In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Educational Studies

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date 9/04/30
The most surprising outcome from the Victoria School of Art and Design's first half century is that it survived into its second. How it survived, and how it almost failed to, is the subject of this thesis. The main argument is that community support for the VSAD, or lack of it, was based more on pragmatic concerns, rather than on whether people liked the art being produced. Among those concerns, the most talked about was art training for employable skills.

Led by Anna Leonowens, who later became the subject of the musical The King and I, well-to-do citizens in Halifax, Nova Scotia founded the VSAD in 1887. In 1925 the school changed its name to the Nova Scotia College of Art. Its current name, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, came in 1969, the year that the College became what was then the only autonomous degree granting art institution in Canada.

As part of an international movement, the VSAD shared its late nineteenth century origins with similar art schools throughout North America, Europe, Britain and its colonies. Many of these schools also shared common purposes: to sharpen the graphic skills of industrial designers, to provide instruction in the fine and decorative arts, and to train drawing teachers for public and private schools.

Of the different groups supporting the Halifax school, women and their organizations were the most consistent and consequential, especially Halifax's Local Council of Women. A properly funded art school, they argued, could generate jobs, stimulate economic gains, and foster higher standards of civic culture within the community.
This study looks at the VSAD's supporters, teachers, and administrators during its first half century. It describes how the school, with its inadequate enrolment, budget, and space, played a limited role in generating art-related employment before the Great War. It is only with the principalship of Elizabeth Styring Nutt from 1919 to 1943, with her strong community connections and decades-long commitment to training artist-workers, that the school finally gained relative security and success.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td></td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE:</td>
<td>Introduction: The Origins and Evolution of Halifax's Art School, 1887-1943</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO:</td>
<td>The Art School Promoters: The Founding of the Victoria School of Art and Design, 1887</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE:</td>
<td>Art for Industrial Needs: The Victoria School of Art and Design and the Nineteenth Century Art School Movement</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR:</td>
<td>Training for Art-Related Employment: Victoria School of Art and Design Programs, 1887-1894</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE:</td>
<td>Programs, Properties, and Priorities: The Role of the VSAD Board, 1894-1906</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SIX:</td>
<td>The VSAD Supporters, 1894-1919: The Halifax Local Council of Women</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER EIGHT:</td>
<td>Miss Nutt Takes Charge: 1919-1924</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER NINE:</td>
<td>Training the Artist-Worker: The 1925 Art College Act</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TEN:</td>
<td>Friends and Factions: The Art College and the Community, 1919-1944</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY: WORKS CITED</td>
<td></td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY SOURCES — UNPUBLISHED</td>
<td></td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>DIARIES</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>EPHEMERA, FILMS, FLYERS, PAMPHLETS, NOTICES</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **INTERVIEWS** .......................................................... 322  
a. Interviews Conducted by Author  .................................. 322  
b. Interviews Conducted by Author and Harold Pearse ......... 323  
4. **LETTERS** ............................................................. 324  
a. General ................................................................. 324  
b. Nutt, Elizabeth S. Letters to and from ......................... 325  
c. Sexton, Frederic H. Letters to and from ....................... 327  
5. **MINUTES** ............................................................ 328  
6. **SCRAPBOOKS** ...................................................... 328  
7. **UNPUBLISHED ARCHIVAL: GENERAL** ......................... 329  
8. **UNPUBLISHED ARCHIVAL: VSAD, NSCA, NSCAD** .......... 330  

**B. PRIMARY SOURCES — PUBLISHED** ............................. 331  
1. **BOOKS** ............................................................... 331  
a. Books, General ...................................................... 331  
b. Chapters, Parts of Books .......................................... 333  
c. College Calendars .................................................. 333  
d. Exhibition Catalogues .............................................. 334  
e. Textbooks, Student and Teacher .................................. 334  
2. **JOURNALS AND MAGAZINES** .................................... 337  
3. **NEWSPAPERS** ....................................................... 338  
a. Obituaries ............................................................. 338  
b. 1825-75: Private-Venture Artist-Teachers ..................... 340  
c. 1878-91: Founding of VSAD ..................................... 342  
d. 1905: VSAD's Art Lectures ....................................... 344  
e. 1907-18: VSAD Supporters: Local Council of Women .......... 345  
f. 1919-25: Nutt's First Years ..................................... 348  
g. 1926-31: Nova Scotia College of Art ........................... 349  
h. 1931-35: Nutt-Royle Years ..................................... 351  
i. 1936-43: Miss Nutt Carries On .................................. 353  
4. **PUBLIC DOCUMENTS** .............................................. 354  
a. Census ................................................................. 354  
b. Inspectors' and Supervisors' Reports ............................ 355  
c. Laws and Statutes .................................................. 357  
d. Reports, General ................................................... 358  
e. Superintendents' Reports ......................................... 360  
f. VSAD, NSCA, & NSCAD Reports ................................... 362  

**C. SECONDARY SOURCES** .......................................... 364  
1. **BOOKS** ............................................................... 364  
a. Books, General ...................................................... 364  
b. Chapters, Parts of Books .......................................... 368  
c. Exhibition Catalogues .............................................. 373  
2. **JOURNALS, MAGAZINES, ARTICLES** ............................ 375  
3. **THESES, DISSERTATIONS** ....................................... 379
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: The Origins and Evolution of
Halifax’s Art School, 1887-1943

This dissertation looks at the origins and first half century of the Victoria School of Art and Design (VSAD) in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Founded in 1887, the school changed its name in 1925 to the Nova Scotia College of Art (NSCA). The school became the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in 1969, when it also gained degree-granting status, while still remaining autonomous from any university. This study examines the community support for the school, showing that this support was strongest when the school’s stated goal was to train women and men in employable art-related skills. It was this practical vocational purpose, more than isolated aesthetic concerns or artistic style development, that shaped the school’s programs and its evolution.

During the period under discussion, most people in Halifax’s art community were connected to the Art School\(^1\) as teachers, administrators, directors, fund raisers, volunteers, students, or community program coordinators. The school was also connected to most of Halifax’s visual arts activities, including exhibitions, art training, art societies, public school programs, after school art programs, and community art lectures. This study of the Art School therefore tells us a lot about Halifax’s art circles, and about the role of art in the city’s community at large.

\(^1\) Newspapers and other sources at the time often referred to the VSAD as the "Art School," and I will follow their practice.
The word "art" took on various meanings during the VSAD's first half century. In different contexts it encompassed fine art, applied art, commercial art, industrial art, craft, and design. In this study I use "art" in this encompassing meaning to refer to any or all of these art forms. I use the other, more specific art terms when referring to a particular form of art, such as "industrial drawing." Similarly, I use the term "art education" in a broad sense, as encompassing not only the different forms of art but also the various programs. As used in this study, "art education" ranges from public school art programs to professional adult art training. I use "art education" this way for consistency, even though it is not always historically precise. Although the term has been used popularly in this encompassing way since at least the 1870s, not all of the people discussed in this study used it in this manner, at least not with the frequency that we hear the term used today.

The VSAD's origins arose within a late nineteenth century trend to establish art schools in the United States, Canada, Europe, and the British colonies. The Halifax institution shared a common purpose with many of these schools: to sharpen artistic skills that could lead to employment, to provide instruction in fine and decorative arts, to train drawing teachers for the public and private schools, and to elevate the public's taste and appreciation of design. As part of this art school trend, the VSAD's development was shaped by, and had parallels in, several places outside of Nova Scotia. This study of VSAD, therefore, situates the Art School within this trend and provides a basis for further comparative research.

Among all of these common purposes, the one that generated most community support for the VSAD was the potential of art training to provide workers with employable skills. This linkage of art with labor stemmed from two nineteenth
century philosophical roots, utilitarianism and romantic idealism. The VSAD drew heavily from British art education, which, according to Stuart Macdonald, had utilitarianism as its most pervasive underpinning for much of the nineteenth century. To generalize, the utilitarian view wanted art training to serve industrial needs by providing designers with standardized practical skills. A nation of such designers would outstrip international competition in the marketplace, resulting in the country achieving the greatest good for the most people. This utilitarian view fostered art programs heavily dependent on rote and incremental step-by-step exercises, from the simple to the complex. Henry Cole, who spearheaded the mid-nineteenth century British art training system and then headed Britain's network of art schools from 1852 to 1873, did so based on these utilitarian principles. Despite his many critics, among them the well-known British art theorist John Ruskin, Cole was able to infuse British art schools with his utilitarian beliefs, entrenching them so firmly that they survived for decades after his retirement.

Centred at the National Art Training School in the South Kensington district of London, and often referred to as the "South Kensington System," the British art schools sent their graduates throughout the English-speaking world, including Halifax. The VSAD's first principal, George Harvey, and its first architectural


instructor, Charles H. Hopson, were both South Kensington graduates. Another graduate of the South Kensington system was Walter Smith, who in 1871 moved to Massachusetts and designed an industrial drawing program that was used throughout North America. Developed and promoted on utilitarian principles, Smith's program was adapted into Nova Scotian art education during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The second philosophical underpinning of art education at this time was romantic idealism, which, according to Mary Ann Stankiewicz, "emphasized the value of art for the education of morals; close ties between art, nature, and spiritual experience; the importance of art as a cultural study; and the role of the imagination and genius in art." The best known nineteenth century spokesperson for romantic idealism in the arts was John Ruskin. In his five volume work, Modern Painters,
published between 1843 and 1860, and even more so in his 1853 essay "the Nature of Gothic," Ruskin outlined links between art, morality, society, and labor.\(^8\) With his stress on art and work being so well known, it is easy to assume that any nineteenth century notions of art's links to labor somehow stem from Ruskin, but such is not the case. It was in very particular ways that Ruskin made that link, and there were also particular ways that he opposed it.

Specifically, Ruskin believed that the utilitarian-based South Kensington system for training artist-workers was wrong-headed. Whereas the South Kensington system was extremely rule-bound, Ruskin contended that, "The only rule which I have, as yet, found to be without exception respecting art, is that all great art is delicate."\(^9\) South Kensington students did tedious copying of artworks and painstaking drawing of casts, but Ruskin believed they should instead turn to nature. In fact, a belief in nature as the embodiment of God's perfection, and therefore the essential stimulus for art, was at the heart of romanticism, with Ruskin admitting that "I would rather teach drawing that my pupils may learn to love Nature, than teach the looking at Nature that they may learn to draw."\(^10\) In linking nature to art and art to work, it was the raising of the workers' sensibilities to a loftier source above the mere corporeal, rather than the mere hand-eye coordination of the utilitarians' programs, that underscored Ruskin's thinking.

---


Although popular among the reading public, Ruskin's ideas had little impact on the British art school system before the turn-of-the-century, and even then they did not fully take hold. Also by then, these ideas had been transformed by Ruskin's disciples, such as William Morris, the leader of the arts and crafts movement. Thus, in Nova Scotia, the heavy British influence on the VSAD at first leaned more toward the utilitarian programs. It was only around World War One that Ruskinian notions of art and labor, as adapted by the arts and crafts movement, began to dominate the VSAD. Earlier, women supporters of the VSAD did put forth romantic-based rationales for the school, but at the time these rationales had only a limited effect on the VSAD's programs.

It is no surprise that in late nineteenth century Nova Scotia, women, more so than men, were prone to support the romantic in addition to the utilitarian aspects of art education. Art as an aesthetic, refined, cultural pursuit had a much stronger tradition in girls' education than it did in boys'. Crafts and fine art were an important part of the nineteenth century "accomplishments curriculum" for females, or at least for the more wealthy among them. However, fine art had a minor role in both the classical and English curricula in Nova Scotia.  

---

Superintendent of Education, Alexander Forrester, noted in 1867 that fine art had "been taught for years as one of the accomplishments of a finished education." In contrast, he said, it was "a comparatively new branch of education in our common schools," and one that had yet to make any headway.\textsuperscript{12} Very much a romantic idealist in his writing, Forrester strongly promoted art and aesthetic education in the common schools, linking it to moral growth and the all important development of the imagination.\textsuperscript{13} Despite his best efforts, however, fine arts in Nova Scotian schools was still limited to drawing by the end of the century.\textsuperscript{14} Nevertheless, the accomplishments curriculum could still be found in the private venture ladies schools and academies.

\textsuperscript{11}(...continued)


\textsuperscript{14} B. Anne Wood and Donald Soucy, "From Old to New Scotland: Nineteenth Century Links Between Morality and Art Education," chap. 3 in \textit{Framing the Past: Essays on Art Education}, eds. Donald Soucy and Mary Ann Stankiewicz (Reston, Va.: National Art Education Association, 1990), 47-56.
The romanticist's link of art to morality fit well within women's other organizational activities within the community. By the end of the century, Halifax women were using the language of maternal and liberal feminism to describe their goals and link their concerns. They also, at times, described the Art School's potential through this language, proclaiming art's ability to refine morals, elevate tastes, and mould a proper cultural life for their city. All of these goals echoed those that romanticists had set for art and art education.

This is not to say that the women VSAD promoters eschewed a more utilitarian purpose for the Art School. On the contrary, they were some of the most dependable proponents of it within the Halifax community. In fact, whether for utilitarian or romantic reasons, women and their organizations were overall the leading force in Halifax's art scene and art education. Partly because their career options were more limited, Halifax women connected art school training with employment long after many men had stopped doing so. Throughout the nineteenth century, art training was linked to mechanical and industrial careers for men. This linkage increased

---

until the last third of the century, when art's vocational potential for both men and women reached a peak in North America. Walter Smith, the continent’s best known promoter of this potential, summed it up: by training both men and women in the arts, "we shall double both the agency and area of art culture, and provide employment for a large number of excellent persons who suffer from the lack of it now." Despite Smith’s claims, the usefulness of art school training for the male worker was being decreasingly touted by the end of the 1800s. In Nova Scotia this was symbolized by the opening of the Nova Scotia Technical College (NSTC) in 1909, which had the effect of stripping the city's twenty year old Art School of its role in training male artisans. Halifax women, however, with no access to the NSTC's or other vocational programs, continued to advocate art school training for careers in craft, design, and fine and applied art. Furthermore, female employment, be it domestic, industrial, craft, or service, generally echoed women's roles in the home: cleaning, clothes-making, childcare, tending the sick, and, in middle and upperclass

---

16 See, for example, John Imison, The School of Arts: Or, an Introduction to Useful Knowledge, 4th ed. (London: J. Murray and S. Highley, 1796); The Art Movement in America: Reprinted from the Century Magazine for the Victoria School of Art and Design of Halifax, N.S., 1886 (Reprint) (n.p.: The Century Co., 1887); Walter Smith, Art Education Scholastic and Industrial (Boston: James Osgood, 1872), especially Smith’s discussion on art education and employment for women, 28-29, 161-72.

17 Smith, Art Education Scholastic and Industrial, 29.
homes, artistic pursuits. Art and craft thus fit well into the women's campaigns for female economic advancement and movement into the public sphere.

For Halifax women, this entry into the public sphere was more than a fight for the vote. Women's organizations there gave as much priority to art training as they did to electoral politics. While neither issue was the essence of their activity, both were consistent themes. Of the two, art remained on the women's agenda longer into this century, and well after many of their other projects were either resolved or abandoned. Thus art and art education can be particularly revealing subjects for exploring the women's movement during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth.

As the umbrella organization for Halifax's women's clubs, the Local Council of Women (LCW) provides a useful vantage point for observing women's role at the Art School. At one time or another, most Halifax women active in the community during this period worked within the LCW. As such, its members had a prominent role in all major campaigns waged by the city's women. Halifax's chapter of the Local Council of Women was the largest in the province. Halifax was the province's capital and, by the twentieth century, its major port. It was a city small enough for clubwomen to know each other, yet large enough to provide them with typical urban problems and possibilities. Halifax was cosmopolitan enough to stimulate the clubwomen's cultural

---

ambitions, but economically advanced enough to sustain such ambitions only through their voluntarism. In short, Halifax is particularly conducive to studying clubwomen's activities.

In addition to women supporters of the Art School, Halifax was able to sustain a group of professional women artists who, although few in number, were dedicated to their art and very public in their dedication. Usually supporting themselves through teaching, they formed art societies, organized exhibitions, designed theatre sets and posters, immersed themselves in the community, and actively encouraged both women and men to take up art. By the 1920s some of the most prominent artists in the city were women, and, in the eyes of some younger Halifax females, they would have been among the more visible women in the community. These artists, nearly all of whom had attended the VSAD, in turn served as role models for other females with artistic interests, thereby both demonstrating and fostering the viability of art school education.

Although this study looks at some of these Halifax artists, both men and women, it emphasises those who supplied the VSAD's program more than the artists who took it. In addition to the VSAD's promoters, the study looks at its administrators and teachers. Many of the teachers were also artists, so to this degree artists are discussed. However, the study does not attempt a comprehensive discussion of Halifax artists who had careers independent of teaching.¹⁹ Neither is

¹⁹ Some information on these other artists can be found in Mary W. Hashey, Maritime Artists (Fredericton: The Maritime Arts Association, 1967); Gemey Kelly, Backgrounds: Ten Nova Scotian Women Artists, exhibition catalogue (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1984); Maria Tippett, By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women (Toronto: Viking, 1992).
this intended to be a comprehensive study of art students. They are discussed primarily in terms of their diploma programs and employment opportunities, with a look at selected individual students who graduated from the VSAD and went on to have successful art-related careers.

It is through this biographical focus that the institutional history of the VSAD will be viewed, with the individuals involved situated within the historical context in which they acted. Although parts of the study raise issues related to gender and class, a theoretical analysis of either of these is beyond the study's scope. The study does, however, provide groundwork for further research to examine students' gender and social class background, and how these related to the type of art they produced, and the extent of their involvement with art following their studies.\(^{20}\)

Biographical study, including an institutional biography of the Victoria School of Art and Design, helps us to locate the historical positions of the Art School and its promoters and teachers. For example, even without resorting to strict criteria for categorizing social class, biographical evidence allows us to conclude that most of

the VSAD promoters who were not themselves artists were primarily from the middle- and upper-classes. Many of them, in fact, came from Nova Scotia’s most prominent, well-to-do families. These biographies also show how individuals and groups were agents of change. We need not claim that any such change began as fully formed intentions of these agents. Rather, the biographies reveal human agency being shaped by historical location and a network of social interaction within the community.

Thus, the biographies facilitate certain types of understanding. First, by looking at the different individuals and groups behind the school we gain varying perspectives of the same event. Second, by describing community efforts in terms of individuals who participated in the events, we get a bottom-up approach that personalizes the wider contexts. Third, art making, curriculum development, and art promotion all derive from lived experiences, each with their similarities and differences. Studying individuals or small groups gives insights into these experiences. Fourth, these lived experiences developed within the context of an institution, and institutional biography helps us understand that context and those experiences.21

The biographical data allows for these insights without claiming to capture fixed individuals with fully coherent identities. Postmodern theorists challenge any such notion of a unified self. However, as Susan Bordo argues, even if people are not fixed identities, that does not mean that they are shapeless, that they are always in the process of "becoming." Only in pure theory are people limitless multiplicities. In research, Bordo reminds us, we need to be pragmatic. Such pragmatism can be found by situating people, either individually or as part of groups and communities, within specific historical contexts. Thus, although these biographies do not render definitive portraits of the individuals involved with the Art School, they do weave a revealing pattern from selected aspects of these individuals' lives.

The starting point for this study is 1887, the founding year of the Victoria School of Art and Design. The study ends in 1943, the year that Elizabeth Styring Nutt retired from her quarter-century principalship of the Art School. The final

21(...)continued)


23 Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism," in Nicholson, Feminism / Postmodernism, 145, 153. See also chapters in Nicholson by Christine Di Stefano (63-82), Sandra Harding (83-106), and Nancy Hartsock (157-75), along with Nicholson's "Introduction," (1-16).
decade of this period, however, is dealt with only briefly, as the mid 1930s was in
many ways the end of an era for the school. By this time, most of the early promoters
of the Art School had either retired or died. Ella Ritchie, the longest serving member
of the original founding VSAD Board of Directors, died in 1928.24 Her sister, Eliza
Ritchie, one of the last surviving women who had been active in the early years, died
in April 1933, and she was just one of four long-standing supporters of the school
whose deaths were reported in the VSAD’s annual report that year.25 Also in 1933,
a serious split occurred in Halifax’s art community that changed its character,
leaving the Art School unable to solely dominate the community as it had in the past.
A year earlier in 1932, a decade-long campaign by Nova Scotia women for a new art
school building concluded, ending four decades of leadership by the Halifax Local
Council of Women for community support of the Art School. That same year, Isabel
Brodie, an Art School graduate who had headed the Art Department for Halifax
public schools since 1905, retired.26 By 1935 Nova Scotia had a new official art
program in its schools, more progressive than what Brodie had been used to.27 For
these reasons, the mid-1930s provides a convenient point for concluding discussion

24 “Obituary” [Ella Ritchie], Halifax Mail, 25 April 1928; “Will of Late Miss Ella Ritchie,”
Halifax Chronicle, 23 May 1928.

25 “Dr. E. Ritchie Passes: Real Lost to City,” Halifax Mail, 5 September 1933; “Impressive
Tribute is Paid Today,” Halifax Mail, 6 September 1933; “Nova Scotia College of Art,” in
Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31st,

26 Lila Publicover, “Report-Director of Drawing,” Appendix 2, in Report of Board of School
of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax for the Year Ending 31st, October, 1934
(Halifax, 1934), 34-35.

27 “Art and Handwork,” in Handbook to the Course of Study, Henry F. Munro (Truro: News
on many issues raised in the study, leaving the next decade to be treated only to the extent of bringing Nutt's principalship to closure. Similarly, while the final chapter overviews the College's history from Nutt's time up until 1990, it does so only with enough detail to allow events from the school's second half century to inform issues arising from its first.

This study of one school gives us insights into the role a community plays in fostering art institutions. It also reveals much about art's perceived links to employable skills during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An art historian looking at this period, in contrast to an educational historian, might see these two themes of community and employable skills as secondary. Instead, art history would look more at the art itself and less at the curriculum, more at stylistic developments and less at social. In doing so it would, for example, gauge the extent to which the era's modernist art style, with its increasing popularity of art for art's sake, affected the fine art produced at the school. Yet, as much as, or more than, these stylistic developments, what shaped the Art School in Halifax, its programs and its artists, were the social considerations of community goals and economic hopes. It will be these considerations that provide this study its focus.
CHAPTER TWO

The Art School Promoters:
The Founding of the Victoria School of Art and Design, 1887

On Monday October 28, 1887, the Victoria School of Art and Design (VSAD) opened its doors to the public for the first time. Located in Nova Scotia's capital city, Halifax, the school was housed in rented rooms at the Union Bank Building, downtown on the corner of Hollis and Prince Streets. For headmaster, the Art School directors had hired George Harvey, a painter who had graduated from the highly regarded National Art Training School at South Kensington, in London, England. It is no surprise that an Englishman was chosen to head the school. A city of forty thousand people in the late 1880s, seventy-five thousand if you included the county, Halifax was overwhelmingly British. Almost eighty percent of the city and county population were either English (32,092), Irish (15,603), or Scotch (11,429), with fewer than six percent being French (4,229). In fact, French were outnumbered by Germans (7,402), who had begun settling Halifax soon after its founding by Colonel

1 See copies of "Acts and Amendments to Incorporate the Victoria School of Art and Design," MG 17 vol. 43 no. 20, (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia). (Public Archives of N.S. hereinafter referred to as P.A.N.S.).

Edward Cornwallis in 1749, and who now formed ten percent of the population, occupying much of the eastern part of the county and Lunenburg.³

Given Halifax's strong British ancestry, Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 was naturally an occasion for serious celebration in the city. Histories traditionally cite that celebration as the main reason for the VSAD's creation, their interpretation being that Halifax citizens, wanting a fitting Jubilee memorial, founded the Art School.⁴ However, closer investigation suggests that the Jubilee was an immediate but secondary cause. More important, the Art School came about because Halifax had two essential ingredients for creating it: resolute agents of change and favourable historical conditions. This chapter looks at the change agents, while the next chapter will look more closely at the historical conditions.

The principal change agents were a group of community-spirited Halifax citizens. Led by Anna Leonowens, who had come up with the idea for the school, these citizens were the leading force in getting the Art School established.⁵

---

³ Census of Canada 1890-91 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1893).


⁵ On the VSAD being Leonowens's idea, see Victoria School of Art and Design, Minutes Book, May 5, 1887 to May 6, 1894, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 2, (P.A.N.S.),29 March 1888 (Minutes book hereinafter referred to as VSAD Minutes). Archibald MacMachan, an English professor at Dalhousie University who occasionally lectured at the VSAD, later claimed that J. Gordon MacGregor had first suggested the Art School, but there is no evidence to support this claim. MacGregor was Dean of Science at Dalhousie University, and he served as VSAD Director from 1888 until he accepted a Chair of Natural Science at Edinburgh University in 1901.

(continued...)
Biographical data reveals both similarities and diversities in the backgrounds of the Art School's promoters. They shared middle or upper class status, but they differed in their religious denominations. They all had a common interest in art and education, but they differed in how they pursued their own art and education. Some were leaders in social entertainment, others in social betterment, and others in business. They were able to combine these similarities and diversities, effectively complementing one another to get the job done. We will look first at the VSAD promoters as individuals, and then at their collective work which led to the founding of the Victoria School of Art and Design.

Seven of the Art School's first thirteen directors were women, some of whom were primarily responsible for the VSAD's founding. All of these women had family names of political, economic, and social import in the province. Lawyers, judges, bankers, merchants, Senators, and Members of the Legislative Assembly were their kin. Except Anna Leonowens, who had lived in Britain, India, Siam, and New York before moving to Halifax, the women had family roots securely grounded in the Atlantic provinces' soil. While Leonowens could play the role of the worldly-wise authority, the other women could use their family networks to steer their project through the mazes of political power. These other women who joined Leonowens on

---

MacMechan may have been referring to general ideas in MacGregor's 1882 book Technical Education Abroad and at Home. See: MacMechan, "New Art School Needed," Halifax Mail, 25 March 1929; Archibald MacMechan, "When Art Flourished," in exhibition catalogue Fine Arts Week, Music Poetry Painting, 2-8 February 1922, Halifax, Victoria School of Art and Design.
the VSAD Board in its first years were Helen Kenny, Ellen Almon Ritchie, Mrs. John S. MacLean, a Mrs. Worrall, Mrs. William Lawson, and Mrs H.H. Fuller.\(^6\)

The assumed tasks of the "lady directors," as they were usually referred to, often differed from those of their male colleagues on the VSAD Board. To some degree, the lady directors were expected to organize community events to raise money; the men sat on the finance committee to determine how that money would be spent. The ladies were in charge of social affairs, the men political and business. The men considered mechanical drawing and the architectural program to be their responsibility; the ladies were sent to find an instructor in fancy needlework.

Although these gendered expectations existed on the Board, the division was not really clear cut, with many of the women taking positions and doing tasks that differed from those stereotypically assigned to their gender. It was a woman Board member, Helen Kenny, for example, who insisted that the Art School's curriculum must include industrial drawing.\(^7\) As for Leonowens, she was more prone to stress the VSAD's industrial program than she was its fine arts offerings.\(^8\) She also took second place to no one when it came to deciding how to spend the collected funds. She knew that the VSAD's vocational emphasis would sell the school to the Halifax public, having no illusions that the city or province would provide public money for a

\(^6\) At this time in Nova Scotia, official or published documents rarely gave the first names of women, referring to them either as "Miss" with their last name only, or "Mrs." with their last name or name of their husband. First names of most women in this study have been determined by archival documents such as letters, scrapbooks, and diaries. All of the original women VSAD directors were married, except Ella Ritchie, who, along with her sister Dr. Eliza Ritchie, another prominent VSAD supporter, never married.

\(^7\) VSAD Minutes, 3 June 1887.

\(^8\) McKay, "Historical Sketch."
school that offered the arts solely as polite pursuits. And she was right. After the school's first year, Halifax's mayor John C. O'Mullen still felt compelled to defend the VSAD against those of the opinion "that the school is only intended to make artists of the young ladies."  

Practical political considerations was only one of the reasons Leonowens advocated an industrial focus for the Art School. More important were her beliefs that training in the arts was good for the economy and society, which she promoted by reprinting a pamphlet called "Art Movement in America." Distributed throughout Halifax, the pamphlet described how contemporary art schools were linked to industrial advancement. In a preface she wrote for the pamphlet, Leonowens explained the schools' aims. An art school, she said, would aid "not only in encouraging the Fine Arts, such as painting, sculpture, architecture, but in giving a remarkable impetus and a higher artistic value to all the various branches of the mechanical and industrial arts."  

With a need for some form of industrial stimulation, Halifax was ready to hear Leonowens's argument. Primarily a port town, Halifax had enjoyed an economic boom during the golden age of sail earlier in the century. By 1887, however, the city's merchants were falling behind in the transition to steamships, railroads, industrialization, and increased central Canadian competition. As the port's

---

9 O'Mullen's quote is in "Ye World's fayre," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 21 August 1888.

commercial traffic declined, its military presence increased, a result of Britain's uneasiness with Bismarck's Germany. Military construction took place in Halifax throughout the 1880s, but manufacturing ventures were beginning to struggle. There was still promise, though. Halifax, and its cross-harbor companion community Dartmouth, could boast of the Starr Company's iron and steel works, Moir's bakery, confectionary, and flour mill, two thriving shoe factories, two tobacco factories, carriage factories, piano manufacturers, a brush factory, foundries, and ropeworks. Yet there were also increased bankruptcies and closures. To regain the city's competitive edge, argued Leonowens and other art school promoters, it should draw from the lessons of the art school movement elsewhere in the continent. Local industries needed the skills of competently trained industrial designers, and so they needed the Victoria School of Art and Design.

Leonowens was fifty-six years old when the Art School opened, and the VSAD was not by any means her first notable achievement. She had moved to Nova Scotia nine years earlier, in 1878, to live with her newly-married daughter Avis and Avis's husband, Thomas Fyshe, a banker who had been transferred to Halifax. By then she was already an established author, lecturer, and educator. Her best known exploit was as governess and tutor for the many children of the King of Siam. Popularized by books and articles she had written about her Siam experience, the story would later become the subject of Margaret Landon's book Anna and the King of Siam. Landon's book in turn spawned more fictionalized portrayals in plays and films. In

---

1946 the first film version of Landon's book won two academy awards. By 1951, Rogers and Hammerstein had turned the story into the well known musical play, "The King and I," which Twentieth Century Fox made into another movie in 1956.\textsuperscript{12}

Despite Leonowens's fame, many details of her life are still not clear. In addition to Landon, we can trace accounts of Leonowens's life back to a newspaper article published when she left Halifax for good in 1897. The article has no byline and its facts credit no sources, but we can assume that Leonowens herself provided much of the story.\textsuperscript{13} That leads to a problem. According to Leonowens's more recent biographer, Leslie Smith Dow, Leonowens had a penchant for fabricating her past. Subsequent writers simply repeated her stories.\textsuperscript{14} Still, we know enough about Leonowens to piece together a portrait of a confident, adventurous woman, one for whom spearheading the VSAD in the late 1880s fits well within the context of her life history. Her biography reveals a person increasingly adept in matters of culture, education, and community organization. Such matters were at the heart of Halifax's Art School.

Although she claims to have been born in Carnarvon, Wales, Leonowens was actually born in India on November 6, 1831, the second daughter of Mary Ann Edwards. Leonowens also claimed she was the daughter of a British army captain

\begin{itemize}
  \item Anna Harriet Leonowens, The English Governess at the Siamese Court (Boston: Fields, Osgood and Company, 1870); \textit{idem}, The Romance of the Harem (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Company, 1872); Margaret Landon, Anna and the King of Siam (New York: The John Day Company, 1944); Anna and the King of Siam, film, 129 minutes, with Irene Dunne playing Leonowens, (Hollywood: Twentieth Century Fox, 1946); The King and I, film, 133 minutes, with Deborah Kerr as Leonowens, (Hollywood: Twentieth Century Fox, 1956).
  \item "Her Farewell to Halifax," Halifax Herald, 14 June 1897, 6.
  \item Leslie Smith Dow, Anna Leonowens: A Life Beyond the King and I (Lawrencetown Beach, N.S.: Pottersfield Press, 1991), xii-xiii, 1-2.
\end{itemize}
named Thomas M. Crawford. However her real father, Thomas Edwards, was of much lower military rank and had died three months before Anna’s birth. Although her mother had named her Ann Harriet Emma Edwards, Leonowens gave her maiden name as Anna Harriet Crawford.¹⁵

Siam was not Leonowens’s first major journey, she having already travelled to Egypt and the Middle East in 1849. Upon her return to India at the end of that year, she married Thomas S. Leon Owens. Although their first two children had died very young, their next two survived into adulthood. Avis Annie Connybeare, whom Leonowens would follow to Halifax, was born in London on October 25, 1854. Exactly one year later, again in London, the Leonowens’s son, Louis Thomas Gunnis, was born.¹⁶

Anna Leonowens’s involvement in education began around 1859, shortly after her husband had died of sunstroke following a tiger hunt in Singapore. Left with a son and daughter to support, she began a school in Singapore. Although the school was a financial failure, it did attract the attention of the Siamese Consul in Singapore. In 1862, Leonowens was recruited to work for the Siamese King. After sending Avis back to England, Leonowens headed to Siam with Louis Thomas, arriving there in March. Leonowens kept the Siam position for five years. Although her main task was to teach English to the princes and princesses, she also took her

---

¹⁵ “Her Farewell to Halifax”; Landon, Anna and the King of Siam, 4; Dow, Anna Leonowens, xii-xiii, 1-2.

¹⁶ “Her Farewell”; Landon, Anna and the King of Siam, 5, 9, 10, 15-19; Dow, Anna Leonowens, 5-6.
first venture into art education by teaching drawing and painting to Princess Fay-ing.\(^{17}\)

Leonowens and her son left Bangkok for England in the summer of 1867. In October she and Avis set out for New York, leaving her protesting son Louis Thomas behind in a boarding school. Continuing to make a living through teaching, Leonowens opened up a school on Staten Island. She also began to write about India and Siam, publishing her first article in the June 1869 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. In 1870 she sold more articles to the magazine. By the end of that year she had published her first book, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court. Being Recollections of Six Years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok*. In 1872 *Atlantic Monthly* accepted two more articles by Leonowens, "Favourite of the Harem" and "L'ore, the Slave of the Siamese Queen." Leonowens combined these articles with supplementary writings to come up with her second successful book, *The Romance of the Harem*.\(^{18}\)

While in New York, Avis Leonowens met Thomas Fyshe, a Scot who had come to North America to seek fortune as a stockbroker. In 1875 Fyshe accepted a position as manager of the Saint John, New Brunswick branch of the Bank of Nova Scotia. Within a year the Bank promoted Fyshe to its main branch in Halifax. On June 19, 1878, Fyshe, thirty-three, and Avis, twenty-four, married in New York.
Earlier that year, Fyshe had bought his first Halifax home, known as Hillside Cottage, which the newlyweds and Leonowens moved into. Soon, they again moved, this time to the corner of Inglis and South Bland Streets, an area of town becoming increasingly favoured by wealthier citizens. In 1883 the Fyshes and Leonowens moved once again to a home known as "Sunnyside," where they still lived in 1887 when Leonowens founded the Victoria School of Art and Design.\(^{19}\)

While living in Halifax, Leonowens kept up her ties to Boston and New York, visiting there often to lecture about education and her travels. During one of her New York trips, she had a hand in founding a private school called the Berkeley School for Boys.\(^{20}\) In 1881 a Boston-based periodical called The Youth's Companion commissioned Leonowens to travel to Russia. Possibly the first foreign woman to travel the country alone, her task was to write a series of articles on Russia and its people. She was there a few months, going from Saint Petersburg to Moscow to the White Sea and then to Kiev. Her articles pleased the editors of The Youth's Companion enough for them to offer her a permanent job. Although attracted to Boston and nearby New York, Leonowens declined the offer, citing a desire to remain

\(^{19}\) Blake, "Anna of Siam Lived in Canada," 9-10; Blakeley, "Anna of Siam in Canada," 41-43; Dow, Anna Leonowens, 70-72, 146-47; "Her Farewell"; Landon, Anna and the King of Siam, 354; McFeely, "Anna of Siam"; see marriage announcement in Halifax's Acadian Recorder, 27 June 1878; see also Thomas Fyshe's biography card, P.A.N.S., with "Information from Mrs. Margot Dixon, Archivist of Bank of Nova Scotia at Toronto. D.C. McKay [art historian and Art School Principal] 1968," and citing History of Bank of Nova Scotia 1832-1900, (1932), 53-58. When Leonowens signed her "Preface" to "The Art Movement in America" she said she was from "Sunnyside, Halifax, 26th April, 1887."

\(^{20}\) "Her Farewell"; Blake, "Anna of Siam Lived in Canada," 11; Blakeley, "Anna of Siam in Canada," 43.
close to her grandchildren in Halifax.\(^{21}\) She continued to write, however,
publishing her third book, *Life and Travel in India: Being Recollections of a Journey
Before the Days of Railroads*, in 1884, which, unfortunately, did not sell as well as
she had hoped.\(^{22}\)

By 1887, therefore, Leonowens was accomplished in both education and
letters, and setting up a school was not new to her. The founding of the Victoria
School of Art and Design thus owes much to the life experiences Leonowens brought
with her to Halifax. Furthermore, while in Halifax Leonowens was successful in
galvanizing community support. Both in its origins and in its first half century, such
support, or at times lack of it, was the key factor determining the rise or fall of the
Art School’s fortunes.

Although Leonowens’s religious interest leaned more toward Buddhism than
Protestantism, the Fyshes and Leonowens attended Saint Matthew’s Presbyterian
Church.\(^{23}\) With its strong legacy of educational leadership in Nova Scotia, the
Presbyterian connection was a valuable one in Leonowens’s art school campaigns.
For example, early supporters of the Victoria School of Art and Design included

\(^{21}\) “Her Farewell”; Anna Harriet Leonowens, "Moscow ‘The Holy’," *The Critic*, (June 1887);
Anna Harriet Leonowens Fyshe, "Anna: from the unpublished memoirs of Anna Harriet
Chronicle*, 21 June 1887, 1, which describes artifacts "brought from Moscow by Mrs.
Leonowens"; Blake, "Anna of Siam Lived in Canada," 10-11; Blakeley, "Anna of Siam in

\(^{22}\) “Her Farewell”; Leonowens, *Life and Travel in India: Being Recollections of a Journey
Before the Days of Railroads*, (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1884); Blake, "Anna of Siam Lived
in Canada," 9; Blakeley, "Anna of Siam in Canada," 43; Dow, *Anna Leonowens*, 84; Landon,
*Anna and the King of Siam*, 182, 355, 371.

\(^{23}\) On her Buddhism, see Edgar Andrew Collard, "When Anna Came to Canada," *Montreal
prominent Presbyterians such as Halifax mayor James C. MacKintosh, Dr. James Gordon MacGregor of Dalhousie University, and Alexander McKay, Supervisor for the Board of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax.

While Leonowens knew her way around Presbyterian circles, her colleague on the VSAD founding committee, Helen Kenny, was prominent in Roman Catholic society. As Halifax and the surrounding county's largest denomination, numbering almost twenty-five thousand, Catholics outnumbered Presbyterians, the third largest denomination, by more than two-to-one. Overall, though, Catholic membership was about half that of the combined Protestant population of forty-eight thousand, led by twenty-three thousand Anglicans.  

Although not always peaceful, the co-existence of Catholics and Protestants in the city was aided by well-established arrangements. Beginning in the 1860s, for example, an "unofficial policy" allowed Halifax school trustees to rent Roman Catholic schools, thereby making them officially public schools, while in fact creating a separate, or "dual," school system. Also in the 1860s, what for the next century would be known as a "gentleman's agreement" ensured alternating Catholic and Protestant Halifax mayors.  

In Halifax, therefore, where religion so often defined political, business, and educational domains, Leonowens and Kenny made a well matched team.

24 Census of Canada 1890-91.


Except for Leonowens, Kenny was the most active and influential founding Board member of the Art School, and she and Leonowens complemented one another in many ways other than religious affiliation. Leonowens stressed industrial arts, Kenny fine arts. The local press portrayed Leonowens as reserved, well travelled, worldly-wise, and well respected for her literary accomplishments and for her eloquence. The much younger Kenny, on the other hand, was often praised in the newspapers for her notably striking appearance, and for her energetic and imaginative initiation of community social events.\(^\text{27}\)

Born in Montreal, Kenny's maiden name was Helen Furniss.\(^\text{28}\) Around 1876, she married Jeremiah Francis Kenny, whose family was among the wealthiest in Halifax.\(^\text{29}\) Although Jeremiah Kenny's personal wealth was less than a third of his older brother's, M.P. Thomas E. Kenny, and only about a quarter of his father's, Sir Edward Kenny, it still amounted to a respectable sum of about one hundred thousand dollars, which would be the equivalent of about two million dollars in the 1990s.\(^\text{30}\)

---


\(^\text{28}\) Her obituary gives her maiden name as Furness, "The Friend of All," 1897; however, an undated letter to her father found in her scrapbook is signed with what appears to be "Mary Helen Furniss." The 1891 article "Mrs. J.F. Kenny" also gives her maiden name as Furniss. The Public Archives of Nova Scotia has an introductory note in Kenny's scrapbook that says she was born on May 20, 1853, but the same note gives an incorrect date for Kenny's death and is therefore suspect.

\(^\text{29}\) The 1891 article "Mrs. J.F. Kenny" says Helen Kenny "married Mr. J.F. Kenny some fifteen years ago."

\(^\text{30}\) "The Almighty Dollar. Halifax Men Who Are Worth Many Thousands," *The Mercury*, 28 March 1891; "This List Is Larger. The Rich Men and Women of Halifax," *Progress*, 16 March 1895. The 1895 article claims that earlier articles overestimated wealth. However, both articles listed Jeremiah Kenny at $100,000, and they list other Kenny men as among the city's (continued...)
Initially using his family wealth to become a partner in the T. & E. Kenny drygoods firm, Jeremiah Kenny later went on to form his own insurance company. His family was also prominent in social and political affairs. His sister Johanna married Malachy Bowes Daly, who would be the province's Lieutenant-Governor during the 1890s. Jeremiah Kenny's mother, Lady Anne Kenny, was from the Henry family, with her step-brother being the Hon. William Alexander Henry, a prominent judge, politician, and Father of Confederation. Along with William Alexander, many other men in the Henry family also made a name for themselves in law.

Helen Kenny fit in well with this highly visible family. She was often publicly praised for her attractiveness, with her "dark eyes" reportedly "the subject of many a toast." The papers complimented her for sparing no expense in her dress and her jewels, nor in the decoration of her home. An admired social organizer, Kenny had many opportunities to display this decor, a local periodical describing her as one of the "chief leaders of gaiety in Halifax." Whether she entertained at home or at community events, Helen Kenny's socials were always the place to be. When Oscar Wilde did his famous east coast tour in 1882, he wrote Kenny to thank her for a... continued

---

30(...)continued

richest. According to the Prices' Division of Statistics Canada, Ottawa, $100,000 in 1887 would be the equivalent of $1,978,260 in 1996.

31 Biography Card, P.A.N.S.

32 Blakeley, in "Key Roles Played by the Nova Scotia College of Art," mistakenly says that Helen Kenny was William A. Henry's daughter. She may have taken this from the P.A.N.S. introductory note in Helen Kenny's scrapbook, which earlier made the same mistake.

33 "Mrs. J.F. Kenny."

34 "Mrs. J.F. Kenny."
supper invitation after his Halifax performance. In 1890, when Prince George visited the city, he dined at the Kenny's.  

Community affairs also commanded Kenny's attention. In 1882 she became president of The Ladies of the Catholic Benevolent Society. She supported Catholic charities, such as the Poors' Asylum and the Sisters of Charity Catholic Orphanage. She contributed to the Children of Mary of the Sacred Heart, which distributed clothes to the poor so they could "attend Mass and catechism, and go regularly to school." Kenny was also active in amateur theatre, though more as a patron than as a performer. In the fine arts, on the other hand, Kenny was both an amateur practitioner and an influential patron. This interest in the arts, combined with her community spirit and well placed position in Halifax's social hierarchy, made Kenny a strong ally for Leonowens in gaining support for the Victoria School of Art and Design.

A third Art School promoter was Ella Almon Ritchie. Whereas Kenny had married into Halifax high society, Ritchie was born into it. The Ritchies were a

35 It is not certain whether Wilde actually dined at the Kenny's. Copy of letter in Helen Kenny's scrapbook, p. 32, with original removed to P.A.N.S. V/F, MG 100 vol. 246 nos. 7-8. On the Prince George visit, see references in scrapbook, which notes that he accepted the invitation from Helen Kenny.

36 See newspaper clipping in Helen Kenny's scrapbook, p. 31.

37 See newspaper clipping in Kenny's scrapbook, p. 33.

38 For Kenny's acting roles, see flyers: "Theatricals. Fort Massey, Halifax, N.S. February 9th, 1876," (Halifax: Nova Scotia Printing Co.), in Kenny's scrapbook, p. 22; "The Academy of Music," Halifax Recorder, 31 December 1884; "Academy of Music," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 31 December 1884. Dow (Anna Leonowens, 114) says that Kenny "took part in virtually every amateur theatre production in town." However, archival evidence reveals only two such acting roles, and the Mercury article "Mrs. J.F. Kenny" says "She has only appeared once or twice personally on stage."
prominent, and very wealthy, Nova Scotian family of jurists.\textsuperscript{39} The family was Anglican, adding another denomination to the mix of Leonowens's Presbyterianism and Kenny’s Catholicism. This coming together of different religious backgrounds was significant in a province where colleges and many schools often served primarily one denomination or another.

Ella was one of twelve children in the family of Hon. John William and Amelia Ritchie. John William Ritchie was a lawyer, judge, and politician. He served as Law Clerk to the Legislative Council and Solicitor General in the Tupper Cabinet in colonial Nova Scotia from 1839 to 1867, moving from there to the Canadian Senate. In 1870 he resigned the Senate to become a Judge of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia.\textsuperscript{40} Ella’s mother was an Almon, another well known name in the province. For example, Ella’s uncle Dr. William Johnston Almon, a Halifax physician and politician, was founder and first President of the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie in 1868. He also served as President of the Nova Scotia Medical Society. Nova Scotians elected him to the House of Commons in 1872, and he was appointed to the Senate in 1879, where he sat until his death in 1901.\textsuperscript{41}

Ella Ritchie’s mother, Amelia, was active in the community and in the woman movement, and she passed on some of these activist tendencies to her children. In 1884 Ella Ritchie entered Dalhousie University, which began accepting women only

\textsuperscript{39} On the wealth of the Ritchie family, see "The Almighty Dollar" and "This List Is Larger."


\textsuperscript{41} Obituary, Acadian Recorder [William Johnston Ritchie], 19 February 1901, 3; Obituary [William Johnston Ritchie], Halifax Herald, 19 February 1901, 1; Marble, Nova Scotians, 36.
three years earlier. In 1887, both Ella and her brother Thomas helped Leonowens and Kenny with the initial organizational meetings for the Victoria School of Art and Design, and when it came time to choose Board members for the new school, Ella was one of the people elected. She continued to serve the Art School for the rest of her life. In 1909, her career as Board member barely half over, the VSAD directors elected Ritchie as their vice-president. Outlasting all of the thirteen original VSAD directors, Ritchie sat on the Board for over four decades until her death in 1928. During that time she also served on the boards of the Victorian Order of Nurses and the Halifax Local Council of Women, and she helped to organize Halifax’s Red Cross during the First World War.\footnote{Obituary [Ella Ritchie], Halifax Mail, 25 April 1928; see the reports for the "Victoria School of Art and Design, Halifax" for each of the years 1905 to 1910 and 1922, in Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia (Halifax: Queen’s/King’s Printer); Local Council of Women of Halifax, Minutes Book April 1899-June 1908, MG 20 vol. 535 no. 3 (P.A.N.S.) (hereinafter referred to as LCW Minutes 1899-1908); Ernest R. Forbes, “Battles in Another War: Edith Archibald and the Halifax Feminist Movement,” in Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989), 67-89.}

Ella’s younger sister Eliza had moved to the United States by 1887. Upon her return to Halifax twelve years later, she too took an active interest in the Victoria School of Art and Design. Eliza had been successful in academe. In 1887 she was in the first graduating class from Dalhousie University that included women. Having left Halifax soon after achieving her Bachelor of Letters degree, she did not play a large role in organizing the Art School.\footnote{Dalhousie degree listed as "B.L." in "Report of President of Dalhousie University," 1918-19, LH D15, (P.A.N.S.), 92. Her obituary says her Dalhousie degree was in Arts: “Dr. E. Ritchie Passes: Real Loss to City,” obituary, Halifax Mail, 5 September 1933.} Instead, she pursued doctoral studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, graduating in 1889 to become one of the
first Canadian women to receive a Ph.D.\(^{44}\) Before returning to Halifax, she taught philosophy and psychology for eight years at Wellesley College in Massachusetts.

When Eliza Ritchie returned to Halifax, she became a driving force in the arts community, the VSAD, the Victorian Order of Nurses, the Local Council of Women, the suffrage movement, the campaign to get women on school boards,\(^{45}\) and the feminist movement in general.\(^{46}\) She lectured on art history at both Dalhousie and

---

\(^{44}\) Her dissertation was "The Problem of Personality," Cornell University, 1889; see Forbes, "Battles," 75.

\(^{45}\) "Dr. E. Ritchie Passes"; Forbes, "Battles"; LCW Minutes 1899-1908, various dates; "Impressive Tribute is Paid Today," obituary, Halifax Mail, 6 September 1933; Local Council of Women of Halifax, Minutes Book, December 1916-May 1920, MG 20 vol. 535 no. 7 (P.A.N.S.), various dates; Eliza Ritchie, "Women Urged to Exercise Franchise," letter to the editor, Halifax Echo, 26 March 1915.

\(^{46}\) Ritchie's obituary described her as "a strong feminist": "Dr. E. Ritchie Passes." Although Ritchie and the other women supporters of the Art School seldom referred to themselves as "feminists," "clubwomen," or a "woman movement," all of these terms describe them. On distinctions between the "woman movement" and "feminism" in Canada, see Alison Prentice, Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson, Naomi Black, Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1988), 169-70. For a wider discussion of these two terms, from a United States perspective, see Nancy R. Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), e.g. 3-10; Gerda Lerner, "Women's Rights and American Feminism," The American Scholar 40, no. 2 (Spring 1971): 49; K. Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society 14, no. 1 (1988): 119-57; Alice S. Rossi, ed., The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1973), xii. Cott says the term "feminism" came into prominent use only in the 1910s. Kealey found the word "feminist" used in Canada in the 1890s to refer to the "New Woman": Linda Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada 1880s-1920s (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979). E.R. Forbes discusses many of the same Halifax women found in my study, usually referring to them as "feminists" and to their activities as the "feminist movement": Forbes, "Battles"; idem, "The Ideas of Carol Bacchi and the Suffragists of Halifax: A Review Essay on Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918" (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), Atlantis 10, no. 2 (Spring 1985), 119-26. I use the term "feminist" more sparingly than does Forbes. Although many of the Halifax women's ideas and activities can rightfully be called "feminist," and though some of the women occasionally referred to themselves as feminists, it was not their usual practice to do so. Prentice, et al. also notes a general reluctance among other Canadians in the woman movement to adopt the term feminist (170).
the Art School. Rarely did a year go by without the VSAD acknowledging the Ritchie sisters' contributions. At her own Alma Mater, Dalhousie, Eliza Ritchie helped organize women's residences, art lectures, and the Alumnae Association, and she was the first woman on the university's Board of Governors. Never marrying, both Eliza and Ella lived on Halifax's North West Arm with their brother George, a lawyer, and their sister Mary, also an activist in women's organizations, both of whom also remained unwed.

Another director during the VSAD's early years was Anna Leonowens' neighbour, Mrs. John S. MacLean. Like the other women VSAD directors, Maclean was financially comfortable, her husband being a West Indian merchant. The Art School was not Maclean's and Leonowens' first educational undertaking together. Earlier, the two had organized a "pioneer book club" in which they and fifteen well-to-do Haligonians met to read and discuss literature. MacLean and Leonowens also conducted a reading class in the MacLean home with up to twenty-two pupils.

---

47 "Early Italian Art: Lecture by Dr. Eliza Ritchie in Art School Last Evening," Halifax Recorder, 5 February 1905; "The Victoria School of Art and Design Reopens on Sept. 30th," Halifax Recorder, 10 September 1907; Victoria School of Art and Design, pamphlet on lecture series, 4 January 1905, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.); VSAD, Course of Art Lectures, pamphlet, 1907, 17 vol. 43 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.). On her lectures at Dalhousie, see "Report of President of Dalhousie University," 92.

48 See especially the Art School's annual reports during Elizabeth Nutt's principalship after World War One, in Annual Report[s] of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia (Halifax: King's Printer).

49 "Report of President of Dalhousie University 1918-19," 92.

50 Ella Ritchie's "Obituary," Halifax Mail. Another brother, Thomas, was president of the Eastern Trust Company; see his Biography Card, F81 C16 H77, 1909, (P.A.N.S.).

51 "Her Farewell"; Blake, "Anna of Siam Lived in Canada," 10-11; Blakeley, "Anna of Siam in Canada," 43. See also letter concerning a book sale by the Pioneer Book Club, from Leonowens to Chief Justice Sir William Young, dated Sunnyside, 16 October 1883, and an 1885 bill to Young for books, MG 100 vol. 175 no. 12 (P.A.N.S.).
Besides Leonowens and Kenny, and for a much longer time than either of them, the key figure in founding and building the Victoria School of Art and Design was Alexander McKay, the Supervisor for Halifax's schools. McKay was the most consistent promoter of art and industrial education in the province. Although he could have claimed many educational successes, he always gave full credit to others who worked with him. As Secretary of the Victoria School of Art and Design during the school's first three decades, he recorded the minutes and interpreted the school's events. Throughout these records, McKay reports that Anna Leonowens and Helen Kenny initiated the Art School. A study of the evidence shows McKay deserves equal credit.\footnote{For examples of McKay crediting Leonowens for the Art School, see: Alexander McKay, letter to Miss Owen, Halifax, 24 November 1898, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.); McKay, "Historical Sketch," 167; VSAD Minutes, 29 March 1888.}

Born on July 16, 1841 in Earltown, Nova Scotia, Alexander McKay was a lifelong educationist. Like Leonowens, and like many other prominent Nova Scotia educators during the nineteenth century, McKay was Presbyterian. He began teaching when he was fifteen years old, and graduated from the Truro Normal School three years later. He taught or served as principal in the counties of Digby, Colchester, and Kings before taking an administrative position with the Dartmouth public schools in 1872. In 1881 he joined the staff of Halifax High School as a member of the Department of Mathematics and Science. At the end of 1883 he was appointed Supervisor of Halifax Public Schools, a position he kept for thirty-five years.\footnote{"Veteran Educationist Ends Long and Useful Life," \textit{Halifax Morning Chronicle}, 9 April 1917, 2.}
In the early 1880s McKay had successfully promoted industrial drawing in Halifax's public schools. By mid-decade he had begun what was to be an effective ten year campaign to have manual training included in the provincial public school Course of Study. Promoting the Art School, McKay felt, was an extension of this campaign. Both Leonowens and McKay believed that the needs of industry, indeed the needs of all society, were served not only by education in industrial arts, but also in fine arts. Industrial arts gave workers the skills to design and make better products. Fine arts educated the taste of consumers so they would appreciate and buy those products. The result from such education would be a thriving economy.  

