

Women Teachers in the Turbulent Educational World of St. John's, Newfoundland, 1920-1949

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Cet article examine les expériences d'enseignantes de la ville de St. John's entre les années 1920 et les années 1940. Même si elles subissaient dans leur travail quotidien l'influence de nombreuses forces sociales, dont celle de la religion, de la classe, du colonialisme et du sexe, les femmes enseignantes faisaient figure d'expertes en programmes d'études et en pédagogie dans les écoles de la ville. Elles trouvaient aussi des lieux où elles pouvaient mettre plus largement leur expertise au service de la formation des enseignants et de l'élaboration des politiques en matière d'éducation à Terre-Neuve pendant cette époque.

This article focuses on the experiences of women teachers in the city of St. John's between the 1920s and the 1940s. Although their daily work was influenced by many social forces, including those of religion, class, colonialism, and gender, women teachers were positioned as curriculum and pedagogical experts in city schools. They also found spaces to contribute their expertise more broadly to teacher training and education policy-making in Newfoundland during this era.

IN AUGUST 1936 BROTHER CORNELIUS WROTE to his friend, Alain Frecker, the recently appointed educational research officer in the Newfoundland Department of Education: "You are steering a fine course through the currents, cross-currents and counter currents of the educational world of St. John's and entre nous, that would tax the wisdom of a Solomon."¹ The Department of Education managed a state-funded system of denominational schools and Frecker had ostensibly been appointed to maintain the balance of power between denominational interests in the system. Denominationalism was one of the currents referred to by Brother Cornelius, but there were others. In 1933 responsible government had been suspended and Newfoundland was subjected again to British colonial rule with the establishment of the Commission of Government. According to Frecker, this new government's objective in regards to education was "to break the stranglehold of the denominational school system."² Yet

1 Brother Cornelius to Alain Frecker, 30 August 1936, Correspondence 1936, G.A. Frecker Papers, Coll. – 193: 3.03.002, Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives (CNSA).

2 G. Alain Frecker, "From Commission of Government to Confederation," in Phillip McCann, ed., *Blackboards and Briefcases: Personal Stories by Newfoundland Teachers, Educators and Administrators* (St. John's: Jespersion Press, 1982), pp. 3-4, 8.

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the tensions that had arisen in terms of education not only originated from conflict between the Church of England, the dominant denomination in politics and education, and the Roman Catholic Church, but were also entwined with the conflict between the British and "native born Newfoundlanders."³ In addition, there were the crosscurrents relating to social class as the denominational colleges favoured by the middle class in St. John's held a privileged position in the school system and were much better funded than other schools.

These tensions relating to religion, colonialism, and class have been referred to by some eminent former administrators in their reflections about this era, but there is an important aspect that escaped their attention and that is related to the gendered nature of the educational system.⁴ The educational world of St. John's was one in which men managed and women taught; the administration of the Department of Education, the supervision of teachers, and leadership in teacher education were in men's hands while the teaching workforce was predominantly female. In this respect Newfoundland was no different from other British dominions such as Canada and Australia, where the creation of state school systems in the 19th century had resulted in predominantly female teaching workforces and confirmed educational administration as a male domain.⁵ This article focuses not on the male administrators, whose perspectives have already been recorded, but on the women who made up the bulk of the teaching workforce and the ways in which they steered their way through this turbulent educational world between the 1920s and the 1940s.

In 1997 Kate Rousmaniere wrote of the "historical silence" surrounding women teachers' work in the early 20th century. Indeed, it has been "all but ignored" by labour and feminist historians, and amongst historians of education more attention has been paid to the work of rural women teachers than their counterparts in city schools.⁶ This is as much the case in Newfoundland as elsewhere.⁷ However, Rousmaniere's

3 Phillip McCann, "Class, Gender and Religion in Newfoundland Education, 1836-1901," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*, 1, 2 (1989), p. 181.

4 McCann, *Blackboards and Briefcases*; Fred Rowe, *The Development of Education in Newfoundland* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1964); Ralph Andrews, *Integration and Other Developments in Newfoundland Education, 1915-1949* (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications Limited, 1985).

5 Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald, "The Historiography of Women Teachers: A Retrospect," in Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald, eds., *Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Marta Danylewycz, Beth Light, and Alison Prentice, "The Evolution of the Sexual Division of Labor in Teaching: Nineteenth Century Ontario and Quebec Case Study," in Jane Gaskell and Arlene McLaren, eds., *Women and Education*, 2nd edition (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1991), pp. 33-6; Cecilia Reynolds, "Hegemony and Hierarchy: Becoming a Teacher in Toronto, 1930-1980," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*, 2, 1 (1990), p. 95; and Phillip McCann, *Schooling in a Fishing Society: Education and Economic Conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador, 1836-1986* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1994), pp. 198-9.

6 Kate Rousmaniere, *City Teachers: Teaching and School Reform in Historical Perspective* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), pp. 5-7.

7 See, for example, Linda Kealey, ed., *Pursuing Equality: Historical Perspectives on Women in Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1993); Grace Layman, *That Part of My Life* (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications Limited, 1994); Alice Collins and Patricia Langlois, "'I Knew I Would Have to Make a Choice': Voices of Women Teachers from Newfoundland and Labrador," *Newfoundland Studies*, 11, 2 (1995), pp. 308-28; Dennis Mulcahy, "Formal and Informal Education in Fair Haven, Placentia Bay, 1911-1958," *Newfoundland Studies*,

study of New York City schools, and Dina Copelman and Alison Oram's research on London's women teachers illuminate the lives and work of city teachers.⁸ In these cities the teaching staffs of large schools were mostly female while the administrators in the school systems were men. Furthermore, in Canadian cities such as Toronto, coeducational schools were organized hierarchically with male principals and female assistant teachers. Men usually taught the upper grades where there were fewer students while women were relegated to larger classes of young children.⁹ While there is much evidence of discrimination against women teachers, recent research has focused on ways in which women educators in a variety of contexts mobilized within and around patriarchal structures, deploying their intellectual, cultural, and political acumen to challenge the gender order in their workplaces.¹⁰ This literature emphasizes that women educators were leading figures in feminist politics and teachers' unions, and that they worked with local communities and in teacher education to effect change.

This article highlights the experiences of teachers who worked in the city of St. John's from the time of the Education Act in 1920 to Confederation with Canada in 1949. The number of women teachers in the city during this period is relatively small compared to other occupations. In 1921, for example, 34 per cent of women workers in St. John's were domestic servants whereas only 10 per cent were professionals (the majority being teachers).¹¹ Paucity in numbers in the general workforce, however, does not necessarily mean that women who taught lacked influence in the state school system. Department of Education annual reports, newspaper articles, school records, and accounts of the work of individual teachers collected in the 1970s by Phillip McCann provide evidence of the contribution to both teaching and school administration of many highly qualified and experienced women in St. John's during the pre-Confederation era as do the 2004 oral history interviews conducted with five

11, 2 (1995), pp. 283-307; Aubrey Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1984), pp. 60-5; and Kay Whitehead and Judith Peppard, "Placing the Grandy Sisters as Teachers in Pre-Confederation Newfoundland," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*, 17, 1 (2005), pp. 81-105.

