

Donald Soucy and Harold Pearse. *The First Hundred Years: A History of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*. Fredericton/Halifax: University of New Brunswick Faculty of Education/Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1993. Pp. 182. Can\$15.00.

Donald Soucy's and Harold Pearse's book, *The First Hundred Years: A History of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*, traces the social and cultural history of one of Canada's premier formal art schools. The Victoria School of Art and Design (as it was known until 1925) was founded in 1887 by a group of Halifax elite, among them Anna Leonowens (author of *The King and I*), as a commemorative project on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Leonowens and other early promoters envisioned the establishment of the College as part of an international art education movement which "not only encouraged the fine arts . . . but . . . [gave] a remarkable impetus and a higher artistic value to all the various branches of [the] mechanical and industrial arts" (p. 4). Over the next one hundred years the College through its various agents became an integral part of Halifax's social and cultural life. In the introduction, Louis W. Collins, Halifax's civic historian, suggests that the College served as a "social document" of the city, one which illustrative of the "institution's place within the community and of the community's reaction to [its] presence and activities" (p. xiii).

The book is in the genre of art school histories which until recently came within the discipline of art history and museum studies. These selective texts often serve as official ceremonial statements attesting to the schools' aesthetic progressivism (and often avant-garde ideology) as represented by its male administration and faculty. Within this framework, change, if discussed at all, is attributed to stylistic periodization, specific groups of artists, and or individual "creative" artists. There is often little critical discussion of how society and the state affected aesthetic ideologies and agendas or how notions of gender and class constructed definitions of art and artist at different historical junctions.

Unlike other institutional histories of art schools, which deal with the schools in relative isolation from social, educational, or cultural contexts, *The First Hundred Years* proposes that the art school as an institution (apart from its structural organization and function) is intrinsically linked to the educational, social, and cultural conditions and prevailing discourses of its time. To this end, the authors transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, which so often mar the analysis of aesthetic culture, fusing (although not always comfortably) methods from art history, educational and curriculum history, and art education. Importantly, they consider both gender and class as medi-

ating factors in the establishment, structural workings, and experience of students, teachers, and administrative staff at the school.

The authors utilize a significant, and hitherto unknown, quantity of sources which highlight the College's past. The book was conceived in 1985, after the discovery of two boxes containing archival material dating back from the College's early inception in 1887. This valuable find (now in the possession of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia), including minute books, memos, photographs, reports, scrapbooks, and newspaper clippings, forms the substantive content of the first seven chapters. Clearly, this important archival find containing letters from Anna Leonowens and scrapbooks from president Elizabeth Styring Nutt (1919–43) provide illuminating insights into the historical relationship between women, art, and school administration. The authors have also compiled an indispensable appendix containing lists of names and dates of all school administrative staff and officers, faculty, and honorary diploma and degree recipients dating back to the College's early years. This compiled data alone is a unique source for future historians interested in quantitative and qualitative studies on a variety of issues relating to education, culture, and gender.

Despite these noble intentions and the use of wonderful sources and lists, the book has many problems. *The First Hundred Years* is often overly descriptive and celebratory (the book was undertaken during preparations for the 1987 centenary celebrations) and occasionally lacks critical depth. For example, it all too often degenerates into simplistic dichotomized portrayals of individual agents. Perhaps the most striking example of this is how the authors conceptualize and represent gender discussions. Although they cite gender as an important analytic category, they often fall prey to unwitting and contentious characterizations. For example, the authors make use of rather shallow portrayals of early founding members Anna Leonowens and Mrs. Jeremiah Kenny to show how their personal characters were related to their promotion of industrial art or fine arts programs, respectively. They point out that Leonowens (who is later labelled a "feminist," p. 36) "was older, more reserved, well travelled, and well respected for her literary accomplishments and her eloquence." They suggest on the other hand, that Kenny "was young, striking in appearance, and well respected for her energetic and imaginative initiation of social events" (p. 4). A similar distinction in a debate between principal Elizabeth Styring Nutt and artist-teacher Stanley Royle runs into much the same problems. Nutt is largely represented in personal terms as an autocratic, spiteful, publicity-seeking, partisan teacher who was artistically a conservative. In contrast, her male competitor is discussed in light of his artistic abilities and his affable relations with local artist organizations and individual artists.