Although McKay emphasised industrial training, he also worked to provide more complete liberal arts education in the city. For example, during the same year that McKay helped found the Art School, he worked with two other VSAD supporters, James C. Mackintosh and James Gordon MacGregor, to help establish the Halifax Ladies' College. Strong in its Presbyterian ties, the school was originally slated to be called the Halifax Presbyterian Ladies' College. Its program included three sections, beginning with a Primary department, which accepted students who had attended kindergarten and could read. The Preparatory section included general education, along with preparation for the advanced Collegiate section, which in turn was divided into a classical course of four years and a literary course of three. The

---

College included a program in fine arts, which over the years was connected in various ways to the Art School. Another part of the Ladies' College in 1887 was the Halifax Conservatory of Music. The educational goals of the Ladies' College, which was primarily a finishing school, bore more similarity to liberal arts than to the industrial objectives commonly associated with McKay. McKay however, saw the two types of education as different means to the same economic and social ends.

In the overall balance, Leonowens and McKay steered the Art School in an industrial direction. Their stance was utilitarian, believing their plans would produce the most good for the most people. McKay's thirty year tenure as VSAD Secretary ensured him the chance to phrase most Art School communiques with slogans reflecting his own priorities. Leonowens' position as the VSAD's first vice-president further ensured that those beliefs would be reflected in the Art School's early programs.

Taking full advantage of the expected Jubilee enthusiasm, Leonowens and Kenny began campaigning for the art school early in 1887. They set up a founding committee, astutely inviting Nova Scotia's Superintendent of Education Dr. David Allison to serve as the chair. Leonowens and Kenny then worked through the committee to hold meetings, issue press releases, solicit subscriptions, and organize fund-raising lectures and theatricals. Leonowens even travelled to Charlottetown,

---

Prince Edward Island, where her lecture raised sixty dollars for the school. At all the events, the two women enthusiastically described their plan to pay perpetual homage to Queen Victoria. What Halifax should do for the Jubilee, they concluded, was create an art museum and art school named after their monarch. This tribute, they said, would have a lasting effect on their city's cultural, industrial, and educational life.

Halifax teachers were among the first to respond, inviting Kenny and Leonowens to speak at the March monthly meeting of the Halifax Teachers' Association. The talk was met with enthusiasm, with the teachers unanimously passing a resolution supporting the plan for the Victoria art museum and school. Two months later, the women on the art school's organizing committee sought support from women teachers across the province by writing an address for the Annual Report of the Provincial Education Association.

By April the organizing committee had its plans more clearly formulated. Prudently paring down their project, committee members no longer talked about creating both a school and a museum and instead set their sights on a Victoria School of Art and Design. That month Leonowens published the pamphlet of articles from Century Magazine on "The Art Movement in America," proceeding to distribute it around the city. The articles described the art schools being founded in the United States, the role of hand-craft, and the need for trade schools in the arts. Leonowens

---

56 VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 12; VSAD Annual Report 1888, 128; VSAD Minutes, 10 December 1887.

57 "Teachers and the Jubilee," The Novascotian, 12 March 1887, 3; VSAD Minutes, 6 May 1887.
wrote a special preface for the publication, declaring that the experience in the United States serves to prove the immense advantage of such a school, which would afford technical education in the mechanical and industrial arts, and thus facilitate the production of articles of excellent and beautiful workmanship, and at the same time serve to give our artisans those advantages which they are now obliged to seek in foreign cities.\footnote{Leonowens, "Preface."}

The monarchist fervour building up around the Jubilee was certainly a boon to the founding committee. Throughout the Empire people planned celebrations for Queen Victoria's fifty years on the throne. Halifax was anxious to take part, as citizens there held matters of royalty in high regard. On June 21st, the day of the main celebrations, four thousand children marched onto the Halifax Commons, waving school banners and singing patriotic songs. On nearby Citadel Hill, fifteen thousand spectators greeted the pageant with enthusiastic applause. Brass bands played, ships fired salutes, the sun shone brightly, and the assembled masses rendered a pealing chorus of "God Save the Queen." What better background could there be for a call to name a local institution after their monarch?\footnote{On Halifax's Jubilee celebrations, see "The Jubilee. The Halifax Celebration a Pronounced Success," \textit{The Novascotian}, 25 June 1887, 6; "How It Was Celebrated in Halifax," \textit{Halifax Morning Herald}, 22 June 1887; "Grand Exhibition of Sub-marine Mining and Torpedo Experiments," \textit{Halifax Morning Chronicle}, 14 June 1887; David Allison, \textit{Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia, for the Year Ending 31st October, 1887} (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1888), 110. Sources estimated between three and five thousand school children participated, and ten to sixteen thousand spectators. On Jubilee celebrations elsewhere in the world, see "The World Over. Celebrating the Jubilee Festival," \textit{Halifax Morning Chronicle}, 21 June 1887.}
with all proceeds going to the proposed art school's coffers. Government officials donated the use of Province House for the art loan exhibition, which Lieutenant-Governor M.H. Richey officially opened. Prominent citizens loaned curiosities and artworks to the exhibition, while local artists displayed their wares. Thousands paid a quarter to pass through the gates, with four hundred more attending the Jubilee Ball on Monday night. After the receipts were counted and the bills paid, the loan exhibition netted the School six hundred dollars, and the Jubilee Ball yielded over a thousand more. You could always depend on Haligonians to honour their Queen.  

Along with fund raising came the political aspects of organizing the Art School. On May 6th Kenny proposed drawing up the school's constitution. She, Leonowens, and McKay formed a committee to do the job, joined by George Harvey, who was to be hired as the VSAD's headmaster, and David Allison, Nova Scotia Superintendent of Education. Later in the month, Mrs. Fuller joined the committee, along with Mr. J. M. DeWolf, Halifax's future mayor James Dempster, and Helen

---

Kenny's cousin, Hugh McDonald Henry, one of the many prominent judges in the Henry family. 61

Working quickly, the constitution committee had a draft by the first week of June. After fine tuning it with a few amendments, the VSAD organizing committee submitted the constitution to the provincial government and City Council for their approval. By July the final amendments were in place and provincial and municipal approval attained. Building on the momentum, the organizers called a public meeting for Friday July 15th at Orpheus Hall. Former Halifax mayor James C. Mackintosh chaired the meeting. He did so in place of Superintendent Allison, who that day was in Chicago on a related mission: attending the National Educational Association "with the duty of considering this subject of manual training in the public schools." New forms of art and industrial art education were clearly in the air that year. 62

When Mackintosh called for the vote on the constitution, those assembled gave it their unanimous endorsement. As outlined in the newly-approved constitution, all members of the Art School were now eligible to vote for directors, having gained this privilege by paying their subscription fees of five dollars a year or fifty dollars for lifetime membership, though many supporters donated more. Michael Dwyer, who became a director, had subscribed for two hundred dollars. And Edward P.

61 VSAD Minutes, 6, 20 May 1887.

Archbold, who would be elected as a director the following year, donated five hundred dollars. In all, seventy-three people became members in the VSAD’s first year, paying a total of $2,760 in subscriptions.\(^{63}\)

The subscribers voted on and passed a slate of eleven candidates who became the founding directors of the Victoria School of Art and Design. In addition to Leonowens, Kenny, and Ella Ritchie, the other original directors elected at that meeting were Power, Slayter, Mackintosh, Dwyer, Mr. T. V. McDonald, Mr. A Sinfield, Mr. F. S. West, and Mrs. Worrall. *Ex officio* members of the Board were the province’s Superintendent of Education, David Allison, and Halifax’s recently-elected mayor James Dempster. McKay was appointed Secretary and MacDonald treasurer. Before the meeting ended, Nova Scotia’s attorney-general “complimented the ladies for the energy and practical wisdom which make Halifax so largely indebted to them for the establishment of the school.”\(^{64}\)

At their first meeting four weeks later, the VSAD directors elected Leonowens vice-president and Allison president.\(^{65}\) Allison’s position was mainly to enhance the School’s position in the provincial educational system. In the actual operation of the Art School it was Leonowens, Kenny, and McKay who exercised executive power. It is true that Leonowens soon resigned her executive position so that Mayor Dempster could be given the title of VSAD Vice-President. But he became a figurehead while Leonowens, who was still a director, joined McKay, Kenny, and the other Board

---

\(^{63}\) VSAD "Constitution"; VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 7.

\(^{64}\) Halifax Morning Chronicle, 16 June 1887; VSAD Minutes, 15 July 1887.

\(^{65}\) VSAD Minutes, 10 August 1887.
members to thank the city for its subsequent three thousand dollar Jubilee Fund grant. 66

The directors added that grant to the Art School’s endowment fund. In all, through the fund raising and subscriptions, this fund reached nine thousand dollars by the time the Victoria School of Art and Design opened its doors at the end of October. In addition the province promised the Art School an annual operating grant of eight hundred dollars. 67

During 1888 the women directors continued raising funds for the school. Kenny helped organize more benefit theatricals, which netted the school just over one thousand dollars. 68 She also helped with the VSAD’s most successful fund raising event, which came to be called "The World’s Fayre." According to Blakeley, "This 'World’s Fayre' turned out to be long remembered as one of the greatest social events in the annals of Halifax." 69 The Halifax Morning Chronicle told its readers that the fair for the Art School was one of Halifax’s three major events of the year to raise money for the city’s "benevolent institutions". The other two equally benevolent

66 VSAD Minutes, 10 August, 20 October, 19 November, 10 December 1887.


68 VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 12; VSAD Annual Report 1889, 128; VSAD Minutes, 10 December 1887, 16, 23 February 1888; "Supplementary to Financial Statements"; Halifax Morning Chronicle, 16 July 1887; Kenny’s scrapbook contains flyers for the theatricals. The flyers for the first and third theatricals (scrapbook, p. 47) have no date. The second is an "Academy of Music" flyer for "Second Amateur Performance in Aid of the School of Art and Design" on Wednesday 25 January 1888. Plays are "Dearest Mamma," a one act "comedietta," and "A Regular Fix," a one act farce.

69 Blakeley, "Key Roles Played," 33, 35.
institutions, according to the newspaper, were the Church of England institute and a Roman Catholic society.\textsuperscript{70}

The VSAD's women promoters were credited with the fair's success.\textsuperscript{71} In booths with elaborate settings based on themes from various countries, appropriately costumed attendants sold goods and dispensed refreshments. Organizers converted much of Halifax's Exhibition Building to replicate London streets, including a South Kensington booth where visitors could buy paintings, tapestries, and other articles designed in the Kensington style. The Chinese pagoda sold intricate paper goods, the Gypsy encampment told fortunes, the oriental depot peddled Eastern wares, and the Venetian Palace offered for sale baskets, fruits, and vermicelli.

Every day for a week in August 1888 thousands of people visited the exposition. Merchants geared their advertising to take advantage of the fair. The Windsor and Annapolis Railway offered discount rates to visitors taking the train to Halifax for the event, and special harbor cruises were arranged. A local publisher put out \textit{Ye World's Fayre Gazette}, "a daily journal devoted to art, literature, news and gossip." The Gazette conducted a ballot among fairgoers, asking them to choose the "The Ten Cleverest Ladies and Gentlemen of Halifax." The Kenny family fared well in the vote, with Helen's brother-in-law Thomas chosen "best orator," another Kenny chosen "best lawyer," and Helen Kenny chosen "best looking."\textsuperscript{72}


\textsuperscript{71} For example, \textit{VSAD Annual Report 1889}, CC.

By the end of the week, the World's Fayre had raised over five thousand dollars. Adding this to the earlier fund raising, the first year endowment, and the subscription fees, the Art School had now raised about sixteen thousand dollars, which would be about $316,500 in 1996. Much of that money was set aside in a building fund, soon to be spent, the directors mistakenly believed, on more suitable quarters for the new institution. Leonowens' son-in-law, Thomas Fyshe, had helped negotiate the Art School's first home in the Union Bank Building. Fyshe was manager of the bank, and all agreed that the rooms, though cramped, would do for the short term. It turned out to be longer than expected, with the Art School not moving out until May 1891. As for the building fund, despite the Board's continuous efforts, they did not have a chance to use it until the VSAD bought its first building in 1903.

Overall, the officials and wealthy citizens who promoted the Victoria School of Art and Design presented a utilitarian point of view. The Art School would do much


73 McKay, "Historical Sketch"; The 1996 equivalent is based on information from the Prices' Division of Statistics Canada, Ottawa, July 1996.

74 On the Union Bank Building, see: VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 13; VSAD Minutes, 17, 25 August, 7, 15 September, 12, 20 October, 4, 19 November, 10 December 1887; 14 August, 13 September 1888.

75 VSAD Minutes, 27 April, 15 May 1891.

76 On the purchase of the building in 1903, see Victoria School of Art and Design, Minutes Book, August 31, 1894 to June 10, 1914, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 2, (P.A.N.S.), 8 October 1902, 3 March 1903; Annual Report 1903, 173.
good for most people. Because the VSAD would serve the whole community, the whole community should support the VSAD. As an 1888 article in the Halifax Morning Chronicle claimed, "It is rarely that any object has so enlisted the sympathies of all classes of people. It is said that 'art knows no country,' and it knows as little of class or creed."77

In many ways, then, the Queen's Jubilee was not the primary stimulus for starting the Art School. Industrialization had brought on favourable historical conditions for the Art School's creation, fostering a demand for skilled artisans who could design and craft better goods. Applied arts provided those skills, while fine arts elevated tastes and desires for the resulting products. Nevertheless, neither can these favourable conditions alone account for the creation of the Victoria School of Art and Design. As the next chapter will show, such conditions existed from at least the 1870s. Yet, as we have seen, it was not until a group of Halifax art school promoters took advantage of these conditions in the late 1880s that a Halifax art school advanced beyond the proposal stage.

77 "The 'World's Fayre," 30 August 1888.
CHAPTER THREE

Art for Industrial Needs: The Victoria School of Art and Design and the Nineteenth Century Art School Movement

To understand the origins of the Victoria School of Art and Design and its curriculum, we have to look at the historical context within which the school's promoters acted. Halifax's Art School was part of an international industrial drawing and art school movement that linked art training to industrial design and economic development. This movement expanded to many parts of the world during the last half of the nineteenth century. Examining this expansion reveals that the VSAD was not the movement's first manifestation in Nova Scotia. For decades various Nova Scotians had called for increased art education as a handservant to industry. By the early 1870s some were even calling for a Halifax art school.

Thus, prior to 1887 key factors for creating an art school had already existed in Halifax: the idea to have a school and the historical context that made such schools viable options in North America. In 1882, Nova Scotians may even have had the chance to hire one of the best known figures in the art school movement. Circumstantial evidence seems to reveal that Walter Smith, who in 1873 had started North America's first normal art college in Boston, was available for hire when he visited the eastern provinces that year. The roles of Leonowens, Kenny, McKay, and the other VSAD promoters already discussed are more fully understood and appreciated when seen within this context. Similarly, the specific programs that
Halifax's Art School adopted can only be understood through tracing their precursors.

In setting up Halifax’s Art School, supporters drew heavily on ideas from both Great Britain and the United States, especially Massachusetts. Nova Scotians looked favorably on any art teaching applicant with credentials from either the National Art Training School in the London district of South Kensington or Walter Smith's Massachusetts Normal Art School in Boston. This chapter will look at these two institutions.

The Victoria School of Art and Design was similar to other schools sprouting up throughout North America, Britain, Europe, New Zealand, and Australia. Some of these schools even shared VSAD's connection to Queen Victoria's 1887 Jubilee. For example, profits from the Royal Jubilee Exhibition of 1887 in Manchester, England financed the new Museum of Art and Handicraft created in that city's School of Art. However, it was not the Jubilee but industrialization that brought on conditions favorable to such schools. Industry called for skilled artisans who could design and craft better goods. In Halifax and elsewhere, advocates of art schools argued that applied arts provided those skills, while fine arts elevated tastes and desires for the resulting products. As a Halifax newspaper, discussing the VSAD, explained in 1888:

The special object of the school of art and design is to develop the industrial status of the community, to foster skill in labor, to create a desire among the mechanical classes to secure great excellence in their work, and to afford them the means of satisfying this desire. It is a school of art as well, and seeks

---

to develop tastes in the fine arts, but the leading aim and the regnant idea among the promoters of the school is to make it practically useful.²

Pamphlets, speeches, minutes, and other newspaper articles on the VSAD all repeated this argument. Industrial art programs warranted community investment, while fine art offerings, if nothing else, generated fees to aid that investment.³ The key point in rallying community support for the Art School was that training the artist-worker would foster industrial advancement. The Halifax Morning Chronicle summed it up: "It is essentially a question of skilled artisans. Given a nation of men who are trained to the highest degree of perfection in all forms of industrial art, and you have a nation bound to outstrip the world."⁴

For over a half century Nova Scotians had supported such training by other means. In 1831 Halifax opened the province's first mechanics' institute. The institute, which might be seen as the VSAD's ancestor, provided lectures on drawing,


³ Superintendent of Education David Allison provides one example of this position in "Victoria School of Art and Design," in his Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia, for the Year Ending 31st October, 1887 (Halifax: Commissioner of Public Works and Mines, Queen's Printer, 1888), xxv.

architecture, and many other topics. It was part of a movement begun by the British, who founded the first mechanics' institutes in 1823 in London and Glasgow. From there the institutes spread to North America. In 1828 MontREALers had opened Canada's first mechanics' institute. Beginning in the 1830s, most major centres in the Maritimes, along with many smaller settlements, set up mechanics' institutes of their own.

---


9 For information on mechanics institutes in the Maritimes, especially New Brunswick, see Martin Hewitt, "The Mechanics Institutes of the Maritimes," M.A. thesis, University of New (continued...
In Nova Scotia and elsewhere, mechanics' institutes began to dwindle in the last third of the century. When they did, new art schools, museums, and public libraries rose up to take their place, with Halifax's Art School being a relative latecomer. Cooper Union helped pioneer this new movement in the United States, having been founded by Peter Cooper in New York in 1859. Like the VSAD three decades later, Cooper Union provided free instruction in applied art for industrial workers. Similar schools followed, for example, the Chicago Academy of Design founded in 1867. It developed into the Art Institute of Chicago, which was incorporated in 1879. The School of Design that later became the Art Academy of Cincinnati was founded in 1869. New York's Arts Students' League was founded in 1875, the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art in 1876, and the Rhode Island School of Design in 1877.10

Other U.S. institutions shared their 1887 founding year with the VSAD. For example, that year New York manufacturer Charles Pratt founded the Brooklyn school that still bears his name. Pratt Institute's purpose, similar to the VSAD's, was

9(...continued)

"to promote manual and industrial education, as well as cultivation in literature, science, and art."\textsuperscript{11} Also in New York, what was to become Teachers College, Columbia University made its first faculty appointments in 1887, and included teachers of industrial arts.\textsuperscript{12} By the close of 1880s the United States had thirty-seven schools promoting the industrial arts.\textsuperscript{13}

In Canada, other cities predated Halifax's entry into the movement. The Ontario School of Art was founded in Toronto in 1876. Six years later, the OSA became integrated into the provincial education system and began to emphasize industrial art and teacher training.\textsuperscript{14} By the time the VSAD was founded in 1887, Ontario had eight art schools in operation, all of them coming under the Minister of

\textsuperscript{11} Catalogue Pratt Institute (Brooklyn: Pratt Institute, 1893). On links between art and industry at Pratt, see also: Clarke, Industrial and Technical Training, chap. 5; Hopkins, "Art Education in Evening Schools," 251-52.

\textsuperscript{12} Industrial Education Association, The Proposed College for the Training of Teachers, Circular of information, TC 21, (New York: Columbia University Teachers College Library, Archives, 1887); Bennett, History of Manual and Industrial Education 1870 to 1917, 467-68; Buckley, "Normal Art Schools," 341; Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 170-76; James Parton Haney, "The Development of Art Education in the Public Schools," in Art Education in the Public Schools, (1908), 63; Foster Wygant, Art in American Schools in the Nineteenth Century (Cincinnati: Interwood Press, 1983), 119, 129. Originally, the school's name was the New York College for the Training of Teachers. It was founded in 1888, chartered in 1889, and became the University Division of Education at Columbia in 1898. The school was renamed Teachers College, Columbia University in 1903-04. Columbia had its first art program in 1880 but did not create a Fine Arts faculty until 1906.

\textsuperscript{13} Macdonald, The History and Philosophy.

Education and the provincial Superintendent of Schools. An Art Students' League began in Toronto in 1886 and another in Hamilton, Ontario in 1895. The Saint John Academy of Art in New Brunswick was created in 1878. By 1887, the Saint John Academy was offering freehand and mechanical drawing, pottery painting, oil and watercolor painting, and instruction in oil painting by mail. Also in Saint John, the Owens Art School was established in 1884, moving to the University of Mount Allison College in Sackville a decade later. Many of these schools, in both Canada and the United States, shared VSAD's stated purpose: to help produce a nation "bound to outstrip the world" in industrial success.


17 Tippett, Making Culture, 39, 95. See also: The Mount Allison School of Fine and Applied Arts, university calendar (Sackville: Mount Allison University, n.d. [ca 1950]), 4; National Council of Women, Women of Canada: Their Life and Work, 1900 (Reprint) (Canada: National Council of Women, 1975), 221; Robertson, Royal Commission on Industrial Training, 1812. The school evolved into what is today the Owens Gallery at Mount Allison University.

Leonowens, Kenny, McKay, and the other VSAD promoters saw their project as part of this wider art school movement, and they wanted the public to see it that way as well. That was Leonowens' stated purpose in reprinting and distributing throughout Halifax a pamphlet on "The Art Movement in America." The articles in it described the new art schools, showing what "is being done in the far-off Western cities of the United States by the establishment of Schools of Art and Design." These cities, said Leonowens, provided a model for what should be done in Halifax.¹⁹

Although the pamphlet discussed only North America, the VSAD organizers looked as much to Britain as they did to their own continent. Of the VSAD's four original staff, two had graduated from the National Art Training School at South Kensington. These were Charles H. Hopson, instructor for the school's architectural program, and George Harvey, the VSAD's first headmaster.²⁰ VSAD directors also sought advice from South Kensington officials after the Halifax school opened.²¹ Here again, the VSAD was part of a trend. During the 1880s the South Kensington school was providing staff for art schools throughout the English-speaking world. By 1892, for example, South Kensington graduates headed five New Zealand schools of

---


²⁰ "Victoria School of Art and Design," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 17 September 1887, 2; VSAD Minutes, 25 August 1887.

²¹ See, for example, letters from South Kensington Museum to Helen Kenny dated 13th and 21st June 1889, and letters from Kenny to South Kensington dated 15th and 21st June 1889, in Helen Kenny, comp. ca. 1896, Mrs. Kenny's Scrapbook, MG 9 vol. 10 (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia).
art and design. In Canada, the Ontario School of Art based its first programs on South Kensington's curriculum.

We do not know the years that either Harvey or Hopson studied at South Kensington. Nor do we know whether they attended the main school or a branch. Still, we can better grasp the essence of their Halifax programs by looking at the ideas South Kensington students would have encountered at that time. The National Art Training School, then called the Central Art Training School, had moved to South Kensington in 1857. From there it spread to branch schools across England. Until 1873, Henry Cole directed the School and the South Kensington Museum. Basing his program on utilitarian principles, and eschewing the strictly fine arts instruction of the academy, Cole maintained that a practical program of industrial drawing and design better served the country's economic needs. Edward J. Poynter brought

---

22 On South Kensington in Canada and New Zealand, see F. Graeme Chalmers, "South Kensington and the Colonies: David Blair of New Zealand and Canada," Studies in Art Education 26, no. 2 (1985): 69-74; "South Kensington in the Farthest Colony," chap. 5 in Framing the Past: Essays on Art Education, eds. Donald Soucy and Mary Ann Stankiewicz (Reston, Va.: National Art Education Association, 1990), 71-85. See also J. Craig Stirling, "The Development of Art Institutions in Quebec and Ontario (1876-1914) and the South Kensington Influence," Ph.D., Edinburgh University, 1991 (I thank J. Donald Wilson for this reference).

23 Fleming and Taylor, 100 Years Evolution of the Ontario College of Art, 11; See also Tait, "The History of Art Education," 36-37, 39.

24 South Kensington's Archives of Art and Design (National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum) contain little about the conventional students. A search there by the author (November 1988) did not turn up anything on either Harvey or Hopson.

about changes when he took over the Department of Science and Art in 1875, partly achieving his goal of moving the schools closer to the fine arts.\textsuperscript{26}

In his British training before becoming VSAD principal, it is not clear whether George Harvey was influenced directly by either the utilitarian Cole or the more fine art-based Poynter. Born in 1846 in Devon, England, Harvey would likely have been a student during Cole's directorship. However, Cole had been retired for eight years by the time Harvey came to Halifax in 1881.\textsuperscript{27} Nevertheless, Cole's sway over South Kensington did not retire with him. By that time the system in England already had 122 schools in which art training was linked to industrial design. Cole's


\textsuperscript{27} Secondary sources mistakenly give 1882 as the year Harvey moved to Halifax: Phyllis Blakeley, "Key Roles Played by the Nova Scotia College of Art," Atlantic Advocate, (May 1967): 34; Ron Shuebrook, Ron, "Principals and a President: NSCAD - 1887-1977," Arts Atlantic, (Summer/Fall 1978): 27; Patrick Condon Laurette, A Centennial Salute: AGNS Paintings by 15 NSCAD Studio Teachers, Biographies and Notes, supplement to exhibition catalogue (Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1987), 3; Report on the Provincial Museum and Science Library 1931-32 (Halifax: King's Printer, 1933), 36. However, see Harvey's advertisement for his new Halifax studio at 35 Inglis Street, Acadian Recorder, 25 August 1881. Harvey became an Associate of the Royal Canadian Academy in January 1882, after he had submitted works to the RCA's second exhibition, held in Halifax in 1881; see Rebecca Sisler, Passionate Spirits: A History of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, 1880-1980 (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1980), 36, 283. According to some of the above sources, Harvey may have emigrated to Montreal in 1864, which would have placed him at the South Kensington school during Cole's directorship.
South Kensington graduates staffed these schools, and many of them continued to spread his utilitarian theories on art and design education.\textsuperscript{28}

Regardless of when Harvey attended South Kensington, his view of art education was closer to Poynter's fine arts focus than it was to Cole's more strictly industrial design emphasis. Like Poynter, Harvey was "strongly of the opinion that a proper amount of attention to fine art Drawing as well as to industrial Drawing would result in a much greater advance being made in both as they are supplementary."\textsuperscript{29} Harvey called for all students, be they amateurs or professionals, fine artists or industrial designers, to be exposed to fine art exercises in light and shade and drawing and painting from life, objects, and antique casts. As we shall see, Harvey was not fully successful in this integration of fine arts with the industrial design programs.

Harvey and Hopson were not the first South Kensington influences in Nova Scotia. In 1862, South Kensington graduate Forshaw Day emigrated to Halifax. Both an architect and competent landscape painter, Day became art instructor and draftsman in Her Majesty's Naval Yard in Halifax.\textsuperscript{30} Long before 1887, Day had called for a Halifax art school. In 1870, he approached the Halifax Board of School Commissioners with a proposal to establish a school of art and design. The Board

\textsuperscript{28} Charles Alpheus Bennett, "Industrial Art Education—America's Opportunity," \textit{School and Society} 10, no. 248 (27 September 1919): 373-77.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{VSAD Minutes}, 25 August 1887.

listened politely but did nothing. The idea did not die, and three years later Nova Scotia’s Superintendent of Education, A. S. Hunt, called for a provincial system of schools of drawing and design to train industrial workers and public school teachers. Again, nothing came of the proposal. The idea for a Halifax art school re-surfaced periodically between then and 1887. For example, the Marquis of Lorne, Governor General of Canada, who had helped to establish the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, used the 1881 RCA exhibition in Halifax to highlight the need for a local art school. However, it was not until the group led by Leonowens took up the cause in 1887 that a Halifax art school became more than an idea.

Even more so than Day, the South Kensington trained head of the Massachusetts Normal Art School, Walter Smith, made Nova Scotians aware prior to 1887 that art training could enhance industrial design and growth. Although Halifax was relatively late in joining the art school movement, it was not because they had to wait for Leonowens to come up with the idea. By then, Smith had popularized this notion by selling his books and lecturing in the province. Nova Scotians even seem to have had the chance to persuade Smith to direct their entry into the movement.

Smith was a graduate of South Kensington and headmaster of the Leeds branch within the South Kensington art school system. In 1871 Massachusetts

---


recruited Smith to come set up its industrial drawing program, offering him a joint appointment as supervisor of drawing for both the state and the city of Boston.\textsuperscript{34} Within a few years, Smith had organized a comprehensive curriculum that progressed from the earliest grades up through to the normal schools.\textsuperscript{35} In 1873, Smith entrenched his program further when he helped found the Massachusetts Normal Art School.\textsuperscript{36} Becoming headmaster at the school, he now held three positions, one each with the state, the city, and the school.

By 1875 Smith was claiming that his ideas and students were influencing school drawing in most Canadian provinces.\textsuperscript{37} His boast was premature but prophetic. Although Canadian educators had begun promoting Smith's program by the mid-1870s, provinces did not begin adopting it until a few years later. James L.

\textsuperscript{34} See address by John D. Philbrick at the first commencement of the Massachusetts Normal Art School, held 23 June 1876; rpt. in Isaac Edwards Clarke, Drawing in Public Schools, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., Art and Industry, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1885), 157. For an example of a call to have Massachusetts art schools and museums emulate South Kensington, see Charles C. Perkins, Art Education in America (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1870), 10-11, 14. Perkins was an influential Boston art critic, member of the Boston school committee, long time chair of its committee on drawing, and supporter of Walter Smith.

\textsuperscript{35} For Smith's own account of his hiring and tenure in Boston, see Walter Smith, Report on the Present Condition of Drawing in the Public Schools of the City of Boston, in the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty, Addressed to the School Committee, April 13, 1880, by Walter Smith, Director of Drawing, School Document No. 7 (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1885), rpt. in Clarke, Drawing in Public Schools, 261-86. The Walter Smith story is the most widely documented one in North American art education historiography. Three detailed sources for the story are: Clarke, Art and Industry; Wygant, Art in American Schools; Harry Beck Green, "The Introduction of Art as a General Education Subject in American Schools," D.Ed. diss, Stanford University, 1948. For a comprehensive list of other sources on Smith, see references in: Soucy, "A History of Art Education History"; Efland and Soucy, "A Persistent Interpretation"; idem, "Who Is Isaac Edwards Clarke?"

\textsuperscript{36} Now the Massachusetts College of Art. See "Official History of the State Normal Art School as Given in the Annual Reports of the Massachusetts Board of Education," in Clarke, Drawing in Public Schools, 172-94.

\textsuperscript{37} See quote by Smith in Green, "The Introduction of Art as a General Education Subject," 140-41.
Hughes, Superintendent of Public Schools in Toronto, advocated the Smith series of drawing texts after his 1874 trip to Boston.\(^{38}\) Within four years a Smith text found a Toronto publisher.\(^{39}\) In Saint John, New Brunswick schools were already using Walter Smith’s drawing series in 1873.\(^{40}\) A year later Fredericton schools began teaching industrial drawing. New Brunswick as a province, however, waited until November 1879 to officially prescribe Smith’s industrial drawing and design for all of its schools.\(^{41}\) By the early 1880s, Manitoba, Quebec, and Nova Scotia had joined Ontario and New Brunswick in publishing Smith’s books on freehand drawing.

---

\(^{38}\) Gaitskell, “Art Education in the Province of Ontario,” 5-6; see also Tait, "The History of Art Education."


industrial drawing, and elementary design. Eventually departments of education across Canadian did authorize Smith's texts.

Smith's direct connection to Nova Scotia began in 1874. That September Hinkle Condon, Halifax County's Inspector of Schools, took a leave of absence to visit Boston schools. Much about the Massachusetts system impressed Condon, but one thing especially caught his attention: Smith’s industrial drawing program. Boston's Superintendent of Schools, J.D. Philbrick, himself a strong advocate of school drawing, introduced Condon to Smith. With Smith as his guide, Condon examined the drawing program from kindergarten to the Normal Art School.

This program, Condon decided, was exactly what his province needed. Mere literary studies were not enough in today's industrial world. Students needed programs of utility, and Smith convinced him that no course could be more practical than industrial drawing. It was the basis of design and innovation, and therefore of


43 Chalmers, “South Kensington and the Colonies II,” 108.

industrial advancement. Furthermore, Smith assured, his program could be easily implemented in Nova Scotia. Smith said he would even be happy, at any time, to aid Nova Scotia with his counsel and the results of his experience.

Condon returned to Nova Scotia, lauding Smith's methods in his reports. When we look at Smith's work, Condon declared, art's "practical benefit is so well demonstrated ... that it can no longer be regarded as an accomplishment fit only for the affluent and the disengaged." It took a few years, but eventually others in the province joined Condon in praising Smith's program. Not only did it promise to aid industrial advancement, but there would also be no extra expense for art specialists, since a cornerstone of Smith's program was that it be taught by the regular teacher.

By 1880, Walter Smith's program had found its way into Nova Scotia's Normal School in Truro. Ottie Smith, a Massachusetts Normal Art School graduate, took over

---


the Truro school’s art program. At the time, hers was one of only two art teaching jobs at the province’s many colleges and universities. She also taught weekly drawing classes to Halifax and Dartmouth teachers. Those unable to attend her classes could discover Walter Smith’s ideas at teacher’s institutes held around the province. Like her mentor Walter Smith, Ottie Smith emphasized drawing strictly for industrial purposes. For a text she used Walter Smith’s Normal School industrial drawing course. Ottie Smith held on to the Truro position for thirty-four years, and was then replaced by another Massachusetts Normal Art School graduate, a Canadian named Marjorie Mills. For decades, then, Nova Scotian teachers who attended their provincial Normal School took an art education course from someone trained at the school Walter Smith helped found.


49 For example, a Miss A. Burgoyne gave a session on "Drawing, Walter Smith's System" in Windsor on September 1880; see Colin W. Roscoe, "Inspector's Report for Kings and Hants Counties," in Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education on the Common, Academic, Normal and Model Schools of Nova Scotia, for the Year Ending 31st October, 1881 (Halifax: Queen’s Printer, 1882), 30.

50 Walter Smith, Industrial Drawing from Blackboard and Object.

Walter Smith's stock started to rise in Canada just as it began to plummet in Massachusetts. In late April 1881, he was dismissed as Boston's Director of Drawing, though he still held on to his positions as supervisor for the state and head of the Normal Art School.\textsuperscript{52} The reasons for his dismissal have been debated ever since, with no consensus as to the cause. Some say it was because his arrogance made Smith too many enemies, others argue that rival publishers wanted to muscle in on Smith's domination of the drawing textbook market, and still others claim that Smith was the victim of a real estate battle over where the Normal Art School should be housed. Maybe it was opposition from drawing specialists, who understandably opposed Smith's insistence that non-specialists must teach drawing.\textsuperscript{53} Regardless of why he was dismissed, Smith faced reduced income from losing his city directorship, and indications were that his other two Massachusetts positions were not all that secure either. Two and a half months following his Boston dismissal, he travelled to Saint John, New Brunswick. There he lectured to teachers and consulted with Theodore Rand, formerly Nova Scotia's Superintendent of Education and now New Brunswick's. Favorably impressed, Rand asked Smith to help design a normal school art curriculum, and invited Smith to return with him to the provincial capital,

\textsuperscript{52} Clarke, Drawing in Public Schools, 291; Green, "The Introduction of Art as a General Education Subject," 165-66.

Fredericton. The result was a program outline identical to the one Ottie Smith was adapting in neighbouring Nova Scotia.\textsuperscript{54}

We do not know what Smith and Rand said to each other during that visit. Certainly, Smith’s recent dismissal and precarious job security weighed heavily upon him. Whatever their discussion, Rand decided to act. Before the month was up he wrote to Sir Leonard Tilley, Canada’s Minister of Finance in Ottawa. Rand described how Smith’s work had inspired all provinces. However, there was just so much you could learn from a text. Now was the time to learn directly from the man. "The Dominion Government should," Rand proposed, "... secure his [Smith’s] services, or those of some equally eminent man, if that be possible, for our country, in the common interests of Industrial and Educational progress."\textsuperscript{55}

Ottawa never funded the hiring, so Smith was never offered the job. With his troubles mounting in Massachusetts, a Canadian position would have been tempting. In early March 1882, the state began a legislative investigation of Massachusetts Normal Art School.\textsuperscript{56} Within a month Smith was back in Canada. He spoke first in Montreal, and followed it by a Quebec City lecture on the first of May.\textsuperscript{57} Four days later, the Massachusetts legislature released its report on his school. For Smith, the

\textsuperscript{54} Rand, Annual Report on the Schools of New Brunswick for 1881, xxxv-xxxvi. The Nova Scotia and New Brunswick programs stem from Smith’s earliest ideas on normal school programs; see: excerpts from Smith’s report for 1872-73 in Clarke, Drawing in Public Schools, 150; Walter Smith, Teachers’ Manual of Free-hand Drawing and Designing.

\textsuperscript{55} Theodore H. Rand, letter to Sir Leonard Tilley, Minister of Finance, Ottawa, 26 July 1881, rpt. in Rand Annual Report on the Schools on New Brunswick for 1881, xxxvii-xxxviii.

\textsuperscript{56} Clarke, Drawing in Public Schools, 190-91, App. D 605 ff.

\textsuperscript{57} Walter Smith, Technical Education and Industrial Drawing in Public Schools. Reports and Notes of Addresses Delivered at Montreal and Quebec (Montreal: Gazette Printing Company, 1883).
results were less than pleasant. In early July, he was let go as State Art Director and as Principal of the Normal Art School.\textsuperscript{58}

A week after his dismissal was public, Smith again headed north. This time his destination was Nova Scotia. His former pupil Ottie Smith was gaining recognition for her normal school art teaching in Truro. Just as important, his old acquaintance Hinkle Condon still held sway among Halifax educationists. Smith spoke in Truro and Halifax, attracting large and enthusiastic audiences in both places. Education officials liked what they heard, and for the next decade they promoted Smith's program in the province.\textsuperscript{59}

However, these education officials did not offer Smith a job. The Halifax art school was still five years shy of being born, and the province's Department of Education had no plans for an art directorship. Still only forty-four years old, Smith was prepared to move from Massachusetts, and after twelve years in North America he and his family were willing to stay on that side of the ocean. In fact, when he did go back to England, three of his children remained behind in Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{60} It is likely, then, that when Smith toured the east he was looking for a job. Neither the federal government nor any province, however, was ready to hire him. So, in 1883,

\textsuperscript{58} Clarke, \textit{Drawing in Public Schools}, 191, 194, 609, 611.


\textsuperscript{60} See booklet by Smith's granddaughter Nora C. C. Sheath: \textit{Some Events in the Life of Walter Smith} (self-published by author, 1982), 8.
Walter Smith returned to England, where he headed the art department of the Technical College at Bradford.\textsuperscript{61} He died soon after, on September 14, 1886.\textsuperscript{62}

Although Nova Scotians never secured Smith's full-time services, they did continue being exposed to his ideas. His industrial drawing texts had begun appearing in the province's common schools by 1880.\textsuperscript{63} In 1884, the academies and high schools adopted Smith's American Text Book of Art Education.\textsuperscript{64} That same year, Halifax teachers were given the opportunity to study industrial drawing under Nathaniel C. James of the Halifax Academy. When the Victoria School of Art and Design opened three years later, it continued James's work, using a room in the Halifax Academy to provide an industrial drawing program for teachers.\textsuperscript{65} Thus, by the time of the VSAD's founding in 1887, the province's students were using Smith's text books from grade one on through to pre- and in-service classes for teachers.\textsuperscript{66}


\textsuperscript{62} Sheath: Some Events in the Life of Walter Smith, 10.

\textsuperscript{63} W.D. McKenzie, "Inspector's Report for North Colchester and Cumberland Counties," in Annual Report ... for the Year Ending October 31st, 1880, Allison (1881), 51; see also McKenzie's reports in: Annual Report ... for the Year Ending 31st October, 1881, Allison (1882), 50; Annual Report ... for the Year Ending 31st October, 1882, Allison (1883), 51.

\textsuperscript{64} The Act Relating to Public Instruction, Together with the Comments and Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction, chapter 29, revised statutes, 5th series (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1884), xxii; "Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction, Relating to County Academies and Graded Schools," in Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education on the Common, Academic, Normal and Model Schools of Nova Scotia, for the Year Ending 31st October, 1885, David Allison (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1886), xxv-xxix.

\textsuperscript{65} "School Board," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 16 December 1887.

\textsuperscript{66} Manual of the Educational Statutes and Regulations of Nova Scotia (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1888), 91.
When VSAD promoters looked for suitable courses for their new school, ideas from South Kensington and Massachusetts were what they found. Halifax had no cadre of like-minded artists that the Board could call upon to establish official curriculum for the school, and none of the directors themselves were from art-related fields. Rather, they were businessmen, members of the educational bureaucracy, community activists, or well-to-do citizens who saw value in the fine and industrial arts. To determine their school's new program, therefore, the VSAD promoters depended on popular ideas, such as those from Walter Smith.

On the other hand, in order to reach fruition, these ideas depended on the VSAD promoters. Working within the wider trends of the art school movement, Halifax agents of change negotiated local conditions, conflicts, collaborations, and compromises. Within this context was born the Victoria School of Art and Design.
When they drafted the constitution for the Victoria School of Art and Design, Helen Kenny, Anna Leonowens, Alexander McKay, and their committee had vocational aims in mind. The constitution they drew up mandated four goals for the Art School:

(a) to provide technical instruction and art culture to persons employed in the various trades, manufacturers, &c., requiring artistic skill;

(b) to open up new and remunerative employment for women;

(c) to prepare the teachers of the Province for the teaching of industrial drawing in the Public Schools;

(d) to educate public taste by establishing exhibitions and classes in the fine arts as far as practicable.  

Over the next few years, the school was only partly successful in achieving its mandate. As explicitly stated, the VSAD teachers, under principal George Harvey, were to offer courses to train both women and men in art-related employable skills. The Art School directors saw four general types of jobs that their school could stimulate: fine artist, artist-teacher, public school art teacher, and the artist-worker engaged in industrial design. As this chapter will show, while the Art School did succeed in offering vocationally-based programs, they attracted only men, and

---

therefore did not to any great extent achieve the VSAD's third mandate, "to open up new and remunerative employment for women."

In the first type of art-related job, the fine artist, the Art School promoters made a clear distinction between those who wanted to follow fine art as a profession and those who wanted to study it as an accomplishment.\(^2\) The latter had long been found in the province's private schools, especially those for females. Being from the leisured social classes, many of the VSAD's women directors would have been familiar with this form of art education as found in an accomplishments curriculum. Since early in the nineteenth century, Nova Scotian girls aspiring to be ladies sought instruction in so-called "polite pursuits" such as watercolor painting, music, and embroidery. Private ladies' schools offering this accomplishments curriculum had peppered the province.\(^3\) Although the VSAD directors wanted the Art School to include instruction in these ornamental arts, they saw such instruction as a secondary priority to more vocationally-based art programs. The directors made it clear in the constitution that the school would offer classes and exhibitions in the fine arts only.

---

\(^2\) For example, see: "The Art School," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 18 November 1887, 4.

"as far as practicable." For the most part, courses in amateur fine arts were justifiable if they brought added income to the school.

The directors therefore set up an amateur class with fees much higher than those for the vocational programs. Their reasoning was that fees should not be a barrier to the workers' access to an art education, as long as that education was suited to their social position and was vocational in aim. For the leisured social classes, on the other hand, the principal focus was not job training but rather cultural refinement and development of taste. Thus the school's amateurs met twice a week in the morning, when most of their fellow citizens were at work. Their classes lasted two and a half hours. In the first year the amateur program attracted six students, all of them women, one of whom was VSAD founding director Helen Kenny.

In addition to the amateur class held at the VSAD's Union Bank Building site, the Art School organized a fine arts program for the Halifax Ladies' College. This was not surprising since the two schools shared some of the same founders. From the beginning organizers had planned for Ladies' College students to attend VSAD classes. By the time the two schools opened, Board Secretary Alexander McKay had negotiated an arrangement whereby most Ladies' College students would have

---

4 Victoria School of Art and Design, Minutes Book, August 31, 1894 to June 10, 1914, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 2, (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia), 10 September 1887 (Public Archives of N.S. hereinafter referred to as P.A.N.S.; minutes book hereinafter referred to as VSAD Minutes).


6 VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 19; "Auspicious Opening of the Art School," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 1 November 1887, 3.

7 "The Presbyterian Ladies' College," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 23 June 1887, 3; The Novascotian, 25 June 1887.
art classes on their own campus. Advanced art students would attend courses at the Union Bank Building, paying regular VSAD fees. In addition, other Ladies' College students could attend a special amateur class at the Union Bank Building on Wednesday afternoons. The fee for this class was slightly below that of the regular VSAD amateur program. In 1887-88, an average of eight Ladies' College students took advantage of the Wednesday class.

As its first art teacher, the Ladies' College hired Miss C.F. Howard from the United States. VSAD's headmaster George Harvey superintended the Ladies' College art program, with the College paying the Art School forty dollars a year for his services. The Art School continued to offer classes in conjunction with the Ladies' College for many years.

The amateur and Ladies' College programs were not, of course, intended to generate employment. The VSAD's other fine arts courses, on the other hand, were. These professional programs also met during the day, catering to prospective artists, but even more so to artist-teachers. Of the four types of jobs the VSAD hoped to stimulate, artist-teacher held the most promise. Even so, its potential was limited by the small demand for these teachers.

---

8 VSAD Minutes, 15 September 1887.


11 VSAD Minutes, 15 September 1887.
Still, the Art School did stimulate a small market for artist-teachers. Furthermore, VSAD students who did find these careers had a more stable employment situation than artist-teachers earlier in the nineteenth century. This was due in part to another outcome of the VSAD's institutionalization of art training, which was to create a new gatekeeping function to regulate the artist-teacher's career entry and practice. Whereas artists-teachers in earlier times could simply proclaim themselves as such, now they needed credentials from the Art School or a similar institution. A brief look at the artist-teachers in Nova Scotia before 1887 shows how this shift took place.

Before the late nineteenth century, artists and art teachers in Nova Scotia were truly independent. Except, perhaps, for mechanics' institutes, no art schools, art societies, government grants or regulations impeded their paths or assisted their endeavours. They were on their own, eking out a living in any way their art would allow. They set their own guidelines, rustled up their own students, and found their own place in which to teach and take on commissions. Although the state took no official interest in the early artist-teachers, their roles were somewhat regulated by the dictates of their middle and upper class clients. Painting portraits and teaching the well-to-do were their mainstay. Many artists and art teachers found at least

---

12 VSAD Annual Report 1890, 146.

temporary employment in Nova Scotia's more wealthy private venture schools.\textsuperscript{14} Those schools that catered to the "lady" or "gentleman" usually included drawing and painting.\textsuperscript{15} Some even advertised a "drawing academy."\textsuperscript{16}

Even if they had no pretense of being a drawing academy, Nova Scotia private venture schools often hired a local or itinerant artist-teacher, and usually had no trouble finding one. There were lots of them, and most needed the work.\textsuperscript{17} Artists would often advertise for a short period and then not be heard from again.\textsuperscript{18} Men artists and teachers tended to be drifters, hanging out their shingles wherever work was a possibility. Women artists and teachers also travelled, but they usually stayed


\textsuperscript{17} See, for example, an advertisement in which one of Halifax's best known early nineteenth century artist-teachers advertises to paint houses: "Valentine, Painter and Glazier," advertisement, \textit{The Novascotian}, 5 January 1825, 2.

\textsuperscript{18} For example, "Mr. L'Estrange," advertisement, \textit{The Novascotian}, 13 December 1832, 400.
longer in one place, often starting up a private school or attaching themselves to one already established.\textsuperscript{19}

The art school movement in the second half of the century would soon change the rules for artists who wished to teach. As art schools arose, they became gateways regulating entry into the art and art teaching fields. Also increasingly regulated was the art curriculum. The British system went much further much faster than Canada in this regard. Unlike the UK system, no centralized national bureaucracy could dictate how Halifax's Art School should regulate artists and art teachers. Nevertheless, Canadian art schools such as the Victoria School of Art and Design did begin to set the expectations for art teaching. In its first year the VSAD established a program for "those who intend to devote themselves to the profession of teaching painting and drawing."\textsuperscript{20} This did not refer to the generalist common school teacher who taught the Walter Smith program. Rather, it referred to the more specialized artist-teacher who taught in private schools and academies. The Art School established new programs for them, and eventually new qualifications.

The VSAD's professional fine arts program was divided into elementary and advanced level classes, with the headmaster, George Harvey, teaching both. The elementary class met twice a week. It began with freehand drawing, followed by drawing and painting from casts, models, and still life. It also included clay

\textsuperscript{19} The best known woman artist-teacher in early nineteenth century Halifax was Mary Morris, who conducted a drawing and painting school for many years. See for example: "Mrs. Sybilla E. Morris," advertisement, The Novascotian, 24 November 1831, 380; "Drawing and Day School, the Misses Morris," advertisement, The Novascotian, 8 September 1833, 285.

\textsuperscript{20} "The Art School," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 18 October 1887, 4.
modelling. Students in the advanced class met every weekday. In addition, the studios were open to them every day from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except when other classes needed the space, which in the tight quarters of the Union Bank Building was quite often. The advanced course consisted of more in-depth versions of the techniques covered in the elementary class, along with life drawing and painting, designing, and timed and memory drawing. The VSAD also offered a higher level course, a life class opened exclusively to the most advanced pupils, but only one student qualified in the VSAD's first year.21

With forty-six students attending the advanced class, it enjoyed the Art School's largest enrolment during the 1887-1888 school year. Combined with the elementary class there were a total of seventy-four daytime fine arts students. Of these, sixty-six were women, with all eight men in the elementary course.22 The number of artist-teacher careers available to these students did not match this heavy enrolment. Still, VSAD graduates began getting all of the more prestigious artist-teacher positions. The Art School had begun its credentialing function.

At least three students from the VSAD's first advanced class gained well-respected positions as artist-teachers. These were Agnes Vondy, Louisa Cornelius,

---


22 Students listed in VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 17-21; for an initial list of students, see "Auspicious Opening of the Art School," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 1 November 1887, 3; enrolment figures are also in VSAD Annual Report 1888, 130.
and Edith Smith. Vondy took over from Howard as head of the art department at the Halifax Ladies' College. The Board hired Cornelius as a VSAD assistant teacher in November 1887, starting a long-standing tradition of hiring advanced VSAD students to help with the Art School's teaching. After completing her own VSAD studies, Cornelius continued teaching at the Art School until 1891. She was replaced by Kate Foss Hill, who had graduated from the VSAD program for public school teachers. A promising student, Hill had been given free VSAD tuition in exchange for helping McKay as an assistant secretary.

Edith Smith went on to teach at both the Halifax Ladies' College and the Art School. She and Hill began at the Ladies' College in 1893 when Edith's brother, Lewis Smith, succeeded Vondy as head of the Ladies' College art department. Edith and Lewis Smith came from a family of painters, illustrators, and designers. Although Lewis Smith did not attend the Art School in 1887, he became a VSAD student soon after. In fact he was one of only two alumni ever to become

---

24 VSAD Annual Report 1893, 118.
25 VSAD Minutes, 4 November 1887; "Circular of the Victoria School of Art and Design," 127; VSAD Annual Report 1888, 1, 10.
27 VSAD Minutes, 18 September 1891; VSAD Annual Report 1892, 158.
28 VSAD Minutes, 19 November 1889, 18 September 1891.
29 VSAD Annual Report 1894, 118.
30 A. Smith, donor, Short Biographical Sketch of Edith Smith, MG 100 vol. 230 no. 18 (P.A.N.S., ca. 1954).
31 VSAD Annual Report 1893, 118.
principals of the Art School. Lewis Smith achieved that position in February 1910 and kept it until May 1912. Edith also taught at the school, covering her brother's classes in the spring of 1910, while he was away in England. She taught there again in 1918, as assistant to another principal, Arthur Lismer.

Edith Smith's art teaching career was, in all likelihood, the longest of any of the Art School's original students. After her instruction with Harvey in the VSAD's advanced class, she continued her studies, first at the Boston Art Club under Ernest Major of the Massachusetts' Normal Art School, and later in England at the Chelsea School of Art. When she returned to Halifax, she and Lewis began offering art instruction from a studio at Bedford Chambers. Her most important contribution to art education began when she took over as the head of the art department at the Halifax Ladies' College around 1912. It was a position she would keep until

---

32 The other was Donald C. Mackay, who started as a VSAD student in the early 1920s and went on to serve as the school's principal from 1945 to 1970 (see chapter eleven).


34 Letter, Lewis Smith to VSAD Board, 5 April 1910, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.).

35 "Report of President N.S. College of Art," Halifax Star, 3 May 1927; VSAD Minutes, 17 October 1918. Although the minutes followed the regular practice of referring only to "Miss Smith" without giving a first name, there are no other Miss Smiths who were apparent candidates for the position. The Star article says Edith Smith taught at VSAD under Lismer.


37 Patrick Condon Laurette says this is the approximate date, A Centennial Salute: AGNS Paintings by 15 NSCAD Studio Teachers, exhibition catalogue (Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1987).
1946. In 1922 she and her brother were founding members of the Nova Scotia Society of Artists. Edith Smith began exhibiting after her study at the Art School, and continued to exhibit until her death in 1954 at Petite Riviere, Nova Scotia.

Beginning with Vondy, Cornelius, Hill, and the Smiths, most people who attained stable careers in Nova Scotia as artist-teachers did so only through art school credentials. There is no evidence that the VSAD caused an increase in such careers, except the few positions on its own staff. Thus, the Halifax Art School did not "create new and remunerative" artist-teacher employment for either women or men; instead it began to regulate it.

Neither did the VSAD create the third intended type of employment, public school art teaching. Although Harvey offered a successful teachers' course during the Art School's first year, it served teachers who already had a job. In late November 1887, VSAD Secretary Alexander McKay attended a local teachers' institute and gained their endorsement for his plan to initiate the course. Of the thirty students in the School's first teachers' course in 1888, twenty-six were women.


41 VSAD Minutes 19 November, 10 December 1887; "Halifax Teachers Association," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 1 December 1887; "School Board," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 16 December 1887.
twenty-four of whom were single. 42 This ratio was understandable, since the teaching profession in Nova Scotia had become increasingly staffed with unmarried women. When the province's free school system began in 1864, only forty-five percent of Nova Scotia's 1,113 teachers were women. In 1871, women became the majority for the first time, constituting fifty-one percent of the 1,565 teachers. By the end of the century they had increased their majority to seventy-six percent (1,941 females, 616 males). 43

Although most students in the teachers' class were female, their Art School program bore little resemblance to the accomplishments curriculum of the ladies' private venture schools. Instead these women were taught industrial drawing. Their program, in fact, was very similar to the one taught by Ottie Smith at the Truro Normal School. This, of course, was because they were expected to teach Walter Smith's industrial drawing in their own classrooms. Before Walter Smith's 1882 lectures in the province, only about ten percent of the students in Nova Scotian schools received drawing instruction. By the time the VSAD opened, that percentage had swelled to forty-six percent. In Halifax, where McKay was Supervisor of the Board of School Commissioners, nearly every student in the early grades was taught drawing from the Walter Smith books. 44

42 See list of VSAD students in various courses, VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 17-21, in which names are preceded by "Mrs", "Miss", or "Mr".