8 Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*; Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism, 1870-1930* (London: Routledge, 1996); Alison Oram, *Women Teachers and Feminist Politics, 1900-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

9 Reynolds, "Hegemony and Hierarchy," pp. 95, 105; Cecilia Reynolds and Harry Smaller, "Gender Relations Among Teachers: A Study of Ontario Teachers in the 1930s," *McGill Journal of Education/Revue des Sciences de L'Éducation de McGill*, 31, 1 (1996), pp. 39-53; Kristina Llewellyn, "Gendered Democracy: Women Teachers in Post-War Toronto," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*, 18, 1 (2006), pp. 1-25.

10 Diane Moyer, "Agency in Feminist Historical Research: Representations of Elsie Ripley Clapp," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 20, 4 (2004), pp. 33-43; Marjorie Theobald, "Women, Leadership and Gender Politics in the Interwar Years: The Case of Julia Flynn," *History of Education*, 29, 1 (2000), pp. 63-77; Kate Deverall, "A Bid for Affirmative Action: Annie Golding and the New South Wales Public School Teachers' Association, 1900-1915," *Labour History*, 77 (1999), pp. 117-39; Kathleen Weiler, *Country Schoolwomen: Teaching in Rural California, 1850-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

11 Nancy Forestell and Jessie Chisholm, "Working Class Women as Wage Earners in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1890-1921," in Peta Tancred-Sheriff, ed., *Feminist Research: Prospect and Retrospect* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), p. 154.

former teachers who worked in St. John's during the 1930s and 1940s.¹² The main argument of this article is that women city teachers' work was marked by many social forces, including those of religion, class, colonialism, and gender, and that, although these forces hindered women's ability to acquire qualifications and their career paths, women teachers in city schools successfully negotiated these currents, cross-currents, and counter-currents in their daily work and found an array of spaces to contribute to education in Newfoundland. Indeed, we show that women teachers were able to use their administrative, curriculum, and pedagogical expertise in the field of teacher education and to influence curriculum policy and practice in Newfoundland schools.

In 1920 the Newfoundland government passed an education act which, according to Fred Rowe, was "perhaps the most important Act in Newfoundland history."¹³ This legislation, for instance, created the "Department of Education" to manage the denominational school system. The new department inherited 1,053 state-funded schools operated by various religious denominations: 315 by the Roman Catholic Church, 344 by the Church of England, 325 by the Methodist Church, and a small number by the Presbyterian Church, the Congregational Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Salvation Army.¹⁴ The vast majority were sole-charge schools in tiny outport communities. More than 20 years later, the denominational composition had not changed markedly nor had school size: "Of the 1,171 schools in operation [in 1942], 809 were sole-charge; 325 employed from 2-5 teachers, and 35 from 6 to 20 teachers. One of the two remaining schools engaged 26 teachers and the other 30."¹⁵ The creation of the Department of Education, therefore, did not result in the centralisation and rationalisation of the school system. Instead, the three major denominational groups maintained control over the employment of teachers and the establishment and operation of their schools. Indeed, the educational landscape in Newfoundland was much the same at the time of Confederation as it was in 1920.

Although the Department of Education produced annual reports from its inception, they were descriptive and contained little statistical information. Individual schools in St. John's were mentioned occasionally, but there are no extant lists of schools in the city in the interwar years and thus no information about the size and condition of various schools, student numbers, or staff. The annual reports and a map of the city indicate that St. John's had up to 28 schools, including orphanage schools, which were operated by various Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church. Middle-class students were served by five denominational colleges: two run by the Church of England, two by the Roman Catholic Church, and one by the United Church. There were six Church of England schools and approximately nine Roman Catholic schools. Prior to 1925, when the Methodist and Congregational churches joined together to form the United Church, there were four Methodist schools and two

12 The interviews were conducted in June and July 2004 by Dr. Judith Peppard and were funded by a Flinders University grant entitled "Women Teaching in Newfoundland, 1920-1949: The outport/urban divide." See also McCann, *Blackboards and Briefcases*.

13 Fred Rowe, *Education and Culture in Newfoundland* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976), p. 21.

14 "Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Church of England Boards," *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1921/22* (St. John's: Union Publishing Co.), p. 75; *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1919/20*; Andrews, *Integration*, p. 23.

15 *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1942*, p. 38.

Congregational schools. There was also a Presbyterian school and a Salvation Army school in the city.¹⁶

An inter-denominational committee, made up of representatives of Protestant school boards and two “educational experts from Columbia University,” reported on the physical condition of Protestant schools in St. John’s in 1920. The committee noted the deplorable state of the school buildings “in respect of heating, ventilation, light and sanitary conveniences.” Indeed, “six school buildings scored five points or less out of a possible fifty-five points. This means that the adequacy and arrangements of the toilet fixtures were of the lowest order. The insanitary condition was especially remarked.”¹⁷ Furthermore, there was little in the way of school furniture or equipment and no denomination seemed “able to provide a properly equipped laboratory for chemistry and physics.” The committee recommended an amalgamation among the Protestant boards of education even “if our Roman Catholic friends could not enter such amalgamation,” but the move was strongly opposed by the “clerical side” of the Church of England Synod.¹⁸ The denominational school system remained firmly in place and there is no evidence to suggest that the physical conditions of schools in St. John’s improved in the following years.

The second reason for the importance of the 1920 Education Act in the history of Newfoundland education is that it provided for a Normal School to train teachers. Prior to 1920, trainee teachers had undertaken “academic work at the high school level, to which was attached some practice in conducting classes” in designated schools in St. John’s.¹⁹ The Normal School began in temporary premises in 1921 and provided a six-month training course. A new building was opened in 1924 and, in the absence of adequate government funding, was financed by the Carnegie Corporation for many years. Newfoundland’s disastrous economic depression led to its closure in 1932. It re-opened as a department of Memorial University College in 1934 and teacher training was extended to one year. Students who attended the Normal School for the minimum period graduated with a First Grade certificate. The University Grade and Associate in Arts Grade (AA) certificates required further university-level study as well as teaching experience. Memorial University College did not have the capacity to confer degrees, so attendance at a university outside Newfoundland was required for those who wished to study at higher levels.²⁰

16 *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland: 1919/20, 1921/22, 1924/25, 1926/27, and 1928/29*; Map of St. John’s, Newfoundland, “from Official Plans and actual Surveys by W.P. Ryan, City Engineer,” 1932, Memorial University Library Map Centre, Map G 3439, S33, 1932, R93. Statistical reports published by the Newfoundland Bureau of Education (1931-33) and the Newfoundland Department of Education (1934-40) make little reference to city schools except to indicate that they were better resourced than their rural counterparts. This is also the case in the annual reports published by the Newfoundland Department of Education from 1941 through to the end of the 1945-46 school year.

17 *Daily News* (St. John’s), 17 September 1920, p. 3.

