, for example, stated that she had “completed her studies under the guidance of the most eminent masters.”⁷² In 1834, Mrs. Nash, “late Teacher of the Central School in London,” planned to initiate “Doctor Bell’s System” in her new school in York. In particular, she informed residents, “we might produce many testimonials from some of the most eminent men of science in Europe and America, to prove the superiority of this system to the ‘old way’....That instruction which is brought to bear upon the mind, is superior to that by which the memory only is called into action; or that it is better to store the mind with absolute definite ideas, than to burthen the memory with unintelligible words.”⁷³ For these women, like their sisters who immigrated to Australia, the colonies offered a viable and respectable means of earning a living and establishing a new career.⁷⁴ For some, the move to Upper Canada promised financial security; a few gained prosperity.⁷⁵

explored further. As Houston and Prentice note, the question of “loyalty” often arose with respect to male teachers. *Schooling and Scholars*, 41, 52, 63. See also Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada*, 53, concerning the Bidwell affair in 1811. Yet throughout the first half of the century, Upper Canadian parents of some means also sent their sons and daughters south to the new republic to go to school.

72. *The Patriot*, 2 Jan. 1838.
73. *British American Journal*, 13 May 1834. Other women also stressed their system of education. See also Mrs. Weatherstone, *KC*, 26 July 1834; Mrs. Bickerton, *Hallowell Free Press*, 1 Nov. 1831; the Streets, *CS*, 2 Jan. 1833; Mrs. Butler, *NG*, 17 Aug. 1833.
74. Mrs. Weatherstone and her sister “just in from England” ran a school for girls in Kingston for at least two years in the mid-1830s. *KC*, 26 Jan. 1834. They were still advertising 9 Apr. 1836. Mrs. Marshall and her sister Mrs. Davidson came from Scotland, *CS*, 6 Aug. 1834. In 1833, a most successful pair were Mrs. and Miss Street who rented Ontario House in Niagara Falls to house their new school; within a year, the Ancaster Boarding School for Young Ladies had the patronage of Lady Colbome, the Lieutenant-Governor’s wife, and the Lord Bishop of Quebec: *NG*, 9 July 1834, 30 July 1833; *CS*, 2 Jan. 1833. Another mother-daughter pair were the Savignys, who announced in *The Patriot*, 13 Nov. 1840, that they would take boarders under the age of 12 years. Gidney and Millar in *Inventing* also note the case of the Skirvings. After the death of Mr. Skirving, one of the daughters became a governess, and Mrs. Skirving and her other daughter tried to establish a girls’ school. After two unsuccessful attempts they settled in York in 1840 and the school prospered until Mrs. Skirving died in 1846 (48-49).
75. See for example James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration 1830-1914* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979); Theobald, “The Sin of Laura” and “Mere Accomplishments?”; Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, note that private-venture schools were “ephemeral” at best, and the income of their proprietors was precarious (65). The same was true of the joint-venture schools (66-69). Yet, as they note, even in the early period

One of the oldest and most successful girls' schools in Upper Canada was begun in York by Mrs. Goodman in September, 1817.⁷⁶ With twenty years' experience teaching in England and Montreal,⁷⁷ Mrs. Goodman settled in the colonial capital apparently to take advantage of its lack of schools for girls. Initially, the boarding and day school was small and its curriculum limited to reading, writing, and grammar, and lessons in music, dancing, and fancy needle-work.⁷⁸ It is likely that Mrs. Goodman taught most classes herself, though a master was engaged part-time to give lessons in dancing.⁷⁹ When she retired in the spring of 1822, her school continued, and under the direction of Mrs. Cockburn,⁸⁰ a doctor's widow from Quebec City, it became one of the premier girls' schools in the province.⁸¹

In 1835, an article in *The Patriot* reported that Mrs. Cockburn's Boarding School had forty pupils, drawn from the best families of York. To assist her in her work, Mrs. Cockburn employed four teachers—three women and one man; the curriculum now included instruction in painting on velvet, and flower and card work. At a public examination that year, attended among others by the Archdeacon of Toronto, the young ladies were questioned for four hours on a wide variety of subjects—reading, English grammar, composition, geography, civil history, arithmetic, etc., and “the principles of the Catechism.” The result, an admiring commentator noted, “was highly pleasing and satisfactory.” The girls all displayed both an “accurate knowledge of their subject” and modesty and diligence.⁸² A year later, Mrs. Cockburn again increased her establishment, hiring additional assistants and expanding the boarding facilities.⁸³ The seminary prospered until well into the 1840s.