44 Percentages extrapolated from tables in reports: David Allison, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education on the Common, Academic, Normal and Model Schools of Nova (continued...
In Nova Scotia, then, the institutionalization of art instruction moved women teachers and their students away from the accomplishments curriculum toward an industrial drawing focus. Gidney and Millar found this same shift away from the accomplishments curriculum to be the case in Ontario during this same period. They discuss the supposed "sexless intelligence" institutionalized in Ontario schooling in the late nineteenth century. They note that it was the male academic and classical traditions that were adopted in the common schools, at the expense of the female schools' accomplishments curriculum, with its strong emphasis on the arts. Gidney and Millar are not arguing that a female curriculum would have been more politically or vocationally liberating for girls. But they do make a case that female-identified subjects have not been historically assessed on their own terms. Rather, historians have judged them "according to the canons of late nineteenth-century (male) academics." It remains unanswered, therefore, how gender schemas reduced, for both men and women, traditional liberal arts subjects such as fine arts to options and frills in modern education. In Nova Scotia and elsewhere,

44(...continued)


46 Gidney and Millar, Inventing Secondary Education, 249.

many promoters of Smith's program found it to their advantage to portray the more ornamental forms of art education as a frill. This allowed them to contrast Smith's industrial drawing as a solid subject essential to vocational preparation.

In addition to its industrial focus, a key characteristic of the Smith program was that it be taught not by specialists but rather by regular classroom teachers. Most students in the VSAD teachers' course were therefore non-specialists. The thirty teachers in the program in 1888 tended to be experienced, with at least a third of them having more than ten years teaching to their credit. Sixteen of the thirty had Normal School training, where they would have taken one course in drawing, which rarely instilled a confidence in teaching the subject. Teachers in the VSAD program received no raise in either license or salary for their efforts. Tests, not courses, determined license levels, and there were no tests in drawing. Teachers therefore went to the Art School to increase their skills and confidence, not their pay or employment opportunities.


49 Characteristics of students in teachers program were derived from cross-referencing the art school's class list in VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 17-21, with tables in Report of the Board (continued...)
Halifax employed about one hundred and twenty teachers at the time, and approximately a quarter of them had already taken drawing from Ottie Smith at the Truro Normal School. Several others had studied Walter Smith's program with Nathaniel C. James of the Halifax Academy, where he had been conducting the teachers' drawing class since 1885. Created that year through the amalgamation of the Halifax Grammar School and Halifax High School, the Academy provided free co-educational secondary education, with its rooms also open for teacher in-service training. When the Art School began its teachers' course, it held classes in James's Academy classroom. The thirty students who took the 1888 VSAD teachers' program exhausted the supply of teachers wanting such a course. When these students finished the program, interest in it was not rekindled until after Harvey retired.

Although the VSAD's teachers' program did not create substantial employment opportunities within the public schools, three of the students who finished the course were to have a significant impact on art and education in Nova Scotia. These three

---

49(...continued)

of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax, for the Year Ended 31st October, 1890 (Halifax: Nova Scotia Printing Company, 1891).


52 VSAD Minutes 19 November, 10 December 1887; "School Board," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 16 December 1887.
were Kate Foss Hill, Isabel Brodie, and Marian Kate "Minnie" Graham.\textsuperscript{53} Brodie had begun teaching in the city's public schools in 1885, two years before the VSAD opened.\textsuperscript{54} In 1904 she became Supervisor of Drawing for Halifax schools, a position she held for 29 years.\textsuperscript{55} In 1912 Brodie became a VSAD director and later served as Secretary of its Board.\textsuperscript{56} Hill, in addition to teaching at the VSAD and the Halifax Ladies' College, taught art at the Halifax Academy and the city's high schools.\textsuperscript{57} When illness finally forced Hill to retire from the high school in 1913, Brodie took over her duties.\textsuperscript{58}

When Hill left her first VSAD teaching position at the end of 1892, the Art School replaced her with her former VSAD classmate Minnie Graham.\textsuperscript{59} One of Graham's main duties at the Art School was to oversee a Saturday morning art class for children. The VSAD had initiated the Saturday class when the school first opened, and it would continue the program off and on throughout its history. Louisa Cornelius had been the class's first teacher, with the directors paying her sixty

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{53} VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 17-18.

\textsuperscript{54} Report of the Board of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax, for the Year Ended 31st October, 1890 (Halifax: Nova Scotia Printing Company, 1891), 24.

\textsuperscript{55} Lila Publicover, "Report-Director of Drawing," Appendix 2, in Report of Board of School of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax for the Year Ending 31st, October, 1934 (Halifax: n.p., 1934), 34-35.

\textsuperscript{56} VSAD Minutes, 10 January 1912.

\textsuperscript{57} Report of the Board of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax for the Year Ended 31st October, 1900 (Halifax: T.C. Allen & Co., 1900), 32.


\textsuperscript{59} VSAD Minutes, 23 December 1892; VSAD Annual Report 1893, 117.
\end{flushright}
dollars a year for her efforts. Hill taught the class after Cornelius, and then Graham did the job for the next two decades.

The school charged Saturday morning students $7.50 each for a course of thirty lessons.\(^6\) Aiming to prepare talented young students for future entry into the Art School, the Saturday class offered a more thorough program than what was possible in the public schools. The course consisted of "Freehand Drawing and Elementary Design," terms from Walter Smith’s public school manuals. The class was successful, with good attendance each term.

It was not until after World War One that the Saturday program was used to train public school art teachers. Thus, despite its success, the Saturday morning art class did not stimulate employment, except for the one teacher who ran the program. The Art School, then, through its teachers' program and Saturday class, did not create many public school teaching positions. Still, the VSAD became the gateway for the few positions that did exist, and for in-service training, of course.

The main type of employment that the VSAD did hope to stimulate were jobs in industrial-design. To achieve this the Art School opened up evening classes for working people to gain or upgrade skills. VSAD’s principal George Harvey was not an industrial designer, and he made it known from the beginning that he was not prepared to teach architectural drawing. So, the directors hired John Larkin to teach the industrial program and Charles Hopson to teach the architectural. Harvey did insist, though, that industrial students take some fine art instruction. The Art School’s

\(^6\) VSAD Minutes, 4 November 1887.
directors agreed with Harvey's views on exposing students to both fine and industrial arts, and they set out to build this practice into the programs.  

Whereas the school charged relatively high fees for the upper class amateurs, and moderate fees for the more middle class fine art professionals, the VSAD constitution stipulated that "classes in industrial and mechanical drawing and designing etc. shall be free to all apprentices and others desiring to prepare themselves for industrial occupations." Furthermore, the Art School initially offered apprentices and mechanics help in purchasing instruments needed for the courses.  

By the end of the school's first year, though, financial constraints led to students having to buy their own instruments. Those workers who could afford it were expected to pay a small instructional fee of five dollars for a course of thirty lessons, eight dollars for sixty lessons, and ten dollars for ninety. In actuality the VSAD rarely charged this fee.  

The VSAD promoters wanted the evening classes to serve both women and men. It was apparent to them, though, that mechanical classes would be male dominated, and perhaps so would the architectural class. Not that women would be excluded from learning to draw with instruments. Although today mechanical drawing is synonymous with instrumental drawing, it had broader application when the VSAD opened in 1887.

---

61 VSAD Minutes, 25 August, 7 September 1887; VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 40-41.

62 "A New Institution."

Throughout the nineteenth century, the words "mechanics" and "mechanical" had various meanings when applied to art instruction. Mechanics included all artisans and handicraft workers, thus the name "mechanics' institutes." When artists spoke about drawing with mechanical aids, they meant not only rules and squares but also other "secondary means" such as tracing through glass. They also used "mechanical" to mean what we now call "technical." An artist needed "mechanical knowledge" of anatomy and forms; drawings could be "mechanically" elaborate or perfect, but still lack truth of expression. As for the term "mechanical drawing," it had only recently gained general use by the 1880s. It did not refer exclusively to drawing with mechanical aids but meant drawing for mechanical trades.

This broader notion of mechanical drawing thus did not restrict it to drawing with instruments. In 1870 William R. Ware, professor of architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, could talk about "Free-Hand Mechanical Drawing." Today, Ware's phrase is an oxymoron, but it made sense within the nineteenth century meaning of drawing for mechanical trades. This is the sense in which the Halifax Art School used the term. According to John T. Larkin, the first head of the VSAD's Industrial Division, "In the Mechanical Class, the object is to

---


65 Hayter, An Introduction to Perspective, 133.


teach the student how to prepare working drawings for the mechanist." There is no evidence in the VSAD program that "mechanical" meant exclusively by mechanical means.

The VSAD did teach drawing with instruments, but it did not restrict this instrumental drawing to the mechanical class. Charles Hopson, for example, included instrumental drawing in his architectural class. There he taught students "how to prepare designs and working drawings, by the aid of which the mechanic and artisan can correctly construct a building." Students in the fine arts courses also used drawing instruments for design, geometric drawing, and perspective drawing. During the Art School's first year, women constituted eighty-nine percent of the fine arts program. At the VSAD, then, women took instrumental drawing, but not mechanical drawing.

The VSAD's use of drawing instruments in more than one course paralleled Walter Smith's programs. Smith did not include "instrumental" drawing as a category to be taught by itself. For example, in Smith's Normal School course used in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, instruments were required in geometrical

---


69  VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 11.

70  VSAD Annual Report 1897, 147-49.

71  For example, Walter Smith, Art Education Scholastic and Industrial; idem, Plan and Graded Programme of Instruction in Drawing; idem, American Text Books of Art Education, rev. ed. (Boston: L. Prang & Co., 1879).
drawing and design, optional in dictation and memory drawing, and forbidden in freehand, ornament, and object drawing.72

"Mechanical," therefore, categorized the type of person who took the program, not the type of drawing. Those connected with the VSAD applied the term to male mechanics and "mechanists." The Art School promoters did intend both women and men to study instrumental drawing. By definition, though, only people in the mechanical trades, which at the time was a category of male workers, would take the mechanical program.

The term "mechanical" is just one of many VSAD program terms whose meaning has shifted since the nineteenth century. By 1887, Nova Scotian curricula at all levels, from the Art School to the common schools to the Normal School, used terms such as "mechanical," "industrial," elementary," and "freehand" to categorize their offerings in drawing. These terms were just gaining their specific meanings by this time, with Walter Smith playing a large role in standardizing many of them.

As with the term "mechanical drawing," "elementary drawing" did not refer to a specific type of drawing. But whereas "mechanical" categorized a type of person, "elementary" categorized a level of proficiency. This can be a source of confusion, because today in education "elementary" is a category of people, referring to a specific age group, as in "elementary grades." That was not the meaning in the nineteenth century. As Gidney and Millar point out, for much of that century "elementary" meant "the subordinate or rudimentary parts of any form of

72 Smith, Industrial Drawing from Blackboard and Object; Rand, Annual Report on the Schools of New Brunswick for 1881, xxxv-xxxvi.
education." This is how the term was used when elementary drawing became established in the British system during the early 1850s. Both there and later in the Walter Smith and VSAD programs, elementary drawing referred to any course for students with little experience, regardless of age or type of drawing involved. For example, at the Halifax Art School, both the architectural students and the fine arts students studied elementary and advanced perspective.

"Industrial" was the most all-encompassing term used for categorizing late nineteenth century drawing programs. More than anyone else, Walter Smith standardized its meaning. For Smith, "industrial" identified the purpose of the program, not the type. "Industrial" thus differed from "mechanical" which, although it did categorize purpose, was primarily a category of the person taking the program.

Industrial drawing incorporated any type of drawing deemed suitable for industrial pursuits. The VSAD used "industrial" to signify purpose when it divided its first programs into "Fine Arts" and "Industrial." Both programs included drawing from casts and drawing with instruments. The difference was the end goal. While the industrial program aimed at training artisans or artist-workers, the fine arts program aimed at training professional artists or artist-teachers.

76 See Walter Smith, Art Education Scholastic and Industrial, 42; idem, "Industrial Drawing and Art Education," xxxiv.
In the nineteenth century, "industrial" was associated not just with mechanized industrialization but with any industrious labor. "Industrial schools," for example, did not necessarily train exclusively for factory work, but often for trades and labor in general, with the goal of making the student industrious. Similarly, the term "industrial drawing" was not limited to mechanical or instrumental drawing. In the Smith program that had been adopted in Nova Scotia and elsewhere, industrial drawing included "freehand," "object," "geometrical," "memory," "dictation," "design," "ornament," and "elementary" drawing. Mechanical drawing was therefore a subset of industrial drawing.

The VSAD's "Industrial Division" reflected this broader notion of the term. In the evening industrial program, Harvey conducted classes in freehand and model drawing, design, clay modelling, and painting. He also offered the night classes drawing and shading from casts. Although Harvey's evening fine art classes achieved adequate enrolment, the evening students attended the mechanical and architectural courses much more consistently than they did Harvey's. The evening and day programs ended up remaining distinct, each with its own predominant style of instruction. For the most part, industrial students designed steam engines and


78 See, for example, First Annual Report of the Committee of the Halifax Industrial and Ragged Schools, Albemarle St. and Spring Garden Road (Halifax: Industrial School Printing Office, n.d. [1865 ca.]).

79 For the first VSAD program, see "A New Institution"; VSAD Annual Report Year 1887-88.

80 VSAD Annual Reports, 1888, 130; 1889, Bb; 1890, 146-47; 1891, 145-46; 1892, 159; 1893, 117.
bathtubs, while the amateurs designed decorative motifs and curios. Architectural students drew working plans, while fine arts students drew still lifes.\textsuperscript{81}

The evening classes did successfully train its students for better jobs. These students, though, were nearly all male, many of whom worked during the day and took VSAD classes at night. While women dominated the day time fine arts courses, the evening industrial program attracted only one woman among the 135 students in the VSAD's first year.\textsuperscript{82} The Art School's directors tried to change this gender ratio. They wanted a needlework program in the evening, believing women could find jobs in that industry. Yet, despite their best efforts and months of searching, Ella Ritchie, Leonowens, Lawson, and McLean were continually frustrated when trying to find a suitable instructor for the course, and it ended up never being offered.\textsuperscript{83} Because its industrial-based evening programs were attended almost exclusively by men, the VSAD's first year saw only very limited success in its goal "to open up new and remunerative employment for women," as mandated in its constitution. Of the four types of employment it had hoped to generate for women, it made gains only among artist-teachers. In the following years the school's success was no better. In fact, the situation deteriorated.

\textsuperscript{81} See, for example, program descriptions in "A New Institution."

\textsuperscript{82} VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 17-21.

\textsuperscript{83} For example, see: VSAD Annual Report 1889, 128; VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 10; VSAD Minutes, 10 August, 7 September, 12, 20 October, 10 December 1887, 10 January, 16 February, 5, 13 September 1888, 19 November 1889.
In the Art School's first year enrolment had reached 282.\textsuperscript{84} This was to be its highest until after World War One. In 1888-89, enrolment had dropped by half, to an average of 141 per term.\textsuperscript{85} The VSAD not only lost students in its second year, it also lost one of its key directors. In March 1888 Leonowens announced that she and her grandchildren were going to Germany to pursue their studies.\textsuperscript{86} As it turned out, she would not return until 1893, adding to the Art School's woes and its steady decline.

The decline was not evident at the outset. On the contrary, the gains of the first year bred optimism for the second. The directors approved the purchase of new casts and models, and instituted new classes in etching, clay modelling, and wood carving.\textsuperscript{87} At the start of the 1888-89 school year, they raised Harvey's salary from thirteen hundred to sixteen hundred dollars, which would be the equivalent to about $31,600 in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{88} Then, in December 1888, the directors hired W.A. England from the Massachusetts Normal Art School to teach new courses.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{84} On first year enrolment see VSAD Minutes, 10 January 1888; VSAD Annual Report 1887-88, 17-21; VSAD Annual Report 1889.

\textsuperscript{85} VSAD Annual Report 1889, EE.

\textsuperscript{86} VSAD Minutes, 15 March 1888.

\textsuperscript{87} VSAD Minutes, 10 January 1888.

\textsuperscript{88} VSAD Minutes, 25 August 1887, 31 May 1888. According to the rate provided by the Prices' Division of Statistics Canada, Ottawa, $1,600 in 1887 would be the equivalent of $31,652 in July 1996.

\textsuperscript{89} VSAD Minutes, 7 December 1888.
The Board's optimism was short lived. Enrolment in the previously well attended advanced day class went down by over seventy-five percent. By April, England's classes had attracted only eight or nine students each, resulting in the Board having to let him go. The directors had spent a considerable sum to equip the School for the etching class, but only one student registered. By the end of the VSAD's second year the only good news McKay could report was that Larkin's and Harvey's evening classes were going well, and so were the children's Saturday morning art classes.

The VSAD's third year began in September 1889 with only fifty students. Enrolment doubled by the end of the school year, but income, morale, and Harvey's spirits continued to decline. Whereas money from fees had amounted to almost nineteen hundred dollars in the Art School's first year, it fell to less than half of that in 1888-89, and in 1889-90 the VSAD collected less than five hundred dollars in fees. For the remainder of Harvey's tenure as headmaster, the income from fees averaged only about three hundred dollars per year. The enrolment did not go down any further, but the proportion of fee paying students did. Most pupils were either tradesmen, whose fees were waived, or students from the high schools and Halifax Academy, who were given scholarships for free tuition. For the fee paying

---

90 VSAD Annual Report 1889, BB, EE.

91 VSAD Minutes, 29 April, 10, 21 May 1889; VSAD Annual Report 1889, CC.

92 VSAD Annual Report 1889, BB.

93 VSAD Minutes, 7 December 1888; VSAD Annual Report 1889; VSAD Annual Report 1880; VSAD Annual Report 1891; VSAD Annual Report 1892.
cliente who had dabbled in the polite pursuits of the fine arts program, the Art School's drab and cramped classrooms soon lost their attraction.\textsuperscript{94}

While Harvey's evening classes continued to go well, his daytime courses required a lot of effort and produced little satisfaction. He had to teach virtually all of the subjects, and the only way he could accommodate every student was to meet simultaneously with the elementary and advanced classes. Furthermore, the tiny rooms made it impossible to take advantage of the School's teaching materials such as the casts. What especially irritated Harvey were the many hours he had to spend arranging and rearranging the classrooms to suit the needs of the different programs.\textsuperscript{95}

At the end of that third year, in April 1890, the directors offered the overworked Harvey a decrease in workload and salary. Asking him to accept less than half of what he had been earning before, the Board compensated by discontinuing his morning classes in the 1890-91 year.\textsuperscript{96} There was some good news, though. In the spring of 1891, the Art School made arrangements with the Halifax School Board to rent three rooms in the Halifax Academy.\textsuperscript{97}

The rooms at the Academy were better than those at the Union Bank Building. Even though still inadequate for the VSAD's needs, at least the space increased. The same could not be said for the headmaster's enthusiasm. Harvey

\textsuperscript{94} The VSAD's inadequate space is a running theme throughout the Board minutes and the VSAD's annual reports.

\textsuperscript{95} VSAD Annual Report 1880, 146-47.

\textsuperscript{96} VSAD Minutes, 21 March, 1 April 1890; VSAD Annual Report 1891, 146.

\textsuperscript{97} On space at the Academy see VSAD Minutes, 19 November 1887, 27 April, 15 May 1891.
spent an uneventful year at the School. He had worked for five years to make the institution successful, receiving consistent help from many of the directors, and also achieving some public visibility. For example the "lady directors" were charged with exhibiting Art School work at the Provincial Exhibition in Halifax during the fall of 1891.\textsuperscript{98} Overall, though, the public was now at best indifferent to the Art School, or at least to its fine arts program, and the city was threatening to end the VSAD's municipal grant.\textsuperscript{99} No one had been able to match Leonowens's ability to arouse community interest, and without that it was difficult for Harvey to maintain a bright outlook on the Art School's future. He was, after all, a fine artist, and that was the VSAD offering which the community seemed to care less about. In the fall of 1892, Harvey let the Board know this would be his last year as headmaster.\textsuperscript{100}

The directors replaced Harvey with Ozias Dodge, a twenty-five year old painter and etcher.\textsuperscript{101} Originally from Morristown, Vermont, Dodge had attended the Yale School of Fine Arts and was a member of the New York Art Students League. Before accepting the VSAD position, he had been living in New York.\textsuperscript{102} He started at the Art School in March 1893, but lasted only one year.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{98} VSAD Minutes, 15 May 1891; VSAD Annual Report 1891, 145. This began a decades-long tradition in which VSAD women organized art-related exhibits for the Provincial Exhibition.

\textsuperscript{99} VSAD Minutes, 23 December 1892.

\textsuperscript{100} VSAD Minutes, 3 October 1892, 13 January 1893; VSAD Annual Report 1893, 117.

\textsuperscript{101} VSAD Minutes, 19 September 1893.

\textsuperscript{102} Hannah S. Dodge, Ozias Dodge 1868-1925, Exhibition catalogue (Norwich, Conn.: Printing Department of the Norwich Free Academy, 1958); "Obituary Ozias Dodge," Norwich Bulletin, 29 June 1925.

\textsuperscript{103} VSAD Minutes, 16 March, 5 May 1894; VSAD Annual Report 1893, 117.
Dodge organized two new classes, one for the nuns in the Convent of the Sacred Heart and another for public school teachers.\textsuperscript{104} The time was right for re-instituting the teachers' course, since the province was phasing out Walter Smith's industrial drawing after a dozen years as the required public school art program. In place of the Smith program was a new Canadian series, "The Public School Drawing Course," designed by J.H. McFaul of the Normal School of Toronto. McFaul's books, which he began publishing in 1892, consisted of increasingly complex drawings that students were to copy. In most classrooms this copying constituted the entire art program. McFaul, however, wanted his exercises to be supplemented with imaginative design work and object drawing.\textsuperscript{105} This was a change from the Smith program where emphasis was on drawing from the flat. Alexander McKay promoted this new form of school art and, consequently, so did the Art School. The VSAD initiated a class in object drawing which attracted fifty teachers.\textsuperscript{106}

These teachers greatly swelled the attendance figures for Dodge's year at the VSAD. Enrolment reached two hundred, the highest it had been since the Art School first opened, and the highest it would be until 1928. However, because the school provided so many students with free tuition, the school collected only $221 in fees, which was to be the smallest amount in the School's first two decades. Furthermore, the new rooms at the Halifax Academy proved inadequate for the large number of

\textsuperscript{104} VSAD Minutes. 5 May 1894.


\textsuperscript{106} VSAD Annual Report 1894, 128.
students. In their perennial search for more space, the directors were able to secure a room at Dalhousie University in which Dodge set up a clay modelling class. The directors also looked into renting part of the National School, an old building near downtown at the foot of Citadel Hill, but found its rooms to be unsuitable. A decade later, in 1903, the VSAD would move into the National School and find that, indeed, its rooms were unsuitable.

As in the VSAD’s first teachers’ course, the students in Dodge’s teachers’ program were, generally, already employed. From 1887 to 1894, therefore, the VSAD promoters had only very limited success in its efforts to generate art-related jobs, especially for the province’s women. Nevertheless, they were successful in other significant ways. The Art School’s programs were a boon for teachers, and the province’s best known artists of the day had received at least some of their training at the Victoria School of Art and Design. True, the industrial advances brought on by trained artisans, a promise so widely touted during the school’s initiation, showed few signs of emerging. Yet within the community, the hope of the promise survived, and thus, just barely, so did the Art School.

---

107 VSAD Annual Report 1894, 128.

108 VSAD Minutes, 7 October 1893.

109 VSAD Minutes, 5 May 1894.
CHAPTER FIVE

Programs, Properties, and Priorities:
The Role of the VSAD Board, 1894-1906

During its first two decades, the Victoria School of Art and Design kept many of the traits developed during its inaugural years. In preparing students for employment, the male-dominated evening industrial programs continued to do a better job than the daytime fine arts programs, whose students were mostly women. Things did change in 1907, however, when the newly-opened Nova Scotia Technical College took over the Art School’s role in industrial education. This chapter looks at the years before the change, focusing on the Art School’s directors, along with its teachers and programs, between 1894 and 1906.

During most of this time, the VSAD Board’s main concern was finding a suitable property in which to house the Art School, for which they had a substantial amount of money set aside from the fund-raising efforts of 1887 and 1888. Understandably, the directors usually left the curriculum up to the principal and teachers since, after all, none of the directors was drawn from art-related fields. Rather, they were educationists, businessmen, or well-to-do citizens with an interest in arts and industrial arts. Although the directors set the general goals of the VSAD’s programs, they depended on the principal and teachers to figure out how to achieve those goals. After 1887, VSAD directors stuck to budget and real estate and interfered little with the principal’s work in setting up programs. Most exceptions, though, came during the few years when the VSAD principal was a woman.
Just keeping the Art School alive was a challenging enough task for the VSAD Board. When Anna Leonowens left Halifax for Europe in March 1888, the VSAD's enrolment, budget, and optimism were still high. By the time she returned at the end of 1893, enrolment had declined and was restricted by cramped quarters and overworked staff, the budget was jeopardized by government threats to terminate grants, and optimism was turning into frustration. Leonowens took it upon herself to revive the former enthusiasm.¹

Cash flow was very tight, with the Board not wanting to touch the building fund. In order to cut back expenses, the Board decided to no longer pay Minnie Graham a wage, instead allowing her to keep the fees collected from her Saturday children's class.² The directors did not change the other teachers' salaries, but then the industrial teachers could not work for fees anyway, since tuition was free for all artisans and other industrial workers, and neither the mechanical nor architectural programs generated much income.³ Fee paying fine arts students partly subsidized the industrial classes, but fine arts fees did not cover all of the school's costs. Neither were the government grants enough to meet all expenses, though when added to the fees they came close to doing so. A few more dollars came in when Leonowens and

¹ Leonowens's return to the VSAD Board is noted in: Victoria School of Art and Design, Minutes Book, May 5, 1887 to May 6, 1894, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 1, (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia), 7 October 1893 (minutes book hereinafter referred to as VSAD Minutes; Public Archives of N.S. hereinafter referred to as P.A.N.S.).

² VSAD Minutes, 9 March 1895.

George Harvey did a little fund raising. Although the amount generated did not increase the budget significantly, it provided a much needed boost in spirits.

Besides paying the bills, one of the VSAD Board's first tasks after Leonowens's return was to find a new headmaster to replace Ozias Dodge. In the search, Leonowens encountered an entrenched gender bias in the Board's thinking. By this time, all four of the Board's executive were male and, among the other fifteen Board members, ten were male and five were female. At the May 5, 1894 Board meeting, eight directors, including Leonowens and two other women, gathered to review applications for the headmaster's position. When a Miss Houghton applied for the position, a majority at the meeting insisted that, as a woman, Houghton would be incapable of handling the job. The directors therefore dismissed her application, even though they had very few others to choose from. The Board had sent enquiries about possible candidates to the Massachusetts Normal Art School and the New York Art Students' League. This resulted in only three applicants other than Houghton, and two of them had withdrawn. The Board was left with Houghton and only one other candidate, Charles C. Waterbury, about whom they knew very little. He did have impressive references, though, from New York artists such as William Merritt Chase, James Carroll Beckwith, and H. Siddons Mowbray. Based on these references the Board hired him to begin in the fall of 1894.

---

4 VSAD Minutes, 9 March 1895.
5 VSAD Minutes, 16 March 1894.
6 VSAD Annual Report 1894, 129.
7 VSAD Minutes, 16 March, 5 May, 31 August 1894.
The VSAD principalship was not an easy job, and Waterbury was just not up to the task. He made no innovations in the curriculum, teaching essentially the same program that Harvey had set up in 1892, along with the clay class that Dodge had initiated at Dalhousie University. While innovation may not have been necessary, some form of commitment was, and Waterbury left no evidence of having it. In March 1895, the Board decided to notify Waterbury that "his services would not be required for another year." The directors once again found themselves searching for someone to head the School. Memorable would not describe Waterbury's short stay in Halifax. In the VSAD's annual report for Waterbury's only year he is referred to as "Mr. C.C. Woodbury." The catalogue for a major 1949 Halifax art exhibition lists him as "Catherine Waterbury." Ironically, after the Board had insisted only a man could do the job, histories continued to assign the wrong sex to the Victoria School of Art and Design's third headmaster.

The debarment of women from the headmaster's position was soon to change. At the July 1895 Board meeting Leonowens listed qualifications of a woman whom she felt could do the job. That afternoon the directors passed a motion put forward by George Harvey and James Gordon MacGregor to hire Katherine N. Evans to replace Waterbury. Evans was from Philadelphia, and she had a letter of reference

---

8 VSAD Minutes, 31 August, 26 October, 9 March 1895.
9 VSAD Annual Report 1895, 120.
11 For example, Ron Shuebrook, "Principal and a President: NSCAD - 1887-1977," Arts Atlantic, (Summer/Fall 1978), 28.
form the Principal of the School of Industrial Art of the Pennsylvania Museum.

Whereas her predecessors were called "headmasters," she became the Art School's first "principal." The new woman principal, however, made less money than the men who had preceded her, receiving seven hundred dollars a year, or eighty dollars less than Waterbury and three hundred dollars less than Dodge. That may have been justified, given the Art School's continued financial uncertainty, but they also imposed a new restriction. The Board would not allow her to teach extra courses to supplement her income, a provision not applied to previous headmasters. Leonowens, however, helped Evans find one way around this restriction. Together they organized summer sketch classes, which added to Evans's income after the regular school terms had ended.\textsuperscript{12}

Evans's first month on the job coincided with the VSAD's expansion. In September 1895 plans were outlined for a new "South End Branch," to be housed at the Halifax Ladies' College building on the northwest corner of Barrington and Harvey Streets.\textsuperscript{13} Establishing the branch was actually a renegotiation of previous agreements between the Ladies' College and the Art School. The original 1887 agreement, in which the VSAD headmaster oversaw the Ladies' College art program, had been discontinued. But the connections were re-established when Art School graduates Lewis and Edith Smith, along with Kate Hill, took charge of art at the

\textsuperscript{12} VSAD Minutes. 15 July 1895. For Waterbury's salary see VSAD Minutes, 31 August 1894. For Dodge's salary see VSAD Minutes, 5 May 1894. On Evans's summer teaching, see: "Miss Evans, the Head Teacher of the Victoria School of Art and Design," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 6 April 1896, 6; "Pupils Desiring to Join Miss Evans' Sketch Class," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 8 April 1896, 4. At least one source ("Report of President N.S. College of Art," Halifax Star, 3 May 1927) lists Evans's first name as "Kathleen," while Shuebrook ("Principals and a President," 28) has it as "Catherine," but sources from 1890s have her name as Katherine.

\textsuperscript{13} VSAD Minutes, 6 September 1895. See also minutes for: 12 May 1896; 31 August 1898.
Ladies' College in 1893.\textsuperscript{14} By 1895 there was another connection: Leonowens's granddaughters were attending the Ladies' College.\textsuperscript{15}

A more recent member of the Board, Dr. A.H. MacKay, also had strong links with the Ladies' College.\textsuperscript{16} Becoming an ex officio VSAD director when he was appointed provincial Superintendent of Education in 1891, MacKay would serve on the Art School Board for over three and a half decades, longer than anyone in the school's history.\textsuperscript{17} Like many VSAD directors, MacKay was a Presbyterian. In addition to his Art School position, MacKay served as a Senator of Halifax's Presbyterian College on Gerrish Street, a director of the Presbyterian leaning Ladies' College, and a Governor of Dalhousie University, which itself had strong Presbyterian roots.\textsuperscript{18} MacKay championed not only women's education but also women's rights in general, supporting issues such as women's suffrage and women's participation on

\textsuperscript{14} VSAD Annual Report 1893, 118.

\textsuperscript{15} Halifax Morning Chronicle, 17 June 1897, 1; Ruth Blake, "Anna of Siam Lived in Canada," The Maritime Advocate and Busy East, (January 1951), 12; Phyllis Blakeley, "Anna of Siam in Canada," Atlantic Advocate, (January 1967); Leslie Smith Dow, Anna Leonowens: A Life Beyond the King and I (Lawrencetown Beach, N.S.: Pottersfield Press, 1991), 118.

\textsuperscript{16} A.H. MacKay, Nova Scotia Superintendent of Education, should not be mistaken for Alexander McKay, Supervisor for the Board of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax. Occasionally, contemporaries of these two mistakenly spelled MacKay's name as "McKay," thereby creating more confusion between the two.

\textsuperscript{17} Frederic H. Sexton, letter to Isabel Brodie, 6 June 1929, MG 17 Series A vol. 23 1928 (P.A.N.S.).

school boards. Given this background, MacKay was a strong supporter of the Art School's links with the Ladies' College.\textsuperscript{19}

Although the new branch's program was virtually the same as the VSAD's regular day program, fees at the new Ladies' College South End Branch were twenty-five percent more than those at the Art School's main campus.\textsuperscript{20} What was different from the main campus, however, were the facilities available in the third floor art room at the Ladies' College. These rooms were much more suitable to the Ladies' College clientele, whose middle and upper class aspirations were reflected in their school motto: "That our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of the palace."\textsuperscript{21}

Meanwhile, the facility at the Art School's main branch continued to be a problem. For many directors, negotiating for property became the only Art School concern about which they displayed any knowledge or interest. In searching for a new location, the Board investigated and abandoned a number of proposals to house the school. In the fall of 1895 the Board entered into negotiations with other


\textsuperscript{20} "Victoria School of Art and Design," flyer on fees and programs, 1896-97, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 21 (P.A.N.S.). See also VSAD flyers on programs and fees for 1897-98 and 1898-99, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 21 (P.A.N.S.).

societies to purchase a building for their common use.\textsuperscript{22} When that plan did not work out, the directors began looking for a place to rent. In June 1896 they finally decided on rooms in the Thomas Building, downtown on the southwest corner of Barrington and Sackville Streets. The rooms were an improvement over the attic in the Halifax Academy, where the VSAD had spent the previous five years. The new location was also easily reached by Halifax's new electric tramcar, which that year had replaced horsecars. Rental for the Thomas Building rooms was low: one hundred dollars a year plus water rates, with the building's owner agreeing to pay all other taxes. That owner was James E. Roy, a Halifax businessman, city alderman, and future director of the Victoria School of Art and Design.\textsuperscript{23}

As the fall 1896 term approached, the Board delegated Evans, Leonowens, and Alexander McKay with the job of preparing the new rooms for the September reopening. The directors agreed that one of the rooms would be used for a new china painting class. The class, which was held on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, resulted from Evans's renegotiated terms of employment. Setting two conditions for returning a second year, the principal asked for a raise to $750, and for the Board's authorization to start the china painting class, from which she would keep seventy percent of the fees. The directors agreed on both counts. In addition to china painting and the evening industrial programs, the Art School offered its regular fine

\textsuperscript{22} VSAD Minutes, 6 September 1895.

arts courses of drawing, modelling, watercolor, and oil painting. Evans continued to teach drawing from casts and from life to both day and evening students, engaging models and arranging new still life studies each week.\textsuperscript{24}

Evans and some of the directors also began reaching out more to the community, hoping favourable exposure would generate increased public support. They put more emphasis on exhibitions, displaying the work of both teachers and students. In Evans's second year the Art School’s display at the annual Provincial Exhibition in Halifax covered 600 square feet and earned a number of prizes.\textsuperscript{25}

Then, in the spring of 1897, Evans organized the VSAD’s first annual exhibition, starting a decades-long tradition of the Art School’s end-of-the-year student show. The exhibition included student work from all departments, both fine arts and industrial.\textsuperscript{26}

The spring of 1897 also saw the Board’s renewed hope of buying a commodious Art School building. Directors regarded rental of the Thomas Building rooms as only a temporary answer to the VSAD’s space needs.\textsuperscript{27} A more permanent solution loomed in sight when plans were proposed to have City Council grant the Art School land in either Grafton Park or Victoria Park. The VSAD could then use

\textsuperscript{24} VSAD Minutes, 29 June 1896; VSAD Annual Report 1897, 146; Alexander McKay, “Victoria School of Art and Design,” 1897 newspaper clipping in Minutes Book, August 31, 1894 to 10, June 1914, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 2, (P.A.N.S.) (hereinafter referred to as VSAD Minutes).

\textsuperscript{25} VSAD Annual Report, 1897, 146. See also: mention of VSAD’s exhibits at the Provincial Exhibition the following year, VSAD Annual Report 1898, 172-73; VSAD Minutes, 31 August 1898.

\textsuperscript{26} VSAD Minutes, 7 May 1897, 12 April 1899; Annual Report 1901, 202.

\textsuperscript{27} VSAD Annual Report 1898, 172.
the money from its 1887-1888 endowment fund to construct a building on the land. To gain public support, Leonowens suggested capitalizing on Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee to set in motion a campaign for the Art School’s new home.\textsuperscript{28}

Alexander McKay responded enthusiastically. He ambitiously envisioned the construction of a three story building, its design arising out of his dream of art education’s central role in industry and the economy. Three quarters of the classroom space would be devoted to the practical arts, with a full floor devoted to the men’s mechanical and industrial programs. On another floor there would be a room for clay work, one for china painting, and a larger one for drawing and painting. In order to educate public tastes, one room would be devoted to a library and a whole floor to an art gallery.\textsuperscript{29} However, his plans were frustrated when, on July 1897, City Council expressed strong objections to granting the Art School the Victoria Park site. They also outlined legal problems involved in giving away land in Grafton Park.\textsuperscript{30} In the end, neither the land nor the building materialized.

The Art School’s failure to receive a land grant was not its most significant loss in 1897. In April of that year Helen Kenny died. Leonowens wrote a tribute to Kenny in a local paper, and the VSAD board passed a resolution of condolence to Kenny’s family and appreciation for her key role in founding the Art School.\textsuperscript{31} To

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{VSAD Minutes}, 7 May 1897.

\textsuperscript{29} For McKay’s vision of the new building, including sketches of his proposed floor plans, see his letter to F.W.W. Doane, City Engineer, 7 June 1897, Files of the Victoria School of Art and Design, MG 17, P.A.N.S.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{VSAD Minutes}, 16 July 1897.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{VSAD Minutes}, 14 April 1897; Anna Harriet Leonowens, “A Tribute to the Late Mrs. J.F. Kenny,” \textit{Halifax Daily Echo}, 20 April 1897, 6.
fill her vacancy on the Board, the directors appointed Kenny's close friend, Mrs. James Morrow.32 A few months following Kenny's death, Leonowens announced that she would be leaving once again for Leipzig, Germany, accompanying her granddaughter Anna, who was travelling there to continue her studies as a concert pianist.33 As it turned out, Leonowens would not return to Halifax. When she moved back to Canada in 1899, it was to join her daughter and son-in-law, Thomas Fyshe, in Montreal.34

In July 1897, at Leonowens's last VSAD Board meeting before leaving for Germany, the VSAD directors decided to give Evans a raise. For the following school year the principal would receive $850 and seventy-five percent of the fees from the china painting class. The Board also asked Evans to re-establish the teachers' class, for which they would pay her an extra fifty dollars.35 In this teachers' course, Evans followed Dodge's example of teaching object drawing, while augmenting the program with blackboard sketching. In the days before ready access

32 VSAD Minutes, 16 July 1897. On Kenny's and Morrow's friendship, see: "The Dances During the Week," Halifax Daily Echo, 12 September 1894; clippings in Helen Kenny, comp., Mrs. Kenny's Scrapbook, MG 9 vol. 10 (P.A.N.S., 1896 ca.).

33 VSAD Minutes, 16 July 1897; Local Council of Women of Halifax, Minutes Book September 1896-May 1899, MG 20 vol. 535 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.), 9 July 1897; "Her Farewell to Halifax," Halifax Herald, 14 June 1897, 6; Halifax Morning Chronicle, 17 June 1897; Halifax Morning Chronicle, 19 June 1897, 3; See also Margaret Landon, Anna and the King of Siam (New York: The John Day Company, 1944), 355-56, who places Leonowens in London by mid-August 1897.


35 VSAD Minutes, 16 July 1897. See also minutes for 31 December 1897.
to slide lanterns and visual teaching aids, the ability to sketch easily and well on the blackboard was a skill that most public school teachers valued.36

The increase in the principal's pay did not diminish her problems. The end of Leonowens's and Kenny's service on the Art School Board was the beginning of Evans's troubles. Earlier in the year, Leonowens and Alexander McKay had recommended that the main VSAD staff draw up a syllabus that would lead to a diploma in their respective programs. Evans would do fine arts, John Larkin the industrial program, and Charles Hopson the architectural.37 The three teachers complied, the two men had their programs approved, but Evans was told that her proposal was unsatisfactory.38 This was the first and only time that directors overruled a VSAD teacher's curriculum decision during the school's first half century.

Evans's proposal, which she presented at the December 1897 Board meeting, called for a two year fine arts diploma. Some of the directors disagreed, including A.H. MacKay. He put forward a successful motion to institute a three year fine arts studio and art history program. He wanted certificates awarded to students who passed end-of-the-year exams, and a diploma granted after three successful years.


37 VSAD Annual Report 1896, 125; VSAD Minutes, 7 May 1897.

38 VSAD Minutes, 15 December 1897.
MacKay also called for instruction in "Composition." This call may reflect the Superintendent's perspicacious view of art education. In the late 1890s composition was a nascent trend; in subsequent decades it became a pervasive one. In the United States, Arthur Wesley Dow was an acknowledged initiator of the trend. By 1898 Dow's theories on composition were just beginning to appear in art education texts published by Louis Prang in Boston and in the first edition of Dow's book, *Composition*. In June 1898, six months after the VSAD began its first composition course, Dow had announced his first composition course organized through the Art Students' League in New York. The VSAD had received notices of Dow's work, and these may have spawned MacKay's interest in composition instruction.

MacKay's recommendations became Evans's mandate. On the Board's direction, Evans had to spend her Christmas break drawing up a new proposal for the fine arts program. Alexander McKay also had a hand in designing it, and was given much of the credit for the final version. On December 31, 1897, the directors unanimously approved that version, which instituted the three year fine arts diploma. VSAD students could now gain diplomas in four areas: mechanical

---

39 VSAD Minutes, 15 December 1897.


41 See original announcement of Dow's first Composition class with the Art Students' League of New York in VSAD files at P.A.N.S.

42 VSAD Minutes, 12 November, 15 December, 31 December 1897.
drawing, the architectural course, fine arts, and elementary drawing. Each of the four diplomas required three years of study.\(^{43}\)

For the diploma in the mechanical program, Larkin's students took practical geometry, orthographic projections, and mechanical and isometric drawing. They learned about materials, processes, and machine design. Students drew working plans for steam engines and did "lessons in metal work, such as laying out a bathtub so as to form it without cutting stock to waste."\(^{44}\) Larkin had always felt confident about his program, saying "that a young man, if called upon to take a more important situation as foreman, or draughtsman, shall, after having attended these classes for three years, be qualified for such a position."\(^{45}\)

In the architectural program, Hopson taught his first year students, most of whom were in the building trades, to do simple exercises with drawing instruments. The second year course covered instrumental perspective, isometric projections, the history of architecture, and a look at the classical elements of architecture. The third and final year included the planning of buildings, design and proportion, advanced perspective drawing, instruction about the strength and use of different materials, and the preparation of building specifications, such as those related to heating and ventilation. Final year students were also expected to do scaled and full sized details of spiral staircases, elliptical arches, ornamental brickwork, and other

\(^{43}\) For an outline of the programs, see VSAD Annual Report 1897, 147-49. See also VSAD flyers on programs and fees for 1896-97, 1897-98 and 1898-99, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 21 (P.A.N.S.).

\(^{44}\) VSAD Annual Report 1897, 147. For other descriptions of the mechanical program, see these VSAD Annual Report 1895, 119; VSAD Annual Report 1898, 172-73.

\(^{45}\) VSAD Annual Report 1891, 147.
Both mechanical drawing and architectural students could take fine arts-based classes in the evening. These included freehand drawing, drawing from casts and life, and clay modelling.\textsuperscript{47}

In Evans's new fine arts program, first year work included drawing and modelling of individual objects and details of the human body. Media included charcoal, pen and ink, crayon, pencil, wash, and clay. Drawing with instruments was introduced along with elementary perspective and a geometric approach to shading. First year students were also taught design based on floral motifs and historic ornament. In the second year, students began work in watercolor and oil, and they drew complete figures from casts and also heads from life. Second year students modelled heads in clay, focused on color in their designs, did exercises in instrumental perspective, worked on composition, and studied art history. Third year students continued to receive instruction in composition and art history. Students in their final year also did full-color renditions from living models, advanced work in still life, and original applied designs for such things as wallpaper and embroideries.\textsuperscript{48}

The Art School also continued to offer china painting, though not as a diploma program. During the turn-of-the-century, china painting was one of the more popular crafts among Nova Scotia women. It entailed drawing or tracing outlines on china or

\begin{footnotes}
\item[47] VSAD Annual Report 1895 119; VSAD Annual Report 1897, 146; "Victoria School of Art and Design," flyer on fees and programs, 1896-97.
\item[48] VSAD Annual Report 1897, 148-49.
\end{footnotes}
earthenware, adding color with enamel paints, and firing. Its popularity was a relatively new phenomenon, some might say a fad. In England, the First Annual Exhibition of China Painting was held in London in 1875. Four years later, the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition in Halifax included china painting among its displays. The craft was also gaining popularity elsewhere in Canada and in the United States, especially in the eastern cities. It attracted middle and upper class women, and retained more the flavour of a leisure female pastime rather than a practical occupation.

The VSAD continued its china painting program until the end of the century. In August 1898 the directors hired Alice Mary Egan, a former student, to teach the program, paying her seventy percent of the income generated by the course. Egan had studied china painting in Halifax with Bessie Brown and in New York with Dorothea Warren O'Hara and the noted china painter, Adelaide Alsop-Robineau. Egan taught the VSAD china painting course in the 1898-1899 school year and again in 1899-1900. Due to limited space at the Art School, the directors paid Egan an extra two dollars a month to conduct the classes out of her own studio.

---

49 For contemporary instructions on china painting, see: The Popular Art Instructor (Toronto: J.B. Young & Co., 1888), 112-28; D.D. Morse, Morse's Manual of Art (Chicago: n.p., 1884), 99-122.


51 Morse, Morse's Manual of Art, 99.

52 VSAD Minutes, 31 August 1898.

53 Elwood, "Alice Hagen."

54 VSAD Minutes, 30 April 1900; VSAD flyer on programs and fees for 1899-1900.
October 1900, she accepted a position at the Halifax Ladies' College. Although the Art School was still conducting other art classes at the Ladies' College, not everyone on the VSAD Board was happy about moving the china painting class there, because they feared the VSAD would lose control over the class. Their apprehensions were justified. The china painting class did move and the Art School eventually lost the program. The VSAD had eleven china painting students in the 1900-1901 school year, but in the following year they had none. Egan, who in 1901 had become Mrs. Alice Hagen, ceased teaching the VSAD course and, unable to find a competent replacement for her, the directors simply dropped the class. Hagen continued working in ceramics, and became one of Nova Scotia's most distinguished artist-potters.

With a woman principal, a Ladies' College branch, and a predominantly female enrolment in the fine arts and china painting programs, the Art School faced charges that it existed solely "for the purpose of teaching a few girls how to spoil good canvas and paper with paint and pencil."

To counter these charges the Board continued to promote the School's architectural and mechanical classes for their practicality and use to industry. Directors were quick to point out how local employers praised the program, with some manufacturers offering prizes to its best students.

---

95 VSAD Minutes, 16 October 1900; Henry Rosenberg, "Head Master's Report to the Directors of the Victoria School of Art and Design," attached to VSAD Minutes, 11 June 1901; VSAD Report 1901, 201; VSAD Annual Report 1902, 178.

96 "In Its New Quarters on Barrington Street."

97 For example, see: VSAD Annual Reports, 1894, 128; 1895, 119; 1897, 146; "The Art School is Deservedly Successful," Halifax Herald, 27 December 1897; "Victoria School of Art and Design," Halifax Chronicle, 27 December 1897.
The architectural program fared well, though it did not have the same impact on the trades as did the mechanical classes. Neither did it have the same enrolment, although it attracted enough students to remain viable as a separate program until 1904, when it merged with the mechanical department. Up until then an average of about thirty-three students attended the mechanical program each year, whereas twelve, on average, took the architectural. There is no evidence that women took any of these courses. Rather, the courses were filled with "mature men," often married, taking advantage of the free tuition to try and better their employment situations. In contrast, the fine arts program continued to attract more women than men. During the 1904-1905 school year, for example, there were thirty-nine women and only twelve men in the morning, afternoon, and evening fine arts classes.

The architectural and mechanical programs had a few changes in personnel during these years. Hopson, the architectural program's first teacher in 1887, had left to take up a position in New Jersey at the end of 1889. In 1895 he returned

---

58 VSAD Minutes 31 August, 19 September 1898, 11 June 1901; VSAD Annual Report 1894, 128; VSAD Annual Report 1898, 172, 173.

59 Enrolment figures taken from the VSAD Annual Reports from 1895 to 1902 inclusive and 1903-1904. Reports for other years combine the enrolment for the architectural and mechanical programs.


62 VSAD Minutes, 23 December 1889; VSAD Annual Report 1890, 147.
to Halifax and his former VSAD position.\textsuperscript{63} By 1898, though, he was spending most of his time working on outside contracts in Windsor, Nova Scotia, a town that had suffered severe fires and was undergoing extensive reconstruction. Consequently, Herbert E. Gates began substituting for him as the VSAD architectural teacher. The Board put up with Hopson’s moonlighting for a while, but in the summer of 1898 they finally officially replaced him with Gates.\textsuperscript{64} In the mechanical program, Larkin taught the classes until his death during the 1901-1902 school year, his fifteen years at the Art School being the longest service of any of the original VSAD staff.\textsuperscript{65} When the Board could not find a replacement willing to accept the small annual salary of $225, they decided to combine the mechanical program with the architectural. They assigned the amalgamated program to Gates, which officially reduced the Art School staff to three: Henry Rosenberg, who by then was principal; Minnie Graham, who continued to teach the Saturday morning classes; and Gates.\textsuperscript{66} From 1902 on, the salaried staff would remain at three or fewer until the 1920s. In 1903 John Critchlow replaced Gates, and in 1906 G.R. Marshall replaced Critchlow.\textsuperscript{67}

Hopson was not the only VSAD teacher to leave the school in 1898. Evans was to teach the new program for only one term. Although her newly structured

\textsuperscript{63} The VSAD Minutes for 15 July 1895 mistakenly say that as "C.H. Hopkins" is hired, but the VSAD Annual Report 1896, 126, and subsequent years say it is Charles Hopson.

\textsuperscript{64} VSAD Minutes, 3 June 1898, 12 September 1899; VSAD Annual Report 1899, 141, 142.

\textsuperscript{65} VSAD Annual Report 1902, 176, 178.

\textsuperscript{66} VSAD Minutes, 19 September, 8 October 1902; VSAD Annual Report 1902, 176, 178.

\textsuperscript{67} VSAD Annual Report 1904, 161, 162; VSAD Annual Report 1907, 180, 181, 183; VSAD Minutes, 14 September 1906.
system seemed to work well, she continued to receive what she felt was undue interference from some Board members. Furthermore, the Board did not always meet its responsibilities. For example, despite promises, a formal spring closing to award certificates and prizes never took place. Soon after, in April 1898, Evans submitted her resignation. The Board of directors were split, with some wanting Evans to leave and others wanting her to stay. She expressed her good will toward the institution and its directors, but also made it known that she should have been given more freedom to do as she saw fit. She did stay in Halifax for the summer to teach private art classes at her Morris Street studio, but then returned to Philadelphia.

Although the Art School’s vocational strength lay more in its industrial programs than in its fine arts and crafts, the directors never considered hiring anyone but a fine artist to head the school, a tradition that would continue for more than a century. With Leonowens no longer on the Board, neither were the current directors likely to again consider a woman as principal. Five artists applied to fill Evans’s job: Miss K. De Bergh from Philadelphia, Mrs. B.L. Maclean from Truro, a Miss Munro, Henry M. Rosenberg from New York, and Forshaw Day from Halifax. The Board did not seriously look at the three applications from women. The two men, on the other hand, provided competition for each other.

---

68 VSAD Minutes, 29 April 1898.


70 The first head of the school who was not a practising artist was Ian Christie Clark, who was appointed College president in 1990.

71 VSAD Minutes, 24 June 1898.
Forshaw Day had stayed in Halifax for nine years after his failed attempt to initiate a Halifax art school in 1870. He then moved to Kingston, Ontario, to take up a position as professor of freehand drawing and painting at the Royal Military College. The following year, 1880, he was the only artist with Nova Scotian roots to become a foundation member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. By 1898 the sixty-one year old Day was back in Halifax, having returned a year or so earlier when age and ill-health prompted his retirement from R.M.C., a retirement he now wanted to end.\textsuperscript{72}

Halifax's mayor supported Day for the VSAD job, arguing that Day's competitor, Henry Rosenberg, was a comparative stranger to the city, while Day was known and respected in the community. And, incidentally, Day had taught the mayor's son at R.M.C. Nevertheless, Rosenberg, not Day, was the leading contender for the VSAD principalship. In fact, championed by Halifax businessman and VSAD director James Roy, Rosenberg was the only candidate granted an interview. In the end, every director, including the mayor, voted to hire Rosenberg at an annual salary of eight hundred dollars.\textsuperscript{73} As for Day, he returned to Kingston, where he died in June of 1903.\textsuperscript{74}

Although Henry Rosenberg is among the best known of the early VSAD principals, many of the stories about his career are suspect. For example, much has


\textsuperscript{73} VSAD Minutes, 14, 18 July 1898.

\textsuperscript{74} Piers, "Artists in Nova Scotia," 154.
been made about Rosenberg's apocryphal strong friendship with the American artist James McNeill Whistler. According to Staden, Rosenberg and Whistler were "intimate friends." For two years, Staden tells us, they roomed together and worked together in the Casa Jankovitz in Venice. Yet Whistler was in Venice for just over a year, and in the Casa Jankovitz for only a few months. According to D.C. Mackay, Rosenberg became closely associated with the New York landscape painter Arthur B. Davies while in Italy. However, Davies arrived in Europe for the first time in 1893, about eight years after Rosenberg had left. Staden's version may be more plausible. He says that Rosenberg and Davies met after Rosenberg had returned to New York. Less plausible, however, is Staden's description of the relationship between the two artists. While Mackay says that Davies strongly influenced Rosenberg, Staden has it the other way around. In Staden's story Davies was an assistant to Rosenberg, "and Mr. Rosenberg's great experience was instrumental in helping to crystallize the artistic groupings of this famous painter in years to come."


77 D. C. Mackay, Henry M. Rosenberg 1858-1947; Staden, "Nova Scotian Artist."
There are also recorded details of Rosenberg’s Halifax days that fail to stand up to scrutiny. Blakeley and subsequent writers said that Rosenberg’s prodding was responsible for convincing the VSAD Directors to move to a new building.\textsuperscript{80} The directors, of course, needed no convincing. In fact, looking for a new building was, for most of them, their main preoccupation as directors. Another spurious detail is the claim by D.C. Mackay and others that Rosenberg was a founding member of the Nova Scotia Society of Artists.\textsuperscript{81} In fact, Rosenberg did not attend any of the NSSA meetings in 1922, the Society’s founding year.\textsuperscript{82} In short, the details of Rosenberg’s career are clouded in legend.

Notwithstanding the many published inaccuracies regarding Rosenberg, it is possible to piece together some of his biography. He was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1858. He studied art in Chicago and then, when he was in his early twenties, left for an extended stay in Europe. It appears that Rosenberg’s travels brought him into contact with a number of prominent American artists. He lived in Italy for about five years, leaving Europe around 1886. From there he moved back first to Chicago and then to New York.\textsuperscript{83}


\textsuperscript{81} Mackay, \textit{Henry M. Rosenberg 1858-1947}; Shuebrook, "Principals and a President," 28.

\textsuperscript{82} Nova Scotia Society of Artists, Minutes Book, Feb. 1922-Nov.1933, MG 20 vol. 502 no. 18 (P.A.N.S.).