18 *Daily News*, 13 September 1920, p. 5. In another article on the same page, the Roman Catholic Archbishop is reported as saying that St. Joseph’s School in Hoyleston, St. John’s, was “second to none in Newfoundland both in educational facilities and pedagogical equipment.” The intention may have been to point out that schools under Roman Catholic boards were comparatively well-resourced and that there was no need for amalgamation with their Protestant counterparts. See also Andrews, *Integration*, p. 85.

19 Rowe, *Development of Education in Newfoundland*, p. 128.

20 Rowe, *Development of Education in Newfoundland*, pp. 126-30; Andrews, *Integration*, pp. 102-03.

The third reason for the importance of the 1920 Education Act was that it created an inspectorate in Newfoundland schools; however, this was not put into effect until the installation of the Commission of Government in 1933. By this time teachers' salaries had been reduced by 50 per cent (1931-32) and education was in a perilous state. Besides injecting funding into the school system, one of the Commission of Government's early initiatives was to reorganize the Department of Education and appoint a new director. In addition, as Rowe notes, "there was considerable expectation that the new government would take advantage of the financial situation and its semi-dictatorial position to eliminate the denominational system."²¹ The Church of England and Catholic Bishops and their respective congregations, however, representing two-thirds of Newfoundland's population, resisted such moves and the Commission of Government focused instead on curriculum reform and the employment of 12 inspectors beginning in 1936 to effect change in Newfoundland schools.²²

While there was much discussion about making schooling compulsory at the time of the 1920 Education Act and again with the establishment of the Commission of Government, this was not realized in legislation until 1943 nor were the regulations strictly enforced thereafter. Thus, throughout the period from 1920 to the 1940s, Newfoundland children attended schools irregularly (i.e., when family circumstances enabled them to do so). The 1920 Education Act arguably affected teachers to a far greater extent, the vast majority of whom were women. In 1920 there were 1,423 teachers in the state school system in Newfoundland, 79 per cent of whom were women; approximately 85 per cent of teachers in Catholic and Methodist Church schools were women whereas the Church of England workforce was the most masculinized of the three denominational groups at 64 per cent women teachers.²³ In sole-charge schools, inexperienced women teachers dominated numerically, and where men and women were on the staff it was the latter who were more likely to be teaching the lower grades.²⁴ In St. John's, however, experienced and well-qualified women were predominant, serving as teachers, teacher educators, and principals. This was the case in the early 1920s and continued throughout the pre-Confederation era.

This high level of experience and qualifications was evident among the female personnel in the six co-educational Church of England schools in St. John's.²⁵ Muriel Purchase, for example, "a most gifted teacher" at the Model School, had been involved in teacher training prior to the establishment of the Normal School. In 1916 she and three assistant teachers were responsible for the training of 173 students.²⁶ Purchase then studied "the teaching of reading and Kindergarten and Primary

21 Rowe, *Development of Education in Newfoundland*, pp. 70-1.

22 P. Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929-1949* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), pp. 45-57; Frecker, "From Commission of Government to Confederation," pp. 3-4.

23 "Report of Public Schools of Newfoundland under Church of England Boards," *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1919/20*, p. 43.

24 See, for example, Whitehead and Peppard, "Placing the Grandy Sisters."

25 These schools were the highly regarded Model School, Springdale St., St. Thomas's, St. Mary's, St. George's, and St. Michael's, each of which varied in size of student population. See Andrews, *Integration*, p. 130.

26 Andrews, *Integration*, pp. 52-3.

Methods in general” at the Teachers College, Columbia, New York, in 1920.²⁷ Thereafter she was the principal of the Model School – “the only century-old school in the colony.” This school was supported by the Colonial and Continental Church Society and catered to almost 200 students from Kindergarten to Grade X.²⁸ For her part, Laura Haines, who taught at St. Thomas’s Church of England School in the mid-1940s, recalled that “at the time St. John’s used to be run by female principals, the Anglicans . . . [had] Miss Purchase was in one, Miss Cherrington was the principal of Spencer. . . . But nearly always the Anglican schools, they had Miss Colley on the southside at St. Mary’s, Miss Blackmore in one, Miss Worrall in the other one, so in the Anglican schools, there were always lady teachers.”²⁹ Haines’s principal was Miriam Blackmore, a Newfoundlander by birth who had trained in South Africa and returned home to teach in the 1920s. Blackmore had also studied at Memorial University College to acquire the University Grade certificate while teaching at Springdale St. in the 1930s.³⁰

The path to being a women principal of a school could be quite varied. Mabel Worrall had spent her early years teaching in the outports, upgrading her qualifications before taking positions in St. John’s. She taught at Bishop Spencer College for one year, conducted a private school in St. John’s for two years, and then spent 20 years at Springdale St. as principal. In the 1920s this school was known for its commercial classes and “nine well-trained first grade teachers.”³¹ Another teacher, Josephine Colley, also taught in outport communities before coming to St. John’s, where she spent 20 years as principal of St. Mary’s. The two-room St. Mary’s school had few children in the upper grades and was particularly impoverished in terms of its students’ economic circumstances, buildings, and equipment.³² In 1920 the newly appointed teacher of the lower room observed that there was “no facility of any kind here. I have only a piece of blackboard on a chair as yet.”³³ In 1925 one of St. Mary’s teachers commented: “Things are going on much as usual. Some of the scholars attend very irregularly, thereby losing lessons. Others ask ‘to get off’ before lessons are over, by request of their parents for things which are connected with household affairs. Tis very difficult for children to make headway.”³⁴

27 “Report of Public Schools of Newfoundland under Church of England Boards,” *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1919/20*, p. 6.

28 “Report of Public Schools of Newfoundland under Church of England Boards,” *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1922/23*, p. 31.

29 Laura (Hodder) Haines, interview with Judith Peppard, Conception Bay South, July 2004 (interview tapes and transcripts are in possession of authors).

30 The teaching records for each of these women are located in Anglican Transfers Service/Payroll Records 1907-48, PRC #21, box #5, file AE3, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland (PANL); see also Church of England Teachers Pension Accounts, Department of Education, PRC #21, R1, box #3, PANL.

31 *Daily News*, 2 September 1922, p. 2.

32 Stoker, Richard, St. Mary’s School, St. John’s, Logbooks, 1916-1954, 6 September 1920 (no page numbers), book 1, MG 365, PANL.

33 Stoker, Richard, St. Mary’s School, St. John’s, Logbooks, 1916-1954, 10 September 1920 (no page numbers), book 2, MG 365, PANL.

34 Stoker, Richard, St. Mary’s School, St. John’s, Logbooks, 1916-1954, 4 March 1925 (no page numbers), book 2, MG 365, PANL.