The Goodman-Cockburn Boarding School was not the only school of such calibre in Upper Canada. In September 1826, the Misses Purcell and Rose announced the re-opening of their girls' boarding school in York.⁸⁴ Under the patronage of the Lieutenant-Governor's wife, Lady Sarah Maitland, the York Boarding School offered twelve boarding students the subjects of French, drawing, and dancing (taught by a master) in addition to the useful and ornamental

there were a few women who managed to prosper.

76. *UCG*, 4 Sept. 1817.

77. Gidney and Millar, *Inventing*, 48. See also McKenna, “Anne Powell,” 58.

78. *UCG*, 20 Jan. 1820.

79. For example, Mr. Tobias, *ibid.*, 30 Mar. 1820.

80. *Ibid.*, 30 May 1822.

81. Gidney and Millar, *Inventing*, 28.

82. *The Patriot*, 21 July 1835.

83. *Ibid.*, 23 Aug. 1836.

84. *UCG*, 26 Aug. 1826.

arts. Until at least 1833, Misses Purcell and Rose ensured that students were taught by the most skilled mistresses and masters.⁸⁵ In 1830 one of these assistants, Mrs. Beynon, left the school to strike out on her own.⁸⁶ And at the same time that one of the last notices for the Purcell and Rose school appeared in the local press in September 1833, Mrs. Beynon announced that she had “removed to a handsome new house” in a “fine, wholesome, airy situation” that was “well adapted for boarders.”⁸⁷

As the capital and by the mid-1830s the largest town of Upper Canada, York offered considerable scope for lady teachers. In addition to the Cockburn Seminary, the Misses Purcell and Rose, and Mrs. Beynon boarding schools, two other establishments of some note were also established in the 1830s. The Misses McCords opened their girls’ boarding and day school in 1831.⁸⁸ Conscious that competition in the capital was brisk, they carefully distinguished their establishment from others. “The system of teaching which they propose to follow,” their initial notice in the *Christian Guardian* explained, “will be found different from the plan generally pursued, but as it is one which is now adopted in the most respectable seminaries in Great Britain and Ireland, and one by which they have always taught, they...feel confident that on trial it will be approved here.”⁸⁹ And approved it seems to have been. For at least the next ten years, the Misses McCord “trained the minds [of young women] by intellectual exercises, and making all the exercises of the school subservient to religion.”⁹⁰ Another school which enjoyed similar success was that of the Misses Winn, “an English family of respectability and strictly moral principles” who arrived in York in 1834⁹¹ and taught young ladies well into the 1840s.⁹²

York was not the only location where professional teachers found scope for their work. Miss Leah operated a seminary for young ladies in Kingston from 1831 to at least 1840 under the patronage of the Archdeacon Stewart, while her brother (or father) was master of a commercial school in Cramache.⁹³ Two years earlier, Mrs. Breckenridge and Mrs. Fenwick, an English lady of “considerable

85. Madam Harris arrived to teach French; *ibid.*, 30 Aug. 1828. A music master was engaged, *CA*, 12 Aug. 1830.

86. *UCG*, 11 June 1829.

87. *Canadian Freeman*, 5 Sept. 1833. The last announcement for Mrs. Beynon appeared in July 1834.

88. *CA*, 14 July 1831.

89. *CG*, 16 June 1831.

90. *Ibid.*, 12 Aug. 1835. It should be noted that in 1840 there was a notice in *The Patriot*, 25 Aug. 1840, to re-open the school.

91. *The Patriot*, 10 June 1834.

92. *Ibid.*, 29 Dec. 1840.

93. School opening, *KC*, 27 Aug. 1831; an announcement by brother, *CS*, 4 Oct. 1831.

experience," had opened the Niagara Seminary.⁹⁴ Their initial advertisement stated their belief that "the great object of an instructor is to inspire a taste for knowledge, and to cultivate the power of acquiring it."⁹⁵ With the patronage of "the principal families of Niagara"⁹⁶ and the help of "suitable assistants," the two women instructed students in the standard curriculum of the time and held at least annual public examinations throughout the 1830s.⁹⁷ By mid-decade, they were competing with a Miss Butler, who also offered, with her assistant, "instruction in the various branches of a polite education."⁹⁸ When Miss Butler was forced to retire due to illness in 1835, her school was assumed by Miss Christle, a former assistant, and her partner Miss Chettle.⁹⁹