\textsuperscript{83} Mackay, \textit{Henry M. Rosenberg 1858-1947}; Laurette, \textit{A Centennial Salute}. 
It was in New York where future VSAD director James R. Roy, a Halifax real estate businessman, first met Rosenberg in 1897. Roy was one person who probably did not want Katherine Evans to change her retirement plans, since by then he had already decided that Rosenberg should head the school. Actually, Roy only became a director two weeks after the Board accepted Evans's resignation, but his influence on the VSAD came earlier through his business connections, his position on City Council, and his ownership of the Thomas Building, which housed the Art School. Even before Evans quit, Roy had recruited Rosenberg to come to Halifax. How did Roy entice the artist to leave New York for Nova Scotia? The Halifax art scene was not vibrant, patrons and exhibitions were few, a public gallery was nonexistent, there was little connection to art circles outside of the province, and the city's Art School was floundering in the midst of community apathy. Nevertheless, Roy could claim that the Art School held some promise. Also, being in the real estate business, Roy was able to supply Rosenberg with a comfortable and affordable studio. Rosenberg accepted Roy's invitation, and at the same June 1898 Board meeting that heard Evans's resignation, directors received Rosenberg's application. At Roy's first Board meeting on July 14, 1898, the directors voted to appoint Rosenberg. A few months later in September, Principal Rosenberg presided over the Victoria School of Art and Design's formal opening for the new school year.

---


85 VSAD Minutes, 24 June 1898.

86 VSAD Minutes, 3 June, 14 July, 19 September 1898.
Joining Rosenberg on opening day were the three veteran teachers who made up the 1898-1899 VSAD staff: Marion Graham, John Larkin, and Charles Hopson. A fourth veteran VSAD teacher returned to the School in Rosenberg's first year. In December 1898, the Board granted Kate Hill's request to teach modelling at the Art School. For her efforts Hill was to retain seventy-five percent of the fees collected from the class. All other staff received salaries: Rosenberg was earning eight hundred dollars a year; Graham, who still taught the Saturday children's class, was paid two hundred dollars; Larkin made two hundred and fifty dollars; Gates, who that year replaced Hopson, received fifty dollars a term.

The directors let Rosenberg determine his own program, though they did keep tabs on things for a little while. In the last days of Evans's principalship, they had agreed to take turns visiting the school once a month. They followed through, but only during Rosenberg's first year. After that, they went back to dealing almost exclusively with budget and real estate. Throughout Rosenberg's principalship, as with all principals before Evans, the Board left program matters to the VSAD teachers. The teachers' independence reigned even when their views did not fully match the directors. For example, one of Alexander McKay's concerns during these years was to make the Art School more closely affiliated with the public school system. In his view, such an affiliation would more closely ally the school with the

---

87 VSAD Minutes, 31 August, 19 September 1898, 12 September 1899; VSAD Annual Report 1899, 141.

88 VSAD Minutes, 13 December 1898.

89 VSAD Minutes, 31 August 1898, 12 September 1899.

90 VSAD Minutes, 3 June, 31 August, 13 December 1898, 18 January, 8 February, 11 October 1899.
community, elevating both the public's taste and the VSAD's chance of survival. Despite McKay's efforts, that affiliation did not occur. In fact, Rosenberg had little to do with the public schools, even though, in McKay's opinion, inspiring teachers should be one of the principal's highest duties.\textsuperscript{91}

For the most part, then, Rosenberg decided on his own program, which was essentially a traditional one. He had his students work in charcoal and pen and ink, watercolor and sometimes oil. He set up picturesque still life arrangements and organized life studies with models dressed in costumes—or at least dressed in something, nude drawing not yet being acceptable within Halifax's community standards. He encouraged his students to render a faithful, closely observed depiction of their subject. Since Rosenberg kept up his own productivity as an artist, regularly exhibiting his work in Halifax, he was also able to teach by example.\textsuperscript{92}

In teaching the program, Rosenberg found the Art School facilities to be far from adequate. Not only were the classes cramped, Rosenberg complained, but dust sifting from the ceiling was having a detrimental effect on the art work, the plaster casts, and the enrolment.\textsuperscript{93} So, as did all VSAD heads before him, Rosenberg added his voice to the Board's call for better quarters for the Art School. Just before


\textsuperscript{92} VSAD Minutes, 18 January, 8 February 1899; VSAD flyer on programs and fees for 1898-97, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 21 (P.A.N.S.); Rosenberg, "Head Master's Report for 1907-08," in VSAD Annual Report 1908, 227; \textit{idem}, "Head Master's Report for 1908-09," in VSAD Annual Report 1909, 243.

\textsuperscript{93} VSAD Minutes, 11 June 1901; Rosenberg, "Head Master's Report," in VSAD Annual Report 1901, 200-201.
his appointment, the Board had begun a protracted negotiation for a site on the military's "Drill Shed" grounds on Spring Garden Road. The plan was to buy the property jointly with the Halifax Infirmary, splitting the costs and the land. Over the next two years appraisals were done, offers were made, and counter offers were proposed and responded to. Finally, in April 1900, the military decided to keep the Drill Shed for a storehouse, leaving the Board once again on the lookout for a property to spend the 1887 endowment on.

The directors next set their sites on a building on the corner of George and Argyle Streets, directly across from Halifax's well-known Saint Paul's Church and the Grand Parade grounds. A very old building, it was owned by the Anglicans who, through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), had erected it in 1819. The building originally had housed the SPG's National School, which had introduced the Madras monitorial system to Halifax and served as Nova Scotia's first organized teacher training institution. Today, it is the fashionable

---

94 VSAD Annual Report 1900, 146; VSAD Minutes, 8 February, 3, 24 June, 18, 31 July 1898, 8 February 1899.

95 VSAD Minutes, 12 November 1897, 8 February 1898, 10 May 1899.

96 VSAD Minutes, 8 March, 12 September, 11 October 1899, 30 April 1900.

97 VSAD Minutes, 30 April 1900.

98 VSAD Minutes, 27 July 1900.

99 C.E. Thomas, "The Work, in Nova Scotia, of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1784 to 1886," Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections 38 (1973), 73; Charles E. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1957), 119; Elizabeth Styring Nutt, "An Incident in the Golden Age of Fine Art in Nova Scotia," Journal of Education [Nova Scotia] 3, no. 1 (4th series 1932), 74. Nutt, VSAD principal from 1919 to 1943, said the National School building was erected in 1813. However, her article, and many of her other writings, contain other historical inaccuracies and are not dependable. Phillips says the date is 1818. Thomas did extensive primary research into the SPG in Halifax, and he gives the 1819 date.
Five Fishermen's restaurant. Back in 1900, it was an aging building sorely in need of repair, but with an attractive price and location.

The Board had found the National School rooms wanting when they first looked into renting them in 1894. Nevertheless, in the fall of 1901 Roy convinced them that the building was worth buying. Once again, their real estate dealings took directors longer than they expected. Negotiations took place, problems were overcome, details large and small were attended to, a joint purchase with the City Library was explored and rejected, and in November 1901 a purchase price of six thousand dollars was finally agreed upon. Still things moved slowly, with various other complications with the property and purchase keeping the directors occupied. It was not until the following summer, in August 1902, that the money was actually paid. At last the endowment fund of 1887 and 1888 could be spent. But then came half a year of extensive repairs, done under VSAD's architectural teacher, Herbert Gates, and costing thirty-five hundred dollars. Meanwhile, having given up its Thomas Building lease, the Art School was forced to hold classes in a borrowed room at the Manual Training School. The inconvenience of these temporary quarters caused a significant decrease in enrolment. Finally,

100 VSAD Minutes, 5 May 1894.
101 VSAD Minutes, 3 October, 12 November 1901.
103 VSAD Minutes, 24 August 1902.
104 VSAD Minutes, 24 August, 8 October 1902; VSAD Annual Report 1903, 173; McKay "Historical Sketch," 169.
105 VSAD Minutes, 8 October 1902, 3 March 1903; VSAD Annual Report 1903, 173.
on the evening of March 30, 1903, the Art School proudly opened the doors of its new home. The school had waited sixteen years to move into its own building. It would have to wait another fifty-four years before it could move out of it.

The directors’ interest in the Art School, highest when property negotiations were on the agenda, sank to its lowest level once those negotiations were settled. During their two year effort to secure the Drill Shed property on Spring Garden Road, the Board met sixteen times. In the year spent bargaining for the National School they met thirteen times. Then, in the two years following the National School purchase, 1904 and 1905, they met only twice, both times failing to achieve a quorum. In fact, in the six and a half years between the spring of 1903, when classes started at the school’s new home at the National School Building, and the end of 1909, when Rosenberg resigned as principal, the directors attempted only nine meetings, managing quorum for only three of them. Some directors did continue their active involvement in the Art School, with Ella Ritchie, James Roy, Alexander McKay, and Colonel Fred H. Oxley, at least showing up for meetings. McKay also kept up his advocacy work, achieving enough success to keep the school alive. Overall though, Rosenberg, unlike Katherine Evans, was left alone to do what he saw fit. During the Art School’s first two decades, then, it appears that real estate, more than art programs, commanded the Board’s attention.

---


107 See VSAD Minutes for these years. Oxley was a director for twenty years from November 1897 until 1917: VSAD Minutes, 12 November 1897; VSAD Annual Report 1897, 125; VSAD Report 1917, 204. For biographical information on Oxley, see his obituaries: "Dies Suddenly. Colonel F.H. Oxley," Halifax Herald, 29 April 1929, 1; "Col. F.H. Oxley Passes Away Very Suddenly," Halifax Herald, 29 April 1929, 1, 4.
Thus, although the majority of the fine arts students at the Victoria School of Art and Design were female, some of the school's directors believed that only a man could be principal. Directors displayed this belief by their actions and, when they dismissed Houghton's application for the job in 1894, by their words. In contrast, the Board always hired a woman for the poorly paid assistant teacher, and would do so until the 1930s. They never gave a thought to hiring women for the mechanical or architectural programs. Even if they had, the system did not allow women to gain the qualifications. When the directors did hire a woman principal, she said that they did not give her enough freedom to do the job. Her male counterparts, both before and after her, had no such complaint. In addition to gender relationships, another part of the explanation for why Evans and Rosenberg received different treatment from the Board is that, at least after 1904, many directors had simply become indifferent to the Art School. Interestingly, these gendered situations played themselves out during a time when at least one third of the directors were female, and women's role on the Board, as we shall see, was about to become even stronger.
CHAPTER SIX

The VSAD Supporters, 1894-1919:
The Halifax Local Council of Women

When Anna Leonowens returned to Halifax late in 1893, she immediately rejoined the Board of the Victoria School of Art and Design. Her goal remained as it had been in the first years of the Art School: to train artist-workers and designers and to generate art-related employment. Leonowens's interests also remained focused on the community, and especially on women's issues. In addition to her work at the Art School, she was a leader in Halifax's suffrage movement, she took part in campaigns to make women eligible for school board membership, fought for prison reform for female inmates, and promoted domestic science for women. Through her

1 Victoria School of Art and Design, Minutes Book, May 5, 1887 to May 6, 1894, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 1, (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia), 7 October 1893 (minutes book hereinafter referred to as VSAD Minutes: Public Archives of N.S. hereinafter referred to as P.A.N.S.).

leadership and that of others, the Victoria School of Art and Design established strong, long-lasting ties with Halifax women and their organizations.

This chapter will show how, at times, the VSAD was dependent primarily on these women and a few male supporters to stay alive. The chapter looks at the origins and art-related activities of Halifax's umbrella women's organization, the Local Council of Women (LCW). We will see that key people in the LCW were also key supporters of the VSAD. This chapter covers the years from 1894, when the LCW was founded, to the end of the Great War in 1919. Midway through these years, in 1907, Nova Scotia passed legislation to provide a system of technical education at both the secondary and post-secondary level. Because the 1907 laws gave the women much less than men in the way of vocational education, women had to fight harder and voice their vocational demands more loudly. This period thus provides much evidence of the women's stated rationales for their campaigns in education, including art education. These rationales, we will see, arose from positions of maternal and liberal feminism. Understanding those positions allows us to better understand why the women included art and art education among their campaigns.³

Many VSAD women became active in the woman movement for the same reasons that attracted them to the Art School. The school was a means to achieve ends beyond matters of strictly art. Economic gains, employment opportunities for

³ Evidence for this and subsequent chapters includes unsigned newspaper articles written by LCW members. The authors of these articles can often be determined through notes in Agnes Dennis, comp., Scrapbook of the Activities of the Local Council of Women of Halifax 1908-1917, MG 20 vol. 204 (P.A.N.S.). When LCW authors are determined through the scrapbook, footnotes will list their names in brackets [ ].
women and men, and promotion of higher standards of civic culture all tied into the women's Art School activities. Many women's clubs shared this agenda, and thus many VSAD women became involved in them. Their clubs had diverse goals, and sometimes were even at odds with one another, disagreeing on issues ranging from suffrage to how they should pray at meetings. Within that diversity, the Councils of Women gave the clubs common ground. Many VSAD promoters, both men and women, helped organize and support the Halifax Chapter of the Local Council of Women, forging a bond between the Art School and the LCW that would last for a half century. This bond would be very important to the Art School's survival in later years, and so its origins are therefore worth exploring.

The Councils of Women across Canada were umbrella groups for various women's organizations. The Local Councils were affiliated with the National Council of Women of Canada (NCW), which in turn was affiliated with the International Council of Women (ICW). The movement drew its membership primarily from the urban middle and upper social classes and was infused with Christian morality. Although the National Council of Women put forward a general platform, Local Councils were able to set their own priorities. Some Local Councils, for example, campaigned for women's suffrage, while the National Council shied away from officially supporting the vote until its Halifax conference in 1910. The founding

---


5 On the 1910 Halifax meeting, see the various local newspaper articles, for example: "The Work of the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Women Starts To-morrow," Halifax Mail, 29 June 1910; [M.K. Stead], "National Council of Women," Halifax Mail, 10 May 1910. On
president of both the ICW and the NCW was Lady Ishbel Majoribanks Gordon, Countess of Aberdeen. A strong liberal, staunch Presbyterian, and future founder of the Victorian Order of Nurses, Lady Aberdeen had moved to Canada in the fall of 1893 when her husband, John Campbell Gordon, was appointed Governor-General. In August 1894, Lady Aberdeen travelled to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, arriving in Halifax for the founding meeting of the Halifax Chapter of the Local Council of Women. Organizers had invited eighty societies from Halifax and Dartmouth, with sixty-nine of them sending representatives. Anna Leonowens joined Aberdeen as one of the three main speakers, the third being Edith Jessie Archibald, a future VSAD Board member. Following the speeches, delegates agreed to form a Local Council.

5(...continued)

6 Lady Aberdeen, Inaugural Meeting of the Local Council of Women Halifax. Address by Her Excellency the Countess of Aberdeen, August 24th 1894 (Halifax: Morning Herald, 1894); Willoughby Cummings, The National Council of Women: Our History, no publisher nor date, but written "after almost 25 years" of the NCW, making it ca. 1918, copy available in Scrapbook of the Local Council of Women of Halifax, 1927-83, MG 20 vol. 1848 no. 1 (P.A.N.S.).

7 On the New Brunswick visit, see Philip R. Campbell, Challenging Years 1894-1979: 85 Years of the Council of Women in Saint John (Saint John: Lingley Printing, n.d.).

8 Leonowens's handwritten minutes of the inaugural LCW meeting are found in LCW Minutes, 24 August 1894. Other information sources on the inaugural meeting include: Inaugural Meeting;Local Council of Women of Halifax, Second Annual Report of the Local Council of Women of Halifax in Affiliation with the National Council of Women (Halifax: John Bowes, 1896); "History of Halifax Local Council of Women," MG 20 vol. 1054 no. 1 (P.A.N.S., n.d.); Halifax Herald, 25 August 1894, 5.
From the beginning, the LCW became involved in art and art education. The Ladies Committee of the Victoria School of Art and Design was one of the Local Council's founding affiliated societies. Demonstrating the priority given to the arts, the LCW chose "Music and Art" to be one of their three initial committees, the other two being "Philanthropy and Benevolence" and "Moral and Social Reform." Among the Music and Art Committee's seventeen members were Anna Leonowens, Edith Archibald, and two Art School teachers, Minnie Graham and Kate Hill. VSAD Board members Ella Ritchie, Eliza Ritchie, and Helen Kenny also took on Council chores. Another Art School director, Mrs. H.H. Fuller, was elected LCW vice-president. A third Ritchie sister, Mary, was also chosen as a vice president, while Leonowens was elected recording secretary. For their first president, the LCW elected Mrs. James C. Mackintosh, whose husband sat on the Art School Board. James Mackintosh himself became an LCW patron, as did Leonowens's son-in-law, Thomas Fyshe, and Edith Archibald's husband, Charles. Other patrons included Helen Kenny's brother-in-law Malachy Bowes Daly, who was Nova Scotia's Lieutenant-Governor, and Kenny's cousin, Nova Scotia Supreme Court Judge Hugh McDonald Henry. There was thus a large intersection between LCW and VSAD circles.

This connection between the LCW and the Halifax Art School continued into the 1930s, with both institutions giving each other support. VSAD women, for example, helped the LCW in its first major fund drive. Although LCW organizers were able to fill a hall on their first try, it took a little longer to fill their treasury.

---

9 LCW Minutes, 24 August 1894.

10 LCW Minutes, 24, 30 August 1894.
After its founding year the organization had only $33.20. At the May 1895 meeting, Leonowens, speaking as the Art School's representative, initiated a resolution to have each LCW member donate one dollar to the Council. The Ladies' Committee of the VSAD, as an affiliated society of the LCW, was the first to contribute.\(^{11}\) As we shall see in chapter ten, the LCW would return the favor thirty-three years later when it initiated a similar dollar-per-woman campaign in aid of a new Art School building.\(^{12}\)

Actually, the LCW became involved in finding a new Art School home from the very beginning. In November 1895, during Katherine Evans's first term as VSAD principal, Leonowens discussed the Art School's needs at the monthly LCW meeting. At the December meeting, she brought Evans along to elaborate on the situation. Evans explained how the Art School's 1887 endowment would pay for a building if the government would provide a site. The LCW passed a motion of support, and in January 1896 brought the issue to their annual meeting, where Leonowens presented a paper on "Art Education in the Province."\(^{13}\) Despite the LCW's efforts, the government never donated the land during Evans's principalship. In fact, the LCW would still be campaigning for an adequate Art School building in the 1930s.

Leonowens's departure from Halifax in 1897 left a large gap in both the city's woman movement and its Art School. Fortunately for the VSAD Board, another woman came close to taking over the role previously fulfilled by Leonowens and

---

\(^{11}\) LCW Minutes, 14 May 1895.


\(^{13}\) LCW Minutes, 26 November, 18 December 1895, 30 January 1896.
Kenny. That was Edith Jessie Archibald, the woman who had joined Leonowens and Lady Aberdeen as a keynote speaker at the inaugural meeting of the Halifax Local Council of Women. Archibald served as VSAD director for sixteen years, from 1900 to 1916, and she continued to actively support the Art School for many years after that. Her main interest throughout that time was to establish links between the Art School and the community.

Archibald was particularly well-positioned for creating those links. As one of Nova Scotia’s best known clubwomen, she took on leading roles in many organizations. If anything, her kin were even more prominent than those of the other women promoters of the Art School. The Archibalds were a family of judges, MLAs, bankers, and a Father of Confederation. Edith Archibald was born in 1854 in Newfoundland to Catherine (nee Richardson) and Edward Mortimer Archibald. Her father was Newfoundland’s attorney general, a post he had been appointed to in 1841. In 1857 Edith’s father was made British Consul to New York, which took the whole family to that city. She grew up there, with her father holding the post until 1883.¹⁴ Edith eventually moved back to Nova Scotia, where in 1874 she married her second cousin, Charles Archibald, a mining engineer who went on to become president of the Bank of Nova Scotia.¹⁵


Edith Archibald began her involvement in the woman movement early in the 1880s, when she had joined the regional Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). A very active force within that organization, Archibald set out to unite the WCTU with other women's groups. In 1891, when the national WCTU set up a committee to look into a Canadian council of women's societies, Archibald became the committee's secretary. With the establishment of the NCW, Archibald's committee became redundant, and so was disbanded in 1893. By that time, Archibald had become president of the Maritime WCTU, a post she held between 1892 and 1896. A few months before the inaugural LCW meeting in August 1894, representatives from the WCTU had met with Lady Aberdeen and agreed to affiliate their organization with the National Council of Women. With these strengthened ties between the WCTU and the NCW, Archibald took up the cause to start a Halifax branch of the Local Council of Women.

By the end of the century, Archibald had earned the presidency of the LCW (1896-1905), had been elected founding president of Halifax Victorian Order of Nurses (1897), and had served as vice-president of the national WCTU. During World War One she organized the local Red Cross. Whenever a feminist

---


17 "Women's Temperance Union," Halifax Herald, 1 February 1895, 8.

18 On LCW presidency, see: LCW Minutes, 30 January 1896, 18 June 1901, 23 April 1903, 21 April 1904; Women of Canada, 256. Forbes ("Battles," 74) says Archibald resigned from LCW presidency in 1906, but see her resignation speech in LCW Minutes, 19 April 1905. On her work with the VON, see: LCW Minutes, 27 April 1900; Forbes, "Battles," 73-74. On National WCTU vice-presidency, see Women of Canada, 258. On her work with the Red Cross, see: Forbes, "Archibald"; idem, "Battles."
campaign sparked up in the city, Archibald was likely to be in the middle of it. She chipped away at City Council for a quarter century, slowly breaking down their resistance to women on school boards.\textsuperscript{19} She led campaigns for suffrage, and, when women finally achieved the vote in 1918, took on the presidency of Halifax’s Liberal-Conservative Women’s auxiliary.\textsuperscript{20}

Along with these activities, Archibald’s agenda included promotion of and participation in the arts. In August 1894, the same month she helped inaugurate the LCW, Archibald took part in establishing the Academy of Music in Halifax.\textsuperscript{21} In 1905 she became a founding member and president of the Halifax Ladies Musical Club.\textsuperscript{22} In the 1920s, now in her early seventies, she wrote her first novel, The Token, and then turned it into a play, premiering it at Halifax’s Majestic Theatre in 1927.\textsuperscript{23} As a VSAD director, Archibald at times was one of the few people

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} LCW Minutes, 31 January 1895, 3 October 1899, 3 July 1900, 8 August 1905, 3 April 1906; [Edith Archibald], “Should Women Have Places on the Halifax School Board?” letter to the editor, Halifax Mail, 9 November 1909; “Shall We Have Women on School Board?” editorial, Halifax Mail, 29 November 1912.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} LCW Minutes, 30 August 1894.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Halifax Ladies Musical Club, Minutes Book, MG 20 vol. 183 (P.A.N.S., n.d.); Halifax Mail Star, 30 September 1905: 10; P.A.N.S. Biography card for Edith J. Archibald.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Edith Jessie Archibald, The Token (Toronto: Ryerson Press, n.d.); Acadian Recorder, 5 March 1927, 2; Hector Charlesworth, “A Cape Breton Novel,” Review of The Token by E. J. Archibald, Saturday Night, 8 November 1930.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
interested in keeping the school alive. When the Halifax Art School awarded
honorary diplomas in 1931, the two recipients were Eliza Ritchie and Edith Jessie
Archibald.24

Archibald became a VSAD director in April 1900. She had recently donated
to the VSAD scholarship fund, and had given the school a large collection of art
prints. When the death of founding VSAD director Michael Dwyer left the Board
with an unexpected vacancy, Mrs. H.H. Fuller, a Board member and LCW vice-
president, suggested that Archibald fill the position. The Board agreed and
Archibald accepted.25 In her first few years as VSAD director, Archibald’s major
effort was to organize exhibitions jointly sponsored by the Art School and the LCW.
She saw many potential benefits, with exhibitions able to generate publicity, raise

24 “Dr. E. Ritchie Passes: Real Lost to City,” obituary, Halifax Mail, 5 September 1933; Edith Jessie Archibald, letter “To the faculty and students of the Nova Scotia College of Art,” 6 May 1931, MG 17 vol. 46 no. 1 p. 30 (P.A.N.S.); “Rewarded for Fine Art Work. Annual Closing Exercises of College of Art Show Progress Made—Two Honorary Diplomas Were Presented,” Halifax Mail, 6 May 1931; “Successful Term Marked by N.S. College of Art. Prizes Are Presented, Honorary Diplomas Conferred on Mrs. Edith Jessie Archibald and Dr. Eliza Ritchie,” Halifax Chronicle-Star, 6 May 1931; Elizabeth S. Nutt and Norma E. Smith, Scrapbook 1924-1933, MG 17 vol. 46 no. 1 (P.A.N.S.). In addition to this scrapbook, P.A.N.S. has at least five others listed under the Nova Scotia College of Art: MG 17 vol. 6 no. 1; MG 17 vol. 8 no. 1; MG 17 vol. 44 no. 16; MG 17 vol. 45 nos. 1 and 2. This 1924-33 scrapbook, which is the largest, has the inscription “Property of Elizabeth S. Nutt,” while entries in the Art College diaries show that Norma Smith helped Nutt compile the scrapbooks. P.A.N.S. has sixteen Art College diaries: MG 17 vol. 5 nos. 1-11; MG 17 vol. 44 nos. 5-9. Most were written by Norma Smith but at least two were written by Elizabeth S. Nutt. At the time of this writing, P.A.N.S.'s finding aids did not have proper authorship assigned to all of the diaries, so I have assigned authorship here based on handwriting and content in the diaries. Content in some earlier diaries was not by Nutt (e.g., Nutt referred to herself in the first person, and these diaries used third person for Nutt), yet the handwriting had some differences from Smith's (see especially the "M"s), but assuming there was no third author I list these as having been written by Smith.

money, enhance Halifax's cultural life, and provide a venue for artists and craftworkers to sell their wares.

Marketing crafts and other homemade goods had been an ongoing concern for Halifax women even before the LCW. In 1892, women in Halifax had created the Women's Work Exchange (WWE), whose purpose was to provide women, and, to a lesser extent, men, a means for selling work they produced, especially "culinary and fancy work," everything "from a cake to a picture." At the LCW inaugural meeting, the WWE became a founding society. Among the VSAD women sitting on the WWE committee were Mackintosh, Fuller, Morrow, and Kenny. When the women found time to make the WWE a priority, they met with commendable success. For example, immediately following the first LCW meeting the WWE sold, on average, over three hundred dollars worth of goods each month. When other priorities took hold, though, the WWE would slip into inactivity, only to be revived later by new champions.

Minnie Stead was one such champion, calling for the WWE revival both before and after World War One. Her aim in the WWE was to get rural women in touch with the urban female market. Handcrafted rugs, homespuns, and canned goods could be brought from the country to the city. Stead promoted the idea through her positions as LCW Press Committee Convener and LCW Convener of Fine and Applied

26 Women of Canada, 405.
27 LCW Minutes, 30 August 1894.
28 See clippings in Helen Kenny, comp., Mrs. Kenny's Scrapbook, MG 9 vol. 10 (P.A.N.S., 1896 ca.), 82-83.
Arts. It was this potential link between arts education and income generating skills that drew Stead and many other LCW women to support the VSAD. Like Archibald, Stead's promotion of art, craftwork, art education, and the Halifax Art School would earn her an honorary diploma from the school, awarded to her in 1934.

The LCW also sold craftwork by Doukhobor women. The Doukhobors were a group of Russian Anabaptists who, to avoid persecution, began emigrating en masse to Canada in 1898. Of the 7400 Doukhobors who arrived in 1898 and 1899, most settled in what was to become Saskatchewan, living there communally. Although Halifax was the port of entry for many of the Doukhobors, the Halifax LCW first became involved with them through the NCW leadership in Toronto, which served as a temporary stay during the Doukhobors' westward trek. In Ontario, the NCW had given its support to the Doukhobors, securing for them looms and arranging for the sale of Doukhobor embroidery to women across Canada. By the end of 1899, the Halifax Local Council began looking into ways it could respond to the NCW Doukhobor campaign. Taking up the cause, Edith Archibald arranged for the LCW to purchase Doukhobor work to sell in Halifax early in 1901.

---


31 Cummings, National Council, 8.

32 LCW Minutes, 25 November, 8 November 1899, 30 January, 18 June, 30 October 1901, 2 January, 6 February 1902.
Archibald hoped to combine the LCW's sales of WWE and Doukhobor crafts with a VSAD exhibition. Along with the crafts, citizens could loan artworks from their private collections. Organizers could charge the public a modest fee to see the exhibition, thereby raising money for both the LCW and the VSAD. The Art School was still holding its annual exhibition of student work instituted under Evans, and so, Archibald reasoned, organizers just had to expand that event.\(^{33}\) Archibald raised the idea with both the LCW and the VSAD Board during her first years as a director. However, although she received support from other LCW women on the VSAD Board, such as Morrow and Ritchie, her other Board colleagues were too preoccupied with real estate dealings to follow through.\(^{34}\) Then the LCW itself lessened its efforts on the exhibition, and other projects, when they became embroiled in a debate over whether the Lord's Prayer should be said aloud or silently before their meetings.\(^{35}\) As they did with many LCW issues, the Halifax women took their cues from the NCW, which was also divided over silent prayers.\(^{36}\) The issue was in part responsible for a low level of LCW activity in Halifax during the years immediately surrounding the turn-of-the-century, with the art exhibitions being one of the victims.\(^{37}\)

\(^{33}\) VSAD Annual Report 1901, 202.

\(^{34}\) VSAD Minutes, 3 October 1901, 8 October 1902; LCW Minutes, 19 February, 19 March 1903.

\(^{35}\) LCW Minutes, 28 March 1895, 12 November 1898, 13 April, 6 September 1899. See 7 February 1900 meeting where Lord's Prayer ceases being said aloud, and Archibald, though present, does not sign minutes as President. See also minutes for 27 April, 1 June 1900, 30 January, 18 June, 10 September 1901.

\(^{36}\) Cummings, National Council, 5-6.

\(^{37}\) LCW Minutes, 19 February, 10 March 1903.
It was thus not until 1904 that the LCW and the VSAD were able to combine forces for a large exhibition. It was the first such effort in Halifax since VSAD’s first headmaster, George Harvey, had organized a loan exhibition over a decade earlier, and only the third in the seventeen years since the Loan Exhibition for the new Art School in 1887. The result of Archibald’s work was a display of fifty of the best paintings that could be borrowed. The show, which opened at the Art School in June 1904 as part of the annual VSAD exhibition, also included hand and loom work by Doukhobor women and other crafts. The LCW solicited the crafts and the Art School organized the paintings, with the two institutions splitting the profits. Archibald gave the opening address, describing what there was to see. Large crowds attended, paying a small fee and sipping tea as they viewed the crafts and art.

In the years that followed, Archibald, Stead, the Ritchie sisters, and other women continued to organize exhibitions for both the LCW and the Art School. By 1905, the LCW and the VSAD had major annual displays at the Provincial Exhibition in Halifax. As they had with the Doukhobor project, the LCW had taken on the Provincial Exhibition display as part of a national campaign of the NCW. At the end of 1903, following a period of LCW inactivity, Archibald had organized a meeting to hear NCW representative Willoughby Cummings. Cummings told how the NCW was setting up an Arts and Crafts committee to develop home industries, such as

---

38 On the 1894 exhibition, see: VSAD Minutes, 16 March 1894; Harry Piers, "Artists in Nova Scotia," Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society 18 (1914), 158. Piers mentions only the 1887, 1894, and 1904 exhibitions, but see Halifax Thursday, December 15, 1893. Catalogue of the Unique and Unparalleled Collection of Works of Art by Old and New Masters, in MG 9 vol. 10 Mrs. Kenny’s Scrapbook, 19.

39 LCW Minutes, 21 April, 27 May, 3 June 1904; VSAD Minutes, 25 May 1904; VSAD Annual Report 1904, 163; Henry Rosenberg, letter to the VSAD Directors, 18 January 1905, VSAD papers, MG 17, (P.A.N.S.).
homespuns, carpet making, linen, rugs, and curtains. The committee would encourage women to send their work to sell at the exhibitions held in the different provinces. The LCW decided to take part, with Archibald and Stead joining a small local committee to look into a Women's Building at the Nova Scotia Exhibition. The committee set up a display at the Exhibition in the summer of 1904, organizing it while the LCW was still working on its joint exhibition at the Art School.⁴⁰

The following summer, 1905, the LCW secured a small building to host the women's displays at the Provincial Exhibition. In addition to crafts and homemade goods, Ritchie set up an exhibit of "minor arts," including miniatures, silhouettes, illuminations, lace, snuff boxes, fans, costumes, and bookbinding. One of the biggest attractions was a weaving demonstration put on by women from nearby Lunenburg. For such an ambitious display, the LCW found that the building assigned to them was far too small. Although they had promised the LCW a larger building, exhibition organizers reneged and turned the bigger space over to the Provincial Exhibition's Art Department.⁴¹

Agnes Dennis, who had that year succeeded Archibald as LCW president, was not pleased with the cramped space that had been allotted for the Women's Building. She got together with Eliza Ritchie to propose that the LCW take over the Exhibition's Art Department, thus giving them the larger facility. Officials agreed, and Ritchie headed up the committee to oversee this sizable undertaking. Working with Ritchie on this LCW committee were many women connected one way or another.

⁴⁰ LCW Minutes, 22 October 1903, 8 January, 11 March, 21 April, 25 August 1904.

⁴¹ See: LCW Minutes, 12 May, 13 June, 8 August, 9 October 1905.
another with the Art School, including Edith Smith, Minnie Graham, Ella Ritchie, Uma Gray, who had been a VSAD student in the school's first year, and Margaret Brown, who in 1910 would take over Minnie Graham's job as VSAD's assistant secretary, and who in 1934 would join Minnie Stead in receiving an honorary diploma from the VSAD.  

For the next twelve years, until the Women's Building was destroyed in the 1917 Halifax Explosion, the LCW set up annual displays of women's crafts and other homemade goods at the Provincial Exhibition. From 1906 on they also organized loan exhibitions and general displays for the Art Department. The LCW solicited both craft and arts from across Canada for these displays. They again combined forces with the Art School, which also began holding its annual show at the Provincial Exhibition's Art Building as well as at the school. Awards were given to the best student works in various categories, with LCW women contributing some of the prizes.

---


44 "Art School Work on Exhibition," Halifax Chronicle, 16 June 1905; "Exhibition by Victoria School of Art and Design," Halifax Herald, 15 June 1905; Rosenberg, "Head Master's (continued...)
Along with exhibitions, Archibald’s other projects as VSAD director included public art lectures. She proposed a lecture series to the Board in the fall of 1904, and then lined up speakers for the winter 1905 term. She and Alexander McKay arranged for ten lectures, borrowing a magic lantern to illustrate the talks and proposing a reading list for each of them. Tickets for the series cost three dollars for individuals, five dollars for a family, or six dollars for three persons. Eliza Ritchie, an engrossing speaker, gave three of the talks. Rev. Edward J. McCarthy, who was about to become Halifax’s Roman Catholic Archbishop, gave two. VSAD principal Henry Rosenberg gave one, Presbyterian College principal James W. Falconer gave another, as did Dalhousie University English professor Archibald MacMechan. Most of the lecturers focused on the early Renaissance, the Middle Ages, and the classical periods of Greece and Rome. Although Ritchie would later attempt to popularize contemporary trends in art, and although Rosenberg’s art practice reflected some of those trends, the 1905 lectures provided no recognition of the more innovative art movements occurring in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\[45\]

\[44\](...continued)


\[45\] VSAD Minutes, 24 September 1904; Rosenberg, "Head Master’s Report for 1904-05," 165-66; "Lectures on Art Subjects," Halifax Recorder, January 1905; "Art Lecture Course in the Art School Building," Halifax Echo, 10 January 1905 (also in Halifax Recorder same day); "Art and Life--Dr. MacMechan Delivers the First of the Art Lecture Course Last Evening," Halifax Recorder, 13 January 1905; "Halifax Actually Seems to Be Awakening to an Interest in Art," Halifax Recorder, 14 January 1905; "Art Treasures in Cathedrals--Lecture by Prof. Stockley at Victoria School of Art and Design Last Evening," Halifax Recorder, 24 January 1905; "Great Italian Masters—Eloquent and Instructive Lecture by Dr.Eliza Ritchie at the School of Art," Halifax Chronicle, 10 February 1905; "Early Italian Painters--Lecture Delivered Last Evening at the Victoria School of Art and Design by Dr. Eliza Ritchie," Halifax Mail, 10 February 1905; (continued...)
MacMechan came closest to discussing the modern era in his lecture on John Ruskin, the well-known British art critic who had been MacMechan's early idol.46

The lectures were a success, achieving good crowds and good press coverage, prompting Archibald to plan more lecture series. The LCW, through the work of Morrow, Brown, Ella Ritchie, and a few others, organized a June 1905 lecture at the Art School on "Encouragement of Art," given by M.E. Dingham from the NCW and the Art Association of Montreal.47 Although nobody suspected it at the time, this was to be the last lecture for quite a while. Archibald and other VSAD directors tried to put together another series for the winter of 1906, but the talks never materialized. Moreover, the annual exhibition that spring was inadequately advertised and consequently poorly attended, resulting in a year of little community contact for the Art School. In 1907 and 1908 Archibald and Ella Ritchie again pushed for another series of public talks. The Board even went so far as to circulate pamphlets and press articles. Among the scheduled lecturers were George Harvey, Eliza Ritchie, and Frederic Sexton, Nova Scotia's Technical Education Director. Even Edith Archibald was prepared to give a talk, entitled "Two Mornings in Venice." But, according to Rosenberg, everybody was just too busy to either give or organize

46(...continued)
"Rev. Father McCarthy," Halifax Mail, 8 April 1905; "Mr. Rosenberg's Lecture on Art," Halifax Mail, 5 May 1905.

46 S. E. D. Shortt, The Search for an Ideal: Six Canadian Intellectuals and Their Convictions in an Age of Transition 1890-1930 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 42, 51.

47 LCW Minutes, 12 May, 13, 26 June 1905.
the talks. In the end, the lectures were never given, and despite plans for more series, the VSAD did not have another course of public lectures until 1920.⁴⁸

Even after these setbacks, Archibald and other LCW women continued their efforts to increase the School's stature in the community. For example, they organized a benefit entertainment in the fall of 1907. The following spring Archibald proposed an Art School "At Home," resulting in a successful reception that brought into the School a number of the city's highborn citizens.⁴⁹ But even with these social events, the overall attitude of the Halifax public toward the Art School was, at best, indifferent.

That indifference increased as the Art School began losing its role in technical education. In 1907 Nova Scotia had enacted laws to expand technical education at secondary and post-secondary levels throughout the province. Up until then, Halifax had looked to the VSAD to provide its arts-related vocational needs, but now they could look elsewhere. For the next few years, both women and men interested in arts-related employment would shift much of their active support away from the Art School toward new or hoped for technical institutions.

An early result of the 1907 legislation was the new Nova Scotia Technical College (NSTC), now the Technical University of Nova Scotia, which opened its doors in 1909. The NSTC's first principal, Frederic Henry Sexton, would remain in that role...
position for the College's first four decades. He also served as the province's first Technical Education Director, having been appointed to that post soon after the 1907 laws had been passed. His wife, May Sexton, was Nova Scotia's most respected proponent of technical education for women. An active LCW member, May Sexton would serve on the VSAD board, becoming a director in 1920. Her husband, too, was an Art School director and, later, president of the VSAD Board. Even though women were not served by her husband's Technical College, May Sexton still saw the 1907 laws as an opportunity to create new avenues for technical education for women.

May Sexton's maiden name was Edna May Best. Originally from Dorchester, New Brunswick, she had moved to Massachusetts, where she did well enough at Boston High School to get accepted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.). At the time, Frederic Sexton was an assistant in metallurgy there at M.I.T. May specialized in chemistry, graduating with high honors in 1902, and receiving a Bachelor of Science. General Electric immediately offered her a research job, which took her to their plant in Schenectady, New York for two years. General Electric also hired Frederic as a research chemist. They married in 1904, and soon after moved to Halifax, where Frederic took up a position in Dalhousie College's three-year-old Mining School. This was just two years before Frederic Sexton's appointment as Technical Education Director.

50 VSAD Annual Report 1921, 202; VSAD Annual Report 1922, 194.
51 VSAD Annual Report 1917, 204, NSCA Annual Report 1926, 188.
52 Biographical information on May Sexton taken from: "Last Tribute to the Late Mrs. F.H. Sexton," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 17 December 1923, 5; "Mrs. F.H. Sexton Passes After (continued...)
As soon as she moved to Halifax, May Sexton became involved with the community, and she stayed very much involved until after the Great War. In addition to the LCW, she was active in the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire and, though not a musician, the Ladies' Musical Club of Halifax. During World War One she toured the province for the Red Cross. Following the 1917 Halifax Explosion, she was vice-chair of a forty-four person medical supply committee. Among all of these activities, though, the issue most central to May Sexton was women's technical education and industrial employment. Armed with her M.I.T. degree, she began researching, writing, lecturing on, and campaigning for the issue. Her credibility was such that she was asked to research and write a chapter on women's industrial work for Canada's 1913 Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education.\footnote{May Sexton, "As to Women's Work in Industries," chap. 7 in Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education. Report of the Commissioners, vol. 4, chair James W. Robertson (Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, 1913), 1746-50. On the Royal Commission, see David Stanley Enns, "Technical Education and Industrial Education in Early Twentieth Century Canada: The Royal Commission of 1910," M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1982.}

end to many of her community activities. In 1923, she suffered a recurrence of a very painful illness, which took her life in December of that year. Nova Scotia's premier, lieutenant governor, and chief justice were among the dignitaries at her funeral, an indication of the Sextons' stature in the province.\textsuperscript{54} The year following his wife's death, Frederic Sexton became president of the VSAD Board.\textsuperscript{55} As we shall see in chapter nine, his efforts in this capacity would rescue the financially strained Art School by having it designated a technical institution, thereby qualifying it for special federal funding.

Even with the Sextons' long term interest in the Art School, the 1907 technical education act had signalled the end of the VSAD's leadership role in educating the province's artisans, apprentices, and other industrial workers. Along with creating the NSTC, the act bolstered Halifax's evening school programs aimed at younger workers, offering courses for both males and females.\textsuperscript{56} Sensing opportunity, women supporters of the VSAD turned their focus toward these schools and other potential forms of technical education. The Art School had been less than successful in its constitutionally mandated efforts "to open up new and remunerative employments for women." Perhaps women could achieve more gains through the province's new technical education initiatives.

The LCW took up the technical education campaign. May Sexton, Minnie Stead, and other members of the LCW press committee began supplying the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[54] "Throngs Present"; "Last Tribute"; "Mrs. F.H. Sexton Passes"; "Obituary," 15 December 1923.
\item[55] \textit{NSCA Annual Report} 1926, 188.
\end{footnotes}
newspapers with articles that pointed out how, except for the few night schools for girls, technical education money was serving only male educational needs. Women too, they argued, needed technical training, regardless of whether they would end up in the trades or as homemakers. Men could acquire vocational skills at technical or mining schools; women had few such opportunities.\(^{57}\)

Just as they had done in the early years of the VSAD, women campaigning for technical education concentrated on the needle industries. Halifax had twenty to twenty-five hundred women workers between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five in industries, with about one thousand of them in needle trades. There were some skilled jobs in the needle industries, such as clothes design and production along with some other aspects of sewing, but without access to training Halifax women had to settle for the unskilled jobs.\(^{58}\) The Art School had never delivered on its promise for needlework courses, and after a few years of searching for a needlework teacher, the women directors had given up on the idea. By 1907, women were more inclined to work toward having new technical schools established, rather than depending on the Art School, as the best option for providing this training. Once again, though, their efforts met with disappointment. It was not until 1911 that their continuing demands resulted in needlework classes being added to a few night school programs in Halifax. The classes were popular, with supply unable to meet demand.

---


\(^{58}\) Sexton, "As to Women’s Work in Industries," 1746, 1748, 1749; Robertson, \textit{Royal Commission on Industrial}, 1719.
women who did get into the classes proved to be conscientious, achieving better than a ninety percent attendance rate. Similar courses were started that year in Amherst, New Glasgow, Sydney, and Yarmouth. Again, response was greater than anticipated. But whereas the Technical College and evening programs provided boys with vocational training, such was usually not the case with the female classes, for which it "was distinctly planned and distinctly announced that these were not trade classes to teach young women to become dressmakers, but only to assist them to make any kind of garment for themselves."  

The emphasis, then, was exclusively on women as homemakers, with no acknowledgement of women as workers. The Sextons did not agree with this non-vocational emphasis of the needlework classes for women. Still, Sexton and other LCW women hesitated to argue against the popular sentiment that said education should fit woman to homemaking. Instead of countering this position, the LCW developed strategies for turning these sentiments to their favor. The trades we wish to teach, they argued, are essentially women's trades. If a women must work, these skills will make her more valuable to her employer. If she goes into her "finest and truest trade," that of homemaker, these skills are even more essential. As Sexton put it, technical education would "make girls self-reliant, capable women, able to support themselves until marriage claims them, and able then to carry on thrifty, economical home-building."  

Again, positions taken in Halifax had their national counterparts,

59 Report of the Board of School Commissioners for Halifax, 1911, 52-53; Robertson, Royal Commission on Industrial Training, 1679.

60 [Sexton], "Industrial Training for Nova Scotia Girls."
with Sexton sounding very much like Adelaide Hoodless, Canada's leader in the
campaign for home economics education.  

Many of Halifax's other clubwomen echoed sentiments similar to Sexton and
Hoodless. They used women's purported affinity to the home to support many of their
campaigns, and not only those related to work, art, or technical education. Such
sentiments buttressed LCW arguments on suffrage, summer playgrounds, domestic
science programs, prison reform, public health issues, and a host of other concerns.
All of these LCW activities centred around education and employment for women,
support for working women and their children, cultural and social advancement for
the city, and political and economic empowerment of women. To link these many
concerns, the women, like Sexton, increasingly began to put forward positions of
maternal and liberal feminism. Understanding those positions allows us to better
understand why the women included art and art education among their campaigns.

61 On Hoodless see: Terry Crowley, "Madonnas Before Magdalenes: Adelaide Hoodless and
the Making of the Canadian Gibson Girl," Canadian Historical Review 67, no. 4 (December
1986): 520-47; Cheryl MacDonald, Adelaide Hoodless: Domestic Crusader (Toronto: Dundurn
Press, 1986); Nancy M. Sheehan, "National Issues and Curricula Issues: Women and Education
Reform, 1900-1930," in Women and Education: A Canadian Perspective, eds. Jane S. Gaskell,
and Arlene Tigar McLaren (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1987), 223-40; Robert M. Stamp,
"Adelaide Hoodless, Champion of Women's Rights," chap. 11 in Profile of Canadian Educators,
eds. Robert S. Patterson, John W. Chalmers, and John W. Friesen (Toronto: Heath, 1974),
213-32. For an example of how similar ideas affected rural Canada through Women's Institutes,
which Hoodless founded, see: Carol J. Dennison, "Housekeepers of the Community: The British
Columbia Women's Institutes, 1909-46," in Knowledge for the People: The Struggle for Adult
Learning in English-speaking Canada, 1828-1973, ed. Michael R. Welton (Toronto: OISE Press,
1987), 52-72. Hoodless was in Halifax for the 1897 NCW meeting: "The Art Conference,"
Halifax Herald, 19 June 1897, 13.

62 To take playgrounds as just one example, see: ["Miss Brown], "Supervised Play Grounds:
Funds Needed to Provide Pleasures for Poorer Children," Halifax Recorder, 30 May 1908; [Alice
Houston], "Duty of Public to the Children—The Relation of Supervised Playgrounds to a
Reduction in the Number of Juvenile Delinquents. Enlightened Opinion," Halifax Mail, 22 June
1912; [Mary Macnab] "What the Tag Stands for," Halifax Echo, 22 June 1912; [May Sexton], "A
Plea from Summer Playgrounds," Halifax Daily Echo, 30 May 1908; Local Council of Women
of Halifax, For the Children's Playgrounds, ca. 1914 Leaflet in LCW Scrapbook 1908-1917.
As guardians of both children and morality, the women said, they had both a proclivity and a responsibility to tend to civic affairs. They needed to be municipal housekeepers because their homes did not end at the front door. As May Sexton asked, "How can that same women feel that she is really being a good housekeeper and safe-guarding the health of her family if she fails to concern herself about the dust before it enters her house?" Sexton could provoke with headlines such as "Women Awake!" She could persuade with her well documented government report on women and work. She could reason with professed dispassionate analysis of both sides of the suffrage debate, leaving little question that the side supporting the vote for women was the correct one. And she defended all of this by extending women's "ancient and time-honoured duty of homemaking."

One of the LCW's clearest statements of maternal feminism came from Ella Maude Murray. An outspoken suffragist, Murray sat with Sexton on the progressive side of the LCW political spectrum. Always willing to tackle big questions, Murray's priorities centred around economics, labor, and consumer rights. Her work to nourish the vocational potential of the Halifax Art School would earn her an honorary

---

63 [May Sexton], "How Far Does Housekeeping Go?" Halifax Mail, 3 April 1915.


65 Sexton, "As to Women's Work in Industries."


67 [Sexton], "How Far Does Housekeeping Go?"
diploma from the school in 1935. Murray's succinct description of maternal feminism came in an article on women's proper relationship to the state. Women active in public deeds, she asserted, "have not trespassed upon 'man's sphere' nor indeed stepped out of 'women's sphere,' which is bounded by that word 'Home.' They have extended the significance of that word beyond the average conception of it, but they have not gone beyond what it should properly connote."

Home, Murray explained, is wherever children grow up, wherever family members must spend their day. This is not confined to four walls. It includes places where children play, learn, or are entertained. It includes places that produce food families eat, or pass laws they must follow, or set conditions under which they must work. All are extensions of the home, and so all are within women's proper sphere. In Murray's view, this meant no real change from the past. Education, work, and play had recently all been under mother's charge within the domain of the family dwelling. Now these were being handled on a wider, more co-operative scale. But this did not curtail the home, it extended it. So, summed up Murray, "in none of the efforts to discharge their responsibilities towards the State, have the women of Nova Scotia stepped out of their proper sphere."

There was an irony in the LCW's maternal feminism: even when equality was the stated end, emphasising differences was an acceptable means. A woman should have the same rights as a man because she was different. She cared more, nurtured

---

68 NSCA Annual Report 1936, 133.


70 Murray, "What Women Are Doing."
better, and acted with a greater moral purpose. Perhaps the clubwomen strongly believed this argument, or maybe they simply used it as a tactic, turning popular ranting against their public participation on its head. Either way, Nova Scotia's clubwomen effectively employed maternal feminism to achieve their ends.

These ends included art and art education. First there was the potential for arts-related jobs; but that was not all. At its best, said the clubwomen, fine art elevated tastes, refined morals, and moulded a proper cultural life. It obviated intemperance, it thwarted impurity. While seekers of profit promoted ale houses and unsavory picture shows, seekers of moral good promoted gentility and gallery exhibitions. And women, it was often said, were by their nature seekers of moral good.

Thus, the 1907 technical education laws did not pull women completely away from their support of the Halifax Art School. Art still had its moral and cultural function within the community. Neither did women completely give up on the Art School's potential to generate women's employment. They turned away from the VSAD temporarily, but they were to return. In fact, one result of the 1907 technical education legislation was that Halifax's women organizations connected art with employment long after many other people had stopped doing so. The opening of the NSTC had stripped the VSAD of its role in training male artisans, leaving the Art School's usefulness to the male worker no longer widely touted. Halifax women, on the other hand, gained no similar alternatives to arts-related vocational training. Art and craft, however, still fit well into the women's campaigns for female economic advancement. Thus, although the LCW paid less attention to the Art School in the years immediately following the 1907 act, they eventually turned their sights back to
the VSAD. The Great War brought a lull in most LCW education-related activities for a few years, but right after the war the LCW would resume its advocacy of art school education for careers in craft, design, and fine and applied art.\textsuperscript{71}

\footnote{\textit{For an overview of LCW activity during the war, see: Forbes, "Battles." See also "Local Council of Women Held Annual Meeting," \textit{Halifax Mail}, 12 May 1916.}}
CHAPTER SEVEN

Lost Opportunity, Loss of Purpose: The VSAD and
Nova Scotia’s Expansion of Technical Education, 1907-1919

From the beginning, supporters of the Victoria School of Art and Design always had one persuasive argument. The community should support the Art School, they said, because it offered practical education for workers, which in turn provided valued skills for industry. This argument never made the Art School rich, but it was enough to keep the school alive. Starting in 1907, however, the argument began carrying a lot less weight. That year the province passed its technical education act, which eventually helped strip the VSAD of its leadership role in industrial arts.¹ The act resulted in the creation of secondary technical programs throughout the province and the Nova Scotia Technical College (NSTC) in Halifax, which opened its doors in 1909. Male artisans, looking for courses in mechanical or architectural drawing, now turned from the Art School to the new technical schools.² This chapter will examine the effect the 1907 laws had on the Art School. We will see how, from 1907 until the end of the Great War, the VSAD adjusted to its new status as primarily a fine arts school, no longer with an industrial arts emphasis. Up until 1907, the VSAD’s fine

¹ Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia, vol. 1 (Halifax: King’s Printer, 1923), 522.

arts program did not come close to matching its industrial program’s ability to serve employment needs. Now it had to.

It is ironic that the Art School’s diminished role in industrial education paralleled the province’s increased commitment to technical studies. Here was the VSAD’s chance to earn renewed community support for its industrial programs, and it missed it. Instead of vying for its share of the new technical education funding, the Art School took a few half-hearted steps in that direction and then abandoned the race, leaving other institutions to take the lead. It began in 1902, when the Nova Scotia Mining Society, a lobbying body for the mining industry, asked the provincial government to form a department of technical education. When the government failed to do so, Dalhousie University responded by establishing a Mining School, which opened in May 1903. To provide the new program, Dalhousie hired professors, such as Frederic Sexton, to teach engineering, geology, mining, and metallurgy.\(^3\) The Art School, still on the right track, wisely saw it better to cooperate with the more powerful Dalhousie rather than compete with it. So in March 1903, Alexander McKay arranged for the VSAD to provide a course in mechanical drawing for Mining School students.\(^4\)

The Art School did little to follow up on this positive start. Over the next few years, while the Mining Society continued to lobby for increased technical education,

---


\(^4\) Victoria School of Art and Design, *Minutes Book, May 5, 1887 to May 6, 1894*, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 1, (P.A.N.S.), 3 March 1903 (hereinafter referred to as VSAD Minutes); *VSAD Annual Report 1903*, 173.
the VSAD did nothing. Strengthening its efforts in the spring of 1906, the Mining Society banded together with the Halifax Board of Trade and the province's five college's, Acadia, Dalhousie, King's, Saint Mary's, and St. Francis Xavier. Through it all, the Art School showed little interest. Its principal, Henry Rosenberg, a fine artist like all of his predecessors, paid scant attention to anything besides sketching, etching, and painting. VSAD's directors paid attention to even less. For two years, from September 1904 to September 1906, during the height of the technical education lobbying efforts, the VSAD's Board never met. During the year the technical education act was passed, 1907, the Board managed to convene three times. However, it was only at the last of these meetings, in September, that they decided it would be wise to investigate what the recently legislated Technical College and secondary technical programs meant for the Art School. They did little to act on that investigation, meeting only once in 1908 and not at all in 1909.