The situation at St. Mary's, where the working-class children were required to contribute to their family's economic survival, stood in stark contrast to Bishop Spencer College, where the daughters of the upper class received their education. Inequalities were reinforced by the government, which granted proportionately more funds to the denominational colleges than to other schools. Indeed, "the Government grants to the colleges on a per-pupil basis were at least three times as much as the per-pupil grant to the Board of Education in St. John's."³⁵ This differential treatment in terms of government grants was perhaps due in part not only to class divisions, but also intertwined with native–non-native tensions. Violet Cherrington, for instance, was the principal of Bishop Spencer College for 30 years from 1922 to 1952. She was born and educated in England and had taught in Canada prior to this appointment.³⁶ While other Church of England schools were "staffed with native teachers" Cherrington preferred British teachers but also "liked to have her old girls back to work with her."³⁷ One former student remarked that "most of our teachers were British who came here with a mission, which was to transform the young barbarians of the oldest colony into genteel young ladies. . . . Some of the teachers were native born Newfoundlanders who to their disgrace were no better than their British colleagues."³⁸ Not only did Cherrington uphold British traditions, but her longstanding networks exemplify the dominance of the Church of England both in education and politics. When she retired in 1952 the Lieutenant Governor was well placed to bid her farewell because he had known her for 30 years.³⁹

In essence, then, the divisive influences of class and gender were very much in evidence in Church of England schools. It appears that this was also the case in schools under the Methodist School Board in the early 1920s and that this continued under the United Church School Board, which was established after the Methodist and Congregational churches amalgamated to form the United Church in 1925.⁴⁰ The profile of women who taught in the Methodist and, subsequently, the United Church schools paralleled that of their Church of England counterparts in that they were well-educated and experienced. In the early 1920s, however, the most highly qualified teachers were concentrated in the Methodist College and Parade St. School while less-qualified teachers were allocated to schools in working-class areas. According to the Department of Education's 1921-22 annual report, the women teachers employed by the Methodist College were particularly well qualified. Mary Fraser held a Bachelor of Arts degree from Durham University and Effie Norwood, Bella Parsons, Rachel Rendell, May Yetman, and Helen Leslie held AA certifications.⁴¹ Fraser would become a member of the influential United Church Board of Examiners during the

35 Ralph Andrews, "The Administration of the Denominational System," in McCann, *Blackboards and Briefcases*, p. 76.

36 *Daily News*, 2 September 1922, p. 2.

37 *Daily News*, 10 November 1933, p. 4; *The Spencerian*, 1953, p. 11; McCann, *Blackboards and Briefcases*, pp. 214, 225-6.

38 *The Telegram*, 6 August 2000, p. 12.

39 *Daily News*, 21 May 1952, p. 3.

40 McCann, *Schooling in a Fishing Society*, p. 190.

41 "Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Methodist Boards," *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1921/22*, p. 191.

1920s and Leslie would go on to become a principal.⁴² At the Parade St. School the teachers were also highly qualified. Three of the four were women and two, Lillian Dwyer and Florence Cave, had AA certification while the third, Jean Taylor, had a First Grade certificate. The latter was also the case for Gertrude Mullet, the teacher at the Methodist orphanage. Centenary Hall and Carew St. schools were the only Methodist schools in St. John's that employed Third Grade teachers in the early 1920s. This is not to diminish the contribution made by Third Grade teachers; some may have been early in their careers while others may not have been able to afford further education to progress their status (as will be discussed later). Certification, though, was valued as a currency by the Department of Education and it appears that the Methodist School Board chose to allocate less-qualified teachers to schools that served the working class. Moreover, the administrative changes that followed the amalgamation of the Methodist and Congregational churches in 1925 did little to improve the position of women teachers in the new United Church schools.

Perhaps the longest-serving United Church teacher and one strongly associated with Holloway School (the former Methodist College) was Mollie Dingle, a kindergarten teacher in the Methodist school system and a teacher in the United Church school system for over 40 years. Born in 1892, she was educated in St. John's at the Presbyterian Hall School and the Methodist College (from which she graduated in 1908). In the same year she began her teaching career as a teacher-assistant and in 1914 attended the Training College at Truro, Nova Scotia, to qualify as a kindergarten teacher. In 1915 she returned to Newfoundland and, with the exception the 1933-34 school year, when she went as an exchange teacher to Dumfermline, Scotland, her teaching career was spent in St. John's.⁴³ She was also involved in training teachers at the annual summer schools and thus was well-known among Newfoundland teachers. Dingle retired in 1952, the same year as Violet Cherrington, but rather than the Lieutenant Governor, it was the Vice Chancellor of Memorial University of Newfoundland who spoke at her farewell dinner – indicating the difference in status and influence between the school systems. Nonetheless tributes flowed and the Vice-Chancellor “expressed an appreciation of Miss Dingle’s influence through the years. He also paid tribute to Miss Helen Leslie [Holloway’s principal] and her far-reaching influence.”⁴⁴

Mollie Dingle’s educational influence was also felt by teachers new to the profession. Isabel Templeton completed her practical lessons in Dingle’s classroom before commencing her long career as a kindergarten teacher on the Prince of Wales school campus in 1943. Templeton was also very actively involved in the Girl Guides and through this work formed friendships with women teachers from other denominations. In a 2004 interview Templeton indicated that at the time there was little professional contact between teachers of the Protestant denominations as well as sometimes intense competition between the Church of England, United, and Roman

42 *Daily News*, 17 June 1952, p. 3; *Annual Report of the Bureau of Education, Newfoundland, 1927/28*, p. 117. From 1927-1930 the Department of Education was called the Bureau of Education and then it reverted back to the “Department of Education.”

43 *The Telegram*, 31 July 2001, p. A11. See also *The Evening Telegram* (St. John's), 31 July 1987, p. 2.

44 *Daily News*, 17 June 1952, p. 3.

Catholic school systems. She recalled that "there was big rivalry in sport, but the Guides was a leveller and we shared camps."⁴⁵

There was limited cooperation among the Protestant schools, but there was even less cooperation between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic systems because of the religious nature of Roman Catholic schooling. Sr. Mary P. Penny, for example, notes in her 1980 doctoral dissertation on the contribution of three religious congregations to education in Newfoundland that in Roman Catholic schools "religious instruction and moral training were the main objectives of the Curriculum in the schools of the three Religious Congregations" (the Presentation Sisters, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Christian Brothers).⁴⁶ Each of these congregations also catered to different groups of students. The Christian Brothers operated St. Bonaventure's College, where boys of the well-to-do received their education, as well as St. Patrick's Hall, O'Donel Hall, and Holy Cross schools for working-class boys and the Mount Cashel Orphanage.⁴⁷ The Presentation Sisters were brought to Newfoundland in 1833 to work with "children in the humble classes of society" in order to impart "useful education combined with Religious instruction" whereas the Sisters of Mercy were invited a decade later to found a school for children of the well-to-do: "It was expressly to give the middle classes an opportunity of paying for their education and to prevent them from having an excuse for attending Protestant private schools, that Bishop Fleming had introduced the Sisters of Mercy."⁴⁸ The Academy of Our Lady of Mercy was the Roman Catholic equivalent of Bishop Spencer College and this congregation was also in charge of St. Bride's College, Littledale, where Roman Catholic lay teachers began their training.