Dichotomized discussions of social relations result partly from the book's structural organization. Following a chronological scheme, the authors frame the narrative around several recurring themes, such as "the quest for suitable space," the "struggle for survival amidst financial and political adversity," "the relationship between society and the local community," "leadership," and "the central role played by women." Although the themes are situated within their various historical contexts, their repetition quickly becomes predictable.

The coherence of the whole is jeopardized as each chapter is further subsectioned into more compact and focussed vignettes, which are at times irritatingly uneven or exceedingly irrelevant. For example, the discussion of the "legend" of whether former principal Henry Rosenberg (1898–1910) came under the tutelage of English artist James McNeil Whistler is artistically hagiographic and digressive (p. 44). On the other hand, notable issues such as the early alliance of the College's women and the local chapter of the National Council of Women of Canada are barely mentioned. Unfortunately, the authors have also omitted any discussions of the dissemination of aesthetic cultural discourses from such already established communities as Montreal, Toronto, and even St. John, New Brunswick.

As the narrative in each chapter unfolds, local, regional, and international contexts and communities and their agents emerge. Although there is often little discussion as to the motives of individuals or groups involved, there are some particularly interesting exceptions, for example, the discussion over such often neglected issues as architecture and the distribution of physical space. The authors observe that the school was often housed in buildings owned by board members whose "interest in the Art School was highest when property negotiations were on the agenda . . . [and at] their . . . lowest level once these negotiations were settled" (p. 50). This is correlated to the number of times they actually attended meetings and the times board members reached quorum. This type of critical analysis is essential in looking beyond standard aesthetic ideologies and public service interpretations regarding board membership. The authors also look at the gendered division of labour among the College's board members in fund-raising projects. Not surprisingly, they found that women were often relegated to conducting social "at homes" and bazaars while the men appropriated the more "serious" endeavours, such as procuring "government grants and real estate" (p. 51).

Although *The First Hundred Years* has various structural and theoretical problems, it has much to offer the educational historian. Soucy's and Pearse's history of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design is much more than a history of an art school; it is an important glimpse into how and why various institutions, communities, and individual agents participated in, contested, and eventually constructed their conceptions of aesthetic cultural life. Significant-

ly, *The First Hundred Years* is a compelling reminder to historians of education that schools of art, long overlooked in critical studies, are viable and important post-secondary institutions which merit scholarly inquiry.

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Robert Thomas Dixon. *Be a Teacher: A History of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, 1944-1994*. Toronto: Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, 1994. Pp. 541.

Robert Thomas Dixon, a Catholic parent, teacher, and provincial educator, was commissioned by the OECTA to write this commemorative account of the Association to mark the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in 1944. Dixon bases his analysis of the OECTA on the dichotomy between teacher professionalism and unionism. The study shows how the OECTA worked to increase salaries, improve working conditions and benefits, and win collective bargaining for English Catholic teachers, and the right to strike for all teachers. Much of the OECTA's attention also focussed on Catholic education and the funding of separate schools. Dixon shows how the OECTA worked with the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) along with its affiliates, and the Catholic community, largely represented by the English Catholic Education Association of Ontario, the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association, and the Bishops.

The book includes nine chapters and an interview with the current president of the OECTA, Claire Ross. Three appendices list the OECTA's constitution, by-laws, units, service departments, executive, awards of merit, and life and honorary members. The first three chapters provide an historical foundation for the following six. Chapter 1 looks at the history of teacher associations in Canada. Here Dixon also deals with the issue of teacher professionalism by presenting the theories of J. M. Paton, A. Kratzmann, and Harry Charlesworth. Dixon attributes the founding of the OECTA to the Teaching Profession Act of 1944, claiming that prior to this, the shortage of corporation tax revenues for separate schools and the lack of government grants or municipal taxes beyond grade ten, the resulting low teacher salaries, and the large number of religious teachers, especially in the urban areas, kept English Catholic teachers from forming a federation. However, the Act, by making all teachers "professionals in the eyes of the law," gave English Catholic teachers the "status" to enforce ethical behaviour and work for