While VSAD directors showed little initiative in capitalizing on technical education funds, Frederic Sexton did. Appointed Technical Education Director for the province and principal of NSTC, Sexton needed to organize various courses, including mechanical and architectural drawing. Realizing such programs were already in place at the Art School, Sexton arranged for them to be part of a new evening technical school program. Geoffrey Marshall, who had taught the programs

---


6 Victoria School of Art and Design, Minutes Book, August 31, 1894 to June 10, 1914, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 2, (P.A.N.S.), 24 September 1904, 14 September 1906, 4 February, 20 May, 7 September 1907, 11 March, 10 November 1908, (hereinafter referred to as VSAD Minutes).
at the VSAD for the past year, was more than happy to have Sexton's support. After all, his own principal, Rosenberg, never saw the industrial programs as a priority. But Sexton did, so much so that, although these programs changed neither classrooms nor instructors, they changed their official status. While Marshall continued to teach the courses, and the Art School building continued to house them, the VSAD ceased receiving credit for them. During the 1908-1909 school year, a year in which the VSAD Board met only once, the mechanical and architectural programs were officially placed under Sexton and the Nova Scotia Technical College.7

The VSAD's loss of the industrial programs signalled an end for one of the Art School's main purposes. Throughout the VSAD's first two decades, the school had drawn parallels with the art education offerings of other countries. VSAD supporters warned Nova Scotians that they would lose their industrial advantage if they did not support their school of art and design. By pointing to the VSAD's mechanical and architectural programs, the supporters could boast that the school successfully met a primary goal of technical education. These programs, they said, supplied intelligent workers to the various trades, and they educated the young away from the overcrowded professions.8 This training helped keep Nova Scotia's industrial advancement apace with the rest of the world. The trick now, VSAD supporters


8 For example, see Alexander McKay, letter to "His Worship the Mayor and Alderman of Halifax," 27 December 1895, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.); VSAD Annual Report 1895, 119; VSAD Annual Report 1901, 202-203; VSAD Annual Report 1908, 225-26.
realized, was to show that a strictly fine arts program could also achieve community needs.

Fortunately, Alexander McKay and a few VSAD directors had consistently noted how the fine arts program, too, had its utilitarian side. For one thing, it raised the standard of public taste, providing industry with intelligent consumers. V9 VSAD supporters could also point to job opportunities which the fine arts program created, though these in no way matched opportunities arising from either the mechanical or architectural courses. The VSAD's programs in ceramics, for example, provided some chances for employment, though not many. In the 1890-91 census, only twenty Nova Scotians had a main occupation linked to pottery. All but three of these were male, and as many as eleven of the twenty may have been merchants of the crafts, not producers.10 Furthermore, although from 1888 on the Art School had provided classes in clay, these classes were generally in sculptural modelling, not in the more employable craft skill of pottery.11 VSAD principals did their best to expand the clay offerings, but severe space and financial limitations prevented them from doing so. They did manage to offer china painting for a few years, but it attracted the middle and upper classes, and retained more the flavor of a leisure female pastime rather than a practical occupation. In the long run, neither china painting nor pottery would have a significant impact on arts trades in Nova Scotia, especially not

---

9 For example, see Alexander McKay, letter to F.W.W. Doane (City Engineer), 7 June 1897, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.).

10 Occupations, vol. 2 of Census of Canada 1890-91 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1893).

11 VSAD Minutes, 31 August 1888.
for women. In 1911, only forty-eight people in the province worked as "pottery, glass and china makers," all but one of them male.¹²

Although other jobs in fine arts had been few during the VSAD’s first two decades, they were not insignificant. The 1890-91 census, for example, had recorded sixty-seven Nova Scotians as artists or art teachers, the majority of whom were women.¹³ Adding to these numbers was an increase of art teachers who found jobs in small private art schools, many of which had sprung up after the VSAD began graduating its first fine arts students. But this particular job creation role of the VSAD was a mixed blessing. On the plus side, the VSAD could claim these schools as evidence for its success in stimulating employment. On the minus side, these private classes cut into the VSAD’s income. The VSAD had created its own competition. Now the potential fee payers in the Art School’s day time programs had other options. Still, the Art School’s directors had put everything in the best light. Alexander McKay described how these "excellent private institutions" had "somewhat limited the sphere of the Art School." However, this was only in the area of art "as a social accomplishment." This left it largely up to the Art School to serve "those classes of students that value art as an instrument of culture or of industrial utility—those classes that exercise the most direct effect upon the development of the country."¹⁴ A problem with the 1907 laws was that people would now go to the

¹² Occupations of the People, vol. 6 of Fifth Census of Canada, 1911 (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1915).

¹³ Census of Canada 1890-91, vol. 2.

¹⁴ VSAD Annual Report 1890, 146.
new industrial and technical schools, not to the VSAD, if they valued art for its industrial utility, or so it seemed.

McKay had ideas on how the Art School should adapt to the new situation. The school would now have to focus almost exclusively on the fine arts, with architecture and industrial design being left, for the most part, to the Technical College. On those points McKay and Henry Rosenberg, who was still VSAD principal, agreed. Rosenberg’s interest had always been the fine arts anyway. McKay, however, had in mind a different fine arts curriculum than the one Rosenberg had been offering. Overall, Rosenberg’s program would meet the vocational needs of the professional fine artist, but not necessarily those of the artist-designer or craftworker, which is what McKay hoped for. While McKay saw merit in Rosenberg’s teaching, he wanted to increase the program’s emphasis on applied design. McKay believed that the Art School would be promoting good taste by having students design book covers, advertisements, furniture, interiors, and other things associated with home and small industry.15

McKay, it must be remembered, was essentially a public school educationist. It is no surprise, then, that his ideas reflected current thinking in public school art. Notions similar to his could be found in new art education text books being published at that time by companies such as Prang in Boston.16 Applied design was also a

15 See McKay’s annual “Report of the Secretary” in the following VSAD Annual Reports: 1908, 225-26; 1909 242-43; 1911, 174-75; 1913, 157-58; 1914, 185-86. See also statement on the VSAD in Robertson, Royal Commission on Industrial Training, 1656.

16 See chapters on “Design,” “Construction,” “Industrial Construction,” and “Training of Aesthetic Judgement” in Prang text books such as: John S.Clark, Mary Dana Hicks, and Walter S. Perry, Teacher’s Manual for the Prang Elementary Course in Art Instruction (Boston: The Prang Educational Company, 1898 [with different versions published in subsequent years]); Hugo B. (continued...)
dominant theme in art education periodicals such as The School Arts Book, which began publishing in Massachusetts in 1901. Applied design played a lesser role in Nova Scotia's public schools. Although design was found in the new manual training programs, the province's art curriculum was generally still limited to drawing. More design would be introduced into the schools in 1914, with Nova Scotia agreeing to an exclusive five year adoption of a Prang series of texts which, though emphasizing drawing, included various sections on design. Following the province's adoption of its texts, Prang began publishing the series in Halifax, and in 1915-1916 almost six thousand copies of the books, covering both primary and secondary levels, were sold to schools in Nova Scotia. Despite these sales, it is

---

16(...continued)
Froehlich and Bonnie E. Snow, Text Books of Art Education (Boston: The Prang Educational Company, 1904). As we will see in the next chapter, the work in England by John Ruskin, William Morris, Walter Crane, and others in the arts and crafts movement did much to popularize applied design in art education.

17 See, for example, the regular columns in School Arts such as "Annotated Outlines" (by 1910 called "Annotated Lessons") and "The Workshop," which appeared during the magazine's first decade. See also articles such as: Mary B. Jones, "Applied Design as Vital in the Child's Life," The School Arts Book, (October 1904): 75-77; Henry Turner Bailey, "Design in Primary Grades," The School Arts Book, (June 1906): 721-26.

18 Manual of the Educational Statutes and Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction of Nova Scotia (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1895), see references to manual training and drawing, e.g., xlvii, li-lix, lxiv-lxvi, lxxiii; Manual of the Public Instruction Act Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction of Nova Scotia (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1900), e.g. 84, 85, 88, 93, 114 ff.; Manual of the Public Instruction Acts and Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction of Nova Scotia (Halifax: Kings's Printer, 1911); for drawing see 147, 177, 198, and 244; for manual training see 134 ff.

likely that few teachers actually implemented much of the program's design component. Instead, teachers, most of whom had little art or design training, used the texts for their drawing exercises, which allowed some students to work busily on their own while the teacher focused on other things. After the Prang program's initial year, the province's educational literature did not say much about the design aspects of art education, and the public school art course continued to be officially called "Writing and Drawing," which it had been called since art's inception in Nova Scotian schools in 1851. Although McKay had hoped that the Art School would increase design education in the schools, it never did during his tenure as VSAD Secretary.

McKay could suggest changes to the VSAD curriculum, but there was little enforcement behind his or any Board member's directives. The 1907 laws coincided with the VSAD Board's near abandonment of the Art School. The directors rarely met, and they accomplished little when they did. Rosenberg was left with pretty much full reign to determine how the VSAD program should respond to the new needs. Eventually complying with McKay's wishes, the principal did offer a design

20 This interpretation was given consistently by interviewees who had been Nova Scotia public school students, Normal School students, and then teachers between the mid-1910s to the 1930s. Interviews were conducted in June 1985 unless otherwise indicated. Interviewees include: Helen Beals (May 1985), Adie Crosby, Evelyn Crosby, Louis Gower, Maxine Hatfield, Delta Hooper, Evelyn Moore, Viva Morehouse, Francela Nagle, Jane Peck, Margaret Sewell (3, 10, 14 August 1982), Fran Snow, Florie Tibert, and Helen Walsh. Tapes and notes from interviews in possession of author. Interpretations are also derived from drawing texts and art ed texts actually used in the province's classrooms, a collection of which are in the possession of the author.

21 "Writing and Drawing" is listed in the Manuals of Public Instruction of 1895 (lvi ff.), 1900 (116 ff.), 1911 (202 ff.) and 1921 (166 ff.), and also in the 1914 Monograph (7). The high school course in 1895 was "Drawing and Book-keeping" (lvii ff.). "Writing and Drawing" first appeared as a course in the province in John William Dawson, Report of the Schools of Nova Scotia, for the Year 1850 (Halifax: Richard Nugent, 1851), 55-56.
class in 1908-1909. Unfortunately, the class was deficient in both enrolment and the principal’s commitment. Rosenberg expressed his intention to strengthen the VSAD’s design offerings, but, as it turned out, he was soon to retire.²²

The job of VSAD principal had never been easy, and the lost status brought on by the 1907 laws did not make it any easier. Public support for the institution, never all that high after the first few years, was not about to get higher. The School’s art collection, which had been started after acquiring the building in 1903, received very few donations from the public. Enrolment, negatively affected by the 1907 opening of evening technical schools, had already begun to decline even before then. In 1906-1907 the VSAD had attracted only eighty-one students, an all-time low. The $176 generated in fees that year was the lowest in the Art School’s twenty year history. Along with inadequate income, insufficient enrolment, indifferent community, and an increasingly uncaring Board, the principal had to contend with an undependable government commitment and an uncertain future.²³

Even before the 1907 laws, funds at the VSAD were so precarious that Rosenberg and the other VSAD teachers had been put on six month appointments instead of yearly ones.²⁴ Rosenberg’s one thousand dollar annual salary certainly had been a wage he could live with, but in 1909 it suddenly became a wage he could live without. At the end of the fall term that year Rosenberg married Emily


²³ VSAD Annual Report 1907, 182-83.

²⁴ VSAD Minutes, 14 September 1906.
Scarfe, the only daughter of the mayor of Dartmouth.Emily’s uncle George had died in Australia a few years earlier, leaving a five million dollar estate to be split between her father and his three siblings. Consequently, Rosenberg was able to spend the rest of his life making art, travelling, and going fishing.

In January 1910 Rosenberg returned from his Ontario honeymoon and resigned as VSAD principal. The Board, managing to achieve quorum for the first time since 1907, met to accept the resignation and to reorganize themselves. A.H. MacKay was appointed Board president and Ella Ritchie vice-president, while Rosenberg agreed to stay on as a director. Other new directors were Margaret Brown, Mrs. S.R. Cossey, G.E. Faulkner, R.M. Hattie, Andrew Cobb, and James Falconer. The hope was that this new blood on the Board would revitalize the institution. It did, but only for a short time.

The Board’s first task was to find a principal, or rather to ensure that they could pay a principal. The provincial government grant had not arrived and, as was often the case, its status was in doubt. In February, Roy, Faulkner, and McKay paid a visit to the inveterate provincial premier, George Henry Murray. They persuaded him that the Art School was still a practical institution worthy of government support. Soon after the visit, the traditional eight hundred dollar provincial grant arrived.

Now, with a little money in the bank but income still precarious at best, they devised a scheme in which the principal’s pay would in part depend on the school’s income.


26 Information on the inheritance is from Garry D. Shutlak, archivist, P.A.N.S., August 1986, August 1996.

27 VSAD Minutes, 12, 18 January 1910.
After a bit of negotiation, the Board got Lewis Smith to accept the principal position for five hundred dollars, eighty-five percent of the fees from his classes, ten percent of the fees from all special classes taught by other teachers, and a studio with northern exposure in the Art School building.\textsuperscript{28}

Lewis Edward Smith is the only native Nova Scotian ever to head the Art School. He was born in Halifax in 1871, the youngest son of Benjamin A. Smith, a local dry goods merchant. A hunting accident early in life had left Smith with an artificial leg, curtailing his ability to pursue some activities but affording him ample time to pursue art. Through this pursuit he was able to bring a wide range of experience to the VSAD job.\textsuperscript{29} This varied experience, the Board hoped, was just what the VSAD program needed to meet its post-1907 priority: training fine arts professionals for viable careers.

Smith, in fact, was a living example of the viability of such careers. His Art School studies with George Harvey had immediately secured Smith his first fine arts position in 1893, as head of the Ladies' College art department.\textsuperscript{30} In 1894 Smith became president of a newly formed Halifax sketch club, thereby beginning a long involvement in community arts organizations.\textsuperscript{31} About one year later he left for Toronto, where he worked for the commercial art firm of Rapid Grip and Batten

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{VSAD Minutes}, 18 January, 10, 14 February 1910.


\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Halifax Herald}, 29 January 1894, 3.
Company. Known as "the Grip," the company would later employ various members of Canada's Group of Seven, including future VSAD principal Arthur Lismer. While at the Grip, Smith achieved some success in commercial design, though not enough to keep him rooted in Toronto, which he left in 1896.\(^3\) Heading south to New York, he spent time with the Art Students League there.\(^3\) While in New York he also studied under William Meritt Chase and H. Siddons Mowbray, two painters who had provided references for one of Smith's predecessors, Charles Waterbury.\(^4\) After a short stay back in Halifax in 1898, Smith boarded a ship for what was to become one of his favorite cities, London.\(^5\) While in England he again continued his studies and worked as an illustrator.\(^5\)

Along with his work in commercial design, Smith nurtured an artistic interest in landscape and, to a lesser extent, figure painting. His principal media were watercolor and etching. One of his favorite subjects was the seacoast of Nova Scotia, especially around Petite Riviere, a small fishing village about seventy miles west of Halifax at the mouth of the LeHave River, where he and his sister Edith often went to sketch. Rosenberg, who had been one of Lewis Smith's instructors in etching,

\(^3\) *Halifax Herald*, 11 August 1896, 6.

\(^3\) "Opportunity Here for Connoisseurs," *Halifax Mail*, 28 September 1926.


\(^5\) *Halifax Herald*, 13 May 1898, 16.

occasionally accompanied the Smiths on these Petite Riviere sojourns. Of Lewis Smith's work, F.W. Coburn, an art critic for the Boston Sunday Herald, wrote:

> Small water colors by Lewis Edward Smith present the art of quick, spontaneous expression in pure washes of tone and tint. Nothing could be more usual, less spectacular, than this man's mode; yet his individuality, his refinement of Nature, and niceness of observation is everywhere apparent. He has taken the straight manipulation of aquarelle as it is taught in a hundred art schools, and has made it a very personal vehicle of expression.\(^{37}\)

If Smith could achieve such professional acclaim from the non-industrial programs of the Art School, so too could others. As principal, his job was to customize the VSAD fine arts offerings to ensure that others did. He would be only partly successful. His vision for the Art School would clearly distinguish its role from that of the new technical institutions, but the fine arts program he advocated did not generate enough demand to sustain itself.

In working toward his vision, Smith displayed great innovation and initiative. He took over the job on February 15, 1910 and was able to see some success right away during his first term. Of course, barring a closure of the School, things were bound to improve. By May, Smith could report that enrolment had doubled, which sounded much better than reporting an increase from fourteen students to twenty-eight, which were the actual figures. More importantly, Smith was giving the Art School new direction, with an emphasis on the fine art professional and away from industrial design. In the morning he conducted a life class and in the afternoon Marion "Minnie" Graham, now in her seventeenth year teaching at the Art School, offered an elementary course, frequented mainly by scholarship students from the

\(^{37}\) Quoted in "Opportunity Here." For other descriptions of Smith's work, see: "Paintings by Late Lewis E. Smith," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 5 October 1926; "Lewis Smith's Pictures," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 6 October 1926.
public schools. New courses were already being planned for the next year, with the hope that Kate Hill would reinstate her modelling class, and Smith would start a wood carving course. He was also considering courses in graphic illustration, crafts, repousse, and metal work.\textsuperscript{38}

The Art School even found a new toehold in technical education. One of the new VSAD directors, Andrew Cobb, was a practising architect. In the evenings, he began offering VSAD classes that focused on fine arts-related aspects of architecture, such as free hand rendering, design, and composition. Cobb generated enough interest for his course that he ended up offering it off and on for the next three decades. Also in the evening, Smith was able to attract a few students to a fine arts course aimed at artisans. The NSTC was still using the VSAD rooms for its architectural and mechanical drawing programs, which not only brought technical education students in contact with the VSAD, but it also ensured that the government had an interest in keeping the VSAD building functioning as a school.\textsuperscript{39}

Things seemed to be going well. So well, in fact, that Smith, after only two months on the job, confidently requested an advance in pay and a leave of absence. He wanted to go to London and Paris to study both art and art schools. In order to arrive in England while the art schools were still in session, he hoped to leave Halifax

\textsuperscript{38} VSAD Annual Report 1910, 224; Lewis Smith, letter to the directors of the VSAD, 5 April 1910, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 12, (P.A.N.S.).

\textsuperscript{39} VSAD Annual Report 1910, 224; Victoria School of Art and Design, flyer on fees and programs, 1911-12, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 2, (P.A.N.S.); Cobb is mentioned as still teaching the course in "Nova Scotia College of Art," in Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended July 31, 1925, A.H. MacKay (Halifax: King's Printer, 1925), 188. Also on Cobb, see VSAD Annual Report 1922, 197.
before the end of the school year. He would pay Graham to take over his day classes until the end of the term, and his sister Edith would fill in for him in the evening. The directors liked the direction Smith was taking the School, and they approved his request. Smith left for England on May 13, 1910 and kept himself productively occupied until he sailed back into Halifax on September 16th.

Smith's undertakings in London demonstrated his optimism for the VSAD's future. Within a week of his return to Halifax, he approached the Board with a proposal to affiliate the VSAD with the St. John's Wood School of Art in London. Seeing potential in the proposal, Rosenberg successfully moved to have it accepted. The affiliation would allow VSAD students to follow a course that was prerequisite for entry into Britain's Royal Academy Schools. Although Smith's art was not a suitably academic role model for students aspiring to the British scholarships, his varied art studies gave him enough background to conduct an academic program.

After having relinquished its role in industrial education to the NSTC, the Art School would now have renewed purpose. True, the level of academic rigour demanded by St. John's Wood had never been known at the VSAD. Nevertheless, there were a few serious students, and for them the international connection might

---

40 VSAD Annual Report 1910, 223-24; Smith, letter to directors of the VSAD, 5 April 1910.

41 VSAD Minutes, 12 April 1910.


43 VSAD Minutes, 23 September 1910.

44 Victoria School of Art and Design, flyer on fees and programs, 1912-13, (Halifax) MG 17 vol. 43 no. 2, (P.A.N.S.); VSAD flyer on fees and programs, 1911-12.
provide motivation and opportunity. The connection would also allow the Art School to broaden its outlook. There was no reason why the School could not undergo such broadening—except that to do so required three conditions: strong-willed people with a plan; managerial and financial support for those people; and, a long-term, unrelenting commitment to carry through with that plan. All three conditions had not existed simultaneously at the Art School since 1887, and they would not exist again until after the Great War.

Smith's scheme for the St. John's Wood affiliation was a worthy gamble. Had it worked, the Art School would have successfully met the new priorities forced onto it by the 1907 laws. In the end, though, neither the VSAD students nor the new program forged a path into Britain's Royal Academy Schools. There was no great demand in Halifax for such entry, and neither Smith—who did not remain long as principal—nor his successor—who did not remain long interested in St. John's Wood—created that demand. Consequently, the VSAD-St. John's Wood affiliation did not survive much beyond the tenure of the principal who initiated it.

Some of Smith's other ideas were less ambitious and would prove more successful. He vitalized the life and sketch classes by having models pose in costumes that he had brought back from England.\(^{45}\) By including work in crafts, he also increased the number of courses available. In addition, he organized a series of talks on drawing for local public school teachers. A few years earlier, while in Boston, Smith had studied with Denman Ross, author of design chapters in many Prang public school art texts. Perhaps Smith introduced some of these ideas to the

\(^{45}\) VSAD Minutes, 23 September 1910; VSAD flyer on fees and programs, 1911-12, 1912-13.
Halifax teachers. Regardless, organizing the teachers’ class further endeared the principal to McKay, who was also pleased that Smith had increased the level of advertising and the number of scholarships to high school and academy students, which helped to double the enrolment. By the end of the 1910-1911 academic year, Smith and Graham had forty-eight students, thirty during the day and eighteen during the evening.46

The Art School’s situation seemed to be stabilizing. Once again, the VSAD directors used the NSTC’s presence in its building as leverage to get the city to renew its five hundred dollar grant in the 1911-1912 year.47 More income was generated from the slight increase in enrolment. There were other positive signs. The student work entered in the Provincial Exhibition was well received.48 In February 1912 Smith was invited to exhibit by both the Ontario Society of Artists and the Montreal Art Association.49 In April the Halifax Board of School Commissioners appointed Isabel Brodie, head of art for the city’s schools, as their representative on the VSAD Board, furthering the ties between the Art School and the public schools.50 The VSAD, while still lacking substantial community support,

---

46 VSAD Annual Report 1911, 175-76. Smith’s study with Ross is noted in Laurette, A Centennial Salute, 12. See Ross’s chapters on design in Froehlich and Snow, Text Books of Art Education, and other Prang texts.

47 VSAD Minutes, 20 October 1911.

48 VSAD Annual Report 1911, 176.

49 See 23 February 1912 clipping in Edith Smith, comp., Edith Smith’s Scrapbook, 1935-41 MG 9 vol. 1 no. 200 (P.A.N.S.).

did appear to have a future, and the directors were cautiously optimistic. They even considered moving to a better building, since the Freemasons offered to buy the old one.\textsuperscript{51} The directors instead decided to stay put and spend $550 to reshingle the building and to install double windows in order to impede the cold winter winds coming up the hill from the harbour.\textsuperscript{52}

The optimism was tempered when, at the end of the 1911-1912 school year, Smith handed in his resignation, having accepted a position in London, England.\textsuperscript{53} The Art School directors, although disheartened, gave their departing employee their best wishes and a one hundred dollar bonus.\textsuperscript{54} For the next few years, Lewis and his wife Annie Smith called London home. Just before the height of the war, they returned to Halifax, where Lewis became the secretary of the Nova Scotia Museum of Fine Arts. When the war ended, he was hired to teach art at Acadia University in Wolfville, a position he kept for ten years. In June 1929 Lewis Smith caught a cold that developed into pleurisy. Confined to his room for the summer, Smith died in mid-September.\textsuperscript{55}

In replacing Lewis Smith, the VSAD directors once again looked outside the province. With little debate the Board decided on George Chavignaud, a French

\textsuperscript{51} VSAD Minutes, 16 January, 13 April 1912.

\textsuperscript{52} VSAD Minutes, 6 August, 6 November 1912; VSAD Annual Report 1911, 175; VSAD Annual Report 1912, 210.

\textsuperscript{53} Lewis Smith, letter to the A.H. MacKay, 25 May 1912, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 3 (P.A.N.S.); VSAD Annual Report 1912, 210; Daily Echo, 18 May 1912, 11.

\textsuperscript{54} VSAD Minutes, 27 May 1912.

watercolorist who had studied in Belgium. Chavignaud had emigrated to New York at about age seventeen, and two years later, in 1884, he had moved to Toronto. Once in Canada he became art director for an Ontario publishing firm. He also painted, working mostly in watercolor but also, occasionally, in oils. Returning to Belgium in the 1890s, he maintained a studio in Antwerp between 1894 and 1901, during which time he continued to exhibit in Canada. By the end of the nineteenth century he had become a member of the Ontario Society of Artists, and his work was exhibited by the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. He was a member of the Society of Watercolor Painters of Belgium and claims to have had his work praised by that country’s monarch, King Leopold. He returned to Ontario in 1908.\textsuperscript{56}

Although the VSAD directors did not know Chavignaud before offering him the principal’s job, they were impressed by one of his references, George Reid, principal of the Ontario College of Art and former president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. Ella Ritchie read Reid’s letter to the Board, and the successful motion to hire Chavignaud followed immediately. The new principal started his job in August 1912, receiving the same wage that Smith had negotiated two years earlier, minus the personal studio in the Art School.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{57} VSAD Minutes, 27 May 1912; VSAD Annual Report 1912, 210. Also on Chavignaud’s wages see: VSAD Minutes, 12 June 1913, 10 June 1914; George Chavignaud, letter to Alexander McKay, 23 January 1914, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 3, (P.A.N.S.).
Unlike Smith, Chavignaud did not display any vision for program innovation. Except for letting the St. John's Wood affiliation slip, the new principal maintained essentially the same program that Smith had established. In the morning Chavignaud taught the advanced classes in life drawing and watercolor painting, with some work in oils. The Halifax winter weather was not conducive to Chavignaud's forte, painting landscapes in the out-of-doors, leaving his painting students to work mostly from ornament or still life. In the afternoons Graham worked with the elementary classes, concentrating on drawing, perspective, and simple wash. The Art School also continued its twice-weekly evening fine arts program, aimed at people whose jobs did not allow them to attend during the day. Advanced painting courses in both the day and night programs worked from live models. In addition to his morning and evening teaching duties, Chavignaud conducted VSAD classes at the Halifax Ladies' College.

Before Chavignaud, this traditional fine arts program had not been enough to make the Art School competitive in the new market brought on by the technical schools, and it certainly was not enough now. The Art School's fortunes sank deeper, and by his second year as principal Chavignaud found himself to be a one person faculty. The spring of 1913 was Marion Graham's last term. She had served the school with little pay for 21 years, the longest tenure of any faculty member in the VSAD's first half century. At the end of her long service, the Board dismissed

---


59 "Re-opening of the Art School."
Graham with little ceremony and no official acknowledgement of her contribution to the School.\textsuperscript{60} She died in Halifax in 1947.\textsuperscript{61}

Chavignaud took over Graham’s afternoon elementary class, but the Board did not have the money to fully compensate him for the extra work. He therefore cut back his workload in another area. In the fall of 1914 he discontinued the evening fine arts classes, thereby putting an end to one of the School’s principal original missions: to train working people for arts-related jobs.\textsuperscript{62} Now the only vestiges of this original mandate were Cobb’s intermittent architectural classes and the Technical College classes that continued to meet in the VSAD rooms.\textsuperscript{63} Instead of renewing its purpose, the Art School was finding itself with less and less of one. Although the Art School’s annual reports continued to put up a brave front, the truth, in the words of Harry Piers, Curator of the Provincial Museum of Nova Scotia and VSAD graduate, was that the school, by 1914, had "a bare existence," was housed in a "barn-like building," and generated little interest among the general public.\textsuperscript{64}

The Art School did try to gain public interest through exhibitions, but success was limited. In addition to the regular end of the year shows, the VSAD began

\textsuperscript{60} VSAD Minutes, 12 June 1913.


\textsuperscript{62} VSAD Annual Report 1915.

\textsuperscript{63} VSAD Annual Report 1914, 183-84.

\textsuperscript{64} Harry Piers, "Artists in Nova Scotia," Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society 18 (1914): 159.
lending its rooms for other exhibitions.\textsuperscript{65} Except for the Local Council of Women's Art Department at the Provincial Exhibition, the Art School rooms were one of the very few places to show art work in the city. In fact, Halifax would have to wait until the 1930s before Leroy Zwicker, an Art School graduate, opened Halifax's first commercial art gallery.\textsuperscript{66} To help organize the displays in the VSAD rooms, the "Thumb Box Club" was inaugurated in 1914. The club consisted of artists then or formerly connected to the Art School as either students or faculty. Among the exhibitors were Hill, Chavignaud, and Rosenberg.\textsuperscript{67}

In the fall of 1914 the Art School hosted a small show of paintings that Dr. Thomas Treneman had donated to the Nova Scotia Museum of Fine Arts (NSMFA). The show became historically important because it was the NSMFA's first sign of life. The Museum, which is now the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, had been incorporated in 1908 by an act of the provincial Legislature. On November 24, 1909, Museum organizers, among whom were Rosenberg and Edith Smith, held their foundation meeting. After that meeting, the NSMFA was dormant until the Treneman show, and after that 1914 show, the Museum went back to sleep until 1917. With the

\textsuperscript{65} VSAD Annual Reports, 1913, 158; 1914, 187; 1915, 185; VSAD Minutes, 12 June 1913, 10 June 1914.


\textsuperscript{67} "Record of Attendance"; "Palmer Thumb Box Exhibition," MG 17 vol. 44 no. 10 (P.A.N.S.).
Treneman show and other exhibitions, the VSAD occasionally garnered some good press, but it really did very little to excite the public about the school's existence.\footnote{VSAD Minutes 12 June 1913; VSAD Annual Report 1912, 158; VSAD Annual Report 1915, 185; Piers, "Artists in Nova Scotia," 159; "Nova Scotia Museum of Fine Arts, Constitution and By Laws, Revised, September 1942," Vertical File vol. 160 no. 16 (P.A.N.S.); Victoria School of Art and Design, Fine Arts Week, Music Poetry Painting, exhibition catalogue, Halifax, 2-8 February 1922, 1.}

By the time Chavignaud resigned as principal in the spring of 1916, the VSAD had essentially lost its way. Worse, his resignation was not the most important loss the Art School faced that year. After three decades as the Secretary of the Victoria School of Art and Design, ill health forced the seventy-five year old Alexander McKay to step down from both that position and his position as Supervisor of the Halifax Board of School Commissioners.\footnote{Journal of Education [Nova Scotia], (April 1917): 14.}

Throughout his thirty years at the Art School's helm McKay's vision had been consistent. His last official report echoed the same sentiments he expressed in his first reports of the 1880s:

> Viewed historically, psychologically or socially an art education is a fundamental necessity of civilized life. Besides adding greatly to the pleasures of living it returns to the community much more than it costs. It is the most fundamental of cultural and vocational subjects. A study of the various countries proves conclusively that those communities that encourage the industrial and fine arts are those that develop refinement and wealth most effectively.\footnote{VSAD Annual Report 1915, 183.}

A year later, on 8 April 1917, Alexander McKay died in Dartmouth.\footnote{"Veteran Educationist Ends Long and Useful Life," Halifax Morning Chronicle, 9 April 1917, 2; "Obituary" [Alexander McKay], Acadian Recorder, 9 April 1917.} His retirement as Art School secretary left a significant gap that was not soon filled. In the next few years the state of the VSAD Board deteriorated so badly that in 1919
Eric Brown, the director of the National Gallery of Canada, received a letter stating, "The directors of the school here are mostly composed of hard headed old Presbyterians without an atom of imagination—how ever they became interested in an art school I don't know—they certainly are not interested now."\(^{72}\)

That letter was written by Chavignaud's successor as VSAD's principal, Arthur Lismer. By the time Lismer had arrived in Halifax in October 1916, the Art School had only thirty students. Edith Archibald had just left the VSAD Board, and except for Ella Ritchie and a couple of other directors, most of the Board had lost interest in the school. The Board's plan was to pay Lismer nine hundred dollars a year and let him figure out the rest for himself.\(^{73}\)

Hailing from Sheffield, England, Lismer had attended the Sheffield School of Art. Although a highly industrial town with great opportunity for designers, Sheffield's art school, for the longest time after its founding in 1843, had never customized its programs to their needs. Instead, the school delivered Britain's centralized curriculum, which was mandated by the South Kensington head school in London, and which consisted primarily of rote exercises. By the turn-of-the-century, though, the city had taken increased control over the school, allowing for a more diversified program. Although students could still subject themselves to the tedious step-by-step exercises of the old school, they could also concentrate more on fine


\(^{73}\) VSAD Annual Report 1915, 153-54.
arts, technical education, applied design of actual products, and art teaching. Of these options, Lismer gravitated to the fine arts, and to some degree applied arts.74

Lismer’s contemporaries at Sheffield included other artists who would eventually find their way to Canada. Among these were Elizabeth Styring Nutt, who followed Lismer to VSAD, and Stanley Royle, who in turn followed Nutt to Halifax. Other Sheffield artists in Canada were Frederick Varley, Herbert H. Stansfield, Hubert Valentine Fanshaw, and William Smithson Broadhead. They left Sheffield for Canada, according to the local Sheffield press, because the city failed to patronize its younger artists.75 William Smithson Broadhead had led their emigration to the New World, arriving in Toronto in 1910 to begin work as a commercial artist. His success stimulated Lismer to follow a year later.

Within a month of his arrival in Canada, Lismer had secured a job at the Grip, the same commercial art firm where former VSAD principal Lewis Smith had worked fifteen years earlier. Lismer left the firm in 1912, soon after he was married. He supported himself, albeit meagrely, with freelance illustration and, occasionally, by selling a painting. He also took on his first teaching job, working with high school teachers in the summer program at the Ontario College of Art. Then, in 1916, he accepted the principalship of the Victoria School of Art and Design.76

74 John Kirby, "Useful & Celebrated" The Sheffield School of Art 1843-1940, exhibition catalogue (Sheffield Mappin Art Gallery, 1987). For an overview of artists and industrial design in Sheffield in the nineteenth century, see: Michael Diamond, Art & Industry in Sheffield: Alfred Stevens and His School, exhibition catalogue (Sheffield: Sheffield City Art Galleries, n.d.).


During his three years teaching in Halifax, Lismer took ideas brought with him from Sheffield and blended them with those beginning to emerge in North American art education. In the spring of 1917 he sent for the Ontario Teachers' Manual for art, which only the year before had come out in the first of its many editions.\(^{77}\) By 1921, the Nova Scotia Department of Education would also be recommending the Ontario book.\(^{78}\) Also by 1917, Lismer had become aware of developments in United States art education. In April, he wrote VSAD Board president A.H. MacKay that "the true purpose of art teaching is the education of the whole people for appreciation."\(^{79}\) Although Lismer did not credit the line to anyone, it was the opening quotation in Theory and Practice of Teaching Art, a 1912 book by Arthur Wesley Dow.\(^{80}\)

Dow has been acknowledged, both then and since, as one of the most authoritative design education theorists of the period.\(^{81}\) Born in 1857, he studied at the Massachusetts Art School and the Academie Julian and Delecluse in Paris. From 1895 to 1903 he was an instructor at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. For the last four of

---


\(^{78}\) Manual of Public Instruction, 1921, 162.

\(^{79}\) Lismer, letter to A.H. MacKay, 29 April 1917, (P.A.N.S.).

\(^{80}\) Dow, Theory and Practice of Teaching Art, 2nd ed. (New York: Teachers College Columbia University, 1912), 1.

those years, Dow lectured at the Arts Students League of New York. Abandoning the
city during the hot months, he began a Summer School of Art in Ipswich,
Massachusetts, opening it in 1900. Also during his Pratt years, Dow served at the
Boston Museum of Fine Arts as curator of Japanese prints, an art form that would
strongly influence his ideas on design.\textsuperscript{82} He compiled those ideas into his book,
\textit{Composition}, first published in 1898, the final year of his stint at the Boston
Museum.\textsuperscript{83} That was also the year that Dow taught his first course on composition
with the Arts Students League, notices of which, it will be remembered, had reached
the VSAD.\textsuperscript{84} Six years later, in July 1904, \textit{Composition} would find a ready-made
market: students at Teachers College Columbia taking courses under Dow, the newly-
appointed Professor of Fine Arts.

Dow spent the last eighteen years of his life at Teachers College, with his book
continuing to go into new editions even after his death in 1922.\textsuperscript{85} The book was a
handy teaching tool, complete with exercises and illustrations, making it popular
among art educators in the field, including Lismer. Teachers could supplement
Dow’s books with his shorter writings, which were widely circulated through the

\textsuperscript{82} James Earl Russel Papers, Access no. 79027 Box 313 (New York: Columbia University
Teachers College Library, Archives, n.d.); “Summer Schools. Drawing-painting-design-

\textsuperscript{83} Arthur W. Dow, \textit{Composition} (New York: The Baker and Taylor Company, 1898), and
subsequent editions.

\textsuperscript{84} Arthur Wesley Dow, announcement, Composition class, June 1898, MG 17 vol. 43 no.
18, (P.A.N.S.).

\textsuperscript{85} e.g., Arthur Wesley Dow, \textit{Composition}, 13th ed (New York: Doubleday, Doran &
Company, 1928).
Prang art education books.\textsuperscript{86} Dow's theories and exercises were also clearly seen in writings by other contemporary art educators, such as those writing in\textit{The School Arts Book}.\textsuperscript{87} Dow's Theory and Practice of Teaching Art, the book from which Lismer borrowed the quote, while never as popular as Composition, also provided teachers with both useful theory and practical exercises.

Lismer's biographer, John McLeish, notes that, early in his teaching career, Lismer knew about design theorist Arthur Wesley Dow. McLeish was referring to Lismer's early years teaching Saturday morning children's class in Toronto during the 1920s. Lismer's uncredited use of Dow's line, however, indicates that he was already aware of the New York-based art educator while in Halifax.

In addition to Dow, McLeish cites Denman Waldo Ross as a design theorist who influenced Lismer.\textsuperscript{88} Unlike Dow, Ross's primary audience was not art teachers, but practising artists. Ross's ideas, therefore, did not affect art teaching as much as Dow's. Ross was a Harvard man in spirit and occupation. When Charles Eliot Norton taught Harvard's first art history class in the fall of 1874, he had Denman Ross among his students. Ross must have liked what he heard. He completed a Harvard Ph.D. in history and, when he did not immediately land a job, began centring his life around art, travelling to see it, spending to collect it, writing to theorize about it, and painting to produce it. Finally, in 1899, Ross landed a position teaching painting and design theory at a summer school at Harvard.

\textsuperscript{86} e.g., John S. Clark, Mary Dana Hicks, and Walter S. Perry, \textit{Teacher's Manual for the Prang Elementary Course in Art Instruction} (Boston: The Prang Educational Company, 1898).

\textsuperscript{87} e.g., Charlotte Reed, "The Rhythmic Ruler II," \textit{The School Arts Book}, (November 1907): 201-13; Ora Strange, "Landscape Composition," \textit{The School Arts Book}, (January 1908): 397-403.

\textsuperscript{88} McLeish, \textit{September Gale}, 129.
then until 1914, Ross summered in Boston and usually wintered in the art museums of Europe.  

Whereas Dow readily acknowledged contemporary theorists, Ross credited his ideas primarily to himself, with perhaps a nodding acknowledgement to the Greeks. Similarly, while Dow took pains to show the roots of his design principles in Japanese art, Ross, although a proudly keen observer of art, claimed scientific deduction as the source for his theories. Ross's two major books, *A Theory of Pure Design* from 1907 and *On Drawing and Painting* from 1912, are systematic, analytic treatises on his design theories. They didn't lend themselves to the classroom as easily as Dow's, but that does not mean that art teachers ignored them. Lewis Smith, as we saw, had travelled to Boston one summer to study with Ross. Other very prominent art education authors showed up to Ross's summer school, and through them Ross's design theories did get some recognition. Among these authors were Henry Turner Bailey, founder and long time editor of *School Arts Magazine*, and John Spencer

---


Clark, author of some of the popular Prang texts. There is therefore nothing surprising about Lismer coming across Ross's ideas.

Neither is it surprising, given Lismer's interest in general education in art and his populist ideas, that he tried to continue the VSAD's work with public school teachers and students. The teachers, however, were not quick to respond. Only one class was ever organized, in 1916-1917, and only ten or twelve teachers took part. Lismer "regretted that more teachers do not take advantage of the opportunity of this instruction at such low terms." He did, however, gain some satisfaction from the relative success of his class with public school students. Although he would later be known for his work with younger children, Lismer's efforts in Halifax were restricted to high school students, with ten to twenty of them coming each year. Reflecting ideas of the arts and crafts movement, Lismer gave his students practical, applied exercises rather than abstract ones. He also set up courses in design and interior decorating to supplement the regular fare of perspective drawing and exercises from antique casts.

Lismer's Sheffield background gave him a broader view of fine art for industrial purposes than any of the principals before him. In the wake of technical education's expansion, Lismer offered ideas that could give fine arts a unique role in

---


a community's industrial growth. While the technical schools could provide workers with mechanical skills, the Art School could provide them with the creativity, design sense, and drawing facility needed to maximize those skills. Lismer called for "the co-operation of employers to send [to the Art School] such of their employees and workers in industrial trades, to whom a knowledge of Drawing and Design would be of value and equip them to be of better service to their employers." Despite these efforts to attract students from a wide spectrum of Halifax's population, Lismer's class sizes remained small.

In truth, by 1916 very few people in Halifax cared about, or even knew about, the Art School. The Nova Scotia Technical College and the smaller evening technical schools brought about through the 1907 legislation were the solutions people now turned to for their vocational needs. There was no evidence to support Lismer's claim about the Art School's value to the city's workers. When he linked the Art School's drawing instruction to increased industrial productivity he was saying nothing new. The province's education officials had been hearing that argument for decades, and not many of them were inclined to still take it seriously. Few jobs in Halifax required drawing, and those that did could be filled by Nova Scotia Technical School graduates. Halifax was not Sheffield: it did not have a strong industrial base to entice aspiring designers. The 1921 census listed only forty-two designers and draughtsman in the city, and by 1931 that number would be cut in half to twenty-one. Even fewer were the city's artists and art teachers—there were

---


seven in 1921—and lithographers and engravers—who numbered five. Although Lismer was sincere, his argument that "the country's needs will demand a closer merging of Art and Industry" was based more on passion than on a tutored assessment of economic conditions.

Still, Halifax provided Lismer with his first major opportunity to apply his populist ideas on art, which he had brought with him from Sheffield. Back in his student days, he had often spent as much time organizing meetings and exhibitions as he did painting, becoming a central figure in Sheffield's artist-run sketching and exhibition society, the Heeley Art Club. Now in Halifax, head of a provincial art institution, he decided to use exhibitions to draw a wider public into the school. He met with initial success. With the help of various Board members, Lismer was able to temporarily revive the Nova Scotia Museum of Fine Arts (NSMFA), devoting Art School rooms to the project. Results were encouraging, with two NSMFA exhibitions in 1907 attracting good crowds.

Then, on December 6, 1917, the Museum's plans for future exhibitions were thwarted when two ships, the French freighter Mont Blanc and the Belgian relief ship the Imo, collided in The Narrows of Halifax Harbor, just north of downtown. Laden

98 Occupations, vol. 4 of Sixth Census of Canada, 1921 (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1929), Table 5; Occupations and Industries, vol. 7 of Seventh Census of Canada, 1931 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1936), Table 43.
100 Michael Tooby, The New North and the Old, Being a Study of the Early Years of Some Emigres from Sheffield, Including Frederick Varley, Arthur Lismer, Elizabeth S. Nutt, Stanley Royle and Others, unpublished draft (Sheffield: Mappin Art Gallery, n.d. [1987]).
with T.N.T., benzol, guncotton, and picric acid, the Mont Blanc exploded with such force that smoke and fire shot two miles high, flames flashed through Halifax and its neighboring city Dartmouth, glass was shattered as far away as Truro, sixty miles to the north, and the sound was heard forty miles beyond that. Levelling large sections of the city, the Halifax Explosion caused an estimated thirty-five million dollars in damage, killed almost two thousand people, injured nine thousand others, and blinded about two hundred from flying glass.  

Although the old structure somehow still stood, the building that housed the Art School and Museum, along with everything inside, was severely damaged. Given the devastation of the Halifax Explosion, the curtailment of NSMFA exhibitions was one of its minor causalities.  

It was not until early in 1919 that the city and its Art School had recovered enough to mount another exhibition. With help from the Local Council of Women, Lismer organized shows of war prints and photos, including some of his own war lithographs based on views of military vessels in Halifax's harbor. Despite Lismer's attempts to publicize these exhibitions, this time the shows attracted very few people. Still, Lismer made out well whether or not people came to see his work. 

102 Thirty-five million dollars in 1917 is the equivalent of $398,125,000 in 1996 dollars (Source: Prices' Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa). Halifax property and building values since 1917 would have increased at a higher rate than did the dollar, so the same amount of devastation over the same area in the 1990s would result in much higher damage than $398,125,000.  


His war lithographs had been commissioned by Sir Edmund Walker and the Canadian War Memorials Fund. President of the Canadian Bank of Commerce and a founder of the National Gallery of Canada, for which he served as the first Board chair, Walker proved to be a consequential patron of Lismer's work. Through his role as advisor on the War Memorials Fund, Walker secured for Lismer twenty-five hundred dollars to produce the war lithographs, which bought the painter his Toronto house once he left the Victoria School of Art and Design.105

Overall, then, Lismer's efforts to introduce art to the community did help to renew the Art School's visibility in the city, but only to a limited extent. In his first year at the Halifax Art School, he was able to increase enrolment to seventy-two pupils, up from thirty the year before.106 However, by his last year, 1919, he still had not succeeded in making the school a stable institution, with enrolment decreasing back down to sixty students.107 In fact, Lismer's Halifax principalship is worth noting not for what he did then, but for what he did afterwards. His view of Halifax's artistic needs did not match the public's own, and he proved unable to reconcile the two. He proposed plans that nobody funded, set up exhibitions that not many saw, and organized Art School programs that few bothered to attend. Had he not become known as "Lismer of the Group of Seven" and "Lismer a pioneer in child art," history would have little reason to acclaim Lismer the Halifax Art School principal.


107 VSAD Annual Report 1918, 189-90.
Nevertheless, Lismer's education work in Halifax could have been more fruitful if he had at least a little help from the VSAD Board. After his first year in Halifax, Lismer wrote the Board president that "I am willing and ready to do all in my power, but I would like to feel that my efforts were seconded & that I had the support of some organization to assist & advise in matters that it is beyond my power to undertake."¹⁰⁸ That support never came, so in 1919 Lismer left.¹⁰⁹

Between 1907 and 1919, therefore, the biggest accomplishment of the Victoria School of Art and Design was that it somehow survived. The province's 1907 legislation had re-directed the focus of technical education to forms of vocational activity other than those offered by the Art School. Up until then, Halifax could look to the VSAD to provide its arts-related vocational needs. Now, those needs were met elsewhere. The Art School's move away from training industrial workers had forced it to rethink its purpose. In finding different ways to sell itself, the Art School came closest to success when it stuck to vocational rationales, either through Smith's vision of a school for fine arts professionals or through Lismer's view of fine arts' unique offerings to industrial design. Neither vision, though, gained wide community acceptance. As damaging as they were, however, the 1907 laws did not deal a death blow to the VSAD. As we shall see, the Art School was able to regain its purpose following the Great War.

¹⁰⁸ Lismer, letter to A.H. MacKay, 29 April 1917, 7, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 4 (P.A.N.S.).

Despite Arthur Lismer’s frustration with the Art School, he wanted to leave it with a fighting chance at survival. He knew his successor must be not only an artist and an educator but also a person with strong will and unremitting stamina. He happened to know such a person, Elizabeth Styring Nutt. He and Nutt had been fellow students at the Sheffield School of Art, though at the time Lismer was half her age, she having been born on September 5, 1870. 1 It is not clear whether Lismer and Nutt had been particularly close back in Sheffield, but they did occasionally display work together in the Sheffield Society of Artists annual exhibitions. Lismer recommended Nutt to the VSAD’s directors, gained their approval, wrote Nutt with an offer and, on June 27th, 1919, received her telegraphed, one word reply: "Accept." 2

Lismer never guessed how strong willed and unremitting Nutt would actually be. To Nutt there was only one correct way—the principal’s. And she saw only one correct role for anybody affiliated with the Art School: loyalty to the headmistress. Because of her resolute manner, the Art School, sometimes for the better and other

---


2 Victoria School of Art and Design, Minutes Book 1887-1925 (Microfilm), MG 17 vol. 6 (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia), 13 June 1919 (Public Archives of N.S. hereinafter referred to P.A.N.S.); Elizabeth S. Nutt to James E. Roy, telegram, 27 June 1919, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 4 (P.A.N.S.); Michael Tooby, The New North and the Old Being a Study of the Early Years of Some Emigres from Sheffield, Including Frederick Varley, Arthur Lismer, Elizabeth S. Nutt, Stanley Royle and Others, unpublished draft (Sheffield: Mappin Art Gallery, n.d. [1987]).
times for the worse, became largely a reflection of her notions. This reflection continued for the two and a half decades of her principalship and, indirectly, for many years after she retired. Of course, the VSAD also reflected contemporary social, artistic, and educational concerns. But Nutt often served as a conduit through which the effects of these concerns were transmitted to the school. Therefore, an understanding of the Art School between the World Wars requires an understanding of Elizabeth Styring Nutt. This chapter traces Nutt’s Sheffield background, examining her student days and early professional career. We will see how Nutt’s ideas on art and education paralleled those found in the arts and crafts movement, which, at the turn-of-the-century, were beginning to gain acceptance in British art education. The chapter then looks at Nutt’s first five years in Halifax, from 1919 to 1924. We examine her program, situating it within the context of art education practices common at that time. We also look at how Nutt maneuvered the Art School onto a stable course, once again making it a viable institution with a strong chance at survival.

Nutt’s family ancestry in Sheffield went back to the days of Queen Elizabeth I. Her brother William was a physician, and her other brother Ernest was prominently associated with Sheffield’s lucrative steel industry. Both of Nutt’s parents were from Sheffield, though they had moved to the Isle of Man, which is where she was born. When Nutt’s father died while she was still a baby, her mother returned to Sheffield to raise Elizabeth and her brothers. Nutt remained very close to her mother, Elizabeth Crabtree Nutt, who was credited with encouraging her young daughter’s artistic tendencies. After moving to Halifax to accept the appointment at VSAD, Nutt, who never married, visited her mother in England virtually every summer, with
a portrait of Elizabeth Crabtree always accompanying the faithful daughter on the voyage.³

Nutt had studied under John T. Cook and Henry Archer at the Sheffield School of Art, which she attended from 1897 to 1900. In her final year she received commendation in a national competition, and she also had work accepted toward her art teacher's certificate, which she went on to pursue. Also that year she studied life drawing, drawing from the antique, historic ornament, and advanced perspective.⁴

There is a story that describes Nutt as being so devoted to her profession that she was expelled from the Sheffield art school for working too hard. The school was opened from 10:00 to 4:00, all too short a day for Nutt, who consequently stayed past closing time. The Sheffield principal dismissed her for the infraction, but eventually relented and allowed her to return.⁵ This was the type of story Nutt liked to tell, either about herself or other artists she was trying to promote, her

---


⁴ The Fifty-seventh Annual Report of the Sheffield School of Art, in Connection with the Board of Education (Secondary Branch), (Science and Art Department) Presented at the Annual Meeting (26th November 1900) (Sheffield: The Independent Press, Ltd., 1901).

⁵ "About People."
interpretations of history often displaying her astute knack for publicity more than her care for academic rigour.  

Nutt did not need the Halifax job. Indeed, she was being adventurous in accepting the position. She was almost fifty years old, she had a well established career in England, with her painting, writing, and teaching having achieved recognition by her peers, and she was making a good living teaching art in Sheffield. Nutt had been a successful art student. After Sheffield she did post graduate work with Stanhope Forbes in Newlyn, England. A travelling scholarship allowed her a year's study at the Sorbonne in Paris, followed by two years with a Professor Sim in Florence. Following her studies on the continent, Nutt returned to Sheffield. In 1904 a drawing she had done of ancient jewellery was included in a selection of student work shown in the United States at the St. Louis Exhibition. She experienced other success in exhibiting her work, for example having a miniature hung at the Royal Academy in 1908 and other paintings shown at the Women's


7 For details on Nutt's career, see clippings in P.A.N.S. collections MG 1 no. 730 a; manuscript outlining Nutt's career, MG 1 vol. 2625 no. 342; obituary, MG 9 vol. 36, p. 180; obituary, MG 9 vol. 218, p. 93; obituary, MG 100 vol. 202, no. 27; biographical data, MG 100 vol. 248, nos. 1b a-e, 16c; biographical article and sample of Nutt's paintings, vertical file vol. 69 no. 1.

8 For an indication of the many prizes Nutt won as a Sheffield student, see *The Fifty-seventh Annual Report of the Sheffield School of Art*. 
International in Philadelphia. By 1904 she had already won a Fellowship of the National Society of Art Masters of the United Kingdom, a male-dominated organization into which few women were allowed. In 1910 she was awarded Associate status in the Society, and five years later she became a full Fellow of the Society. Nutt's painting generally followed an English landscape tradition. Her stated objective in painting was to achieve not only a naturalistic rendering but also, as she put it, to capture the more important reality behind the surface appearance. What this meant was usually described by Nutt in two general ways. The first was


12 For examples of Nutt's interpretations of her work and the purpose of art in general, see: Elizabeth S. Nutt, The "Why" in the Drawing Lesson (Sheffield: I.W. Northend, 1929); idem, The World of Appearance, Part II (Sheffield: Parker Bros., 1935); "Teachers Art Class Annual Exams," Halifax Evening Echo, 4 February 1920; "Miss Nutt Honored: Royal Academy Accepts (continued...)
a relatively straightforward enunciation of design and painting principles with which Nutt felt she achieved unity and harmony in her artistic compositions. These principles dealt primarily with light, line, form, and other art elements. Nutt's second way of describing her art was less straightforward and more spiritual. Drawing, she said, drew out our "sense of oneness with the infinite spirit that is the life of all things." The art lesson's purpose was "to be an educative instrument in the unfolding of the Godlike in our scholars." The world's greatest artists, she claimed, are also the greatest Bible students. As the ideals of the artist become higher, the greater becomes the artist's work.

Although successful in her painting, it was not her studio production that gave Nutt her real career success, it was rather her work in art education. Upon her return to Sheffield, following her European studies, she became headmistress of the Firs Hill Branch School, which was attached to the Sheffield School of Art. Her principal task there was the training of teachers. She was, for a time, on special staff of the School of Art, and did further work in art education at the Sheffield Training College for Teachers, the Pupil Teachers' Centre, and the University Training College. Her own continued studies also concentrated on the teaching of art. She

12 (...continued)


13 Elizabeth S. Nutt, "Significance or Flower Drawing with the Children, 1916 (Reprint) (Sheffield: J.W. Northend, 1921), 20, 39.

14 "Gave Fine Address on Art Subject Matter," Halifax Star, 16 March 1927.
received her Art Masters Diploma from the University of Sheffield, writing her thesis on the "Teaching of Color in Schools." It was this diploma in art education, more than her art exhibitions, that allowed her entry as a full Fellow of the National Society of Art Masters.\textsuperscript{15}

Nutt began to publish her ideas on art education, with titles indicative of her teaching interests: "Christmas Lessons," "Flags and Flower Emblems of the Allies," and "Pastel Drawing—The World of Appearance." Some of her essays appeared in the Harmsworth Associated Press children's periodical. Her paper "Artists, All of Us," originally published in My Magazine, was later incorporated into The Book of Knowledge.\textsuperscript{16} In 1916 a series of articles on "The Teaching of Pastel Work," which she had written for a periodical called The Schoolmistress, was published as a book, Flower Drawing with the Children.\textsuperscript{17} The Society of Art Masters praised the book in their journal, noting that "Miss Nutt is well known to many of our members as a most enthusiastic teacher."\textsuperscript{18} Five years later, after Nutt's arrival in Halifax, the book would be reprinted.\textsuperscript{19}

Nutt's book, which was illustrated with her adequate but unexceptional drawings, provided practical art teaching exercises. The book also introduced some

\textsuperscript{15} "About People"; List of Members; "Nova Scotia Has Good Reason"; "Stresses Need"; "Sheffield Woman Artist," Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 21 December 1927.