In Roman Catholic schools, therefore, gender and class were much in evidence in the contrasting foci of the three congregations. Department of Education annual reports suggest that the colleges conducted by the Sisters of Mercy and the Christian Brothers had better facilities than the free schools operated under the auspices of Roman Catholic school boards. In the 1919-20 school year, for instance, a new building was under construction for the 330 "young ladies" attending the Academy of our Lady of Mercy. That building, named the Knights of Columbus Memorial Hall, opened in 1921 and the facilities described in the *Newfoundland Quarterly* suggest that students would be well-served compared to their working-class counterparts. The new building featured "13 classrooms, auditorium, library, general science laboratory, seven music rooms, lunch room, dressing room and wash rooms. The domestic

45 Isabel Templeton, interview with Judith Peppard, St. John's, June 2004 (interview tapes and transcript in possession of authors).

46 Sr. Mary P. Penny, "A Study of the Contributions of Three Religious Congregations to the Growth of Education in Newfoundland" (PhD diss., Boston College, 1980), p. 111.

47 "Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Roman Catholic Boards," *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1922/23*, p. 86; "Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Roman Catholic Boards," *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1919/20*, pp. 38-9.

48 Penny, "Study of the Contributions of Three Religious Congregations," p. 31; Sr. Mary Basil McCormack, "The Educational Work of The Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland, 1842-1955" (master's thesis, Catholic University of America, 1955), pp. 26-7. McCormack points out that the Presentation rule did not permit the sisters to accept any remuneration from their pupils while the Sisters of Mercy order was permitted by its founder to have both pension (fee-paying) and free schools.

science room accommodated a class of twenty and a dining room was attached to it. It was furnished with all modern appliances.”⁴⁹ The music and commercial departments provided education “of a high standard” to middle-class girls and the academy was one of only two girls’ schools in St. John’s to have an orchestra.⁵⁰

In contrast, the working-class schools operated by the Presentation Sisters were overcrowded and the facilities poor. In 1920 the free school at the Presentation Convent had 596 pupils and, by December 1922, with an enrolment of 814 students, classes were “filled to their utmost capacity.”⁵¹ Enrolments continued to be high throughout the 1920s, with over 750 students registered there most years. Similarly, at St. Patrick’s Convent School operated by the Presentation Sisters in the West End of St. John’s, the classrooms “were filled to overflowing” in 1923, and while in 1926 a “splendid new building [held] one of the most interesting groups of students in the country,” 748 students were registered at the school by the 1929/30 school year – suggesting that space continued to be a concern.⁵² To the extent that schools operated by the religious congregations mirrored class structures in both their organization and curriculum and, as Sr. Mary Penney suggests, aimed to instil “the idea that obedience to the civil rulers is a religious duty,” they served to help maintain the status quo (including the class and gender order).⁵³

Although there were many highly qualified women teachers in Protestant schools, Phillip McCann argues that during this era the “Catholic boards tended to employ the best qualified staff.”⁵⁴ Some of the teachers who had been born overseas had undertaken much postgraduate study. Sr. Perpetua O’Callaghan, who was of Irish parentage, had completed her initial training at Mount Pleasant Training College, Liverpool, and then studied at the University of Scotland, Fordham University, and Columbia University (becoming the first woman in Newfoundland to be awarded a doctoral degree). Sr. M. Regis Collins and Sr. M. Chrysostom McCarthy, who were at St. Bride’s College in the late 1930s, had Master of Arts degrees from the Catholic University of America.⁵⁵ These women religious had access to secure lifelong careers as teachers and leaders within their orders. Sisters Collins and McCarthy, for example, were in charge of training novices and lay teachers at St. Bride’s College. Isabelle Woodforde, a lay teacher, “regarded the nuns as exemplary role models who set very high standards . . . and opened up a different world for me, one that changed forever the way I thought, the things I appreciated. It helped to form not only the teacher but the person I was to become.”⁵⁶

49 Cited in McCormack, “Educational Work of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland,” p. 33, from *Newfoundland Quarterly*, XXI, 3 (1921), p. 8.

50 “Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Roman Catholic Boards,” *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1919/20*, p. 42; McCormack, “Educational Work of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland,” p. 43.

51 “Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Roman Catholic Boards,” *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1922/23*, p. 91.

52 “Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Roman Catholic Boards,” *Annual Report of the Bureau of Education, Newfoundland, 1928/29*, p. 81.

53 Penney, “A Study of the Contributions of Three Religious Congregations,” p. 146.

54 McCann, *Schooling in a Fishing Society*, p. 201.

55 Andrews, *Integration*, p. 255.

56 Pat Trites, “The School on Fardy’s Cross: Shamrock School Remembered,” in Sharon Cook, Lorna McLean, and Kate O’Rourke, eds., *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women’s History in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), p. 185.

Despite their high qualifications, women religious were not involved in educational matters outside of their convents and thus had little if any contact with Protestant women teachers in St. John's. This may have been true to some degree because the rules of their orders prevented them from contributing more broadly to the educational world, but it was also due to the prevalence of the gender order within the religious congregations in St. John's. Women religious did not have a place in education policy-making and other wider education spheres during Archbishop Roche's episcopate, which extended from 1915 until 1950.⁵⁷

Among Catholic lay teachers there were also some well-qualified and influential women. Miss Flynn, who received her qualifications at "one of the foremost Normal Schools in the United States," was the Kindergarten teacher at the Mercy Convent.⁵⁸ Margaret Murphy, who taught at St. Patrick's Convent School operated by the Presentation Sisters, received special mention in the Department of Education's 1922-23 annual report: "Kindergarten is under the direction of Miss Margaret Murphy, a graduate of Trenton State Normal, USA, and a teacher with many years' experience in Kindergarten work. It may be said in passing that Miss Murphy is probably the pioneer in this country of the Parent-Teachers Association, and has found it a very valuable adjunct to the success of her work."⁵⁹

Murphy was privileged in that she was able to study overseas; native-born teachers, both Protestant and Catholic, did not have access to a complete tertiary education in Newfoundland. Such was the case with Lillian Collins, who attended St. Bride's College in 1939 where she "was taught an understanding of the Faith so I could teach religion. I did preparation for university that year, before going on to Memorial University. Memorial University had no degree-conferring power. You had to go to the mainland to get a degree. I got everything that was available at that time."⁶⁰

On completion of her training, Collins taught near her hometown for one year and in 1942-43 moved to St. Teresa's School at Mundy Pond in St. John's. She described the "heated building with inside toilets" as "heaven on earth" compared with the outport schools. "At the end of the year," notes Collins, "the nuns took over the teaching. Some of the experienced teachers stayed but I had to go." In 1943-44 there were four women religious and four lay teachers at this school. It seems that within the educational world of Catholic schools there were significant differences between the women religious and lay teachers and also some tensions. Whereas women religious had secure careers within their orders, lay teachers faced the insecurity of yearly contracts, displacement from their positions and, as Collins pointed out, career-ending marriage: "When I got married you couldn't continue teaching. Isn't that scandalous! . . . I missed the money and independence teaching gave me."⁶¹ The

57 Penney, "A Study of the Contributions of Three Religious Congregations," p. 127.

58 "Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland Under Roman Catholic Boards," *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1919/20*, p. 41.

59 "Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Roman Catholic Boards," *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1922/23*, p. 89.

60 Lillian (Greene) Collins, interview with Judith Peppard, St. John's, June 2004 (interview tape and transcript in possession of authors).