After 1815, single and married women also opened girls' schools in small towns and villages, like Cobourg, St. Catharines, Bytown, Brockville, Belleville, and Peterborough. The growing demand for "superior" education for women encouraged a few teachers to move from one community to another, either to gain a better location for their school, or to take advantage of new opportunities for employment. A case in point was Miss Radcliffe. In 1823, a brief account in the *Niagara Gleaner* described an evening "of the finest treats." "The young ladies under the tuition of Mrs. and Miss Radcliffe exhibited specimens of their industry and improvement, to an assemblage of nearly all the finest families of the Town."¹⁰⁰ The next month, it was announced that Mrs. and Miss Radcliffe's school would re-open.¹⁰¹ Nothing more was heard of the Radcliffe school or its proprietors until 1829, when a notice in the *Brockville Gazette* noted that a Miss Radcliffe was now directing the Brockville Seminary.¹⁰² It appears that at some time in the intervening years, the Niagara school had closed (and perhaps Mrs. Radcliffe had died as there was no subsequent mention of her) and at least one of her daughters had found her way to Kingston, to teach at the high school for ladies. Then either she or her sister made their way to Brockville. The editor of the *Brockville Gazette* was clearly pleased with the community's acquisition. "We beg to congratulate the gentry of this place" on the new seminary, he wrote, particularly as Miss Radcliffe possessed "great abilities and accomplishment."¹⁰³

94. *FJ*, 18 Mar. 1829.

95. *Ibid.*, 6 May 1829.

96. *CG*, 27 Feb. 1833.

97. Announcements of examinations appeared in the *Niagara Herald*, 21 Jan. 1830; *NG*, 17 Dec. 1831. In 1831, 12 Feb., a Miss Fraser was hired as an assistant.

98. *NG*, 17 Aug. 1833.

99. *Ibid.*, 23 May 1835.

100. *Ibid.*, 28 June 1823.

101. *Ibid.*, 3 July 1823.

102. *Brockville Gazette*, 17 July 1829.

103. *Ibid.*, 24 July 1829. The Miss Radcliffe in Brockville was accompanied by her brother or father who was teaching at the boys' high school: *KC*, 8 Aug. 1829, 9 Jan.

Two years later one of the Miss Radcliffes re-surfaced in Cobourg, where she "had undertaken a share in the direction of the Cobourg Ladies' Academy."¹⁰⁴

The Misses Radcliffes, Miss Cockburn, Mrs. Breckenridge, and a growing number of women who owned and/or taught in Upper Canadian girls' schools or ladies' academies were professional teachers. They taught for a living and, given the durability of their schools, were able and expected to continue to teach throughout much of their lives. Their success was the result of a number of factors. They must have had some ability to teach, and perhaps considerable knowledge of their subjects. They also had gained a reputation, both in their local community and in some cases throughout the colony, as women of integrity, respectability, and ability. These teacher-proprietors must also have possessed some considerable skill in administration and management. Like any other successful business person, they had to hire and fire employees, keep accurate accounts, establish and maintain certain routines and work schedules, and generally invest their time, energy, and financial assets wisely. Not all or even most women who began private-venture schools were so capable. And even if they had the expertise and experience, many women teachers did not have the economic resources that must have been available to Mrs. Goodman or the Misses Winn when they arrived in the colony.

Upper Canada nonetheless provided some opportunity for young, educated, and often single women teachers who arrived with sufficient capital to open their own schools. On their arrival, some found positions as a resident governess in a good family. As the number of girls' schools grew, there was an increasing demand for qualified assistants and salaried teachers. And after 1830, some young women found work as a preceptress or teacher in one of the new coeducational academies of the colony.

V

In April 1829, four trustees of a privately endowed organization announced to the public their intention of opening a new Elementary and Classical School—Grantham Academy in St. Catharines. The substantial two-storey building for the "Academick Institute" was almost complete and the trustees now solicited applications from qualified gentlemen ("graduates of some college or university") and the services of "a competent female teacher" with "respectable refer-

1830; *Brockville Gazette*, 24 July 1829.