\textsuperscript{16} "About People"; "Nova Scotia Has Good Reason"; "Stresses Need"; Elizabeth S. Nutt, letter to Arthur Lismer, 31 July 1919, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 4 (P.A.N.S.).

\textsuperscript{17} Elizabeth S. Nutt, Flower Drawing with the Children, (Sheffield: J.W. Northend, 1916).

\textsuperscript{18} "Books Received," Journal of the National Society of Art Masters 3, 2nd series, no. 4 (1918): 204.

\textsuperscript{19} Nutt, Significance.
of Nutt's vague, spiritual rationales for art education. She believed that art teachers should be "awakening minds to the meaning of life." Art, she claimed, was "a most valuable means whereby we may aid in unfolding the God-like in our children," a statement she would reiterate in her first report to the VSAD's directors. In this unfolding she stressed "the importance of the study of flowers as a [child's] first step towards appreciation of life as manifested in appearance."20

Nutt remained preoccupied with her ideas on art's spirituality throughout her career. This preoccupation stemmed partly from her religious convictions—she was a devout Christian Scientist. Her ideas were also an outgrowth of a Victorian upbringing. Nutt's moralistic purposes for art, her ethereal claims of art's role in finding the truth of nature and oneself, and therefore finding the truth of God, clearly reflected notions found in nineteenth century critical romanticism and idealism, especially among disciples of the British art critic John Ruskin.21 As we will see, ideas from Ruskin also found their way into Nutt's beliefs on how art education should serve the artist-worker.

Although rooted in nineteenth century ideas, parts of Nutt's book also reflected early twentieth century notions about art. In the opening chapter of Significance Nutt posited that art is "not hand and eye training, but mind training."22 Although


21 On Ruskin's romantic idealism in art education history, see Mary Ann Stankiewicz, "The Eye is a Nobler Organ": Ruskin and American Art Education," Journal of Aesthetic Education 18, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 51-64.

22 Nutt, Significance, 7.
she emphasized a realistic representation of the artwork's referent, she urged teachers to cultivate individual expression. Each element in the art work—the lines, the tone, the color—should express the "significance" of the subject being drawn. Angular lines, for example, should be used to capture the strong "lion-ness" of a lion, while rounder, more flowing lines could depict the gentleness of a bird. For the artist who could render in this manner the character underlying physical appearance, all form was significant.23

In shaping these theories Nutt drew on terminology then currently in vogue. In 1914 Clive Bell had published his book Art, which introduced many to the notion of "significant form."24 In Sheffield, too, there were other theorists expressing ideas similar to Nutt's. In a lecture at Sheffield's Technical School of Art in August 1916, three months after Nutt's Significance was published, William Rothenstein, a portraitist who had been appointed to the newly created Chair of Civic Art at the University of Sheffield, spoke to his audience about "the artist's instinctive faith in the deep significance of all form." With words very similar to Nutt's, Rothenstein described the artist's "devotion to the beauty in which the hidden realities of life clothe themselves." Like Nutt, Rothenstein claimed that the artist "concentrates upon the radiant and harmonious aspect of material form, and is able, through his faith in this exterior beauty, to interpret something of the reality which underlies it."25

23 Nutt, Significance, see especially lessons vii and ix, 45-59.
Nutt would advance sentiments similar to these for the next three decades. She would also echo other tenets put forward by Rothenstein in that August lecture. He was calling for a greater role for artist-craftsmen. Artists, he said, must be given specific, practical tasks upon which to concentrate their powers. Without practical ends artists would end up as "gifted men who, masters of their own time and fancy, become mere interesting experimenters." Art, then, was not for its own sake. The idea was to train artist-designers, an idea that gained credence in Britain through the work of William Morris, filtering into English art schools through the teaching and books of Walter Crane. For both Morris and Crane, and to a lesser extent for Nutt, John Ruskin was an intellectual mentor.

Born in 1819, John Ruskin became the most highly recognized British art critic of his century. Known for his articulation of romanticism in art, Ruskin stimulated a school of theorists and practitioners that linked art to the moral and social conditions that produced it. His most heralded set of works, the five volumes of *Modern Painters*, came out between 1843 and 1860. The series began with his influential defense of contemporary art, marked by its championship of British landscape painter J.M.W. Turner. The first volumes of *Modern Painters* emphasized the relationship between art, moral development, and the divinity of nature. By the fifth volume, Ruskin's writings increasingly stressed art's connection to society. But it was not *Modern Painters* that became the main credo for artist-social reformers. Rather, it

---


27 Nutt more than once referred to Ruskin in her writings. For example, see references to Ruskin in various places in her book *Significance*.

was Ruskin's social criticism of architecture, "The Nature of Gothic," from his book The Stones of Venice, published in 1853 between volumes two and three of Modern Painters.²⁹

Fifteen years younger than Ruskin, and not yet established as the key arts and craft figure he was to become, William Morris read "The Nature of Gothic" a few years after it was published. The text became Morris's beacon. Decades later, in 1892, Morris wrote a preface for "The Nature of Gothic," hailing the chapter as "one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century." Morris described Ruskin's three essential points in "The Nature of Gothic": "...that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work ...; and lastly, that unless man's work once again becomes a pleasure to him ... [all] must toil in pain and therefore live in pain." It had been Morris's mission to organize art production that adhered to these three tenets.³⁰

In 1861 Morris set up his firm, "Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Co., Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture, and Metals," where he began to put into practice what Ruskin preached. The firm was a success, producing wallpapers, furnishings, carpets, stained-glass, and other finely crafted objects. Through the firm, Morris and his associates showed that fine work and design could be marketed. Eventually growing to nearly one hundred employees, the firm also demonstrated Morris's proposition that "It is right and necessary that all men should have work to


³⁰ Aymer Vallance, William Morris, His Art His Writings and His Public Life (London: George Bell and Sons, 1897), 21, 46-47, 307-11, quotes on 238.
do which shall be worth doing, and be of itself pleasant to do; and which should be done under such conditions as would make it neither over-wearisome nor over-anxious."

By the late 1870s Morris was both well established and well known. He began lecturing, elaborating on his Ruskin-based ideas through public talks given at intervals between 1878 and 1891. Art, he asserted, would bring dignity and pleasure to labor and quality to the fruits of that labor. His association of art with labor led him to the socialist movement, where he quickly rose to leadership positions. Within a year of giving his first public lecture on socialism in 1883, Morris helped found the Socialist League, serving as its leader from 1884 to 1890. That same year the Art Workers' Guild was formed, bringing together the elite of Britain's craftworkers and art, craft, and design educators.

One of Morris's 1884 lectures, "Art and Socialism," found a thirty-nine year old designer and book illustrator, Walter Crane, sitting in the audience. Moved to action by what he heard, Crane too became a socialist, linking art with the dignity of labor. Together, Morris and Crane worked with other craftworkers to increase the quality of design and the social conditions they believed would allow art to flourish. In 1888 Crane founded the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, opening it to all craftspersons who met the Society's juried standards. Six years later, the Art Workers' Guild was founded. Although not himself a founder of the Society, Morris was by now the elder

---


statesman of the group, providing strong support for both the Society and the Art Workers' Guild.\textsuperscript{33}

Crane, more so than Ruskin or Morris, worked within the British art school system to bend it toward the ideals of the arts and crafts movement. In 1888, as President of the Applied Arts Section of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and Its Application to Industry, Crane criticized the British art schools for emphasizing the needs of only pictorial artists while ignoring the crafts. The balance must be shifted, he said, because "the true root and basis of all arts lie in the handcrafts ....We must turn our artists into craftsmen, and our craftsmen into artists."\textsuperscript{34} It was a position he would repeat throughout England. As the century approached its end, Crane took more direct steps to bring about reform by becoming director of design at the Manchester Municipal School. In 1896, the year of Morris's death, Crane moved on to be art director of Reading College. Within another two years, in August 1898, he was given charge of the whole system, becoming Principal of the Royal College of Art, the new name for the former South Kensington National Art Training School.\textsuperscript{35}


\textsuperscript{34} Walter Crane, "Presidential Address," in \textit{Transactions of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and Its Application to Industry} (London: n.p. [22 Albermarle Street, Picadilly], 1888), 213, 215-16.

Principal Crane’s ambitions were high, aiming to rid the College of its mechanical and lifeless curriculum, and replacing it with learning through real-world production. His hopes were frustrated, though, so much so that he left after only eight months. Nevertheless, his ideas did not all leave with him. The year he became principal, 1898, he published his lectures from his Manchester teaching in the book *The Bases of Design.* The year after he left the position, 1900, he published a second book on teaching design, *Line and Form.* Also in 1900, a Council of Art was set up to oversee changes at the Royal College of Art. When members to the first Council were announced in March 1900, all were from the Art Workers’ Guild. The arts and crafts movement, infused with many of Crane’s ideas on art education, was finally having an affect on British art training. It continued to affect the training in the years leading to the Great War.

Thus, the ideas of Ruskin, Morris, and Crane were taking hold at the exact time that Elizabeth Nutt studied art and established her art teaching career. Sheffield was certainly no stranger to these ideas. Ruskin had chosen Sheffield in 1875 to launch his utopian experiment, the Guild of St. George. The Guild, which

---


was to return people to a simpler life of cooperation and handcraft production, never got very far. One of its legacies, though, was the Ruskin Guild of St. George Collection in Sheffield, which by 1890 was attracting sixty thousand visitors a year.\(^\text{41}\) A largely working class city, Sheffield also had a history of labor and socialist organizations.\(^\text{42}\) The city was thus well prepared to embrace Morris and Crane's arts and crafts socialist-leaning ideals. As a highly industrial city, Sheffield throughout the nineteenth century supported artists working in industrial design.\(^\text{43}\) True, it was not until 1926, seven years after Nutt left the city, that Sheffield designated its school of art as a College of Arts and Crafts.\(^\text{44}\) Nevertheless, Sheffield's earlier support for the goals of the arts and crafts movement is evinced by William Rothenstein's faculty position. The University's creation of Rothenstein's Chair of Civic Art in 1916 was a clear attempt to draw connections between artist-designers and the community's architectural and industrial needs. Rothenstein argued that, "Had the last generation made proper use ... of Watts, Alfred Stevens, Rosetti, William Morris, Walter Crane, each using his own particular gifts in the service of national, religious institutions, England would have been a living example


\(^{44}\) John Kirby, "Useful & Celebrated" *The Sheffield School of Art 1843-1940*, exhibition catalogue (Sheffield: Mappin Art Gallery, 1987), 23.
of what a great country stands for." It was in this milieu that Nutt learned her art, and the ideals of training the artist-worker would travel with her to the Victoria School of Art and Design.

Britain was not the only country in which art training was shifting toward craft and design. In the United States, the 1904 St. Louis Exhibition, the same exhibition in which Nutt had her student work hung, was a major stimulus for moving art education in this direction. The exhibition devoted a large hall to student artwork. Competition was fierce, with cities and schools from across North America, and indeed the world, vying to have the best display. Schools gaining much of the attention were those such as the Moscow Technical School which, instead of teaching concepts and techniques through abstract exercises, had its students learn through the production of actual crafts. As one prominent contemporary art educator, James Haney, put it, "The insistent note throughout the entire exhibition was that of use and of beauty in use. It was a note born of a new creed of the arts, one which preached them as agents which should deal with realities—with things made for use and not for drill or show."

Nutt's affinity with art education made her lean toward these notions of applied art. Ideas coming from the St. Louis Exhibition had more influence on Nutt than the modernist art-for-art's-sake ideas that arose from the famed 1913 Armory Show in New York and from other contemporary art centres such as Paris. Nutt was

45 Rothenstein, A Plea, 11.

to take such ideas on applied art, combine them with a particularly British landscape sensibility, her spiritual notions, and her theories on significance and the world of appearance, and incorporate them all in a program for Halifax's Victoria School of Art and Design.

Nutt left for Canada in the fall of 1919. The end of the Great War had generated a heavy demand for ships to Halifax, but Nutt was finally able to book passage on one, arriving in Nova Scotia on the S.S. Sachem in October. After depositing her luggage, she walked up the winding stairs to her new place of employment and found a school very much different from those to which she had been accustomed. Her Firs Hill Branch School was a large, solid stone building, well lit and with spacious rooms. In stark contrast, she realized her new school was housed in a dilapidated, century-old wooden building. When she reached the classrooms on the second floor, she discovered what she and her handful of students had to work with: a half dozen or so books lying on a rickety old shelf, a few drawing boards, a couple of casts, several statues, and Henry Rosenberg's etching press. By the end of the year the situation had already begun to change.

Nutt set out to build the library's book and art reproduction collection. She received immediate help from Eliza Ritchie, who donated books, lantern slides, and art photographs. Nutt was also determined to build the enrolment. Using Lismer's tactic, Miss Nutt, as she was to be called by all, took advantage of the Art

---

47 Description based on my visit to the Firs Hill School building, 20 November 1988.

48 VSAD Annual Report 1919, 171; "Miss E.S. Nutt, Former Art College Head, Passes"; Elizabeth S. Nutt, letter to James E. Roy, 14 August 1919, MG 17 vol. 43 no. 4 (P.A.N.S.).

49 VSAD Annual Report 1920, 185.
School's scholarship system, which offered free tuition to promising students. Within two months Nutt had recruited thirty-one new first year students through scholarships.\textsuperscript{50}

The Board gave Nutt free reign in curriculum matters, and she took advantage of it. She initiated a teachers' class, which attracted another fifteen students. She added other courses by designating the best pupils as student teachers, and paying them a small bursary for their labors. Nutt was thus able to expand the Art School's offerings but not, to any great extent, its expenditures.\textsuperscript{51} She began craft classes in embroidery, modelling, metal work, and basketry. With enrolment and spirits high, Miss Nutt was able to convince the directors to hire Margaret Brodie to teach two of the craft courses for an annual salary of $250.\textsuperscript{52} One director was, in fact, Margaret's sister Isabel Brodie, who would sit on the Board until 1933. Isabel was also connected to the Art School in another capacity. As Supervisor of Drawing for Halifax's public schools she was responsible for judging the art work of public school students who applied for VSAD scholarships.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Annual Report 1919, 171-72.

\textsuperscript{51} Information on these student teachers are found in most of the Annual Reports and VSAD Minutes, 8 May, 22 October 1923, 24 April 1924.

\textsuperscript{52} VSAD Annual Report 1919; See various entries in VSAD Minutes for 1921.

To add to the enticement generated by the scholarships and bursaries, Miss Nutt initiated what was to become a munificent diploma system. In 1921 the Brodies, along with Isabel's assistant in the public schools, Lila Publicover, received the Art School's first teachers' course diplomas. The following year the School's first pure art diploma for painting was awarded to Marjorie Tozer, an artist whose talents would make her a valuable asset to the School, but whose sense of artistic freedom would, years later, lead her to a toe-to-toe confrontation with the sometimes autocratic Miss Nutt.

Tozer's family boasted a long art lineage, so it had come as no surprise when young Marjorie began her first art studies in Edith Smith's Bedford Chambers studio. Tozer moved on to the Victoria School to study with Lismer, eventually graduating under Nutt in 1922. In her final year at the VSAD, Tozer put her talents in the service of the Art School, when she was awarded the Art School's first student teachership. A resourceful administrator, Miss Nutt saw obvious financial advantages to a student teacher system, and for $150 she was able to place Tozer in charge of the newly formed preparatory class for public school students. In the

---

54 On scholarships, bursaries, and diplomas in Nutt's first few years at the school, see: *Nova Scotia College of Art 1925-1926*, Course Calendar (Halifax: N.S. College of Art, 1925).

55 VSAD *Annual Report 1921*, 203; VSAD *Annual Report 1922*, 196; VSAD *Minutes*, 1921. On Tozer-Nutt dispute, see chapter ten of this study.


57 VSAD *Minutes*, 4 September 1921.

58 VSAD *Annual Report 1921*, 203.
1923-1924 school year, Nutt further rewarded selected senior students by adding a ninety dollars bursary to their scholarship for free tuition.\textsuperscript{59}

Miss Nutt worked hard soliciting funds for the scholarships, student teacherships, and bursaries. No prominent citizen or local business was safe from her persuasive requests for donations.\textsuperscript{60} Nevertheless, inadequate funds and increased demands for scholarships—the scholarships were given to most young students—forced an end to the bursary system within a few years.\textsuperscript{61} But Miss Nutt continued to use student teachers, rendering it very difficult now to create a definitive list of who actually were salaried teachers at the Art School. Adding to this difficulty are the many local artists who volunteered their services to teach courses. Chief among these was Henry Rosenberg, who continued to offer occasional classes in etching until his wife's death in 1934, after which he permanently moved to his winter home in Citronelle, Alabama.\textsuperscript{62} Other volunteer teachers were Andrew R. Cobb, who continued as a VSAD director and intermittent teacher of architecture, and S.L. Shannon, a director and future president of the Art School who taught wood carving.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{59} VSAD Annual Report 1924, 194.

\textsuperscript{60} See the many forms of evidence of these solicitations in Elizabeth S. Nutt and Norma E. Smith, \textit{Scrapbook 1924-1933}, MG 17 vol. 46 no. 1 (P.A.N.S.).

\textsuperscript{61} NSCA Annual Report 1925, 189; NSCA Annual Report 1925-1926, 127.


\textsuperscript{63} Nova Scotia College of Art 1925-1926; Rosenberg and Cobb are mentioned in various VSAD Annual Reports and NSCA Annual Reports, e.g.: 1920, 184; 1922, 197; 1926; 1930. Shannon is acknowledged in NSCA Annual Reports, 1929, 133; 1935, 158, and in a Halifax Star article, 12 November 1932.
With volunteer help, student teachers, low paid staff, and Miss Nutt's ever-optimistic administrative drive, the Art School was able by 1921 to boast of 120 students and seven distinct programs, each with its own diploma: the teachers' diploma course; the preparatory course; commercial art; architecture; painting; design and mechanical drawing; and crafts. In the same year Miss Nutt called for a nude life class, which never materialized. The topic never came up again during her tenure.64

The 1920-1921 teachers' program, which was reorganized into two levels, attracted twenty-eight students.65 A boon to the program came when Miss Nutt convinced provincial education officials to recognize the Art School's diploma for teachers. In addition, the Halifax Board of School Commissioners took up Miss Nutt's suggestion and offered a ten dollar bonus to each teacher who passed Part I of the teachers' course and twenty-five dollars to those passing Part II. This more than compensated for the course fees, which were $4.50 for Part I and $6.00 for Part II.66

In 1924 Frieda Creighton, a former VSAD student teacher, was hired by the Art School for one thousand dollars and, among other duties, was assigned responsibility for the teachers' classes. Creighton, who was born in 1900, began

---

64 VSAD Annual Report 1921, 202-3, 205; Marguerite Porter Zwicker, a student and teacher at the school, said they were not even allowed models in bathing suits: interview with author and Harold Pearse, 27 September 1986, notes in possession of author. A male model nude from the waist up was sometimes referred to as a "model posing in the nude," e.g., Smith Diary 1926-1927, 25 January 1927; idem, Diary October 1, 1924 to March 20, 1925, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 6 (P.A.N.S.), 1 December 1924.

65 VSAD Minutes, 9, 25 May 1921; VSAD Annual Report 1921, 203.

66 VSAD Minutes, 10 December 1920, 9 April 1921; Annual Report 1920, 184-85.
attending the Art School when she was eleven years old. She studied there under Lewis Smith, George Chavignaud, Arthur Lismer, and Miss Nutt. In addition to VSAD diplomas in painting, commercial art, and the teachers' course, Creighton had received a B.A. from Dalhousie University and a diploma from the Provincial Normal School in Truro. Despite these qualifications, her salary was substantially lower than that of public school drawing teachers: by contrast, in 1924 Isabel Brodie was earning $1,594 as Supervisor of Drawing for Halifax public schools, and Lila Publicover was paid $1,356 as Brodie's assistant.

The preparatory class of "junior students" started by Nutt and Tozer, which was open to pupils in grades nine and up, allowed for more diverse activities than the copying exercises found in public school classrooms. In their first year of study at VSAD the junior students were "all taught the same subject and the same principles at one and the same time." For the second and third year the program was individualized because, as Miss Nutt put it, "The individual element is the most precious in all art work after the eternal principles have been established in the minds of the students." Entry into the preparatory classes was highly competitive, with many local students vying for the limited number of scholarships. Miss Nutt

---


68 Report of Board of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax for the Year Ended 31st October 1924 (Halifax: The Ross Print Ltd., 1924), 52.

69 See descriptions of some VSAD classes during these years in Norma E. Smith, Diary 1924-1925, e.g., 29 November, 1, 3 December 1924; 6, 9, 27 January, 3, 10 February, 1925.

70 NSCA Annual Report 1928, 123.
wanted to accept more students, but the Art School's perennial problem of inadequate space made higher enrolments impractical.\footnote{Annual Report 1922, 196; Annual Report 1924, 193.}

In both the preparatory class and the programs for adults, students were encouraged to engage in crafts, applied design, commercial art, and other forms of art for practical ends. Margaret Brodie was soon promoted to full-time head of crafts. In 1920 she added jewellery and leather work to the list of craft courses. Modelling classes were few, due to inadequate space, but the craft department nevertheless thrived.\footnote{VSAD Annual Report 1919, 172; VSAD Annual Report 1920, 184.} Miss Nutt required each student to take at least one course in the department because, she believed, that "Crafts alone can make a design a real thing."\footnote{Quote in VSAD Annual Report 1924, 196, and in "Annual Meeting of Victoria School of Art and Design," Halifax Evening Echo, 25 November 1924.} Enrolment swelled and in 1924-1925, when a new evening craft class was initiated, Marjorie Robertson, another former VSAD student teacher, was hired for $250.\footnote{VSAD Annual Report 1924, 194; VSAD Minutes, 24 April 1924.}

Miss Nutt's belief in applied arts extended beyond craft into commercial art. In 1920, returned soldiers in the Art School's first commercial art course designed posters for an exhibition of Lismer's war works.\footnote{VSAD Annual Report 1921, 203.} Little did these soldiers know that they were beginning a long tradition: Haligonians for decades to come would be
treated to innumerable posters designed and displayed by Art School students. Miss Nutt found other practical ends for her students' work. In 1923, for example, Donald Cameron Mackay, one of her favorite students, and one who two decades later would succeed her as principal, became art editor of "The Boy's Own Mail," a weekly section of the Halifax daily, the Evening Mail.

Miss Nutt took charge of the painting program, providing instruction which she felt "dealt exclusively with the eternal principles underlying the world of appearance." What this meant in practice was constant drilling in notions repeated from her writings: "light against dark," "harmonic spacing," "continuity without conjunction," "the veil of atmosphere," "losing and finding a line." She was usually dramatic and engrossing in her teaching, and she was also innovative. For example, one of Nutt's students, Nellie Adams, recalls Miss Nutt having students sing to paintings in order to learn harmonic spacing.

When examining the Art School's program during the Nutt era, we have to bear in mind that Nutt rarely carried through with the described courses beyond the first few weeks of the fall. After spending each summer in Sheffield, Nutt would return to Halifax full of ideas and promises about reorganizing the curriculum. The new ideas found their way into the Art School's publicity, but not necessarily into its

---

76 Nellie Adams, interviewed by author and Harold Pearse, 14, 15 September 1986, tape in possession of author; VSAD Annual Reports, 1922, 197; 1924, 195; NSCA Annual Reports, 1925, 190; 1926, 129; 1927, 122; 1930, 127; 1936, 131; Halifax Evening Echo, 29 November 1924; "Halifax Observes Canada Book Week," Halifax Evening Mail, 2 December 1924.

77 VSAD Annual Report 1924, 194-95.

78 VSAD Annual Report 1920, 185.

79 Nellie Adams, interview.
classrooms. By mid-October Nutt was usually back to teaching in her potluck fashion, offering the students whatever she felt inspired to give them on that particular day. She rarely prepared her lessons, deciding on what she was going to teach just before she taught it.\(^{80}\)

It was this ability to improvise upon which Miss Nutt depended in her teaching. She was an absorbing extemporaneous raconteur, and though the slogans in her lectures were always the same, the stories were always different. Her lectures did sometimes fall flat, but more often than not she was able to capture and hold her listeners' attention. After talks which she thought were particularly good, she often rushed off to share her success with Norma Smith, who not only had the job of VSAD secretary, registrar, and librarian, but also had a closer, more devoted relationship to Miss Nutt than anyone else in Halifax.\(^{81}\) "I gave them a thumping good lecture," Miss Nutt would report to Smith, and that was usually enough to lift the spirits of both women for the rest of the day.\(^{82}\)

---

\(^{80}\) Interpretations of Nutt's teaching based on Norma Smith's Diaries, and on interviews with Nellie Adams, Marguerite Porter Zwicker, and other former students of Nutt's: Homer Lord, interview with author and Harold Pearse, 27 September 1986, notes in possession of author; Margaret Sewell, interviews with author, 3, 10, 14 August 1982, tapes in possession of author; David Whitzman, interview with author and Harold Pearse, 12 September 1986, tape in possession of author; Marguerite Porter Zwicker and LeRoy Zwicker, interviews with author, November 1986, notes in possession of author.

\(^{81}\) Although in Halifax art circles today I have heard that this was a lesbian relationship, I did not attempt to confirm that in any of the interviews done with Nutt's contemporaries that are cited in this study. On Smith, see "Norma Ethel Smith," Halifax Mail, 22 September 1948.

\(^{82}\) Elizabeth S. Nutt, Diary September 25, 1933 to March 11, 1934, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 7 (P.A.N.S.), 15 December 1933. At the time of this writing, P.A.N.S. incorrectly lists Norma E. Smith as the author of this diary. Handwriting and references to "Norma," which do not appear in diaries written by Smith, reveal that this diary is by Nutt.
In addition to Nutt's lectures to her classes, she regularly prepared talks that were open to the public. She also did lecture tours, such as one in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1925, sponsored by Local Councils of Women. Her interpretations of art history in these lectures frequently pictured artists as staunch strugglers for the artistic ideals and nebulous spiritual purposes which Nutt herself espoused. Miss Nutt's talks often placed the School in a seemingly important historical light. For example, her first public series, which she initiated the January after her arrival, was entitled "Our Debt to the Past and Our Responsibility to the Future." Miss Nutt wanted Haligonians to know that their "responsibility to the future" included adequate funding for the Art School. In summarizing this position to the VSAD directors, she asserted that the Art School "provides the link which united the present with the past ... thus provides a sure guide for our future conduct."

Miss Nutt's public lectures provided good publicity for the VSAD and helped strengthen the community's ties to the school. Understanding the importance of these ties, Nutt found other ways to link with the community. In early February, 1922, for example, Art Week was organized under the auspices of the VSAD. Events included a large exhibition in the annex of the Majestic Theatre on Barrington Street, a concert, and a poetry reading, the latter organized by Norma Smith, a published

---


84 "To Lecture on Canadian Art," Halifax Evening Mail, 10 February 1925. Also on Nutt lectures and the LCW, see Local Council of Women of Halifax, Minutes Book, March 1922-June 1927, MG 20 vol. 535 no. 9 (P.A.N.S.), 26 January, 30 November 1922.

85 VSAD Annual Reports, 1919, 172-73; 1920, 185. The "Debt to the Past" was a recurring theme, for example see "Miss Nutt Lectures on Debt to Past," Halifax Evening Echo, 22 January 1925.
poet. Art Week events were well publicized, with numerous newspaper articles and, of course, the display of a number of large posters made by VSAD students.  

On the Tuesday following Art Week, on February 14, 1922, eleven local artists gathered for the founding meeting of the Nova Scotia Society of Artists (NSSA). Controversy would later surround these events, with Nutt writing histories that described herself as the principal founder of the organization, while others would claim that Lewis Smith was the main impetus. The real story is that the Society resulted from a group effort. Among those present at the inaugural meeting were Smith and Nutt, along with Smith's sister Edith, the Brodies, Andrew Cobb, and Alice Hagen. Publicover had wanted to attend, but illness prevented her from doing so. Andrew Cobb was elected President of the new organization, a position he retained until he was succeeded by Miss Nutt in 1930. After this initial meeting in 1922, the organization took a long time to get firmly established. It held its first exhibition

---


88 NSSA Minutes Book, 14 October 1931.
over a year later, in May 1923, in the Art School building, then did not hold its next exhibition until the fall of 1930.\(^{89}\)

Through all of her exertions, Miss Nutt was able to put the Art School on as firm a footing as it had been since the early years with Anna Leonowens, Helen Kenny, and Alexander McKay. And as in those early years, success resulted not only from the work of the principal, but also by other supporters within the school and community. The Art School’s continuous survival depended on the teaching staff, Norma Smith, and a few dedicated friends and directors such as Rosenberg, Cobb, Isabel Brodie, and the Ritchie sisters.\(^{90}\) Another long-time supporter of the Art School was A. H. MacKay. MacKay served as a director for about three and a half decades and as VSAD Board President for fourteen years before stepping down in 1924.\(^{91}\) His role was never a prominent one, but his strong beliefs in the merits of art education ensured the Art School an influential, and very much needed, political ally. Without such allies it is doubtful that the Art School would have survived its very lean years. Not that the school was now a symbol of opulence. When A. H. MacKay stepped down from the Art School’s Presidency in 1924, the VSAD was still receiving inadequate and insecure financing, and it was still housed in the same cramped firetrap on the corner of George and Argyle Streets. Yet, Nutt had helped create a renewed vibrancy in the Art School, a vibrancy which, ironically, is

---

\(^{89}\) "Many Visiting Exhibition at College of Art," *Halifax Mail*, 27 November 1930.

\(^{90}\) See *VSAD Annual Reports* for these years.

\(^{91}\) *VSAD Minutes*, 24 November 1924; "Annual Meeting of Victoria School of Art and Design"; Frederic H. Sexton, letter to Isabel Brodie, 6 June 1929, MG 17 Series A, vol. 23 (P.A.N.S.); "Former Superintendent of Education Passes," *Halifax Mail*, 11 May 1929.
illustrated by the fact that 1924 was the last year in which the Victoria School of Art and Design existed.
In 1925, thirty-seven years after it first received its charter, the Victoria School of Art and Design was no more. The same teachers taught the same art classes in the same building, but a legislative act elevated the institution's status to that of a college, with its new name the "Nova Scotia College of Art."¹ Elizabeth Styring Nutt, who was still principal and who would remain so for almost two more decades, oversaw the changes. Working with her was Frederic Sexton, the province's Director of Technical Education and, in 1925, the president of the Art School. Their strategy was to increase the school's relevance to the vocational needs of the community, to make it a training ground for economically viable artist-workers. Given this goal, they believed, the public would give greater support to the ever-struggling institution.

This chapter shows how this vocational strategy shaped the school's program. In both her curriculum and her publicity efforts, Miss Nutt promoted art for practical ends instead of merely art for art's sake. We will look at each section of the school's curriculum, illustrating its effectiveness through short biographical sketches of some of its graduates. We will then look at how the vocational strategy affected funding. Through this we will see that Nutt's and Sexton's strategy, to some extent, paid off,

¹ An Act Respecting the Victoria School of Art and Design, Bill no. 145, MG 17 vols. 5-6 (micro) (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1925) (Public Archives of N.S. hereinafter referred to as P.A.N.S.).
with the school's vocational aims garnering federal grants and its programs graduating some successful artist-workers. We shall also see, though, that, overall, Nova Scotia's population of artist-workers did not increase during this period.

Fostering art and design for practical ends was the basis for the school's new motto, "Heart and Head and Hand." According to Nutt, "the College embodying 'Heart and Head and Hand' is really an apprentice school." An artist-worker needed a disciplined hand to produce well-crafted commercial products. The finest products, though, displayed artistry, and for that the hand needed guidance from the best emotions of the heart and the most enlightened judgements of the head. Nutt's description of the motto gives us a good example of her flowery prose:

But the Heart that finds the Head willing to weight justly and generously its prompting, and finds the Hand quick to do the bidding of this well poised twain then the desert blossoms as the rose, and days pass in glad praise that Truth to the inner self yields love to that Truth and to our neighbours and happy life with a sense of satisfaction suffuses itself in ever widening circles, and so in diffusion is ever more intense, and so we join the choir invisible whose music is the gladness of the world. Membership of Heart and Head and Hand is the fullness of life. If we but realize this Trinity in Unity then the Nova Scotia College of Art will hold its own with the best Art Colleges on this continent.

Whatever Nutt meant by that description, one thing rings clear: Nova Scotia's art school could achieve lofty goals by providing well-rounded art education. This education required good teaching, and, despite a still limited budget, Miss Nutt was able to put together a sound staff which she believed could deliver on the promised unification of "Heart, Head, and Hand." As leader of this staff, Nutt received a one

---


3 NSCA Annual Report 1926, 133-34.
hundred dollar raise with the 1925 Act, giving her a respectable annual salary of twenty-six hundred dollars. Frieda Creighton, one of Nutt's two assistant teachers, received the same raise, bringing her annual salary to eleven hundred dollars. Although Creighton made less than half Nutt's salary, she was much better off than her colleague, Marjorie Robertson. As Nutt's second assistant teacher, Robertson's $150 boost in pay still left her with only a scant four hundred dollars a year.

Secretary-librarian Norma Smith, upon whose shoulders fell many of the tedious day-to-day operating tasks, had her weekly income increased from $12.50 to $15.00. The other paid staff included Marjorie Brodie and her student assistant in the craft department, Nellie Drysdale, the latter receiving a one hundred dollar honorarium.4

Continuing to teach voluntarily were former VSAD principal Henry Rosenberg, architect Andrew Cobb, wood carver S.L. Shannon, Dalhousie professor James Falconer, who lectured on art history, and medical doctor John Cameron, who lectured on anatomy and art history.5

Together under Miss Nutt's wardship, the teaching staff began fine tuning the official curriculum to better meet the vocational potential of the arts. They began by consolidating the previous seven program sections into six, each offering its own diploma: design, decorative art, and crafts; modelling and sculpture; commercial art; drawing and painting; the teachers' course; and architectural details. Each of the

4 Victoria School of Art and Design, Minutes Book 1887-1925 (Microfilm), MG 17 vol. 6 (P.A.N.S.), 24 April 1924, 23 April 1925 (hereinafter referred to as VSAD Minutes).

5 NSCA Annual Reports, 1926, 130; 1927, 122; 1928, 126; 1930, 131, 133; 1934, 155, 158; Halifax Star, 12 November 1932; Nova Scotia College of Art 1925-1926, Course Calendar (Halifax: N.S. College of Art, 1925), 1, 13; Elizabeth S. Nutt, Diary, September 25, 1933 to March 11, 1934, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 7 (P.A.N.S.), 10 October 1933.
sections, including drawing and painting, aimed at teaching students to become productive, income-earning art-workers.⁶

Serious students usually received diplomas from more than one section.⁷ All sections except the teachers' class required an elementary course covering what Nutt believed were the fundamentals of art: principles of pure design, analysis of historic ornament, an introduction to art history, color theory, perspective, basic anatomy, "the subjective world of appearance," "significance," and drawing in light and shade. In the elementary course, students worked in pencil, pastels, watercolors, and oils.

Another area that crossed all sections was Miss Nutt's lectures, which all students were expected to attend. As with much of her teaching, Nutt's lectures often aimed at preparing her students to be artist-workers. Her strategy was to first give lectures on what she called "eternal principles" of art. She followed these with abstract exercises based on those lectures, and then real-life projects, such as community posters or theatre sets, which put these eternal principles into practice.

In addition to Miss Nutt's lectures, students were required to attend, and make posters for, the public art history lectures organized by the College. James Falconer, Harry Piers, Eliza Ritchie, John Cameron, and Miss Nutt were some of the local people called upon to deliver the talks. The College also brought in guest speakers such as Stewart Dick of the National Gallery in London, England. Dick would

---


⁷ N.S. College of Art, Class Registers 1924-28, MG 17 vol. 10 no. 1-75 (P.A.N.S.); NSCA, Class Registers 1928-32, MG 17 vol. 11a no. 1-67 (P.A.N.S.); N.S. College of Art, Calendar 1931-32, MG 17 vol. 45 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.).
periodically undertake a Maritime tour, giving illustrated talks on art history throughout the region. Whenever the Art College could afford it, or at least convince other city organizations that together they could afford it, Dick put Halifax on his itinerary. The Nova Scotia Technical College had to provide the lantern to show Dick's slides, since purchasing one was beyond the Art College’s means.⁸

Maud Brown was another popular lecturer. Brown, whose husband was Eric Brown, Director of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, regularly came to Halifax, giving talks on art not only to the College but also to local community groups. Under Miss Nutt the Art College had reunited its ties with many of these groups, especially those connected with either art or the Local Council of Women. Many women active at the College were also active in these organizations. Norma Smith, for example, was president of the local chapter of the Canadian Authors' Association, and Nutt, who also considered herself a poet, served as president of a literary society called the Fortnightly Club. Both of these organizations, among others, invited Brown to their meetings, and she often accepted. Her trips to Halifax, along with those of her husband, were usually part of a larger Canadian art lecture tour sponsored by the National Gallery.⁹

---


⁹ NSCA Annual Reports, 1927, 123; 1928, 126; LCW Minutes Book, 13 February 1928; "The Authors’ Club Met Last Evening. Very Fine Program," Halifax Evening Mail, 12 December 1924; "Guest of Authors’ Association," Halifax Mail, 12 March 1927; "Women’s Organizations Doing Share for College of Art," Evening Mail, 20 April 1928, 18; "Mrs. Eric Brown Guest for (continued...)
The lectures and elementary course were not the only areas covered in multiple sections of the program. Five of the six sections, all except the teachers' course, were in turn divided into Groups I, II, III, and IV. In all sections, Group I constituted an elementary course. When students completed all four groups in a section, they received the diploma for that section. Often, a group would count for more than one section. For instance, Groups I, II, and III were the same for both the commercial art section and the drawing and painting section. Thus a student who received a diploma in drawing and painting could also receive another diploma by completing just Group IV in the commercial art section. It all added up to lots of diplomas, which Nutt used as much for marketing as for anything else. They were incentives for students and tangible measures of success for public consumption.

Crafts, like the lectures, were part of all sections, but they were especially emphasized in the section on design and decorative art. Although the 1925 Act had dropped the word "Design" from the school's name, that was by no means an indication that design was being dropped from the curriculum. On the contrary, dropping "Design" was actually an indication of just how important Miss Nutt felt design to be—so important that, to her, the word "art" itself implied design. To include the latter in the school's name would be redundant. To rationalize her thinking, Nutt once again drew upon her interpretation of history: "A generation or

9(...)continued)
Fortnightly," Halifax Mail, 26 April 1928; Norma E. Smith, Diary September 29, 1933 to May 29, 1934, MG 17 vol. 5 no. 4 (P.A.N.S.), 10 October 1933. On Maud Brown's lectures elsewhere in Canada, see: Maria Tippett, Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts Before the Massey Commission (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 86-87.

10 Nova Scotia College of Art 1925-1926.
two ago it was the custom to separate art and design in name and in fact, but with the advance of the last quarter century Art is recognized as one, so that the present title is all inclusive, 'Nova Scotia College of Art'.

Also, in the spirit of the arts and crafts movement, Nutt linked design and craft production together as one. Thus "design, decorative art, and crafts" constituted one subject, not three separate ones that happened to be together in one section. Under Brodie's tutelage, students in that section were able to learn batik, weaving, basketry, raffia work, leather work, stencilling, toymaking, jewellery, rug making, and the occasionally popular though always time-consuming production of lamp shades. Of course, restrictions on space and equipment, not to mention budget, left Brodie little chance to offer more than basic instruction in many of these crafts. While students were able to practice design skills on rudimentary crafts, there was no room for diverse, full scale craft activity.

Neither did the cramped quarters yield enough room for teaching much of the proposed clay modelling and sculpture section. This section was to follow standard academic lines. Students were to start by modelling classical architectural elements, along with details from antique casts, such as hands and heads. While beginning students would produce small clay plants and fruit, advanced students were to model figures from casts and life. However, this got little beyond the planning stage; there was simply no classroom space for it all. S.L. Shannon continued his occasional wood carving classes, and modelling classes were sporadically offered. But, as Nutt

---

11 "College of Art," Halifax Evening Echo, 8 May 1925.

12 NSCA Annual Reports, 1926, 130; 1928, 125; 1929, 130.
informed the directors, the modelling and sculpture classes would not be effectively
taught until new studio space was made available, and that was not immediately
forthcoming.  

Whereas space limited the sculpture section, budget hampered the
architectural program. Unable to afford a full-time instructor in architecture, the
College relied partly on the volunteer teaching of Andrew Cobb, a local architect
and member of the NSCA Board. After doing Group I of the drawing and painting
section, and Group II of design, architectural students drew with Cobb and did the
same life drawing offered to other sections. For their work in Group IV, the students
took the architectural drawing course in Halifax's evening technical school. Such
schools had been set up in Nova Scotia not to train students entering the job market,
but to enhance the skills of those who already had jobs. Thus, through its
architectural section, the Art School continued, in a small way, its earliest tradition
of serving the needs of local workers.

If any section were to produce employable artist-workers, commercial art, by
definition, would be it. Typifying an arts and crafts movement curriculum,
commercial art at the college emphasized design and creation of actual products.
Students were introduced to illustration, lettering, printmaking, interior decorating,

---

13 Nova Scotia College of Art 1925-1926; NSCA Annual Reports 1926, 128; 1927, 121;
1928, 125; 1929, 133.

14 Nova Scotia College of Art 1925-1926, 11. On Nova Scotia's evening technical schools,
see: "Provisions for Technical Education," chap. 3 in Royal Commission on Industrial Training
and Technical Education, Report of the Commissioners, part 4, chair James W. Robertson
Board of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax for the Year Ending 31st October 1930
(Halifax: n.p., 1930), 41-42, also, irregularly, in School Commissioners' Reports for other years.
landscape gardening, and, of course, poster making. Miss Nutt constantly sought opportunities for students to design posters for community organizations, especially those organizations in which she was actively involved. According to Nellie Adams, a prize winning student who later taught at the Art School, the posters were often done with house paint on large sheets of beaver board or plywood. The Grand Parade across the street from the School was a favorite place for display, and more than one poster became the victim of either the weather or a vandal’s match.

Art College students undertook other practical projects, such as illustrating book covers, providing theatre sets and costuming for local performances, creating Christmas cards, and designing patterns for the Nonia Knitting Industry in Newfoundland. Marguerite Porter of Yarmouth, for example, illustrated a children’s book of verse, and the Art College’s new seal was designed by Zeta Lovett, a student who was gaining a reputation as one of the College’s most original artists. These projects were usually undertaken as a community service, sometimes for pay but more often gratis, bringing recognition to the school but little monetary gain for the students. In all of these endeavors, Miss Nutt was putting into practice popularly held theories from the arts and crafts movement. As she boasted

\[15\] Nova Scotia College of Art 1925-1926; NSCA Annual Reports, 1925, 189-90; 1926, 128, 129; 1927, 121; 1928, 124, 125; 1929, 129.

\[16\] NSCA Annual Reports, 1925, 190; 1926, 129; 1927, 122; 1930, 127; 1936, 131.

\[17\] Nellie Adams, interviewed by author and Harold Pearse, 14, 15 September 1986, tape in possession of author.

\[18\] NSCA Annual Report 1925, 189-90; NSCA Annual Report 1926, 128-29.

\[19\] NSCA Annual Reports, 1926, 129; 1929, 129.
to the School's directors, "There has been no useless production or deadening half practice."\(^{20}\)

One way the commercial art section led to employment for at least a few students was by preparing them to teach at the Art College, it being customary for the school to hire its own. Porter and Lovett provide two examples. When they became senior students in 1928, both were hired to teach at the school, replacing Marjorie Robertson, who had left the NSCA's employ that year.\(^{21}\) Porter did not teach at the Art College very long. For one thing, surviving in Halifax on her six hundred dollars a year salary would only be possible with continuous financial help from her family in Yarmouth. She left NSCA after two years, but continued to be involved in the province's art community. She taught at Acadia University, was active in the Nova Scotia Society of Artists, and exhibited at the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and the Montreal Art Association. She married another former NSCA student, the respected Halifax painter LeRoy Zwicker. The Zwickers' prominent position in Nova Scotia's art milieu would keep the couple inevitably linked over the years to the affairs of the Nova Scotia College of Art.\(^{22}\)

Unfortunately, Zeta Lovett's promising career experienced a setback when she contracted tuberculosis and had to leave the College. Ill-health also plagued

\(^{20}\) NSCA Annual Report 1925, 189-90.


Lovett's replacement, Rhoda Jordan. Like many other NSCA students, Jordan moved to Ontario after graduating from the College. While there she was offered a design job, which she declined in order to return to Halifax to teach at the NSCA. She taught at the Art College for two years before her health problems led the Board to force her resignation in 1931.²³ In that year the NSCA staff was dealt an even more severe blow. Herbert Davison, who had begun his studies at the College in 1926, and who had graduated three years later, had been groomed by Nutt to teach at the College. Instead of the usual postgraduate NSCA course, Davison spent an award winning year studying fine arts at Yale. Shortly after returning to Halifax in the summer of 1931 to take up his position at the Art College, he and his father were killed when their car was struck by a train.²⁴

Ozzie Schenk's story was a happier one. Schenk is an ideal example of the type of artist-worker Miss Nutt wanted the commercial art section to produce. In 1926, during his first year in the Art College Saturday morning children's class, the local newspaper called the eleven-year-old Schenk a "Budding Genius."²⁵ That same year he was one of four thousand competitors who each submitted six artworks for a contest sponsored by a crayon manufacturer. Schenk won the runner-up prize.²⁶ He studied at the College for the next nine years, becoming a recognized


²⁶ NSCA Annual Report 1926, 129.
spokesperson for the student body and a student-teacher in etching. Upon graduation he secured a position at Gordon and Gotch, an advertising firm in London, England, initiating a design career that lasted decades.

As with the commercial art section, the drawing and painting section was also intended to yield graduates who could earn an income from their art. This section included work in the usual art genres, such as portraiture, still life, landscape, figure studies, and interiors. Because aesthetic concerns alone were not enough to make College students employable, those in this section also had to study applied design and craft production. The students drew from casts, memory, and life. Ever able to make do with a small budget, Miss Nutt had students take turns as models, often dressed in costume. Nutt also found a ready source of inexpensive and visually interesting models among the many people who hung around the unemployment office located on the first floor of the Art College building. On other occasions, local young men would generate a bit of excitement by posing partly clad for the predominantly female class. Before one such session, Norma Smith noted in her diary, "There'll be a man come tonight for the nude. He'll give us his shoulders tonight to his waist line." From the waist up was as nude as the male models could be, while female models had to be appropriately dressed.

---

27 Smith, Diary 1933-1934, 24 November, 1933; Oswald K. Schenk, letter to Elizabeth S. Nutt, 21 November 1932; Emily Orme [Nellie] Adams, letter to Elizabeth S. Nutt 27 November 1933; letters in NSCA papers, MG 17, (P.A.N.S.).

28 NSCA Annual Reports, 1934, 158-59; 1935, 132; 1936, 133; 1937, 147.

29 Norma E. Smith, Diary October 1, 1924 to March 20, 1925, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 6 (P.A.N.S.), 1 December 1924.
For the artist-worker, drawing and painting was not just a pastime but a profession. Nutt steered her best painters toward exhibition and sometimes toward teaching. Graduates could teach in their own private studios, though Nutt did not encourage such competition for the Art College among graduates who remained in Halifax. She did, however, hire some of her best students and graduates to teach at the College, thus providing both income for the student and, since students taught for relatively low pay, economic efficiency for the school. Miss Nutt and her full-time paid staff had neither the time nor the full range of skills to cover all subjects. Nutt was primarily a landscape painter, and she was most confident when she taught either this genre or still life. Although she did do a few portraits, she usually let her assistants provide instruction in that area. One of these assistants was John MacGillivray, whose father Dugald was a long-time director and future president of the College. John MacGillivray began as a student at the Art School during Nutt’s first year, 1919. Typical of many successful graduates of the Halifax Art School, he left to study at the Ontario College of Art after his VSAD graduation in 1923. He then returned to Halifax to seek portrait commissions. For a few years following the 1925 Act, MacGillivray became a “visiting master” at the Art College. In 1929, after a year as assistant teacher, he travelled to Europe, returning to the Art College in 1930 as a “visiting teacher.” He taught portraiture in the drawing and painting program, freeing Miss Nutt to teach from her strength, landscape and still life. Students such as MacGillivray thus did dual service to the College, providing
dependable instruction and proving that graduates could generate income from their art training.\footnote{30}

MacGillivray's was not a unique career path among Art College students. As we saw with Rhoda Jordan, others also graduated from the Art College, took further study in Ontario, and then returned to a teaching job at the NSCA. One of the more successful students doing this was Marjorie Tozer, who returned to Halifax from Ontario in 1926.\footnote{31} A 1922 graduate of Nutt's, Tozer had just spent four years at the Ontario College of Art. There she had studied with George Reid and her former Halifax teacher, Arthur Lismer. Tozer had done well in Toronto. By the end of her first year at O.C.A. she had won a scholarship and had become a teaching assistant. She also had her first exhibit when her work was included in the Ontario Society of Art annual exhibition in 1924. In fact, Tozer was to have her work hung in the Ontario Society exhibition every year for the next decade.\footnote{32}

After returning to Halifax, Tozer continued to exhibit, though at first only outside of the province. In November 1927 her painting, "The Harbour, St. John's Newfoundland," was accepted by the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.\footnote{33} During


\footnote{31} NSCA Annual Report 1927, 121.

\footnote{32} NSCA Annual Report 1926, 192; "Honors for Marjorie Tozer," Halifax Evening Mail, June 1924, MG 100 vol. 248 no. 16c (P.A.N.S.); "Marjorie Tozer, O.C.A. Comes from a Long Line of Family Artists," Halifax Mail, 21 March 1934.

\footnote{33} "Royal Canadian Academy Honors Local Artist," Halifax Mail, 23 November 1927.
the next year her work was exhibited in the annual Canadian Art Exhibition at the
National Gallery in Ottawa and the Spring Exhibition of the Art Association of
Montreal.\textsuperscript{34} With all this success, it was only a matter of time before her home
province recognized her potential. Finally, in November 1929, she opened her first
Nova Scotia exhibition, held at the Eaton Building on Barrington Street. Her show
consisted of a few portraits and a number of pastel landscapes done during her
summer tour through the province.\textsuperscript{35} In the following year, at a 1930 exhibition of
the Nova Scotia Society of Artists, one of Tozer's oil paintings was priced at five
hundred dollars.\textsuperscript{36} Along with this local success, she continued having her work
included in the National Gallery exhibitions.\textsuperscript{37}

Successful as she was, Tozer could not live well off her painting sales alone.
So, as did Porter, Lovett, MacGillivray, and other former students, Tozer took on a
teaching job at the Art College. She added prestige to the staff, being the first
NSCA teacher other than Nutt to have work hung by the RCA. Soon, other Art
College teachers also began to gain recognition outside of Halifax. In 1928,
Marguerite Porter and Zeta Lovett each had an etching accepted by the Society of
Canadian Painters Etchers and Engravers. Two other senior students, D.C. Mackay
and C. Richard Wilcox, each had three etchings accepted by the Society. In March
1930, Porter exhibited with the Montreal Art Association. In the same year Jean

\textsuperscript{34} NSCA Annual Report 1928, 125-26.

\textsuperscript{35} "An Interesting Announcement," Halifax Star, 23 November 1929; "Miss Marjorie Tozer,"
Halifax Mail, 23 November 1929.

\textsuperscript{36} "Many Visiting Exhibition at College of Art," Halifax Mail, 27 November 1930; "Another
'First Thing'," Halifax Star, 29 November 1930.

\textsuperscript{37} "Open Exhibit," Halifax Herald, 23 January 1931.
MacIntyre was hired as a junior teacher at the NSCA, a position she would keep until 1933. In 1932 MacIntyre had a work hung in the National Gallery exhibition, further increasing the prestige of the College, its staff, and Miss Nutt.\textsuperscript{38}

Miss Nutt was quick to praise these teachers for their accomplishments. She also ensured that similar praise found its way into the newspapers, letting the public know that, yes, the school’s graduates were making it in the art world. Despite her praise for them, Miss Nutt still saw Tozer, Porter, Lovett, MacIntyre, and other successful graduates as former students, not as artistic equals. Indeed, in Miss Nutt’s old school view, equals could not be tolerated at the College; there was only room for loyal subordinates. Tozer at first accepted these conditions. Her contribution was acknowledged at the end of the 1927-1928 year when Miss Nutt informed the directors that Tozer has “truly been my right hand.”\textsuperscript{39} Tozer’s loyalty lasted long enough for her to keep her position for another half dozen years.

Having replaced Frieda Creighton at the College, Tozer assumed responsibility for much of the section for the school teachers’ diploma. The program was aimed at elementary and high school in-service teachers, mostly from the Halifax-Dartmouth area, but also some from around the Maritimes. Toronto had prepared Tozer well to teach this section, since she had been able to observe firsthand Lismer’s pioneering work in this field. Upon leaving the VSAD in 1919, Lismer had taken over as vice principal of the Ontario College of Art, a position he held until 1927. Applying some of his Halifax experience, Lismer set up young


\textsuperscript{39} NSCA Annual Report 1928, 127.
people's Saturday morning art classes at the O.C.A. These classes evolved into a laboratory school where artist-educators such as Tozer developed their art education skills. While still in Toronto, Tozer had a chance to employ these skills by teaching at the Ontario College of Art summer school for teachers. Through these Ontario experiences Tozer not only brought fresh ideas to the NSCA teacher program, she also earned an invitation to teach the 1927 summer school for teachers in St. John's, Newfoundland.

In that same year, 1927, Nova Scotia began its own summer programs, including art instruction, for in-service teachers. In Halifax, the provincial Department of Education set up summer classes "for higher-class teachers and others wishing courses in cultural subjects," while in Truro the program was "for teachers of lower academic grade." The "higher" and "lower" designations referred to teacher licenses, not grade levels taught. Cooperating with the Department of Education, the Art College brought in Stewart Dick from England to lecture summer school students on the "Development of Painting in Europe." The College also offered the teachers a course on clay modelling taught by Dick's wife Dorothy, whose sculpture had been exhibited by the Royal Academy in London. The rest of the teachers' summer art program, conducted by Isabel Brodie, included lessons on color,

---


representation, design, lettering, and picture study. The Department of Education continued its summer art program until 1935. In subsequent years the College filled the void by providing teachers with summer sessions in outdoor sketching.

In addition to the summer program and regular teachers' course, the Art College instituted a correspondence course for teachers. The College also taught off-campus courses for nuns, an increasing number of whom began enrolling in the teachers' program. There was a hitch, though: one of the nuns' vows forbade them from taking classes outside of their own college. No problem. Whenever ten Catholics enrolled in a NSCA teachers' course, the Art College moved their class over to the Sisters' school on College Street in Halifax, inviting nuns from around Nova Scotia to join them.

At the Art College, Tozer's courses, and before hers Creighton's, were consistently able to draw from the ranks of in-service elementary and high school teachers. In fact, by 1929, seventy-eight of the 190 teachers in Halifax schools had been students at the College. Pressure was then put on the other 112 to enrol.