61 Lillian (Greene) Collins, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

marriage prohibition for women teachers, of course, applied to all women teachers – not just those in Catholic schools.

As a cohort then, the women who taught in and administered the schools in St. John's were likely to be from well-educated and middle-class social backgrounds. They were among the most highly qualified teachers in Newfoundland and most had teaching experience in other places before securing positions in the city. They were also long-serving members of the teaching profession. In these respects they were much the same as their urban counterparts in Ontario and large cities such as London and New York City.⁶² However, the divisions in the educational world of St. John's were well represented in the profile of city teachers. The cohort was separated by religion, first and foremost, and by birthplace – the latter having an additional impact on qualifications. It seems that the most highly qualified women taught in the middle-class denominational colleges rather than the working-class schools. In addition, there were differences between women within denominational groups as in the case of lay teachers and women religious in Catholic schools as well as the women teachers at Bishop Spencer College compared with other Church of England schools.

Yet although women teachers were divided by denomination, class, birthplace, and qualifications, there was also much about their material conditions of work that was shared. As previously mentioned, the sanitary condition of schools in St. John's was appalling in the 1920s, and in each of the school systems the working-class schools were overcrowded with very little equipment. Yet the building at Bishop Spencer College was also substandard and never replaced. Wherever they taught, women teachers in the city had few comforts and modern conveniences. Indeed, as Michael Corbett notes, Newfoundland schools in the 1940s were "in little better shape than in the early part of the century or even in the latter part of the nineteenth century."⁶³ Given these circumstances, it is likely that city teachers faced similar challenges in their daily work. Indeed, variations in their experiences of curriculum and teaching methods were more closely related to school size and the grade levels that they taught than the denominational groupings to which they belonged.

Gender was another shared challenge faced by all women teachers. In two-room schools like St. Mary's, the traditional gender division of labour applied when men were on the staff. When Ida Reeves began teaching there in 1920, for example, she was assigned the lower grades while the male principal taught in the upper room. Given the patterns of early school leaving, teachers of the upper grades usually had fewer students than those who taught young children and this was Reeves's experience for her first three years at St. Mary's. In addition, male teachers were not required to teach needlework so that became an extra task for her on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Reeves stayed a further five years, with teaching workloads and the tasks of fundraising, buying school equipment, and effecting school repairs becoming more evenly distributed in this school with the appointment of a woman principal in 1923. For example, grades were allocated so as to give each teacher

62 Reynolds and Smaller, "Gender Relations Among Teachers," p. 164; Rousmaniere, *City Teachers*; Oram, *Women Teachers and Feminist Politics*.

63 Michael Corbett, "A Protracted Struggle: Rural Resistance and Normalization in Canadian Educational History," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*, 13, 1 (2001), p. 36.

approximately an equal number of students.

Many women teachers were doing innovative things in terms of the education of particularly young children in kindergarten classes, which were commonplace in St. John's the 1930s and 1940s. The Model School kindergarten where Muriel Purchase was in charge "was modeled on the Harriet Mills Kindergarten of the city of New York women," and Purchase's focus was on applying "the best methods in the case of each child."⁶⁴ Visitors were able to observe lessons at the Model School and Purchase gave "demonstrations of Kindergarten reading after the most modern method."⁶⁵ Isabel Templeton, a United Church teacher, also taught kindergarten. She portrayed her work as "an extension of being an aunt to my nieces and nephews. What I'd do with them on Saturdays or any holidays I sort of brought into the classroom. Farmer in the Dell, and read nursery rhymes, read stories and taught them their alphabet." She added that there was a "sandbox and blocks and stuffed toys, teddy bears and all that [but] in those days there wasn't very much money available for supplies." Templeton therefore used her savings to buy many of the education materials in her classroom.⁶⁶ Laura Haines, who taught kindergarten at St. Thomas's Church of England School, also emphasized a progressive, child-centered approach to teaching the lower grades: "Well, I divide them into a group of twelve and you study with them that way while the other ones I had cut-outs and things, like cows and things, and they would be fitting them together like crossword puzzles. You had to have a lot of imagination."⁶⁷

While kindergarten work was seen to be child-centred, the work of the upper grades was subject-centred and focused on the annual Council of Higher Education (CHE) examinations. The CHE operated independently of the Department of Education, setting the public examinations and, by implication, the curriculum for the upper grades. Fees were charged to sit for CHE exams and thus many students were excluded by poverty. CHE results were published in the daily newspapers and thus teachers' and schools' reputations were affected by their students' successes and failures.⁶⁸ The Church of England Model School, for example, offered a wide range of subjects and, according to the *Daily News*, had "a wonderful CHE record."⁶⁹ Teachers of the upper grades were also subject to the denominational rivalry that accompanied these exams. Sarah Manuel, who taught for a year each in St. Michael and St. George's Church of England schools, remarked that "there was more pressure though, more competition, even on the denominational level, and you had to hold your end."⁷⁰

The focus on examinations not only impacted on the curriculum, but it also influenced teaching methods in the upper grades. As Alain Frecker noted in an address entitled "Trends in education" to the Newfoundland Teachers Association

64 *Daily News*, 10 November 1933, p. 4.

65 "Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Normal School Boards," *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1922/23*, p. 175.

66 Isabel Templeton, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

67 Laura (Hodder) Haines, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

68 Rowe, *The Development of Education in Newfoundland*, p. 92.

69 *Daily News*, 10 November 1933, p. 4.

70 Sarah Manuel, interview with Judith Peppard, St. John's West, June 2004 (interview tapes and transcripts in the possession of authors).

convention in July 1936, in Newfoundland, overall, “book-learning” predominated.⁷¹ Laura Haines’s reflections on her teaching in the upper grades support this contention: “We had a little book on Social Studies. They had a reader and a workbook accompanying that, so they could fill in and the same way they had arithmetic that was all you could fill in.” She added that “I had workbooks stacked up that high and I used to take them home.” Her after-hours work included much lesson preparation and, like Isabel Templeton, she used her savings to supplement inadequate supplies. Haines bought a “hectograph,” an instrument used to make copies of worksheets that were published in the *Instructor* and *Grade Teacher*, two journals that circulated among Newfoundland teachers. She noted that “every time these books came there was always one there that you could put on your hectograph and take off. So we had lots of supplementary work which helped you.”⁷² Notwithstanding the peculiarities of teaching the upper or lower grades in small or large schools, city teachers worked long hours under trying conditions.