104. *CS*, 24 May 1831.

ences or recommendations”¹⁰⁵ to assume responsibilities for teaching. Eventually, a Mr. William Lewis was appointed principal and a Miss Cornelia Converse was engaged to supervise the Ladies’ Department.¹⁰⁶ Miss Converse taught at Grantham Academy for a year; then, without explanation, she was replaced by a Miss Anderson.¹⁰⁷ Miss Converse returned, however, in the fall of 1831, only to lose her position two-and-a-half years later when the school failed.¹⁰⁸

As advertisements attest, the curriculum offered to young women enrolled at Grantham Academy reflected the ability and expertise of their teachers. Both Miss Converse and Miss Anderson appear to have taught at least some of the basic subjects—spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, and mapping. They also provided instruction in plain and fancy needlework. In the fall of 1831, Miss Converse was acclaimed for her ability “in the higher and more useful branches of female literature.”¹⁰⁹ While she was in residence, students could enrol in chemistry and geology, and probably history and natural philosophy. Miss Anderson’s abilities were more “traditional.” Considered “a young lady of ability and experience,” during her tenure at the school she oversaw “the different branches which are usually taught in Female Institutions” and particularly gave instruction in “Musick, Drawing and Ornamental Needlework.”¹¹⁰

Grantham Academy was the first of a number of coeducational private-venture day and boarding schools established in the colony in the 1830s. A professional woman teacher might find employment in the Commercial and Classical Academy¹¹¹ founded in 1833 in York, the Bay Street Academy, a day school

105. *FJ*, 1 Apr. 1829.

106. *Ibid.*, 5 Aug. 1829. It was also noted at this time that boarding would be arranged with families in the area.

107. *Ibid.*, 11 Nov. 1830; 3 Jan. 1831.

108. *Ibid.*, 16 Nov. 1831. For a time, it appears the school was financially solvent and thus the salary of its teachers assured. On 20 May 1834, the *British American Journal* announced however that Grantham Academy was forced to close, due to overwhelming financial difficulties. After failing to obtain a grant from the provincial government, trustees were forced in August to auction off the school building and pay off their creditors: *The Patriot*, 5 Aug. 1834; see also *British American Journal*, 5 Aug. 1834. The various public notices about the College suggest there were more than financial difficulties. In its first four years, there were four different principals and a number of male assistants. The school was revived, largely due to the efforts of William Merritt. In the 1840s, it became the St. Catharines Grammar School. See Gidney and Millar, *Inventing*, 23, 70-71.

109. *CG*, 1 Oct. 1831.

110. *FJ*, 3 Jan. 1831, 10 Nov. 1830.

111. A notice in the *CG* informed residents of York that eighty students were already enrolled, 14 Aug. 1833. For certainly the next three years, young men and women took a variety of classical and standard subjects from “qualified masters and

begun by Mr. Boyd,¹¹² or "The Toronto Academy" established in 1837 by Mr. Scanlon.¹¹³ All these schools maintained separate "Ladies Departments" supervised by "a Governess" or, as in the case of the Toronto Academy, the founder's wife, Mrs. Scanlon. Potential patrons were assured that the women teachers were "of unquestionable ability and respectability," and their daughters would be taught needlework and other appropriate subjects in a "separate and spacious apartment."¹¹⁴

Women willing to move out of the York area could also apply to Upper Canada Academy, a coeducational boarding school in Cobourg.¹¹⁵ Sponsored and financially underwritten by donations from the Methodist Church, the Upper Canada Academy opened its doors to boarders in 1833. The school was officially non-denominational;¹¹⁶ it did dedicate itself, however, to promoting "the health, morals, comfort and instruction of the children committed to its care," under a "parental government." To ensure that the students were truly regarded as "members of the same family," a preacher and his wife catered to their daily comforts. Masters and mistresses, whose duties were apparently restricted to teaching, superintended the students' education.¹¹⁷ The founders of Upper Canada Academy fully accepted the belief that girls needed special and separate education. From the beginning, "young ladies from the country"¹¹⁸ were afforded "Gentile accommodation" and throughout the term, "parts of the building and premises [were] assigned exclusively to the young ladies."¹¹⁹ "The course of instruction prescribed for young ladies" enrolled at the Academy was, a notice explained in 1840, "as complete in all the solid and ornamental branches of female education as any in America."¹²⁰ And parents were assured in 1837 that "the young ladies were constantly under the supervision of the Preceptress" and a considerable part of their evening was spent "in the presence of an efficient monitress...preparing their lessons for the following day."¹²¹

mistresses."