Early in the 1930-1931 school year, Halifax's Superintendent of Schools, G.K. Butler, wrote to his teachers about the NSCA course and informed them that "It is expected that all new teachers take this course and it is recommended that others who have

46 "Resume of History of the Nova Scotia College of Art."
48 "Resume of History of the Nova Scotia College of Art."
not taken it in the past should do so now."\textsuperscript{49} Not all teachers who attended did so with any great degree of dedication. Some did not take well to Miss Nutt's exceptionally strict methods. Overall, however, the teachers' course, Tozer, and Miss Nutt were well regarded. This regard was exemplified in 1929 when the Department of Education recommended and distributed throughout the province Nutt's second book, \textit{The "Why" in the Drawing Lesson}. Nutt dedicated the book "To my dear friends, the public school teachers of Halifax, Nova Scotia."\textsuperscript{50}

Part I of the teachers' course covered design, color theory, drawing, and art history. Part II covered the same subjects in more depth, and also provided instruction in still life painting, interior decoration, costume design, and the history of design. A main component of the teachers' course was blackboard drawing, and for years the students were tested annually on the boards in Eva Pye's classroom at the Acadian School. These blackboard sketches often included studies of light and reflections on different surfaces. Eliza Ritchie sometimes served as examiner of the sketches. The exercises came mostly from Miss Nutt who, in 1935, would incorporate them into her third book, \textit{The World of Appearance}. In addition, the blackboard

\textsuperscript{49} G.K. Butler, letter to teachers of Halifax public schools, 7 October 1930, in Nutt and Smith, \textit{Scrapbook June 4, 1930 to February 10, 1937}.

drawings were related to other school subjects, such as nature, science, geography, history, and local studies.\textsuperscript{51}

The art education trends promoted in professional publications were far from pervasive in Nova Scotian public schools, even though provincial art educators were aware of them. For example, by the early 1920s, Miss Nutt and Lila Publicover, a VSAD graduate who was assistant director of art for Halifax public schools, regularly subscribed to \textit{School Arts Magazine}, a Boston journal, founded in 1901, that disseminated many blossoming art education theories throughout North America.\textsuperscript{52} Furthermore, Miss Nutt's writing reflected ideas found in \textit{School Arts Magazine}, which also emphasized design and learning through production.

But the province's public schools had neither the materials nor the personnel to offer a well rounded art education; what they did offer was drawing. Much of the provincial public school art programs consisted of drawing exercises taken from commercial school texts. The \textit{Prang Drawing Books}, which had originated in Boston and had been adopted for use in Nova Scotia's public schools in 1911, were still in

\textsuperscript{51} Nellie Adams, interview; VSAD Annual Report, 1924, 196; NSCA Annual Reports, 1925, 130; 1926, 132; 1928, 127; 1931, 126; "Teachers Art Class Annual Exams"; "Art in Teaching," Halifax Daily Echo, 8 April 1925; "Noteworthy Work of Art Students at Acadian School," Halifax Mail, 31 March 1926; Elizabeth Styring Nutt, \textit{The World of Appearance, Part II} (Sheffield: Parker Bros., 1935). Although \textit{The World of Appearance Part II} contains an outline for Parts I and III, these were never published. For a review of \textit{Appearance}, see: Jean Hat, \textit{Halifax Mail}, 4 March 1936.

\textsuperscript{52} Author has copies of \textit{School Arts Magazine} from this era that belonged to Lila Publicover. References to Art School's subscription to \textit{School Arts Magazine} are found in: Norma E. Smith, Diary 1924-1925, 14 February 1925; Smith, Diary 1933-1934, 7, 11 March 1934; Frederic H. Sexton, letter to William L. Payzant, 10 December 1929, MG 17 Series A, vol. 23 (P.A.N.S.).
use. The other recommended school drawing books were the Augsburg series, also hailing from Boston. First published in 1901, D. R. Augsburg’s texts were adopted in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and then revised by the two provinces in the 1930s. The students’ task was to copy the drawings found in the texts. Some schools had class sets of these books, while in other schools teachers were expected to reproduce the drawings on the board for the students to copy. Throughout the province, most schools offered only this limited form of drawing education.

Despite the Art College’s teachers’ course, the Halifax public school drawing program was not necessarily of a higher quality than that found in the rest of the province.

53 The Graphic Drawing Books (Halifax: The Prang Company, 1914). By 1921 the Prang series is still listed in Manual of the Public Instruction Acts and Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction of Nova Scotia (Halifax: Wm. MacNab and Son, 1921), 255. I have copies of the series used by a teacher in Shelburne County, N.S., with student drawings and certificates dating as late as the 1940s.


55 Interpretations of school art programs at the time are derived from a series of interviews done with people who were Nova Scotia public school students, Normal School students, and then teachers between the mid-1910s to the 1930s. Interviews were conducted in June 1985. Tapes and notes in possession of author. Interviewees include: Adie Crosby, Evelyn Crosby, Louis Gower, Maxine Hatfield, Delta Hooper, Evelyn Moore, Viva Morehouse, Francela Nagle, Jane Peck, Fran Snow, Florie Tibert, and Helen Walsh. Interpretations are derived also from drawing texts and art education texts used in the province, a collection of which are in the possession of the author.
province. In Halifax, however, travelling art teachers, moving from school to school, made drawing available to a higher percentage of students. Isabel Brodie supervised drawing in all of the city's grades seven and eight classes. She also taught drawing to all of the grade nine classes, having inherited that job after her classmate in the first VSAD teachers' course, Kate Hill, resigned as drawing teacher for the city's Academy and high schools. Publicover supervised drawing in the kindergarten and grades one to six. Every month Brodie and Publicover each saw hundreds of students. Their supervision required a monthly visit to each class in the city, where work was inspected and a demonstration lesson was given. For the rest of the month the classroom teacher was expected to carry on the drawing lessons, and thus many of these teachers turned to the NSCA's teachers' course for assistance.56

Although schools offered only a limited art program, public school students could take a richer art program offered by Art College student teachers on Saturday mornings. Dormant since the days of Lismer, Saturday morning art classes were re-instituted by the NSCA in 1931. The Saturday classes, which were open to children between the ages of eight and fourteen, were not taught in the Art College building—there was not enough space. Instead, the classes were held in selected public schools in Dartmouth and Halifax, and continued there until Miss Nutt retired in 1943. These branch classes were taught by Art College teachers and student teachers, who would meet once with Miss Nutt at the beginning of the term. At this

56 Lila Publicover, "Report-Director of Drawing," Appendix 2, in Report of Board of School of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax for the Year Ending 31st. October, 1934 (Halifax, 1934), 34-35; Margaret Sewell, series of interviews by author, August 1982, tape in possession of author. Sewell was a student of Nutt's and taught art in the Halifax school system from the Nutt era until the 1960s. In her interview she describes Halifax art education from the days of her childhood until her retirement.
meeting Miss Nutt would give the teachers a whole term’s outline of student assignments, which were, for the most part, exercises from her books. Although the teachers had to put up with Miss Nutt’s circumlocution in her writing—with her generous use of flowery phrases and her sparing use of periods—they likely discovered a number of very practical and easy-to-follow lessons in her books. In fact, teachers today might discover the same thing.

The College could not claim its teachers' program fostered jobs, since very few graduates ever found positions as public school art teachers. True, the Art School had graduated every single Halifax public school art teacher prior to World War Two, but that was not saying much in terms of jobs. Halifax schools had created a one person art department in 1904, hiring VSAD graduate Isabel Brodie for the position. A few years later the art department expanded to two people, with Lila Publicover becoming Brodie’s assistant. Together, Brodie and Publicover were responsible for all students in grades one to nine in the city. By the 1950s, the department had grown to only four teachers. Over the decades, people filling these scarce positions tended to hold on to them for years, and sometimes decades, so that there was very little turnover. And outside of Halifax, there were just no full-time art teachers at all in the province’s schools. Still, the Art College's teachers' program had very practical ends. Its primary role was to work with classroom teachers, who

---

57 NSCA Annual Reports, 1932, 122-23; 1933, 153; 1934-35, 131; 1935-36, 133; 1936-37, 147; 1942-43, 136; 1943-44, 140; Norma E. Smith, Diary October 1, 1931 to May 3, 1932, MG 17 vol. 5 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.), 24 October 1931; Elizabeth Styring Nutt, letter to Principal of Bloomfield School, Halifax, 1 November 1935 (P.A.N.S.); Nutt, letter to Secretary Board of School Commissioners Halifax, 8 October 1936 (P.A.N.S).
were mandated to teach art, and train them for a skill that was necessary for their work.58

At least in part, then, each of the Art College’s six sections provided practical education related to the world of work. The curriculum, along with the successful graduates, backed up Nutt’s claim that the Art College was really an apprentice school. Given this visible vocational emphasis, Nutt was able to garner enough support to keep the College, if not rich, at least alive. The bulk of the support came from the province and the city, who every year were convinced once again that the College was indeed deserving of funding. In 1925, significant support also came from the federal government, which accepted Nutt’s claim that art could be taught for vocational ends.

The federal funding, in fact, was explicitly dependent on the College being designated an institution of vocational education. To find out why and how this designation came to be, we have to go back to 1910, the year when the Dominion government set up the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education. Chaired by James Wilson Robertson, a dairyman who was serving as the first principal of the Macdonald College of Agriculture near Montreal, the Commission’s mandate was to inquire into “the needs and present equipment of Our Dominion of Canada respecting industrial training and technical education, and into the system and methods of technical instruction obtaining in other countries.”59 Technical education, they concluded, was important to both the social and economic

58 Margaret Sewell, interview; Publicover, “Report-Director of Drawing.”

59 Robertson, Royal Commission on Industrial Training, part 1 (1913), v.
advancement of the Dominion, and it was deserving of increased federal support. Although the Commission issued their report in 1913, it was not until after the war in 1919 that the federal government actually committed money. On July 7th, 1919, the federal government passed "An Act for the Promotion of Technical Education in Canada," empowering the Dominion Department of Labor to fund provinces for technical education. The grants were to be spread over ten years, until 1929, during which time Nova Scotia could get up to $662,000. There was one catch: the province had to match the funds.60

The year the Act was passed was Nutt’s first as VSAD principal, and neither she nor the Board considered the Art School to be a technical institution eligible for such a grant. By 1922, however, one director, Frederic Sexton, thought that perhaps it could be. Sexton had first joined the Board under Lismer’s principalship, and his wife May had also spent two years as a director.61 He knew from experience that the Art School’s future was far from secured. He also knew that, with the right political maneuvering, the school might be able to tap into the federal funds. As principal of the Nova Scotia Technical College and the province’s Director of Technical Education, Sexton was in a good position to direct this maneuvering. In


61 VSAD Annual Reports, 1917, 204; 1921, 202; 1922 194.
fact, back in 1910, federal Labour Minister Mackenzie King had wanted Sexton to head the Royal Commission on Industrial Training. King reconsidered because Sexton was still an American citizen, but both Frederic and May Sexton contributed to the hearings and final report under Robertson's chairmanship.  

In early 1922, Sexton first suggested that the Art School might qualify for the federal grant. With that goal in mind, he had the Board place the VSAD within his provincial Department of Technical Education. Unfortunately, by 1924, the federal government had still not declared the Art School eligible for the grant. But during that year, Sexton suddenly had further reason to have the VSAD declared a technical institution. A.H. MacKay, having served thirty-two years as VSAD president, stepped down from the position, and Sexton replaced him. It was Sexton, therefore, who presided over the Board that brought about the 1925 Art College act. It was also Sexton who was president when, in February 1925, the Dominion Department of Technical Education finally accepted the Art School as meeting the requirements entitling it to the federal grant. The 1925 Act, then, can be seen as part of the campaign to strengthen the school's role in meeting

---

62 Guildford, "Coping with De-industrialization," 74; May Sexton, "As to Women's Work in Industries," chap. 7 in Royal Commission on Industrial Training part 4; See also Frederic Sexton's contributions in part 4 of Royal Commission on Industrial Training.

63 VSAD Minutes, 30 March 1922.


vocational and technical needs. Sexton’s goals for technical education meshed well with Nutt’s ambition to foster artist-workers. Thus, one of the three purposes of the College outlined in the 1925 Act was “The training of students in all branches of applied arts in the more artistic trades and manufactures.”

Because the federal government would only match provincial funds, the NSCA Board devised a plan whereby the city grant of $720 was combined with a provincial grant of $1,000, thus securing a federal grant of $1,720. The whole scheme almost fell apart when both the City Council and the Provincial Legislature hesitated to continue their usual grants to the College. Why spend money now, officials asked, when the institution would likely collapse after the federal money ran out in 1929? Not for the first time, the College was threatened with closure, but a strong lobbying effort, supported by the local press, the art community, and the College’s political friends, secured the funds from all three levels of government.

For the next four years, the Art College continued to receive $1,720 in matching funds from the federal government. When 1929 finally arrived, and federal grants were scheduled to dry up, Ontario was the only province that had used its entire allotment. Nova Scotia, in fact, had spent less than half of what had been budgeted for the grants. Left over was $375,000 that Nova Scotia had failed to match in its technical education spending throughout the province. Finding this amount too much to simply give up, Nova Scotia joined other provinces in

---

66 An Act Respecting the Victoria School of Art and Design.

67 “Art School’s Successful Year,” Halifax Evening Echo, 2 May 1925; “Killing the Prophets,” Halifax Evening Echo, 18 March 1926; “Rejoicing Over Continuance of Grant to College,” Halifax Mail, 20 March 1926; Elizabeth S. Nutt, letter to E.N. Rhodes, 19 April 1926, in NSCA papers, MG 17, (P.A.N.S.).
successfully lobbying the federal government to allow another five years to spend the money. When that extension was up, the federal government agreed to another two years of funding, so that in the end, the federal grant contributed $1,720 a year to the College from 1925 until the fund was depleted in 1936.  

In Miss Nutt's unceasing promotion of the College as an apprentice school for artist-workers, she noted with some accuracy that historically, "this apprentice aspect of Fine Art has always been an ideal of the College, as it leads to the highest results in creating sound and confident craftsmen." Nutt always made it a point to inform the directors about confident craftworkers and artists like Schenk, Porter, and Lovett. Keeping track of successful graduates, she reported their successes each year to the directors and to the Superintendent of Education. It was these students who seemingly justified Miss Nutt's claim that the College was training much needed art workers.

Despite the claims, though, many NSCA students did not go on to secure a career in arts or crafts. Some became window dressers, but Halifax businesses

---


70 NSCA Annual reports, 1927, 123; 1928, 125-26; 1929, 130-31; 1931, 125-26.
needed only a few of these.\textsuperscript{71} According to the census, in 1921 there were only four "decorators, drapers, and window dressers" in the city.\textsuperscript{72} Over the next two decades the number increased to only ten, all male.\textsuperscript{73} For some of the crafts taught at the College, demand for handcraft-workers throughout Nova Scotia decreased with industrialization. For example, while the College continued to teach rug making and weaving, hand weavers had largely been replaced by operators of textile machinery. Back in the mid-nineteenth century, hand weaving was a viable occupation, with 196 Nova Scotians listing it as their primary occupation in the 1861 census.\textsuperscript{74} Sixty years later in 1921, at just about the time Brodie was introducing weaving and rug making into the College curriculum, there were only 124. Of these, none lived in Halifax, the city from which the College drew most of its students.\textsuperscript{75} Brodie's courses did not prevent the hand weaving trade from decreasing even further. By 1931, only forty-nine Nova Scotians listed weaving as their primary occupation.\textsuperscript{76}

Neither did the College's modest offerings in clay and pottery effectively stem the decline of that craft in Nova Scotia during this period. In 1911, with the china

\textsuperscript{71} Nellie Adams, interviewed by author and Harold Pearse, 14 & 15 September 1986, tape in possession of author; Marguerite Porter Zwicker, interview. Both Adams and Zwicker said that few graduates received art-related jobs, and both mentioned window dressing and teaching as the two main jobs.

\textsuperscript{72} Occupations, vol. 4 of Sixth Census of Canada, 1921 (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1929).

\textsuperscript{73} Gainfully Occupied by Occupations, Industries, Etc., vol. 7 of Eighth Census of Canada, 1941 (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1946).

\textsuperscript{74} Census of Nova Scotia, Taken March 30, 1861 (Halifax: E.M. McDonald, 1862).

\textsuperscript{75} Occupations, 1929.

\textsuperscript{76} Occupations and Industries, vol. 7 of Seventh Census of Canada, 1931 (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1936).
painting fad still going strong, forty-eight people in the province worked as "pottery, glass and china makers." Interestingly, while china painting as a hobby was predominantly a female activity, there was only one woman generating income from pottery. By 1921, the number of potters and china makers listed in the census was down to twenty, with still only one female. Over the next decade the number decreased even further, with only seven Nova Scotians, all men and all from places other than Halifax, listing themselves as "potters—glazers and decorators" in the 1931 census.

Of course, Nutt's artist-workers may have listed themselves more generally under "artists and teachers" instead of under a specific craft or art medium. If so, their numbers were still small and getting smaller. The 1890-1891 census recorded only sixty-seven Nova Scotians as artists or art teachers, the majority of whom were women. Almost all of these teachers were outside of the public school system, working primarily from private studios. By the 1931 census the number had decreased to forty-four, and women had become the minority, totalling twenty, half of whom were in Halifax. Every other twentieth century census prior to World War II recorded even fewer Nova Scotian artist-teachers than there were in 1931.

---

77 Occupations of the People, vol. 6 of Fifth Census of Canada, 1911 (Ottawa: J. del Tache, 1915).


79 Occupations and Industries, 1936.

80 Occupations, 1893.

81 Occupations and Industries, 1936.
In Halifax, the employment situation for artist-workers was not substantially better than in the rest of the province. The 1921 census listed only seven people in the city as being "artists and teachers of art." This number increased to twenty-three in 1931, but fell back to nineteen a decade later. Overall in 1921, the census listed only ninety-two people employed in Halifax in art-related jobs, and that is if we use a generous interpretation of what constitutes such a job. Along with the eleven decorators and teachers, the ninety-two included: "designers and draftsmen"; "engravers and lithographers"; "photographers"; "pottery, glass and china makers"; and "printing and photography." By 1941, this had increased slightly to 116 people, but this still constituted less than one half of one percent of the civilian workforce. Furthermore, much of this increase took place in fields related to photography, for which the Art College offered no courses. If photography is not included, art-related jobs actually decreased during Nutt's tenure, from sixty-nine people in 1921 to sixty-three in 1941.\(^\text{82}\)

Nutt's vocational rationales for art education, therefore, had as much to do with merchandising a program as it did with objective analysis of market conditions. Despite efforts by Nutt and Sexton, the promises of the 1925 Art College were never fully realized. Training labor did not, in itself, create a demand for that labor. On the other hand, the minimal support given to the Art College was not enough to allow it to really test Miss Nutt's argument that a proper art program could generate a strong employment environment for artist-workers. Furthermore, many NSCA students and graduates displayed strong dedication to their work. While the school

\(^{82}\) Occupations, 1929; Occupations and Industries, 1936; Gainfully Occupied by Occupations, 1946.
did not achieve all that Miss Nutt had envisioned, it did foster a climate of support for arts and crafts that is still found in Nova Scotia today. Because the institution generated this interest in the arts among so many Nova Scotians, it is clear that many of the province’s art and craft traditions sprouted from the Victoria School of Art and Design and the Nova Scotia College of Art.
CHAPTER TEN

Friends and Factions:
The Art College and the Community, 1919-1944

Under Elizabeth Styring Nutt's principalship, Nova Scotia's art school became more vibrant than it had ever been. Enrolments remained high; income, though ever precarious, was steady; and community support, though never overwhelming, provided Nutt with rallying troops whenever they were needed. Well known among community groups, both arts-related and otherwise, Nutt could always find an audience to hear her calls for lobbying efforts or fund-raising campaigns. And it was a two-way street, with the Art College, as we have seen, serving the community through design and applied art production.

This chapter looks at the community's role in supporting the Art College during Nutt's principalship. We look first to groups not specifically related to art. We find that, among these, the strongest supporters of the Art College continued to be its earliest promotors: Halifax's women's organizations. Next, looking at the art community, we see that Nutt was, for a while, the acknowledged leader. She spoke for the community with authority, organized their exhibitions, nurtured their out-of-province art-world contacts, and shepherded young Nova Scotian artists into careers. She used her strengths of assured confidence and a resolute manner to forge as viable an art community as the city had ever seen. These strengths, however, were also Nutt's weakness. So viable was the art community she created, that sectors of it were able to leave her nest and still survive. As we will see, the same resolute
manner that allowed Nutt to build such a strong community hampered her ability to grant that community its independence.

Never the most financially secure of institutions, the Art College always gave Nutt opportunities to rally support by claiming looming budgetary crisis. The scheduled drying up of federal money in 1929, the year that the Act for the Promotion of Technical Education in Canada was to stop matching provincial funds for the College, was one such opportunity. Although the grant ended up being extended until 1936, the initial extension was not announced until May 1929, giving Nutt opportunity to take full advantage of its impending termination. With the federal government about to abandon its financial support for the College, she pleaded for the community to double its efforts to ensure that the school remained viable. Her message was repeated in countless lectures and newspaper articles: adequate facilities and a secure source of funding were needed to prepare for the eventual cutoff from federal money. When the grant was finally extended, it did not deter Miss Nutt’s pleas. Continuing to use every opportunity to mention the urgency, Nutt was adept at steering any discussion toward the subject.¹ Even in press articles on the Art College’s Halloween parties, Miss Nutt would comment on how "the staff and students were bent on ignoring the shabbiness [of the building] and somehow contrived to make their guests forget it." She wanted Haligonians to realize

that "nobody would expect to find so old and worm-eaten a building used as a College of Art in any part of the new world".2

Nutt tried every angle to get a new building for the College and provincial art gallery. She wrote to the newspapers, the city, the province, Ottawa, the National Gallery. She questioned the Carnegie Foundation of New York on why they were not lending support to the College. After all, the Foundation was granting money to other post-secondary art facilities, such as Halifax's Dalhousie University, which had received a Carnegie grant to equip a room with illustrations and books to encourage the study of art. Moreover, a 1927 Carnegie grant to Acadia University had allowed the university to increase the status of its art courses to a "Department of Art." Why, Nutt asked, were these philanthropists not directing any money toward the Art College? To pursue the question even further, Nutt wrote a letter to the industrialist Henry Ford in 1930 to see if he would share some of his millions to aid the School. He declined.3

---

2 "Costume Dance at Nova Scotia College of Art," *Halifax Evening Echo*, 18 December 1926.

Nutt's campaign did receive strong support from at least one sector: women and their organizations throughout the province. Since the early days of Leonowens and Kenny, the Art School and the local women's groups had given each other consistent mutual support. Some of the women who had fostered these original links, such as Edith Jessie Archibald and Ella and Eliza Ritchie, were still very active during the 1920s. The two Ritchie sisters, for example, often wintered in Italy, and always brought back useful gifts for the Art School. In fact, Miss Nutt reported that the Ritchies never arrived empty-handed when they made their frequent visits to the School. It was largely due to their donations that the half dozen books that Miss Nutt found on her first visit to the school grew into a functional library. The sisters' generosity to the Art School continued throughout their lives, with each leaving five hundred dollars to the school in their wills.

Another of the many dependable contributors to the College was Nutt's close friend, Dr. Jane Heartz Bell. Like Eliza Ritchie, Bell had successfully achieved academic credentials not usually awarded to women of her day. Born in Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, the daughter of a Methodist minister, Bell attended the Women's

---

4 "Victoria School of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1919," in Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia for the Year Ended 31 July 1919, A.H. MacKay (Halifax: King's Printer, 1920), 185 (hereinafter referred to as VSAD Annual Report(s) [year(s)]). Gifts from one or both of the Ritchie sisters are acknowledged in the following VSAD Annual Reports and NSCA Annual Reports: 1920, 185; 1921, 204; 1922, 195; 1924, 195; 1925, 191, 193; 1926, 131; 1927, 123; 1929, 133; 1930, 128; 1931, 129; 1934, 157. See references to the Ritchies and their support of the Art School in Norma E. Smith's and Elizabeth S. Nutt's Diaries, MG 17 vols. 5 and 44 (P.A.N.S.). See also Elizabeth S. Nutt, "A Romantic Chapter in the History of the Provincial Art School," Halifax Evening Mail, 31 December 1924.

5 "Will of Late Miss Ella Ritchie," Halifax Chronicle, 23 May 1928; "Dr. E. Ritchie Passes: Real Loss to City," obituary, Halifax Mail, 5 September 1933.

6 NSCA Annual Reports, 1926, 131; 1927, 123; 1928, 126; 1930, 128; 1931, 129; 1934, 156; 1935, 132; 1936, 132.
Medical College of the New York Infirmary, from which she graduated in 1893. She then did post-graduate work at the John Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore, and set up practice in Chicago. Returning to Halifax in 1898, Bell specialized in diseases of women and children. Retiring from medical practice in 1929, she remained very active in community affairs, including the affairs of the Art College. For example, she took NSCA courses, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1930, and acted as a confidante to Miss Nutt. Bell was also an early member of the Nova Scotia Society of Artists, and she frequently included her work in their exhibitions.

As in the days of Leonowens and the years leading to the Great War, Halifax women banded together in clubs, nearly all of which were linked through the Local Council of Women (LCW). Minnie Stead, Halifax’s LCW Convenor for Fine Arts since 1916, helped oversee the organization's support for the Art College. She ensured, for example, that the LCW provided annual prizes for the school's students. Through connections such as Stead and the Ritchies, Nutt was able to become immediately involved with the Local Council of Women in Halifax. In January 1923, for example, Nutt became the Convener of Fine Arts for the LCW, succeeding Minnie Stead, who had taken on the position in 1916. Nutt did not attend many LCW meetings, and Stead soon regained the position, but the episode demonstrates how closely Nutt was

---


tied to the LCW.\textsuperscript{9} So closely, in fact, that Nutt's home in Halifax—she also maintained a summer residence in Sheffield—was a big corner room on the first floor of the Local Council of Women House at the intersection of Young Avenue and Inglis Street on the city's posh south side. She lived there for most of her Halifax stay, moving into an apartment with her closest friend, NSCA secretary Norma Smith, toward the end.\textsuperscript{10}

The house had been willed to the LCW by George Wright, a Halifax man who went down with the Titanic in 1912.\textsuperscript{11} The city exempted the house from taxes, making it economically easy for the LCW to keep it.\textsuperscript{12} There were occasional debates over how Council House should be used. For example, in 1919, the year Nutt moved in, some argued that the house should be for local young women who wanted to work and be independent, while others wanted to use the house as a residence to attract domestic servants, who were in short supply in the city.\textsuperscript{13} The "domestic service problem," as they often referred to it, had been an issue with the

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{9} On Stead's return as Convener, see LCW Minutes, 17 May, 12 November 1923.


\textsuperscript{11} LCW, re: Will of George Wright, 1975, MG 20 Vol. 1558 (P.A.N.S.); "Express Appreciation of the Late Mr. Wright's Noble Gift," Halifax Mail, 11 May 1912.

\textsuperscript{12} "Exemption from Taxation: City Council Last Night Placed Local Council of Women on Same Footing as Other Philanthropic Bodies," Halifax Mail, 14 April 1913.

\textsuperscript{13} LCW Minutes Book, 19 June, 17 July 1919.
LCW both before and after the Great War. To attract immigrant women to Halifax as servants, the LCW since 1903 had run a Women's Welcome Hostel in a leased building on 327 Brunswick Street, located in Halifax's north side. Like many other buildings, the Hostel was destroyed by the Halifax Explosion in 1917.

Following the war, and especially among the older LCW women, Council House seemed a suitable place to house a new hostel. In the end, Council House was used for various purposes by LCW members and sister organizations. The LCW rented rooms to live in, for women such as Nutt and Smith, while sister societies paid nominal fees to use the house for their events. The rent and fees paid all costs of maintaining Council House, and so it never burdened the LCW budget.

---


Given the long-standing ties between the LCW and the Art School, LCW member Edith Jessie Archibald may have remembered the Local Council meeting in May 1895 when Leonowens, as a representative of the Victoria School of Art and Design, initiated the drive to have women each donate a dollar to support the Local Council of Women in Halifax.\(^{17}\) Now in April 1928, Archibald witnessed a similar motion; but with the roles reversed. The LCW joined forces with the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) and the Catholic Women's League to launch a campaign to have every woman in the province donate a dollar to the Art College building fund.\(^{18}\)

The 1928 women's campaign was actually part of a longer LCW effort to help secure a new building for the Art College. The LCW's highly active role in the school had waned a bit during the Great War, when many of the women made a significant commitment to the war effort. But in the summer of 1921, with City Council once again grumbling about discontinuing the Art School grant, the LCW reclaimed its leadership role in supporting the school. The promises of vocational and technical education had never served women in the way it did men. With their career and educational options more limited, Halifax women had more reason to continue linking art with employment opportunities. Immediately following the war, the LCW renewed its activity in various art and craft arenas, such as supporting exhibitions, offering prizes for art and music in the public schools, and promoting

\(^{17}\) LCW, Minutes Book August 1894-March 1896, MG 20 vol. 535 no. 1 (P.A.N.S.), 14 May 1895.

craft production and sales by women.\textsuperscript{19} Eliza Ritchie, Minnie Stead, Edith Smith, Agnes Dennis, and other LCW women once again began talking about the Art School as if it were one of the LCW's own projects. They formed delegations to City Council in support of the school, helping to secure the grant for one more year.\textsuperscript{20} At their annual meeting in January 1922, the 125 delegates present agreed to organize a series of LCW entertainments to raise money for the Art School.\textsuperscript{21} A few days later, Nutt gave an address at the provincial conference of the Nova Scotia Council of Women. Following her talk, the delegates passed a supportive motion: "We should provide for one adequate Art School for the Province or the strengthening of the present one."\textsuperscript{22}

Throughout 1922, the LCW followed through on its resolution to raise funds.\textsuperscript{23} By their 1923 annual meeting, they had become more ambitious. Having temporarily taken over Minnie Stead's position as Fine Arts Convenor, Miss Nutt headed a committee that included Art School supporters such as Eliza Ritchie, Isabel and Margaret Brodie, and Edith Smith. At the LCW's annual meeting, Miss Nutt put forward a successful motion on "A New Home for the Victoria School of Art and Design." The LCW struck a committee to carry out the motion, ambitiously charging them to raise forty thousand dollars for the school's new home. Using a strategy

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{20} LCW, Minutes Book, 21 April, 16 June, 17 November, 15 December 1921.
\bibitem{21} LCW, Minutes Book, 22 January, 1922.
\bibitem{22} LCW, Minutes Book, 26 January 1922.
\bibitem{23} LCW, Minutes Book, 16 February, 16 March, 15 July, 30 November, 1922.
\end{thebibliography}
bepitting the Art School's origins as a memorial to Queen Victoria's Jubilee, the LCW linked their campaign with creating a "Women's War Memorial Building" to house Halifax's Art School. As in decades past, support between the LCW and the Art School remained mutual. In June of 1923, for example, the VSAD helped organize an LCW fund-raising exhibition at the Council House. Miss Nutt took charge of organizing paintings, Elizabeth Brodie oversaw crafts, Edith Smith loaned some of her work, and Alice Hagen displayed some of her china. The event was successful enough to lead to a similar exhibition the following year.

Together over the next few years, the LCW women wrote appeals to government, issued press releases, and organized public meetings to promote the need of a new building for the College and for the provincial gallery. The LCW gained support from other community groups, especially those that had women as active members. These included, of course, local arts organizations, in which women usually outnumbered men, with many of these women, such as Marjorie Tozer, Edith Smith, and Isabel Brodie, taking on leadership roles. The campaign was both local and provincial. In October 1925, for example, seventeen Halifax organizations sent representatives to a public meeting called by the LCW for the Art College and gallery building fund. A month later, the LCW and Miss Nutt made a plea for support at the Nova Scotia Council of Women annual meeting. And again a year

---

25 LCW, Minutes Book, 17 May 1923; 17 January 1924.
later, in November 1926, the provincial Council invited Nutt to speak at its meeting in New Glasgow.\textsuperscript{26}

During the fund-raising campaign there was scarcely a women's group, or any other group for that matter, in the city that did not have Miss Nutt in for a lecture. She spoke to nurses, teachers, students, labour unions, professionals, the Overseas Club, bureaucrats, clergy, loyalists, radio audiences, Catholics, Protestants, young business women, authors, musicians, poets, artists, Rotary Clubs, children... anybody. Norma Smith was also skilled in getting the College put on the agenda of different meetings, especially those of literary organizations in which she often took on administrative functions. Regardless of Nutt's advertised topic, one point was always made clear: the province needed more art education and more art workers, and in order to get these things it needed a properly housed and equipped Nova Scotia College of Art.\textsuperscript{27}

Men in the community also played important roles in the fund-raising. Dalhousie professor and art history lecturer James Falconer, Art College director G.E. Faulkner, and Provincial Museum Curator Harry Piers, a member of the first Victoria School of Art and Design class in 1887, were always willing to assist in any effort to re-house the Art College and find a home for a provincial art gallery. However, it was the women who waged the most visible campaign, taking their cause not only to

\textsuperscript{26} Halifax Echo, 11 October 1925; Halifax Evening Mail, 3 November 1925; Halifax Evening Echo, 30 November 1925; Halifax Evening Mail, 30 November 1925; Halifax Morning Chronicle, 26 November 1926.

\textsuperscript{27} Halifax Mail, 17 November 1924; "Graduate Nurses Association Meet," Halifax Evening Echo, 27 October 1926. For other notices, clippings, letters, and other ephemera related to the building fund campaign, see: Scrapbook of the Local Council of Women of Halifax, 1927-83, MG 20 vol. 1848 no. 1 (P.A.N.S.); Nutt and Smith, Scrapbook 1924-1933; idem, Scrapbook March 20, 1933 to March 20, 1936, MG 17 vol. 45 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.).
government officials but also to the community. With help from the Ritchie sisters, Edith Archibald, and others, Minnie Stead headed the fund-raising committee.28 The 1928 dollar-per-woman drive built up the momentum. Although few women outside of the local initiating organizations donated the dollar, the scheme generated substantial publicity. In the drive’s first month Maud Brown came from Ottawa and gave a series of well attended benefit lectures for the cause. That same month the Halifax IODE persuaded their provincial chapter to endorse the campaign at an annual meeting.29 As in earlier years, the LCW used its connections throughout the province, getting Miss Nutt on the agenda, for example, at a Pictou meeting organized by the LCW there.30

All of these events sparked supportive headlines, bolstering Miss Nutt’s confidence that the College would have a new building in the 1929-1930 school year. It did not, but the delay would be only a short one, she affirmed. Though the new building had not yet materialized by the 1930 graduation, Miss Nutt felt that, "the vision once so far off, and so tinged with the roseate hues of dreamland is so surely becoming part of our consciousness that there will be no insupportable surprise when during the coming year, it will be an accomplished fact."31

---

28 Edith Jessie Archibald, "Plea for New Modern Library and Halifax Art Gallery is Made," letter to the editor Halifax Mail, 1 January 1928. A 3 October 1932 letter to Stead, in Nutt and Smith, comps., Scrapbook, addresses her as the Chair of the Fund Raising Committee for the building fund.


31 NSCA Annual Report 1930, 129.
The school year came and went, and still no building. Nevertheless, the fund-raising committee continued to work with increased visibility. Sympathetic journalists, such as the Halifax Mail's art and drama critic Alice Houston, kept the College in front of the public eye. Early in 1931, for example, the Halifax Star ran a large banner headline about the "Wrangle Over Art College." The city was being pressured to grant the College a piece of land on the Robie Street Camp Hill site, but refused. With newspapers coming out strongly in favor of the College, however, the city yielded, granting the Camp Hill land if approval could be obtained from the Minister of National Defense. Although approval was received, the College was never built there, and the land was eventually used for Queen Elizabeth High School.\(^\text{32}\)

Later in 1931 the women tried new gimmicks. On a chosen Sunday in late November, they organized clergy in various churches to use their sermons to call for aid to the College. That same month the women's group launched a new campaign that asked citizens to buy one to one thousand bricks for the College at a dollar apiece. If eighty thousand bricks were bought the new school could be built.\(^\text{33}\) Miss Nutt even appealed to children to buy bricks. She had been a regular contributor to "Farmer Smith's Rainbow Club," a children's page written by Laura Carten for the Halifax Evening Mail. Under Miss Nutt's direction, Carten's column

\(^{32}\) NSCA Annual Report 1932; "Wrangle Over Art College"; "Mayor Agrees to Place for Art College," Halifax Mail, 18 February 1931.

\(^{33}\) Halifax Mail, 23 November 1931; "Large Number of Leading Local Women to Head up Campaign for New Building," Halifax Mail-Star, 19 November 1931. Each of the Halifax papers ran various stories on the "brick" campaign, see especially issues between 23-28 November 1931.
provided art activities for children, conducted drawing contests, and published artwork done by local children. Miss Nutt wrote letters to Farmer Smith's readers, telling them about the NSCA, urging them to express themselves through art and to donate to the College.\textsuperscript{34} Through Carten, Nutt gave a pitch in the Farmer Smith column, asking each child in the Rainbow Club to contribute one, five, or ten cents so that "when there is a splendid new building, every one of you may say 'I helped to build it. It is my College of Art'."\textsuperscript{35}

School children were also asked for funds in an article Nutt wrote for the provincial \textit{Journal of Education}.\textsuperscript{36} In the article, Nutt fabricated a tale of early Nova Scotian art history. According to Nutt, two of Nova Scotia's best known early nineteenth century portraitists, Robert Field and William Valentine, used to meet at the home of Maria Morris, a young girl who would also become a famous artist. In truth, Field had left Halifax in 1816, when Maria Morris was only three, and Valentine only arrived there in 1818, but Miss Nutt often did not let facts get in the way of a good story.\textsuperscript{37} As Nutt tells it, Valentine and Field so inspired little Maria that "She had but one ambition, she too must draw." Maria succeeded in fulfilling her aspirations because artists "from the 'Old Homeland' brought their highly trained

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{NSCA Annual Report, 1927}, 121; Canadian Authors Association, Nova Scotia Branch, \textit{Writings by Bertha Archibald, Laura Carten (Farmer Smith), and Helen Creighton}, MG 20 vol. 16 (P.A.N.S., 1940-44). For examples of Nutt's writing in the "Farmer Smith" column, see Nutt and Smith, Scrapbook 1924-1933.

\textsuperscript{35} "Farmer Smith's Rainbow Club," \textit{Halifax Mail}, 7 November 1931.


talents to serve the 'New Country,'" and consequently young Maria was able to learn their skills.\textsuperscript{38} Nutt, of course, saw herself as a modern "Old Homeland" artist bringing her talents to the "New Country," but that was not her main point. She concluded to her young readers, "So it is your College, and you must help to build it [...] If when you are men and women, Nova Scotia is to be proud of you as children, you must have your chance to cultivate your own talents. So let us work together, now, towards this new College building, and never let us lose the vision until we have made it rise before us in beauty, and permanence."\textsuperscript{39}

By early 1932 the women had collected three thousand dollars for the building, which was no small amount considering that they waged their campaign in the middle of the Depression. But neither was it enough to buy a building, and that was Miss Nutt's main objective.\textsuperscript{40} Although she never relinquished her dream of a new Art College home, Nutt was to spend the rest of her career teaching in the same inadequate structure in which her Halifax teaching began. Still, the campaigns generated a lot of good publicity for the College, helping to weave it into the city's fabric, making it an institution that would not quietly disappear. To acknowledge those who helped create this high profile, the College instituted honorary diplomas, with LCW members receiving many of them. The first two, in fact, went to Edith

\textsuperscript{38} Nutt, "An Incident in the Golden Age," 73.

\textsuperscript{39} Nutt, "An Incident in the Golden Age," 75.

Archibald and Eliza Ritchie in 1931.⁴¹ Formalizing the honorary diplomas into an annual event in 1934, the college conferred them that year on Minnie Stead, Jane Hertz Bell, Margaret Brown, and Emily Payzant. Men receiving diplomas that year were businessman and director James E. Roy, former principal Henry Rosenberg, Dalhousie University English professor and occasional NSCA lecturer Archibald MacMechan, the architect and volunteer NSCA teacher Andrew Cobb, and the former Lieutenant Governor James Cranswick Tory. Earlier, two other men, James Falconer and Harry Piers, had also received honorary diplomas.⁴² In 1935, the College gave out two more honorary degrees, both to LCW women, Ella Maude Murray and Jean Campbell.⁴³

During their many Art College campaigns, the internal politics among the women had not always been smooth. Nutt rarely went to LCW meetings unless fund-raising for the Art College was on the agenda, and even then only if the women needed an extra push. At one point the LCW even turned to revising their past in regard to Nutt, or perhaps just clarifying it. Going back to some of their minutes, they asterixed in the word "Special" in Miss Nutt's title as "Convenor of Fine Arts," the implication being that she headed the special committee for the building effort.

---


⁴² NSCA Annual Report 1934, 158-59; NSCA, Calendar 1931-32, MG 17 vol. 45 no. 2 (P.A.N.S.).

but not all of the LCW's fine arts projects.\textsuperscript{44} Similar clarifications came when Nutt served as LCW Fine Arts Convenor again in 1926. Stead read Nutt's report for her at the annual LCW meeting that year. Later in the minutes, the report was asterixed with the note that: "Discussion followed as to whether everything mentioned properly be termed Council work as distinguished from the work of the Art School proper."\textsuperscript{45}

Overall, though, these small territorial skirmishes were the exception, with the women usually putting forward a solid front in support of the Art College.

Along with the LCW, Halifax's fine arts community was also united in its support for Miss Nutt and the Art College, at least during the first half of her principalship. Miss Nutt saw herself as the fine arts spokesperson for the whole province, and she made considerable effort to have others recognize her as such. As usual, she was successful. During her first thirteen years in Halifax, nobody challenged Nutt's predominant position in the city's art hierarchy. There were certainly other people knowledgeable about art in Halifax, such as Harry Piers of the Provincial Museum and James W. Falconer of Dalhousie. And even though Miss Nutt courted the interests of such people, she felt that she was both the academic expert—a dubious claim—and Nova Scotia's most successful practising artist—an assumption not without credence. From her arrival in Halifax until the end of the 1920s she was the only painter living in the province to have work accepted by the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, which she succeeded in doing on an annual basis beginning in 1922. In 1929 she was elected to the RCA, being the only artist then

\textsuperscript{44} LCW, \textit{Minutes Book}, 17 January, 15 March 1923.

\textsuperscript{45} LCW, \textit{Minutes Book}, 21 January 1926.
living in Nova Scotia to be so honoured. The National Gallery's annual Loan
Exhibition hung one of Nutt's paintings for the first time in 1925, and continued to do
so in subsequent years. Each of these accomplishments was celebrated in the Halifax
press, whose articles consistently reminded other local artists and the general public
that Miss Nutt's paintings were "brimful of artistic 'significance'".\(^{46}\) Thus, in
Halifax's art world, Nutt's leadership remained unchallenged—that is, until another
Sheffield artist, Stanley Royle, became well established in the city.

Royle's stay in Halifax did not begin as a challenge to Nutt. On the contrary,
she was the one who brought him over from England. For many years, Nutt and
Royle had spent time in Sheffield painting together during the summers. When the
young NSCA teacher Herbert Davison died in the car-train accident in the summer of
1931, Nutt decided to recruit Royle to fill the vacant position.\(^{47}\) For the first time
since Nutt had taken over, the College was not hiring one of its former students.
Nutt boasted to the directors that Royle's Sheffield student days were "a brilliant
success of triumphs." He had been a scholarship student at the Sheffield School of
Art, was the recipient of the King's prize in design, and was awarded a silver medal

\(^{46}\) Quote from "Miss Nutt Honored: Royal Academy Accepts Picture," Halifax Evening Mail,
19 November 1924. On Nutt's success with RCA and National Gallery, see: "The Annual
Exhibition," Halifax Mail, 19 November 1926; "Word Received," Halifax Mail, 3 March 1927;
"Miss Nutt Highly Honored," Halifax Star, 3 March 1927; "Is Honored," Halifax Mail, 23
November 1929; "Social News," Halifax Herald, 23 November 1929; "Halifax Artists Receive
Honor," Halifax Herald, 18 January 1930.

\(^{47}\) NSCA Annual Report 1932, 122-23; Smith, Diary 1931-1932, 1 October, 26 November
1931; "Obituaries," [Herbert Davison] Halifax Herald, 2 July 1931; Elizabeth Styring Nutt, letter
to Arnesby Brown, Royal Academy, London, 26 March 1935, in Elizabeth S. Nutt and Norma
E. Smith, comps., Scrapbook June 4, 1930 to February 10, 1937, MG 17 vol. 45 no. 1
(P.A.N.S.).
in a lithography competition open to all of the British Isles. Royle had been represented in the British Royal Academy of Arts exhibition every year except two since 1913, and his work was in many corporate collections in Britain and private collections in Britain, the United States, and Japan. In an article announcing Royle's departure to Canada, the Sheffield Telegraph described his painting as being "notable for fine design, good tone values, and strength of color. He has never pandered to popular tastes for pretty landscapes, preferring rugged realism and the expression of his own individuality." Royle's work in Canada would increase Sheffield's artistic influence in this country, an influence that was already strong. According to the Halifax Mail, in 1931 Sheffield was represented in Canada by five heads of art institutions. What Nutt did not know then was that Royle was going to make it six.

A Royle painting, Winter, England, arrived in Halifax before the painter did, and was hung in the November 1931 exhibition of the Nova Scotia Society of Artists. This was only the second NSSA exhibition since their original show in 1923. When Nutt had succeeded Andrew Cobb as NSSA president in 1930, she helped revive the Society's annual exhibition. But when she saw some of the paintings, she did not hide her displeasure that many of them were too small and amateurish. Seeing


49 "Sheffield Artist: Canadian Appointment for Mr. Royle," Sheffield Telegraph, 13 October 1931.

50 "A Noteworthy Array of Very Fine Pictures," Halifax Mail, 6 November 1931.

herself as leader of the artistic community, Miss Nutt set about to improve matters for the next time. Her solution was to start bi-weekly Art College classes for NSSA members, with the extremely reasonable fee of five dollars a night for the whole group.\textsuperscript{52} These classes would later be a battleground for the NSSA's fight for independence from Miss Nutt.

There was no immediate hint of that battle, though, when, in the month following the exhibition, on December 14, 1931, Stanley and Lily Royle, and their daughter Jean, sailed into Halifax. Miss Nutt took the family to their new home, which she had found for them, in Westminster Apartments on Morris Street, bordering the south end of town, just a few blocks from Nutt's home at the Local Council of Women House, and perhaps a twenty minute walk through downtown to the school.

Two days later they all attended the annual NSCA Christmas party, where Stanley Royle, ever a charmer, was quick to win over his new charges. Students at the party gave him a rousing cheer, and they also showed their appreciation for their other teacher, Margaret Brodie, who was retiring after twelve years as head of the craft department.\textsuperscript{53}

When classes opened after Christmas vacation, Jean Royle enrolled. At the same time, her father began teaching and designing new curricula for the school. Both father and daughter had a good winter term in 1932, and in May Miss Nutt

\textsuperscript{52} Elizabeth Styring Nutt, letter to H.O. McCurry, National Gallery, Ottawa, 19 January 1934, in Nutt and Smith, Scrapbook June 4, 1930 to February 10, 1937; NSSA Minutes Book, 14 October 1931.

\textsuperscript{53} Stanley Royle, telegram to NSCA; Margaret Brodie, letter to Elizabeth S. Nutt, 15 December 1931; telegram and letter in Nutt and Smith, Scrapbook 1924-1933, pp. 326, 333. NSCA Annual Report 1931; Smith, Diary 1931-1932, 28 October, 1, 9, 14, 16 December, 1931. Students also cheered Royle at their graduation: Halifax Star, 4 May 1932.
gave high praise of Royle's work in her annual report. As she told the directors, "The College is indeed fortunate in securing him....we have secured a most loyal member of our staff, one whose ideals of both life and art are of the highest."\textsuperscript{54} She would later change her mind.

The next term, the fall of 1932, was even more successful for the Royles. In November Stanley Royle was made Laureate of Art by the Montreal Inter-Department Art Association. The month before he had packed off two of his paintings and one of Jean's to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, which had accepted the works for its exhibition. All three of the works were of Stanley Royle's specialty, Peggy's Cove, a picturesque, rocky-shored, lighthouse village, just thirty miles west of Halifax. Jean was one of the youngest RCA exhibitors that year, and the first NSCA student to have a large oil hung by the Academy.\textsuperscript{55} Unfortunately, that painting has since been lost, Jean having thrown it away years later, believing that not many people really cared any more about such works.\textsuperscript{56}

Although 1932 was a good year for the College, it was also the year in which the first major strains surfaced to disrupt the harmony of Miss Nutt's school. It is hard to say how long Nutt's former "right hand," Marjorie Tozer, had been having difficulty with her principal. Certainly, Tozer had become an artist in her own right and no longer needed to remain under the shelter of Miss Nutt's wing. Furthermore, the presence of Stanley Royle, an artist who expressed his independence and whose work

\textsuperscript{54} NSCA Annual Report 1932.

\textsuperscript{55} "Nova Scotians at Big Exhibition," Halifax Mail, 5 December 1932; Norma E. Smith, Diary October 3, 1932 to May 12, 1933, MG 17 vol. 5 no. 3 (P.A.N.S.), 19 October, 4 November, 28 November, 1932.

\textsuperscript{56} Jean Royle-Copleston, telephone interview with author, 21 November 1988.
and teaching was admired by Tozer, could also have led her to question the complete loyalty that Miss Nutt expected. Whatever the reasons, the confrontation came to a head on December 6, 1932. Nutt and Tozer had it out in the office. It was not their first office quarrel, but it was to be their last. As Norma Smith correctly predicted that afternoon, the College was going to have a vacancy in the spring. Soon after, Tozer asked for and received a leave of absence, from which she never returned.57

Things managed to remain relatively calm during the winter term of 1933, with Royle's painting continuing to gain recognition. His Evening Light at Peggy's Cove was exhibited by the National Academy of Design in New York.58 Another of his paintings of Peggy's Cove, along with a Cape Breton landscape, was hung in the Royal Academy Exhibition in London, England.59 In April, one of Miss Nutt's paintings also found a new home, but as a result of a theft, not a purchase. The painting, Morehead Bridge, was one of sixteen works cut from their frames at the Montreal Art Association Exhibition. The painting was eventually recovered, and Miss Nutt exhibited it in the next NSSA show. She titled it "The Gangster's Choice,"


59 Halifax Mail, 23 March 1933.
but it was not really. The thief had expected to steal a collection of old masters valued at about $750,000, but he broke into the wrong floor.60

Following the winter 1933 term, Nutt, as usual, spent the summer in Sheffield.61 But this time she did not go on painting excursions with Royle, who had stayed behind in Nova Scotia to teach his second summer school and paint along the South Shore of the province.62 By the time Miss Nutt returned from Sheffield in the fall, Royle had accumulated a new body of work that was attracting a lot of attention. Just recently, Halifax artist and NSCA graduate, Leroy Zwicker, had begun hanging work by local artists in a back room of his father's frame and print shop.63 In September, Zwicker staged an exhibition of Royle's summer production, boldly inviting comparisons between Royle's work and Nutt's. In a newspaper review of the show, Zwicker wrote, "They are arresting canvasses, suggesting consummate emphasis by the artist on technique rather than responsiveness to what might be

60 The stolen paintings would make quite a tale, with the thief burying the paintings, demanding ransom, getting caught after murdering a railway officer, and leading police to the paintings as a ploy to get his old shoes, in which he had stashed poison, using it to commit suicide back in his cell: Smith, Diary 1932-1933, 19 April 1933; "Art Thieves Loot Spring Exhibition: 16 Paintings Taken," Montreal Gazette, 19 April 1933; "Art Kidnapping Latest Racket," Montreal Star, 23 August 1933; "Slayer," Montreal Star, 11 September 1933; "Suspect Suicide in Cell," Halifax Mail, 11 September 1933; "Slaying of Railway Officer," Montreal Star, 11 September 1933; "Nova Scotian Artists Open Exhibit Today," Halifax Star, 19 March 1934.

61 Smith, Diary 1932-1933, 9 May 1933.


called the subjective in 'the world of appearances.' ... There is not a suggestion of the 'spirituelle,' if one may so speak, in the collection of striking pictures."64

Comparisons between Royle and Nutt were not limited to their painting. Members of the Nova Scotia Society of Artists also began to compare Royle’s method of teaching with that of Nutt’s, with some deciding that they preferred Royle’s. These artists were being increasingly exposed to Royle’s teaching, through his summer painting school and the Art College’s NSSA classes.65 Facing many other commitments, Miss Nutt’s had placed these classes under Royle’s charge. "And thenceforth," Miss Nutt later reflected, "all peace went too. The rest is a sordid tale."66 At the NSSA meeting immediately following Zwicker’s review of the Royle exhibition, Nutt, sensing the competition, informed the NSSA that the College could no longer afford to continue the Society’s classes. This sparked a flurry of follow-up meetings, with the NSSA artists responding to Nutt with a vote to rent their own studio space. Nutt rebounded by announcing that Art College employees—including, of course, Royle—would not be allowed to provide instruction at the NSSA studio. It was clear to the artists, however, that Tozer and others could give classes. Furthermore, Royle could still provide critiques at the monthly NSSA meetings. Some members, though, in support of Miss Nutt, announced that they would not attend the classes if they were moved from the Art College. The debate

64 LeRoy Zwicker, "Stanley Royle," Halifax Mail, 21 September 1933.

65 Marguerite Zwicker’s [nee Porter] obituary calls her 1932 study with Royle the “turning point in her career”: “Prominent Halifax Artist Marguerite Zwicker Dies,” Halifax Chronicle-Herald, 23 September 1993; see clippings on Royle’s 1933 summer class in Edith Smith, comp., Edith Smith’s Scrapbook, 1922-1935,” MG 9 vol. 1 nos. 199, 200 (P.A.N.S.).

66 Nutt, letter to McCurry, 19 January 1934.
was strong, the vote was split, but a majority ended up deciding to rent the space. Margaret Brodie then moved to thank Miss Nutt for her work in the NSSA classes, while her sister Isabel Brodie countered with a motion thanking Royle. The split had begun, with the factions for the upcoming battle beginning to coalesce.  

Miss Nutt, acting like a teacher who is challenged by her impudent charges, moved quickly to display her authority. She issued a memo informing all NSCA teachers that they must follow the curriculum as arranged by the principal. "Any insubordination," the memo warned, "will be reported and instant dismissal will result." The day after the NSSA meeting she had it out with Isabel Brodie. Nutt then hauled Royle into the office and, with Norma Smith as a witness, read him the "Riot Act to pull his Life [drawing] work together." A week later, Nutt decided to take over Royle's senior class. Under Royle, she claimed, the senior students had received poor teaching or no teaching at all. Worse, the senior students were being unduly influenced against the principal. When the less timid senior students complained about Miss Nutt's takeover, she accused Jean Royle of stirring them up. In punishment, Jean was suspended from the school. As the term came to an end,

---

67 NSSA, Minutes Book, 10, 17 October, 13 November, 21 November 1933; Elizabeth S. Nutt, letter to McCurry, 19 January 1934; Elizabeth S. Nutt, Diary September 25, 1933 to March 11, 1934, MG 17 vol. 5 no. 7 (P.A.N.S.), 13, 14 November 1933, 25 January 1934.

68 Nutt, undated memo to NSCA staff, in Nutt and Smith, Scrapbook 1924-1933, MG 17 vol. 46 no. 1, 398 (P.A.N.S.).

69 Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 14 November 1933.