Women who taught in the denominational colleges were also embroiled in the tensions surrounding the CHE exams. According to McCann, “the Methodist College was pre-eminent for excellence in the secondary sector” and United Church students “achieved the highest scores in the annual examinations in the standards.”⁷³ Bishop Spencer College was said to eschew the CHE exams except for the final grade of schooling, but nevertheless celebrated examination successes at length at the annual public Speech Days in June each year. Department of Education reports indicate that scholarship was emphasized at St. Bride’s, and its Roman Catholic students consistently made a good showing in the CHE exams. However, teachers and students were often reminded in the departmental reports that “all is a failure if graduates are not imbued with sound religious and moral principles.”⁷⁴

Although women teachers in the colleges were subject to similar pressures as their colleagues in other city schools, they attracted credit and status as subject specialists. Jean Murray, who had “spent two years at McDonald in Montreal studying Domestic Science and Agriculture,” established the Domestic Science Department at Bishop Spencer College.⁷⁵ Edith Manuel taught the lower grades for some years at Bishop Spencer College, but was better known for her work as a geography teacher. Manuel also noted that “most of our teachers there who came in from the other side were specialists in some way; it could be in English, it could be in art. We had our gym mistresses. They were specialists and there were a lot of English ideas because of this.”⁷⁶ Likewise, at the Mercy convent, there were specialist art, music, and commercial teachers. Sister Mary Joseph Fox, the founder of the Commercial Programme at the Mercy Convent, “was from Ireland and she had many specific

71 Alain Frecker, “Trends in education: An address to the Newfoundland Teachers Association convention, July 1936,” G.A. Frecker Papers, Coll – 193: 2.01.001, CNSA.

72 Laura (Hodder) Haines, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

73 McCann, *Schooling in a Fishing Society*, p. 246.

74 “Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland under Roman Catholic Boards,” *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1921/22*, p. 123.

75 Jean Murray, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

76 Edith Mary Manuel, “From Outport Schools to Bishop Spencer College,” in McCann, *Blackboards and Briefcases*, pp. 205-6.

qualifications including art.”⁷⁷ When she died in 1930, her contribution to “the commercial life of the city” was acknowledged in an editorial in the *Daily News*, which noted “three generations of stenographers and secretaries and female accountants have passed through her capable hands.”⁷⁸ In essence, women who taught in the denominational colleges in St. John’s in the 1930s and 1940s were distinguished by their subject specializations whereas other city teachers were more likely to be associated with their students’ grade levels. Nevertheless, the subject specialists were equally vulnerable to heavy workloads, denominational rivalries, and the problems of making-do with little equipment and inadequate buildings.

Whatever their denomination, when women teachers reflected on their work in classrooms and city schools collegiality was a common theme. Lillian Collins, who maintained lifelong friendships with her teaching colleagues, recalled that in Catholic schools “there were other teachers to talk to at recess time. I got ideas from other teachers. We learned from each other.”⁷⁹ Similar sentiments were expressed by women teachers at St. Mary’s Church of England school. Ida Reeves did not comment on staff relationships regarding the times there were male principals, but she relished the collegiality that came with the appointment of a female principal in 1923. In December 1924 Reeves wrote that Miss Taylor “has been a good companion to me while we worked together.”⁸⁰ Likewise, Jean Murray, Mary White, and Edith Manuel portrayed Bishop Spencer College as a close-knit school.⁸¹ Unlike schools in cities such as Chicago and New York, none of the schools in St. John’s were so big as to be impersonal.⁸² School staffs in St. John’s varied in size from two to about twenty, and some women served for very long periods in the same school. It is likely, therefore, that collegial work cultures developed and that these were women-centred. Aside from occasional visits from male members of school boards, there were probably few male visitors; there were also no inspectors until 1936. Thereafter, as Laura Haines recalled, “the inspectors, they were called school supervisors, visited once a year. Mr. Kirby was helpful. He gave me some books that were useful in my teaching.”⁸³ However, having established positive relationships within their schools, these women were no doubt learning more from each other than from any inspector. In so doing they were also positioning themselves as active agents in their daily work and experts in the field of curriculum and teaching methodology.

Although the relative size of the schools in St. John’s facilitated positive social

77 Sister Mary Ligouri, “Roman Catholic Education in Outport and City,” in McCann, *Blackboards and Briefcases*, p. 264.

78 *Daily News*, 4 September 1930, cited in Penney, “A Study of the Contributions of Three Religious Congregations,” p. 214.

79 Lillian (Greene) Collins, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

80 Stoker, Richard, St. Mary’s School, St. John’s, 19 December 1924 (no page numbers), Logbooks, 1916-1954, book 2, MG 365, PANL.

81 Jean Murray, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004; Manuel, “From Outport Schools to Bishop Spencer College,” pp. 209, 214; Mary M. White, “Thirty-Five Years at Bishop Spencer College,” in McCann, *Blackboards and Briefcases*, pp. 225-6.

82 Kate Rousmaniere, “Teachers’ Work and the Social Relations of School Space in Early-Twentieth-Century North American Urban Schools,” *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d’histoire de l’éducation*, 8, 1 (1996), pp. 42-64.

83 Laura (Hodder) Haines, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

relations among women teachers, the notion of collegial work cultures should not be overstated as school staffs were comprised of women with many different experiences, aspirations, and qualifications. Between the 1920s and the 1940s there was an increasing emphasis on credentials, and this not only produced divisions within schools but it also had an impact on the careers of individual teachers. While some women were blocked from advancing in the profession, others found opportunities outside their workplaces to deploy their qualifications, experience, and expertise more broadly in the educational world of St. John's.

The push for credentials or higher qualifications among teachers had a definite impact on women teachers. As previously mentioned, Memorial University College did not offer a complete tertiary education, so the Carnegie Corporation provided scholarships for selected teachers to study for bachelor and master degrees overseas; the men usually took courses in educational administration and the women courses in curriculum and teaching methodology.⁸⁴ The women who were selected for these courses and others who could afford to study overseas were highly regarded in the school system. Isabel Templeton alluded to the emphasis on university qualifications when she discussed her career. Having gained her initial teaching certificate, she resisted further study for 12 years before enrolling in courses in Ontario for three consecutive summers. She stated that "the course increased my confidence and was important for the way you were viewed by the Department of Education and particularly for promotion."⁸⁵

For women such as Laura Haines, who could not afford to upgrade her qualifications, opportunities to realize ambitions were limited. As a native-born Newfoundlander she did not have access to a complete tertiary education. Indeed, she began her career as an Ungraded teacher in an outpost school and attended summer schools to gain her Third Grade and Second Grade certificates. While teaching at St. Thomas's School in St. John's she "really wanted to go to university and improve my grade," but she could not afford it. Haines was ambitious and confident about her teaching ability, but her career path was blocked because her lack of access to further qualifications. Her ambivalence about them as a measure of expertise was evident when she pointed out that "grades didn't guarantee you were going to get across to children though it could help you in different ways just the same." Haines was appointed vice-principal in 1946 despite protests from more qualified women, but the next year she was forced to "step down" in favour of a teacher "who had been to university." Amidst these tensions, and being unable to afford further study, she resigned from teaching "and got a job in an office."⁸⁶ For Laura Haines, the emphasis on credentials led to a change in occupation, but university qualifications provided other women with opportunities to claim authority and leadership more broadly.

Teacher training was the arena outside of schools in which women teachers were most visible. Although the director of the Teacher Training Department at Memorial University College was always a man, Helen Lodge, MA, and Mary Fitzpatrick, MA,

84 "Report of Public Schools of Newfoundland under of Church of England Boards," *Annual Report of the Bureau of Education, Newfoundland, 1928/29*, pp. xvi-xvii; Frecker, "From Commission of Government to Confederation," pp. 6-7.