112. Notice of its first public examination, *The Patriot*, 30 Aug. 1833; notice of other examinations appeared 30 Dec. 1834, 5 Jan. 1836.

113. *Ibid.*, 14 Nov. 1837.

114. *CG*, "Concerning the Commercial and Classical School" 14 Aug. 1833. See also *CA*, 15 Aug. 1833.

115. *CG*, 20 June 1832. See Marion Royce, "Methodism and Education of Women in Nineteenth Century Ontario," *Atlantis* 3:2, Pt 1 (Spring 1978): 131-43.

116. *CG*, 29 Sept. 1830.

117. *Ibid.*, 31 July 1839.

118. *Ibid.*, 7 Aug. 1833.

119. *Ibid.*, 6 May 1840.

120. *Ibid.*, 23 Sept. 1840.

121. *Ibid.*, 27 Dec. 1837. It was also noted that it was automatic grounds for expulsion if male students entered the girls' section of the school.

Being a teacher at a large school in Upper Canada was considerably different from owning and operating one's own school. Miss Anderson, Miss Converse, and others in their position received a specific wage for their work, remuneration which was negotiated and did not depend on their ability to attract students or manage a business. At the same time, women hired as teachers had little independence or authority. The initial advertisement soliciting students for Grantham Academy noted that "the Female Department is visited daily by the Principal" and young ladies would be taught some "of the branches" of their education by masters.¹²² Miss Converse, Miss Anderson, and others who taught for wages were undoubtedly also subject to close scrutiny in their private lives. Only women of proven and clearly evident decorum and ability could be entrusted with the care of patrons' daughters. Many of the single women who taught at one of the new coeducational schools or at one of the larger ladies' academies undoubtedly expected to marry and leave the paid work-force. Others, like Mrs. Barnes, who taught at Upper Canada Academy in 1840 and 1841, had ambitions to open their own schools and gain greater freedom of action.¹²³

VI

Mrs. Tyler and her husband would have been hard-pressed to compete in the academic world of post-1815 Upper Canada. Indeed, to many colonial parents in the 1830s, Mrs. Tyler's school would have appeared hopelessly old-fashioned. Within two generations, middle-class Upper Canadians had embraced specialized education for women. It was accepted that literacy, the "domestic arts," and mastery of at least some of the accomplishments was absolutely necessary for future wives and mothers of the middle and upper classes. It is somewhat ironic that at a time when society was placing increasing importance on the cult of domesticity and prescribed that "true" women restrict their activities to the private sphere of the home, middle-class parents increasingly relied on wage-earning women to transmit these values and skills to their daughters. While continuing to perform essentially "women's" work, these wage-earners or individual pro-

122. *FJ*, 1 Apr. 1829. Notice of annual examination, "Communications," *British Colonial Argus*, 6 Aug. 1833.

123. It was noted that Miss Barnes taught at the school: *CG*, 19 Feb. and 29 Apr. 1840. She opened her own school with Mrs. Van Norman in 1842: *ibid.*, 4 May 1842. There were a few other women of similar circumstances. A Mrs. Hurlburt, for example, for a number of years preceptress at Upper Canada Academy (4 May 1842), started her own school a year later. For more information on Mrs. Hurlburt and Mrs. Van Norman, see Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 67-68, 87, 362.

prietors provided a very strong, though often elastic, link between the public and the private worlds of Upper Canadians. Yet lady teachers were themselves often products of these new social values, and most accepted its dictates. They jealously guarded their status as gentlewomen, and carefully restricted their work and their classrooms within the domestic, private realm of home and family.

Nonetheless, a number of women teachers were implicitly challenging the basic rubric about a woman's relationship to paid labour. Many women teachers undoubtedly did expect to teach only until their financial circumstances improved. Most young women teachers did undoubtedly marry and leave the job market. Widowed women and their friends and daughters may too have hoped to remarry or to realize their husband's assets and thus regain the privacy of their homes and the rhythms of apparent leisure. A few women schoolmistresses undoubtedly found, however, that teaching provided more than a short-term solution to their financial problems. For widowed women, in particular, it offered the possibility of financial independence and personal satisfaction. And some, like Mrs. Cockburn, Miss Purcell, and the Misses McCords, imperceptively moved from the status of the "amateur" teacher to that of a professional. Though supporting and in some cases embracing in their work the "dictates of domesticity," they also seemed unwilling to give up that independence that came with working for wages.