85 Isabel Templeton, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

86 Laura (Hodder) Haines, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

were highly regarded lecturers in the 1930s and 1940s. The annual summer school offered training courses for inexperienced and ungraded teachers, and highly qualified women teachers contributed their curricular and pedagogical expertise.⁸⁷ At the 1937 summer school, for example, “city teachers of skill and experience were found in the persons of Miss M. Purchase (Primary Methods), Miss E. Manuel (Social Studies) and Miss M. Dingle (Primary Methods). Nature Study was once more in the capable hands of Miss Edith Edgar.”⁸⁸ As previously mentioned, Muriel Purchase had studied at Columbia’s Teachers College – as had Edith Manuel – with Manuel graduating with a Bachelor of Science majoring in Geography and then a Master of Arts.⁸⁹ Muriel Purchase and Mollie Dingle taught at the summer schools for many years, offering up-to-date knowledge and practical guidance to young teachers while at the same time promulgating progressive educational ideas. Purchase and Dingle influenced hundreds of teachers each year, among them Laura Haines who was “fascinated” by Dingle’s demonstrations of kindergarten methods.⁹⁰ It is important to note, however, that women teachers’ leadership at the summer schools was almost invariably in the areas of curriculum and teaching methodology rather than administration. With the exception of Violet Cherrington in 1944, the directors of the summer schools were men and they were usually in charge of the compulsory course in psychology and courses in school management. Although there were many women principals in St. John’s schools, their expertise in administration was not used in the summer school courses.

A second area in which women had significant influence was educational policy. Although they were excluded from the day-to-day administration of the Department of Education, women teachers in city schools were members of a range of policy committees in the 1930s and 1940s. In these forums the gendered pattern of power was evident in the low proportions of women on committees compared to their numbers in the teaching workforce as well as in the dominance of men in executive positions. Isabel Templeton, for example, was the only woman on the “Education Department Religious Committee. There was a specific name for it. It involved representatives from various religions – the Salvation Army, United Church and Anglican . . . and I served on that for a few years.”⁹¹ Violet Cherrington served on several committees including the Church of England Board of Examiners from 1932. This committee assessed teachers’ qualifications and recommended policy changes to the Department of Education. She was the only woman on the powerful CHE, the organization that controlled the public examinations in Newfoundland.⁹² She was also secretary and one of only two women on the ten-member “Commission of Enquiry

87 Andrews, *Integration*, pp. 228, 279-80.

88 “Department of Education Report of the Summer School 1937,” p. 2, in Andrews, Ralph, Personal Files 1920s-1970s, MG 895, box 6, PANL.

89 Manuel, “From Outport Schools to Bishop Spencer College,” p. 198.

90 Laura (Hodder) Haines, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

91 Isabel Templeton, interview with Judith Peppard, June 2004.

92 See minutes of meetings on 2 April 1932, 10 March 1934, and 18 February 1938 in Church of England Board of Examiners Minute Book, 13 February 1926-12 June 1942, in Church of England Board of Examiners and Council for Higher Education, 1908-1953, no. 100.63, box 1, Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador Archive, St. John’s.

into the present curriculum of the colleges and schools” in 1934. Cherrington and the headmaster of Prince of Wales College combined to produce a dissenting report at the end of the commission’s 64 meetings as they were “determined to preserve at all costs the unique status of the denominational colleges.”⁹³ During this period the tensions in St. John’s were particularly intense. The Commission of Government wanted to abolish denominational schooling and reform the examination system, and this was strongly resisted by many senior administrators in the Department of Education and Violet Cherrington. Denominational rivalry was rife and prominent Roman Catholic men were as suspicious of Cherrington’s motives as they were of those of Protestant men.⁹⁴ The tensions here more likely related to her social class, British origins, and religion rather than her gender. It appeared that Cherrington, as a British-born member of the dominant class and religion in St. John’s, was determined to preserve the status quo as far as educational policy that would affect her school was concerned.

The area of committee work in which women’s expertise and leadership came to the fore was that relating to curriculum and pedagogy. When a 14-member Curriculum Committee was formed in 1934 to decide on a common curriculum for Newfoundland schools, female leadership was much in evidence. Mabel Worrall and Violet Cherrington represented the Church of England schools, Mollie Dingle represented the United Church, and Margaret Murphy provided leadership on behalf of Catholic schools.⁹⁵ The “new curriculum” that was produced as a result of the committee’s deliberations reflected the progressive ideas about curriculum and pedagogy that these women had long been using in their city schools. Furthermore, most of the women on the committee were instrumental in informing teachers about the new curriculum and teaching methods at the annual summer schools. In addition, Edith Manuel used her curricular expertise to write the geography textbooks for grades three, four, and five, which she subsequently revised in 1949 when Newfoundland entered into Confederation with Canada.⁹⁶ And Frances Briffett, a United Church teacher who completed her Master of Arts at Queen’s University in 1927, wrote *Little Stories of Newfoundland* for primary students as well as *More Stories of Newfoundland*. Both books were listed as supplementary textbooks in the history curriculum for the 1940-41 school year.⁹⁷ *The Story of Newfoundland and Labrador*, also by Frances Briffett, was published in 1942, and a revised edition, “to make the text more suitable for pupil use in the elementary grades,” came out in 1954 and went into a fifth printing.⁹⁸ In essence, some highly qualified and experienced city teachers were able to deploy their curricular and pedagogical expertise in ways that had a far-reaching influence in the turbulent educational world of St. John’s and

93 Andrews, *Integration*, pp. 162-3, 174.

94 J.M. O’Neill to Alain Frecker, 4 March 1943, Correspondence 1942, G.A. Frecker Papers, Coll – 193: 4.02.004, CNSA.

95 Andrews, *Integration*, pp. 181-2.

96 Manuel, “From Outport Schools to Bishop Spencer College,” p. 199.

97 Frances Blandford Briffett, “The History of the French in Newfoundland prior to 1714” (master’s thesis, Queen’s University, 1927); *Annual Report of the Department of Education, Newfoundland, 1940/41*, p. 23.

98 Frances Blandford Briffett, “Preface to the revised edition,” *The Story of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1960).

Newfoundland schools generally during this era.

It is evident, therefore, that whatever their denomination and place of birth, city teachers were well-qualified, highly experienced, and active members of their profession who often mobilized within and around the multiplicity of currents and crosscurrents of social class, colonialism, religion, and gender. Notwithstanding these and other challenges posed by inadequate infrastructure and funding, women teachers usually viewed their classroom experiences and relationships with other staff positively, and many of them found a range of spaces in which to position themselves as active agents and experts in curriculum and teaching methods. They deployed progressive ideas in their schools and were equally keen to use their expertise in the broader educational arena. They were prominent in teacher education, as textbook authors, and active in policy making and administration through their committee work within denominational groups and at the macro level on the Curriculum Committee. In all of these activities they quietly disrupted the dominant understanding that men belong in administration while women's place was in the classroom. Notwithstanding the many boundaries that marked their work, these "city teachers of skill and experience" subtly challenged the gender order of the educational world of St. John's from 1920 to the 1940s.