70 Smith, Diary September 29, 1933 to May 29, 1934, MG 17 vol. 5 no. 4 (P.A.N.S.), 21, 22 November 1933.

71 Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 23, 24, 27, 29 November 1933; Ellen Emily Orme [Nellie] Adams, letter to Elizabeth S. Nutt, 27 November 1933, in NSCA papers, MG 17 (P.A.N.S.).
Nutt informed the Board that Royle "is unsatisfactory as a teacher. He does not sufficiently know the groundwork of Fine Art to communicate the principles of the subject to his students." 72

Miss Nutt became obsessed. Royle was continually in and out of her office to hear the "Riot Act." 73 She gave him back a painting, his gift to her from years before, but only after she rubbed off his inscription on the back. 74 Once when Lily Royle came to speak with her, Miss Nutt had Norma Smith hide within earshot, vainly hoping that the registrar could record a few incriminating remarks. 75 Miss Nutt cheered every time her work received better press than Royle's; she brooded when his work attracted reviews more favorable than hers. 76 A friendly nod from Royle to a female student would set Miss Nutt off complaining about "his silly ingratiating smile and mental suggestion mesmerizing women folk." 77 If Royle were seen talking to a local artist outside of school, Miss Nutt would watch the artist with caution. 78

As the art community continued to split, the dispute got increasingly bitter. In early 1934, against Miss Nutt's wishes, the NSSA for the first time voted not to hold

72 Elizabeth S. Nutt, letter to Board of the Nova Scotia College of Art, 13 December 1933, in NSCA papers, MG 17, (P.A.N.S.); See also Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 21, 24 November, 13 December 1933; 3, 25 January 1934.

73 Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 14, 23, 27 November 1933; 4, 18, 25 January, various dates March 1934.

74 Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 6 February 1934.

75 Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 29 January 1934.


77 Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 24 January 1934; see also 9 January, 19 February 1934.

78 Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 19, 21, 22 February 1934.
their annual spring exhibition at the College. It would instead be at Zwicker's Gallery.\(^79\) When reviews of the exhibition clearly favored Royle's work over Nutt's, the principal initiated a new complaint: Royle, she claimed, had copied her style. Exactly who copied whom, if indeed either did, has never been settled. Certainly, the two painters had similar styles, but why should we be surprised at that? After all, they had similar artistic backgrounds, sought out the same subject matter, experienced the same visual atmospheric conditions, from dusty Sheffield to the bright Nova Scotia seacoast light, and they had painted together for years. There is no concrete evidence to show that either was the more influential in their respective learning from each other.\(^80\)

At about the same time, the debate over who founded the NSSA back in 1922, Miss Nutt or Lewis Smith, began to be vigorously fought in the local press. Reviewers of the NSSA exhibition who favored Royle's paintings and his summer school also tended to mention Smith as the Society's founder. Writers who praised Miss Nutt's painting usually credited her with establishing the Society. For the next two years this featherweight battle would continue through a sporadic exchange of newspaper articles and letters to the editor.\(^81\) Had the authors depended more on the written

\(^79\) NSSA, Minutes Book, 16 January, 19 January; Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 21 February 1934; "Nova Scotian Artists Open Exhibit Today."


record than on their memories, they would have had to admit that both Nutt and Smith, along with Andrew Cobb, Edith Smith, the Brodies, and Lila Publicover, had initiated the NSSA by working all together, something they had been failing to do of late.\footnote{Nova Scotia Society of Artists (NSSA), Minutes Book, Feb. 1922-Nov. 1933, MG 20 vol. 502 no. 18 (P.A.N.S.). See also: “Looking Back,” in Catalogue Silver Jubilee Exhibition The Nova Scotia Society of Artists (Halifax: Nova Scotia Society of Artists, 1951), 52-53; “Resume of History of the Nova Scotia College of Art, Halifax, N.S. [Presented at a meeting at Halifax City Hall 20 November 1929],” MG 17 vol. 46 (P.A.N.S.), 127-34.}

Within the Art College, both Nutt and Royle had their respective supporters. During the winter of 1934, students on Royle’s side supported him with a petition, and some even quit the College in protest. Marjorie Tozer had begun giving classes in her studio, attracting some of the disenchanted Art College students. They were the minority, however, with most students sticking by Miss Nutt.\footnote{Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 24 November 1933; 10, 18, 24 January, 16, 21 February, 5, 6 March, 1934; NSCA Annual Report 1934, 155; Adams, interview; Marguerite Porter Zwicker and LeRoy Zwicker, interview; “To Open Studio,” Halifax Star, 13 January 1934.} The Board too, was split, as were patrons of the College. A particularly severe blow to Miss Nutt came in February 1934, when Frederic Sexton, former Board president and still head of the Nova Scotia Technical College, stated that there was cause to believe that Miss Nutt was neglecting students and mismanaging the school.\footnote{Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 16, 25 February 1934.}

In the end, the Art College Board was left to figure things out. On March 1, 1934, a committee was set up to look into the conflict, consisting of Henry

\footnote{[ca. 1935] on Nova Scotia College of Art and Design stationary, likely written by Nutt, and calling Nutt the founder of the NSSA, in Nutt and Smith, Scrapbook June 4, 1930 to February 10, 1937.}
Rosenberg, Frederic Sexton, and the Board executive. The next day the committee brought in the two antagonists. Royle and Nutt shook hands and the dispute was resolved, at least that is what the committee thought. Miss Nutt, however, thought differently. She wrote in her diary that evening: "We shook hands and they clapped. Bah!" As the fight continued, Nutt and Norma Smith spent days writing and typing "evidence" against Royle. In the meantime, Royle and his supporters, realizing the worth of the handshake, continued to lobby for their case. The Board's final decision came in May 1934. Although the charges alleging that Royle was instigating a rebellion and was incompetent as an art teacher were never substantiated and often refuted, he was fired.

In the summer of 1934, both Royle and Nutt sailed to England, but only Miss Nutt returned in the fall. When she got back, however, the peace she had hoped for was not to be found. Instead, she was faced with a new art school in Halifax, located just a few blocks from the NSCA. Marjorie Tozer had expanded her studio teaching into a three-faculty art school, run in the atelier manner, and offering a program with content and fees closely paralleling those of the NSCA. Some NSCA students quit the College to study with Tozer, making it apparent that her school could become a major competitor to the Art College. In the wake of the Nutt-Royle battle, many local artists and others in the community eagerly supported Tozer's new school. Its inaugural flyer even boasted the support of Frederic Sexton. In January 1935, at the start of the second term, a benefit exhibition and studio tea was organized at Tozer's

---

85 Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 2 March 1934.

86 Nutt, Diary 1933-1934, 25 January, 22 February, 1, 6 March, 1934; Norma E. Smith, Diary September 29 1933 to May 29, 1934, MG 17 vol. 5 no. 4 (P.A.N.S.), 9 May 1934.
school. In addition to works by Tozer and her teaching staff, the exhibition included Stanley Royle and some members of the Nova Scotia Society of Artists. Among the many people who attended were notables such as Lila Publicover, Harry Piers, Isabel Brodie, Zeta Lovett, Superintendent of Education Henry Munro, and folklorist Helen Creighton. Notable in her absence was Miss Nutt.87

It was not impossible for Tozer's school to become a major competitor to Miss Nutt's school. Tozer could have awarded diplomas which, with the possible exception of the teachers' diploma, might be as meaningful as those from the NSCA. However, although Tozer had support from prominent local artists and officials, her school did not have the well-established community support system that sustained the NSCA. Furthermore, Tozer had to run her school without government funding. After a few years Tozer closed the school, leaving Halifax for England, where she lived until her death in 1959.88

But Miss Nutt still had other competition to contend with: Royle's influence continued to pervade Halifax's art circles. Zwicker's Gallery was showing his work, and newspaper articles and letters to the editor regularly lamented how his departure was such a loss to the city.89 During the annual exhibition of the Nova Scotia Society of Artists in March 1935, Royle's paintings were as favourably

---


88 Marguerite Porter Zwicker, interview; Jean Royle-Copleston, interview; Halifax Star, 27 August 1938; "Obituary [Marjorie Tozer]," Halifax Mail-Star, 4 August 1959; see also MG 100 vol. 248 no. 16e (P.A.N.S.).

received as they had been when the artist was still an active member of the Society. In reviews of the NSSA show, Royle's paintings often grabbed headlines, while discussion of Nutt's work was sometimes buried in the nether regions of the article. The real blow for Miss Nutt came at the end of the NSSA show. Throughout the exhibition visitors were asked to vote for the work that had the greatest appeal. When the ballots were counted, Royle's *Evening LeHave* was the clear winner.

The month of the 1935 NSSA exhibition brought Miss Nutt another disturbing announcement. Leroy Zwicker had organized Royle's return to Nova Scotia to teach a summer class, to be held in August at Peggy's Cove. Miss Nutt was further frustrated when Royle's class attracted students not only from Nova Scotia but also from other parts of Canada and the United States. It was better attended than the Art College's summer program, and in fact was probably the largest summer art school in the Maritimes provinces.

A year later, in March 1936, Miss Nutt gave a speech to the Maritimes Women's Club in Montreal. She told her audience that she was convinced that the Maritimes, through the Nova Scotia College of Art, would soon produce its own style of art, different from central or western Canada. Her prediction was partly

---


91 "Wins First Place," *Halifax Star*, 1 April 1935.


correct, since a notable Maritime art style did begin to emerge during Miss Nutt's tenure as NSCA principal. However, it did not sprout from the Art College, but from Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. One of the earliest, and most prominent, leaders in this art movement was Alex Colville, who, on more than one occasion, acknowledged his debt to his teacher at Mount Allison, Stanley Royle. Royle had taken up his duties as head of Mount Allison's art department immediately following his 1935 summer art school at Peggy's Cove. He headed the department until 1945, after which he returned to England, where he died in 1961. It was under Royle that, in 1937, Mount Allison instituted its Bachelor of Fine Arts degree program, the first to be offered by a Canadian university. In the following year, Nutt would propose that the NSCA also offer a BFA by affiliating with Halifax's Dalhousie University. That proposal, however, would not be acted upon until 1962.

The energy of most other sixty-four year old educators would have been completely dissipated by the battles Miss Nutt fought in the early 1930s. The Art College principal, however, had the stamina to push forward. Except for occasional lapses, she put the Royle debacle behind her and continued with her main concern: organizing a publicly visible and financially stable Art College housed in appropriate accommodations. In 1934 she initiated the "Citizen's Society for Fostering an Appreciation of Fine Art," a popular community group which met regularly to hear

---


95 Elizabeth S. Nutt, Report for Directors' meetings Nova Scotia College of Art, MG 17 vol. 5-6 (P.A.N.S.), 11-12 October 1938.
lectures on art.\textsuperscript{96} She also continued to work with the Councils of Women, becoming National Convener of Fine Arts and Letters for the National Council of Women in the 1934-1935 school year.\textsuperscript{97} In that capacity, Nutt gave national radio broadcasts on art and lectured in different cities in eastern Canada.\textsuperscript{96} In the winter and spring of 1935, Miss Nutt took part in establishing the Maritime Art Association.\textsuperscript{99} The following year, in January 1936, she became founding president of the Nova Scotia Society of Watercolor Painters.\textsuperscript{100} That year Miss Nutt finally acquired more space for the College. The lower floor of the building had always been rented out, providing the College with a much needed $1,085 a year. In 1935-36 the space was turned over to the College for its own use, allowing the craft department to have its long-awaited rooms for clay modelling and work in other media.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{96} NSCA Annual Reports, 1934, 155; 1935, 130; 1936, 132; Alice H. Houston, Halifax Mail, 20 April 1934.

\textsuperscript{97} On Nutt's role in the NCW and LCW, see Elizabeth S. Nutt and Norma E. Smith, comps., Scrapbook 1935-1938, MG 17 vol. 8 no. 1 (P.A.N.S.).


\textsuperscript{99} NSCA Annual Report 1936, 134; Elizabeth S. Nutt, letters to Walter Abell, Acadia University, 21, 26 February 1935; Walter Abell, letter to Elizabeth S. Nutt, 23 February 1935; Elizabeth S. Nutt, letters to H.O. McCurry, National Gallery, Ottawa, 21 February, 3 April 1935; above letters in Nutt and Smith, Scrapbook June 4, 1930 to February 10, 1937; Maritime Art Association Scrapbook 1935-38, MG 17 vol. 9 no. 1 (P.A.N.S.).


\textsuperscript{101} NSCA Annual Report 1936, 131-32; Brodie, letter to Clyde Furst.
The end began for the principal in the 1940-1941 school year: the seventy year old Miss Nutt had a nervous breakdown. She spent most of the winter resting in the Annapolis Valley, on the northern shore of the province, while her staff kept the school running. The following year she was back, but the aging Miss Nutt could not keep up her previous pace. With Norma Smith’s help, she managed to administer the Art College for another year, but that 1942-1943 school year was to be Miss Nutt’s last. By October 1942, her health left her unable to continue directing the College’s activities. On March 12, 1943, she wrote her resignation and asked the disconsolate Norma Smith to help her type it. That same night, the Nova Scotia Society of Artists opened their annual show, which was now held at the Lord Nelson Hotel. Norma Smith lamented that the opening failed to include a tribute to one of its founders, Miss Elizabeth Styring Nutt.102

The tributes for Miss Nutt did come, however, on May 10th, the day of the College’s graduation exercises. Miss Nutt had chosen the exercises to officially announce her retirement, though she was too ill to attend. In her absence, Jane Bell read the principal’s report, in which Nutt acknowledged her one major regret: “I am disappointed not to leave an Art Gallery or a new Art College but it is not because I have not striven for them.”103

102 W.R. Barlow, letter 9 December 1940, in NSCA collection, MG 17 (P.A.N.S.); Elizabeth S. Nutt, letter to A.B. Wiswell NSCA president, 13 December 1940, in NSCA collection, MG 17 (P.A.N.S.); NSCA, Scrapbook January to July 1943, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 16 (P.A.N.S.); Norma E. Smith, Diary January 4 to May 10, 1943, MG 17 vol. 44 no. 8 (P.A.N.S.), 12 March, 12 April 1943, “Miss E.S. Nutt, Former Art College Head, Passes,” Halifax Mail, 28 March 1946.

There was one final tribute. Norma Smith had been so closely associated with Miss Nutt that Smith's diaries are often referred to as "Miss Nutt's Diaries." Smith had faithfully kept the diaries for years, but her May 10th, 1943 diary entry was to be the very last one she would ever write:

I can only pay tribute here. I who have been with her longest, and knew her most intimately, and had the privilege of calling her by her simple family pet name. I who alone shared her joys and sorrows, and had the gift of her wonderful trust and friendship. The papers are publishing many fine tributes to a great teacher: she deserves them all but while one of her personally taught students lives, Elizabeth Styring Nutt will never die. I could go on but words are so futile. In the years to come Nova Scotia and the Dominion may learn a trifle more about the great teacher and artist of a century they had for a few years in their midst. She came, she will go, but she leaves imperishable memories behind her. Fini, Norma E. Smith

In September 1945, Nutt returned to Sheffield, where she died in March the following year at age eighty-one. Three years later, on September 21, 1948, Norma Smith died.

Nutt had headed the Art School for twenty-four years. It could easily be argued that the school would not have made it through those years had it not been for Miss Nutt's tough minded, single-focused determination. It could also be argued that these same qualities which made the institution administratively stable also led it to eventually be artistically stagnant. Miss Nutt strove to make the College a

---

104 Most of the sixteen so-called "Art College Diaries" or "Miss Nutt's Diaries" at P.A.N.S. were written by Smith, although at least two were written by Nutt. At the time of this writing, P.A.N.S. did not list definitive authorship for all of the diaries, so I have determined authorship here based on the diaries' handwriting and content.

105 Smith, Diary 1943. 10 May 1943.

106 "Miss E.S. Nutt, Former Art College Head, Passes"; "Elizabeth Styring Nutt Succumbs in England," Montreal Gazette. 13 April 1946.

centre for art that reflected her own beliefs, but she made little room for artists whose beliefs stood independent from her own, regardless of the qualities of those artists. When Miss Nutt first began putting her ideas into practice the College was a dynamic place, but when those ideas began to reach their inevitable limits, Miss Nutt resisted the new ideas required to sustain the dynamism.

Despite the tensions of the early 1930s, it cannot be denied that, under Miss Nutt, the College went from a neglected institution with a handful of students to a viable school with an increasingly secure funding base. For many students at the school, the memory of Miss Nutt is one of deep respect. She was embarrassingly strict with her students, but she was clearly loved by many of them. Nutt was able to keep the school afloat despite an economic depression and a traditionally indifferent community. That indifference changed as Miss Nutt's programs and community involvement brought more people into contact with the College. In fact, not since Anna Leonowens had anybody been so successful at gaining sustained community support for the school. It is because of Miss Nutt's success that the College is still around today.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

Fortunes, Failings, and Frictions:
The Art School's First Half Century in Light of Its Second

Three themes run through the first half century of the Victoria School of Art and Design: community support, art education's connection to employable skills, and the consequences of the principal's and board's managerial style. These themes were often intertwined, with community support determining the Art School's fortunes, and the Art School's managers and its perceived connections to employment partly determining the community support. When these connections appeared strong, the Art School, though rarely flourishing, at least survived adequately. When art education's relation to work was not highly visible, the institution usually teetered on the edge of total collapse. In addition to the Halifax community at large, the city's art community also affected the fate of the school. Rarely, though, did the city look toward its own indigenous art community for a principal to manage the institution. Instead, it was more prone to look toward England, Toronto, or the eastern United States, both for principals and for the curriculum that would best train Nova Scotians for art-related work.

In the Art School's history, the role of community and the importance of employable graduates did not end with Elizabeth Styring Nutt's retirement in 1943. During the decades that followed, these two themes, along with others found in the school's early history, continued to shape the Art College's fortunes, failings, and frictions. By looking at key episodes from these later decades, we get a better
understanding of these themes, and thus a better understanding of the school's history between 1887 and 1943. In this concluding chapter, therefore, we will look at the Art School's first half century in light of its second, drawing parallels between the two.

In many ways, the Victorian ideals that Elizabeth Styring Nutt brought with her from Sheffield lived on at the Art College long after she retired in 1943. Succeeding her as principal was Donald C. Mackay, known to most as "D.C.", one of Nutt's favorite students. A native of Fredericton, New Brunswick, Mackay's ties to the school began in February 1920 when, at age fourteen, he entered the Saturday morning art classes. In 1928, he graduated from the Art College, heaped with honors, prizes, and diplomas in all subjects. Spending the next few years in Europe and Toronto, Mackay continued his art studies and did some teaching, including work with Arthur Lismer's Saturday morning art classes at the Art Gallery of Toronto.¹ During the spring of 1934, fresh from her battles of the past academic year, Nutt had to appoint a senior teacher to replace the fired Stanley Royle. Wanting a person whom she could fully trust, she chose Mackay, informing him of the

one main requirement for the job: "Absolute loyalty to the College and Principal and let no one deter us from that ideal."\(^2\) Eleven years later, in 1945, after finishing a stint as a naval war artist, Mackay took over the principalship of the Nova Scotia College of Art, a job he would hold for the next quarter century.\(^3\)

As did Nutt, Mackay was able to maintain the College's viability, though not its guaranteed long-term security. He even accomplished Nutt's longest-standing goal: moving the College to more suitable quarters. In January 1957, the NSCA finally left the old National School building, which had served as its inadequate home since Henry Rosenberg was principal in 1903. On the other side of town, the College settled into the former St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church hall, a sound, brick structure situated on Coburg Road next to Dalhousie University. Even with its new home, the College remained small, with ten teaching faculty and only about one hundred full-time students taking courses during the 1958-1959 school year.\(^4\)

To some extent, Mackay's appointment broke Halifax's tradition of looking outside of its community for the Art School's leadership. He was only the second, and so far the last, graduate of the school to become its head. True, though he had moved to Halifax as a young boy, he was not from the province. This leaves the two

\(^2\) Elizabeth S. Nutt, letter to D.C. Mackay, 26 May 1934, NSCA papers, MG 17, (P.A.N.S.). Also see Elizabeth S. Nutt, letter to D.C. Mackay, 5 June 1934, NSCA Papers, P.A.N.S.

\(^3\) NSCA Record Book 1934-1950, 276-77. Florence Blackwell, who in 1940 had retired after twenty-one years as head of the Halifax's Ladies College, served as "acting administrative head" of the Art College until Mackay returned from the war; see "Leads Art College," Halifax Chronicle Herald, 24 September 1943.

years of Lewis Smith's principalship as the only time, in either its first half century or its second, that the Art School was headed by a native Nova Scotian. Under Smith, however, more so than under Mackay, the school's sight was focused well beyond Nova Scotia's borders. In fact, it was under the native Smith's stewardship in 1910 that, somewhat ironically, the school went furthest to tie itself to an outside system, that of Britain's St. John's Wood Art School.

Although not as directly as Smith's, Mackay's Art School programs also had turn-of-the-century British foundations. Mackay was, after all, a "most loyal" student of two Sheffield artists, Nutt and, to a lesser extent, Lismer. In his NSCA program, Mackay included nothing that would have been out of place in Nutt's, either before or after she left Sheffield. Like Nutt, Mackay kept the Art College on a traditional path of painting, drawing, printmaking, and craft. Neither Nutt nor Mackay acknowledged the more contemporary stylistic trends, such as cubism or modernist painting, that emerged during the century.

In many ways, then, Mackay's principalship carried on the Sheffield traditions that came to Halifax via Nutt, and before her Lismer. While Lismer no more than introduced these traditions, Nutt was able to entrench them, and Mackay more or less simply maintained them. Thus, of these three artists, Nutt's role at the Art School is the most historically significant. Overall, though, Lismer is by far the most historically prominent. His education at the Sheffield School of Art (1899-1906) and the Academie royale des beaux-arts in Antwerp (1906-1907), his membership in Canada's Group of Seven, and his work in children's art education have all been
recorded in various books and articles—though many of these are hagiographic.\textsuperscript{5} Nutt, in contrast, has received scant art historical attention. Nevertheless, when viewed through the lens of the Halifax Art School, it is Nutt who stands out. Although she is less known than Lismer, she was his most valuable contribution to Halifax’s art community.

As a student of Sheffield artists, D.C. Mackay was far from unusual in Canada. In the first half of this century, the Sheffield School of Art gave up a number of its graduates to Canada. Three, of course, taught in Halifax: Lismer, Nutt, and Royle. In addition, at least eleven other Sheffield Art School graduates emigrated to Canada during this period. Some of these, such as Frederick Varley, H. Valentine Fanshaw, Herbert H. Stansfield, and L.A.C. Panton, had prominent careers in Canada as both artists and educators. Stansfield, for example, taught applied art and design at the Ontario College of Art from 1922 until 1933, before moving on to Toronto’s Northern Vocational School. Four years later, Panton also went to the Northern Vocational School, after having first taught art at Toronto’s Central Technical School from 1924 to 1926, followed by a directorship for the art program at Western Technical School until 1937. Leaving Northern in 1951, Panton served as principal of the O.C.A. until he died in 1954. Varley was also connected to the O.C.A., serving in various

capacities there between 1916 and 1926. He then headed west, where he taught painting and drawing at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts from 1926 to 1933, and then served as founding president of the B.C. College of Arts until that school's early demise in 1935. Fanshaw, whose father had taught both Varley and Lismer back in Sheffield, spent twenty-seven years, from 1913 to 1940, as Director of the Art and Design Department at Kelvin High School in Winnipeg.\textsuperscript{6}

While living in Sheffield, all of these artists had crossed paths. For example, Nutt, Varley, Stansfield, and Fanshaw had all won art school prizes as students in 1901.\textsuperscript{7}

Now, in the new world, they collectively played a large role in shaping Canada's art education.

Halifax, therefore, was just one of many Canadian communities which turned to Sheffield artists for leadership in art and art education. Yet none of these communities had an art educational system similar to that of England. The Sheffield artists, and other British imports who headed Canadian art institutions, had been trained in schools that, although gaining increasing autonomy as the decades progressed, were historically part of a regulated national system of education, complete with centralized government exams. They came to a country that had no


\textsuperscript{7} The Fifty-seventh Annual Report of the Sheffield School of Art (Sheffield: The Independent Press, Ltd., 1901), 27-28.
hint of such a centralized system. On the contrary, Canada's schools were assured autonomy from federal regulation by the 1867 British North America Act, which assigned control of education in Canada exclusively to the provinces.8

As principals of Canadian art schools, therefore, the British artists had fewer constraints than they would have had at home. In Nova Scotia, they were free to devise their own programs for art, craft, and design training. Furthermore, the Nova Scotian art community at the time had, at best, only very weak networks linking it to artists and designers in other parts of the country. Although this isolation could have obvious negative effects, it assured the scarcity of experts who could challenge the principals' authority on art, and thus challenge their autonomy. At the Art School, this rarely-questioned authority led to a managerial model of a strong principal overseeing a weak teaching staff. Thus, on the one hand there was the freedom of a decentralized system, and on the other there was often the constraint imposed by the individual authority of the principal. This constraint was best exemplified by the Nutt-Royle battle in the 1930s.

This tension between creative freedom and confident authority, which characterized the dispute between Nutt and Royle, was not unique to them or to the NSCA in 1933. Vancouver, for example, experienced a similar split in its art community, and at about the same time. Involved in the British Columbia fracas was another Sheffield artist, Frederick Varley. Occurring in 1933, the split led Varley and Jock Macdonald to leave the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts

---

to found the short-lived British Columbia College of Art.\footnote{Richardson, \textit{First Class}, 16, 18.} For an even stronger parallel to the tensions of Nutt and the NSCA during the 1930s, we can turn to the Halifax Art School itself. Almost a half century after Nutt became its principal, Garry Neill Kennedy was appointed the school’s first president. Like Nutt, Kennedy had a vision for the Art College, and he tenaciously stuck with it, making the school more dynamic and confident than it had been since Nutt’s best years. But also like Nutt, as we shall see, Kennedy, after more than two decades at the helm, became embroiled in a bitter battle with his teaching staff.

Actually, it was the 1967 appointment of Kennedy that finally brought the Nutt-Mackay era to its end. Mackay stayed on as the College’s last principal until 1971, but after 1967 it was Kennedy’s school, and it would stay that way for three decades.\footnote{In a letter Mackay said: “On January 1st [1970] I commence seven months retirement leave and this will mark a ‘phasing out’ of the title of Principal.” The 1971-72 NSCAD academic Calendar still lists Mackay as principal. Shuebrook mistakenly says Mackay’s last year as principal was 1966, Laurette has it as 1970, as does a wall calendar issued by NSCAD for its 1987 centenary, with none of these referencing a source for its information. The “History” in the 1975-76 NSCAD academic Calendar mentions Mackay’s 1945 starting date, but he is the only principal for whom a leaving date is not given. Mackay died in Halifax on November 19, 1979. D.C. Mackay, letter to R.J. Wilson, 16 December 1970, Art Teachers Association files, Nova Scotia’s Teachers Union, photocopy in possession of author; NSCAD, \textit{Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Calendar 1971-72} (Halifax), 87, 91; Ron Shuebrook, “Principals and a President: NSCAD—1887-1977,” \textit{Arts Atlantic}, (Summer/Fall 1978): 30; Patrick Condon Laurette, \textit{A Centennial Salute: AGNS Paintings by 15 NSCAD Studio Teachers}, exhibition catalogue (Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1987), 6; NSCAD, \textit{Centennial [wall] Calendar 1987} (Halifax), see information about Mackay on pages accompanying January and February; NSCAD, “History of the College,” in \textit{Calendar 1975-76} (Halifax), 46-47.} In hiring Kennedy, Halifax once again turned to someone outside the community to salvage the art school, with its ageing curriculum and low enrolment. Born in St. Catharines, Ontario, Kennedy had studied at the Ontario College of Art
and at the University of Buffalo before going to Ohio University for an M.F.A.\textsuperscript{11} After completing the degree in 1965, he took on his first appointment, as head of a three person art department at Northland College in Wisconsin. Just two years later, when he interviewed for the Art College presidency in the spring of 1967, he was only thirty-one years old. But like Nutt, he showed confidence in his ideas, and he knew how to take charge. He was also one of the few people willing to take the job. Not having many alternatives, Henry Hicks, Dalhousie University president and one of Kennedy's three interviewers, quipped, "Well, he's not going to get any younger."\textsuperscript{12} The decision was made, and Kennedy became the youngest active college president in the country.

Nobody, not even Leonowens or Nutt, has done as much as Kennedy to make the school a secure, viable institution. The time was right, with the late 1960s witnessing growth in post-secondary and technical education.\textsuperscript{13} In his second year, 1968, Kennedy pushed the Board to be more ambitious in its expansion plans for the building. Board members had considered adding a four storey addition on newly-purchased adjacent land, but Kennedy convinced them to make it six, tripling the school's space. As part of the addition, the College opened an art gallery, naming it after the school's founder, Anna Leonowens. The next year, Kennedy and the Board changed the school's name to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. The new name mirrored the new program, now divided into two sections, art and design.

\textsuperscript{11} NSCAD, Calendar 1971-72 85, 90.


There were federal grants available for professional design training, and the College, with "design" once again back in its name and emphasized in its program, successfully went after them. Although Kennedy's interest was the fine arts, it was clear to him as it had been to Nutt that financial security depended, in part, on demonstrating the College's role in meeting vocational needs. Thus, under his presidency, design and environmental planning became high priority programs, their practicality helping to gain community support for the College.¹⁴

In 1969-1970, the initiation of new professional degrees further increased the career potential of NSCAD graduates, thereby boosting the long-term viability of the school. Nutt's strategy for degrees, which never succeeded, had been to try and affiliate with Dalhousie University.¹⁵ Mackay, too, had banked on affiliation, initiating a short-lived joint NSCA-Dalhousie degree course in 1962, which never yielded any graduates. Kennedy, on the other hand, did things differently. Displaying his typical shrewdness, he realized that the 1925 act, which had given the school the status of "College," also allowed it to confer degrees on its own.¹⁶ In 1969, therefore, along with the name change, the College began awarding degrees, making it Canada's first autonomous degree-granting art school. Beginning in 1969-70, the College offered a B.F.A. and a Bachelor of Design, and the following year it

---


¹⁵ VSAD Annual Report 1920, 186; Elizabeth S. Nutt, Report for "Directors' meetings Nova Scotia College of Art," 11-12 October 1938, MG 17 vol. 5-6, (P.A.N.S.).

¹⁶ Garry Neill Kennedy, interviews and discussions with author and Harold Pearse, Halifax, November 1986; An Act Respecting the Victoria School of Art and Design, Bill no. 145, MG 17 vols. 5-6 (micro) (P.A.N.S., 1925). Article 16 of the Act gave degree-granting status, while Article 17 allowed affiliation with any other college or university. Nutt would have known that the Art College could grant degrees without affiliation, e.g., see "College of Art," Halifax Evening Echo, 8 May 1925.
initiated a B.A. in Art Education.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, thirty-four years after Canada's first B.F.A. program under Stanley Royle at Mount Allison, Halifax's Art College could now finally also offer the same degree.

By 1970, enrolment had reached 389 full-time students, up from eighty-six students in 1964, while faculty had grown from ten in 1964 to thirty-four in 1970.\textsuperscript{18} This did not happen without controversy, however. In March 1968, Kennedy let go a number of teachers who were at the College when he arrived, replacing them with artists who shared his thinking, most of whom hailed from the United States. Chief among these artists was Kennedy's friend from grad school, Gerry Ferguson, who as much as anyone helped Kennedy shape and carry out his vision. Despite placard-waving protests by students and teachers, Kennedy carried through with the layoffs, determined to situate the school on the cutting-edge of contemporary art.\textsuperscript{19}

And cutting-edge it was. Whereas Mackay's traditional curriculum would have seemed very familiar to Nutt, the same could not be said of Kennedy's. Nutt was always confident in her notion about what art was, and Mackay never seemed to question the matter. Kennedy and his teachers, on the other hand, operated on the

\textsuperscript{17} Davies, "A Brief History," n.p. For descriptions of the degree programs, see NSCAD, Calendar 1971-72, 36 ff.

\textsuperscript{18} Davies, "A Brief History." The Calendar 1971-72, 6, gives the 1970-71 enrolment as "about 365" with a faculty of 39, while the academic calendar of the school's centennial year, 1887-88, claims the College "expanded its size from 90 full-time students in 1964 to over 400 in 1970." As Dean of the College since 1968, and an academic with a Ph.D. in the social sciences, Davies's figures can be taken as more accurate. NSCAD, "History," in [academic] Calendar 1987/88, 5.

\textsuperscript{19} Kennedy, interviews; Dorothy Ellis-Jackson, interview with author and Harold Pearse, Halifax, 14 November 1986. Jackson who, after teaching full-time at the College for eight years, was one of the instructors whom Kennedy let go.
premise "that we do not know what art is." As a 1969 ad for the College in *Time* magazine put it: "What is art? If we knew we'd tell you ... we still don't know what art is ... or what it isn't. Which we believe is the way it should be." Whereas Nutt wanted her students to learn the "eternal principles" of art, Kennedy and Ferguson wanted theirs to regard any such principles as conventions to be transcended. To expose students to the latest ideas, the College by 1971 was spending fifty thousand dollars a year on its "Visitors to the College" program. Now cloaked in a legendary aura, the program brought students in direct contact with the leading figures of contemporary art from Toronto, Europe, and especially New York. Through the program, and through its Lithography Workshop for contemporary prints and its NSCAD Press, the College gained international recognition as a centre for pushing the boundaries of art. By 1973, American art critic Les Levine was asking in the influential journal *Art in America*, might NSCAD be "the best art school in North America?"

---


Boundaries were pushed, the definitions of art were challenged, but nevertheless the College promoted a hierarchy of acceptable styles. As with the eras of Harvey, Rosenberg, Nutt, or Mackay, NSCAD art of the 1970s shared common characteristics, easy to identify by a trained eye as being of an approved style of a specific time. But there was one major difference from earlier decades, when a style's dominance could last from Lismer to Nutt to Mackay. Now, NSCAD's stylistic hierarchy was continually shifting, with new art "isms," such as conceptualism and minimalism, emerging before old ones became entrenched. Despite this ferment, some critics began to pigeonhole NSCAD. The school gained a reputation as primarily a centre for conceptual art, the style in which idea reigned over artifact and text was usually valued over image, and to a lesser extent for performance art. Kennedy, never one to accept being labelled, disagreed. "A lot of people have criticized us for being simply a conceptual school," he reflected during a 1988 interview. "But we never were. We reacted to all contemporary art—political art, minimalism, the re-emergence of painting. We never did get caught in a dead end."25

While its Time ad might imply a wide-openness to styles, the College certainly contained strong views about "what art is ... or what it isn't." These views were reflected not only by artists who were invited to visit, but also by those who were not. For example, the College invited few, if any, artists from its neighboring art institution, Mount Allison University's Fine Arts Department, once headed by Stanley

Although geographically separated by only two hundred kilometres, the two schools for decades had little to do with each other after Nutt's and Royle's fight in the early 1930s. By the 1970s, the historical friction had not lessened, with NSCAD students commonly perceiving Mount Allison as a stagnant centre of traditional technique, out of touch with contemporary artistic concerns. Part of this friction likely stemmed from the long-standing historical grudge of the 1930s, which most people would have known nothing about but which Mackay would have done little to rectify, and part was the strong difference of opinion about what art is or isn't.

Comparing the College's programs of the 1970s to those of the 1930s, it becomes apparent that, indeed, NSCAD did have hard-nosed views about what constituted art. During the 1930s Stanley Royle had greatly popularized Peggy's Cove as an artist's mecca. We may even credit Royle, in part, for the increased popularity of Peggy's Cove as a tourist haven. By Kennedy's time, Peggy's Cove, though still very popular with painters and tourists, had in many people's mind become an artistic cliche, a subject suitable for only the Sunday dabbler. Demonstrating how far this change was ingrained, Kennedy told Art College students

---

26 See list of visitors in NSCAD academic calendars and in Garry Kennedy's piece, "Nova Scotia College of Art and Design." The painter Alex Colville was a visitor to the College sometime during 1974-1975, so he could be considered an exception to there having been no visitors from Mount Allison, since Colville studied at Mount Allison under Royle from 1938 to 1942, and then taught there from 1946 to 1963; see Calendar 1975-76, 54.

27 Mount Allison interpretation is based on my experience at NSCAD, which I attended from 1974 to 1978, and from 1981 to 1985.

in July 1976, "If somebody comes along and wants to paint a cove then our advice to him is 'go out and paint a cove,' because we have nothing for them here."^{29}

Having thus rejected the art that the community held dear, we might expect the College's already tenuous community support to be further weakened. Yet, during the 1970s the school became the most stable at the exact same time it was the most avant-garde. Although this leading-edge position in art did not cause the stability, neither did it cause the school's demise. In fact, during the Art School's history, fine art styles rarely had much bearing on community support. Mackay promoted a safe style, one in which a cove was certainly a subject worth painting. Yet by his final years as principal, the community was once again indifferent to the College. Lismer, on the other hand, introduced a new art style to the school, yet he too faced community indifference. Often portrayed as a populist striving to bring art to the masses, Lismer could be seen as a visionary in the wilderness, whose insights and efforts Nova Scotians simply failed to appreciate. Another possibility, though, is that it was the other way around, with Lismer unable to read the community well enough to make the Art School a viable part of it. In fairness to Lismer, we have to remember that he headed the Art School when many of its traditional promoters were preoccupied with the war effort. This was especially true of the women supporters of the VSAD, who both before and after World War One, but not necessarily during, were the Art School's strongest allies. But regardless of whether we view Lismer as

^{29} Quoted in *Look! I'm a Creative Person, I'm Above All That Political Shit!*, booklet produced by students in Advanced Studio course, NSCAD, taught by Ian Burns, photocopied, (Summer 1976), copy in possession of author.
ahead of his time or simply out of touch with the community, his particular art style was not what determined the Art School's fate.

With Lismer, Mackay, Kennedy, and the other heads of the school, the key to community support was not art style, but fulfilling larger community needs. More to the point, the key was to convince the community that the Art School did, or at least could, fill those needs. During its first few decades, despite its many promises to create a cadre of successful art-workers, the Halifax Art School did not, to any great extent, increase the number of such workers within the province. We could point the finger at the art school promoters, arguing they offered illusions unrooted in economic realities. In their defense, however, they were never given a real opportunity to fully test their propositions. They pleaded for soundly-supported art education, and they never got it. Instead, the entire first half century of the Art School is characterized by inadequate classroom space and hand-to-mouth budgets. It may very well be that, had the Halifax community paid more attention, its art school could have actually produced more of the art entrepreneurs that the promoters strove for. Under Kennedy, they did pay attention, and the College entrenched itself within the community in a way it had never been able to before.

One reason they paid attention is because Kennedy's boundary-pushing characterized not only his art but also his administration. In one of his boldest moves, he ended up significantly changing the downtown core of the city. Design professor Tony Mann came up with the idea, and two new faculty members, architect-planners Bob Parker and Bill Smith, fleshed it out: renovating the century-old deteriorating buildings on Hollis and Granville Streets, having shops on the bottom floors, and the Art College up above them. Despite a sceptical Board,
Kennedy championed the scheme. The result was Halifax’s Historic Properties, a pleasant shopping district, one block west of the harbor waterfront, a block north of the Art School’s original home in the Union Bank Building, and a block east of the school’s former location in the old National School. It took six years, from 1972 to 1978, for NSCAD to move the entire campus to the Properties, with the official opening taking place on April 27, 1979. The Historic Properties project ingrained the Art College deeply within the community. Although most Haligonians would have cared little for a hotbed of New York-based leading-edge art activity, they did care about their downtown, and the College’s role in revitalizing it gained community support for the school.

At the same time, expansion into graduate programs gained the College increased academic respectability. In 1973-1974 NSCAD started an M.F.A. program, and in 1977-1978 it began offering an M.A. in Art Education. College graduates could now boast strong credentials for entry into careers as artist-professionals, either as designers, public school art teachers, post-secondary art instructors, and, of course, practising artists. Surveying graduating students in the mid-1970s, the College claimed that up to ninety-five percent found employment within a year of leaving the school, most in art-related fields. As in earlier years, this vocational success bred public support and government funding.

Along with providing degree students with employable skills, the College strengthened its community links through non-credit courses. In 1972 NSCAD established the position of Director of Extension Services, renewing the school's emphasis on community programs. Extensions invited the general public to day and evening courses and workshops in various fields of art and design. Throughout the province, interested groups could request lectures or workshops which the Department would organize. Collaborating with Extensions, the Art Education Division breathed new life in the Saturday morning art program for young people. As in the days of Nutt, students in the Division planned and taught the Saturday program as part of their teaching internship.³³

The work of NSCAD Extensions, through its evening programs and its Saturday morning classes for children, echoed the school's earliest and most successful community involvement. Both types of programs were offered at the Victoria School of Art and Design when it first opened in 1887. While the nineteenth century VSAD evening courses had many precedents throughout the continent, its Saturday program for children is one of the oldest known examples of such classes. Eventually, such programs were common features of many museums and post-secondary art education institutions, with art education historians usually citing Franz Cizek's classes in Vienna as being its earliest roots.³⁴ Yet Cizek conducted his influential weekend


children's art classes from 1897 to 1938, starting it ten years after the VSAD began doing so. In North America, historians rightfully credit Lismer's work at the Art Gallery of Ontario in the 1920s and 1930s for playing a major role in popularizing the children's Saturday morning art class movement.\(^35\) However, Arthur Lismer's first Saturday morning art class for public school students was in Halifax, in 1917, while he was principal of the Victoria School of Art and Design.

Examples of Saturday morning art classes earlier than those organized by Cizek and Lismer are not generally known, but they did exist. In 1907, under former VSAD principal Ozias Dodge, Saturday classes at the Norwich Art School in Connecticut were important enough to assign a studio space for exclusive use by the children.\(^36\) At that time Saturday art classes for children were also available at schools of art in Cleveland, Denver, New York, and St. Louis.\(^37\) One of the first known children's Saturday morning art class in the United States was initiated at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in 1897, the same year as Cizek's first class and a decade after the program began at the VSAD.\(^38\)


\(^{36}\) The Norwich Art School, [academic calendar, 1907-1908], (Norwich, Conn.), n.p.


\(^{38}\) Pratt Institute, Catalogue 1897-1898 (Brooklyn), 44.
When it revitalized the classes in the 1970s, the College was unaware of its historic nineteenth century role in Saturday morning art classes for children.\(^{39}\) In fact, during this decade when the Art College was most obsessed with blazing art's future, it forgot its own past. For example, although NSCAD academic calendars of the 1970s had sections about the "History of the College," they did not know all of the former principals' names. Katherine Evans was called "Miss Kathleen Evans," and Charles Waterbury, who by then everybody thought was a woman named Catherine, is listed safely as "C.C. Waterbury."\(^{40}\) By 1980, the calendars' histories avoided the problem of forgotten names by listing only a few, apparently the most important, administrative officials: Rosenberg, Lismer, Mackay, and Kennedy. It misspelled D.C. Mackay's name as "D.C. MacKay," a trivial mistake when you consider that the up-to-then most historically consequential principal, Elizabeth Nutt, was not even mentioned.\(^{41}\) By 1983 the calendar's history simply stopped naming past principals altogether, and instead focused primarily on the school's buildings.\(^{42}\)

---

39 Harold Pearse, chair of NSCAD's Art Education Division when the Saturday classes were revitalized in the early 1970s, knew nothing about the earlier Saturday classes before he and I began researching the school's history in 1985. See our article on the Saturday classes: Harold Pearse and Donald Soucy, "Nineteenth Century Origins of Saturday Morning Art Classes for Children in Halifax, Nova Scotia," Studies in Art Education 28, no. 3 (Spring 1987): 141-48.


As they began to be lost in the historical shuffle, it may be just coincidence that Evans, Nutt, and "C.C. Waterbury" were women, either in fact or by assumption. In the mid-1970s, however, a feminist critique emerged at NSCAD, and although those developing the critique may not even have been aware of either Evans or Nutt, they did argue that the College’s gaps in historical memory were anything but coincidental. The feminist critique was one of the various political “isms” that began challenging the validity of NSCAD’s stylistic “isms.” By mid-decade, left-leaning faculty and students at the College started questioning the “privileged art” of NSCAD, with its “art about art” emphasis and its failure to acknowledge social content. Although other administrators might have blocked their critics, Kennedy instead hired more of them to teach summer courses. He took up their challenge, however, irking them by suggesting their work was simply another art style, “Political Art.”

As just one example of this growing left presence at the College, its feminist critics challenged the predominant art historical interpretations being taught in NSCAD courses. Art history at NSCAD, they argued, systematically omitted women artists, or ignored the female origins of artwork such as Minoan art or Bayeux.

---

43 See, for example, Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge, *It’s Still Privileged Art*, exhibition catalogue (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Ontario, 1976). Although not specifically about NSCAD, this exhibition and catalogue was worked on by Conde and Beveridge while they were teaching at NSCAD in the summer of 1976, and their criticism was directed at the type of art found, among other places, at the College. They ran NSCAD Press’s New York Office, and also ran the New York loft which NSCAD maintained for students. The catalogue quotes Kennedy as trying to “rationalize” Conde’s and Beveridge’s work by labelling it “Political Art” (n.p.). Also on the Conde and Beveridge exhibition, see: Peter White, “Art Has to Wait for More Important Business,” *The Globe and Mail*, 8 January 1977, 33. Ian Burns, a member of the New York leftist artist collective Art & Language, also taught at NSCAD in the summer of 1976. See: Art & Language, “Report & (Self)criticism of (Provisional) Art & Language Discussions, July 22nd and 27th, 1976, at Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, Incorporating Criticism by Gary Zatzman (CPC,M-L), to Be Submitted to the Group for Struggle Over the Points of Criticism,” unpublished photocopy, copy in possession of author (Halifax, 1976).
tapestries. Far from being inadvertent, this selected view of the past, they affirmed, was a product of the "masculist bias" at NSCAD, and in the art world in general.\footnote{Barbara England, "Women & the Art School: An Introductory Analysis of Masculism at NSCAD," unpublished photocopy, copy in possession of author (Halifax, n.d. [1975-1976]), n.p.}

In a faculty that had grown fifty-one strong by 1975-1976, only seven teachers were women. Of these, three were instructors, whereas forty-one out of the forty-four men were either assistant or associate professors or, in the case of Kennedy only, full professor. Among the twenty administrators that year, only five were women, none of whom were in academic positions.\footnote{NSCAD, Calendar 1975-76, 49-53.} More subtly, in a school where half the students were female, the NSCAD academic calendar continued to refer to artists and students using only "man," "men," and male pronouns. Was it any wonder, the feminist critics concluded, that art history at the College had a "'Men's Club' atmosphere" about it?\footnote{England, "Women & the Art School," n.p.}

Addressing, among other issues, the College's "distorted view of art and history," NSCAD student Barbara England wrote, photocopied, and distributed a twenty-eight page pamphlet on "Women and the Art School: An Introductory Analysis of Masculism at NSCAD." As a student representative on the NSCAD Board of Governors during 1975-1976, the year she wrote her widely-discussed pamphlet, England had an insider's view of the College. She called on the school's art historians to begin serious research on women's role in art history, to begin reclaiming the lost stories from women's past.
Viewed two decades later, England's pamphlet lends weight to its own argument. In it there is no mention of the historical role of women during the Art School's first half century. By then most people had forgotten this role, or at best did not acknowledge it. None of the histories in the academic calendars of the 1970s discusses it, nor did the few rare historical articles on the College published during the 1960s and 1970s. Nearly all of these histories mentioned Anna Leonowens, most mentioned Elizabeth Nutt, and one even mentioned "Mrs. J. F. Kenny," but that was the extent of it. Yet, along with individuals such as Anna Leonowens, Alexander Mckay, and Elizabeth Styring Nutt, it is Halifax's clubwomen to whom the Art School owed the most for its survival before World War Two, and therefore its continued existence in the 1970s.

Although forgotten by the 1970s, the clubwomen's contributions to the College were still well remembered in the 1930s. True, the Local Council of Women was still active at the school at the time, but it was not just their current campaigns that were acknowledged, it was also their work in decades past. In 1930, for example, Frederic Sexton, who had served as Art College president and as Director of Technical Education for the province, noted that the Art School "was started by the enthusiasm of a group of cultured women nearly fifty years ago and has been kept alive mainly by the support of other women." Had this history been still well known at NSCAD nearly fifty years later, it could have added weight to the feminist

---


arguments that history is distorted when women are left out. Not only was the
College still around thanks to earlier efforts by clubwomen, but these efforts also
revealed much about how women had organized to contest and exert power in the
arts community and the community at large. In forging Halifax’s art world, turn-of-
the-century women’s groups formed a power structure parallel to that of the male city
government. In several areas of the public sphere, such as art and art education,
this parallel female structure was most responsible for what went on—or did not go
on—in the community.

Just as the history of women and the Art School could have informed the
feminist critique of the College, lessons from the Nutt-Royle conflict of the 1930s
could have illuminated Kennedy’s battles at NSCAD in the mid-1980s. Although
their ideas on art and art teaching vastly differed, Nutt and Kennedy were in many
ways similar. Both steadfastly pursued their visions for the school, changing its
name, initiating new diplomas or degrees, pressuring for new buildings, and making
the school more vibrant and financially secure than it had ever been before. And
also like Nutt, when Kennedy’s authority was eventually challenged by artists
teaching under him, he refused to weaken his grip on the school. With Nutt this led
to the nasty dispute with Royle. In Kennedy’s case, it resulted in a bitter faculty
strike in 1986.

\footnote{For an examination about Chicago clubwomen and community power, see Maureen A.
Flanagan, “Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman’s City Club of
Chicago in the Progressive Era,” \textit{American Historical Review} 95, no. 4 (1989): 1032-50.}
Throughout the 1980s, the number of full-time faculty at the College ranged between forty-two and forty-five. In the years when Kennedy first took charge, it was not unusual for an artist to teach a term or two at the College, then retreat to New York or Toronto to continue their own studio production, maybe returning later to the College for another hitch. There was no tenure, there were no permanent contracts. An advantage of frequent staff turnover was that it kept things fresh, a revolving door of contemporary ideas. A disadvantage was, although there were many examples of faculty members with long-lasting careers at NSCAD, there were few official assurances of job security. In addition, salaries were less than in many other post-secondary institutions in the region. By the 1980s, as more faculty were making long-term commitments to the College and community, security and a good salary became more of an issue.

In May 1986, NSCAD's faculty unionized. Although they humorously chose the name FUNSCAD, an acronym for Faculty Union of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, the subsequent negotiations were anything but funny. Kennedy was ready to play hardball. From his perspective, he had made NSCAD what it was by propelling dynamic change, not by entrenching secure comfort, and he was going to fight against any union demands that he thought could take his school back to the stagnant years of the mid-1960s. Although officially only an ex officio member of the

---

50 NSCAD, Calendar 1980-81, 2, notes there were forty-five full-time faculty in 1979-80; the Calendar 1983-84, 5, says there were forty-two in 1982-83; the number remained fairly stable throughout the decade, with the Calendar 1988/89, 7, listing forty-three faculty for 1987-88. The numbers are larger if you count faculty members listed in calendars, but these lists include adjunct faculty.

Board of Governors, Kennedy’s opinions held a lot of sway among Board members, and he knew how to get results at their meetings. Falling in line behind their president, the Board stiffly opposed the Union. In doing so, they underestimated the faculty’s resolve and the strength of the union’s position. With negotiations at a deadlock, FUNSCAD hit the pavement, striking for twenty days from October 20 to November 4, 1986.

The result was a collective agreement that all parties said they could live with, but which clearly reflected the faculty’s demands more than the Board’s positions. Starting in the following year’s academic calendar, the administration began warning students that NSCAD assumed no responsibility for interruption of services, "which causes may include, but shall not be limited to, withdrawal of services by any unionized employees of the College." So far the warning has not been needed. Although labor-management relations remained tense for the next couple of years, there were no more major disruptions.

Initially giving no indication he would step down as president following the strike, Kennedy finally announced in the spring of 1988 that this, his current term, would be his last. At the close of the 1989-1990 school year, he set out on a one

---

52 This interpretation is based on my own experience as a member of the NSCAD Board of Governors (1986-1988) during negotiations, the strike, and its aftermath. I had also served on the Board of Governors under Garry Kennedy a decade earlier (1976-1978). As a NSCAD student from 1974-1978 and 1981-1985, and a summer instructor there in 1983, I knew many NSCAD faculty members, and had opportunity to speak about the negotiations, strike, and contract with them, and with Kennedy, on many occasions.

53 A Collective Agreement Between the Board of Governors of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Faculty Union July 1, 1986 to June 30, 1988 (Halifax).

54 NSCAD, Calendar 1987/88, 4.
year leave, from which he returned to a regular faculty position. His successor, Ian Christie Clark, had served as a Canadian delegate to UNESCO and Secretary General of the National Museums of Canada. With Clark’s appointment, the Halifax Art School, for the first time in its century-plus history, did not have a fine artist as its principal or president.

Despite the residue of difficulties remaining from the labor-management unrest, Kennedy left the school in better shape than had any principal before him, including Nutt. During Kennedy’s years as president, enrolment had swelled to five hundred students and the annual budget had increased by seven thousand percent. From a managerial point of view, both Kennedy’s and Nutt’s strong leadership were in a large way responsible for the Art School’s vibrancy and organizational stability. From an artistic view, however, each had their critics who believed that, after more than two decades, this strong authority was impeding the school’s and the province’s creative advancement.

In viewing the advancements of the College from Leonowens to Kennedy, we can identify key conditions whose absence or presence determined the school’s success. The Art school fared best when it had: leadership from strong-willed people who had vision and an ability to galvanize the community; managerial and financial support from the community; a plan to achieve goals that the community believed were worthwhile; and a long-term, unrelenting commitment to see that plan through. Few were the times when all four conditions existed simultaneously. Leonowens, Smith, and Lismer had a plan, they ventured into the community, and, at least for

Leonowens and Lismer, they fit the description of strong-willed. But none of the three was around for the long term. Alexander McKay was there for three decades, and he had vision, but he usually depended on others to galvanize the community. Those others were often not to be found. Rosenberg and Chavignaud never succeeded in achieving strong community support, and never, actually, worked that hard for it. As the longest serving principal, Mackay was there for the long term, but his vision kept the school rooted in earlier times. It is only with the ever-resolute Nutt, and the equally unflinching Kennedy, with their successful building of community connections and their decades-long commitment, that we have an institution that achieves relative security and success. Yet, somewhat ironically, it was also Nutt's and Kennedy's unflinching resoluteness that contributed to divisive fracturing of the Halifax arts community. The history of the Halifax Art School, therefore, tells us something about conditions that affect both creative success and creative tension. By better understanding those conditions, other arts institutions might also better understand their own options for sustained viability.
A. PRIMARY SOURCES — UNPUBLISHED

I. DIARIES


____. *Diary October 3, 1932 to May 12, 1933*. MG 17 vol. 5 no. 3. Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia.


2. EPHEMERA, FILMS, FLYERS, PAMPHLETS, NOTICES

*Anna and the King of Siam*. Film, 129 minutes, with Irene Dunne as Leonowens. Hollywood: Twentieth Century Fox, 1946.


"The British Government Announces an Exhibition of Official Lithographs."


*The King and I*. Film, 133 minutes, with Deborah Kerr as Leonowens. Hollywood: Twentieth Century Fox, 1956.


3. INTERVIEWS

a. Interviews Conducted by Author


Shutlak, Garry D. Halifax, August 1986, August 1996.


b. Interviews Conducted by Author and Harold Pearse


4. **LETTERS**

a. **General**


b. Nutt, Elizabeth S. Letters to and from


c. *Sexton, Frederic H. Letters to and from*


5. MINUTES


6. SCRAPBOOKS


7. **UNPUBLISHED ARCHIVAL: GENERAL**


Canadian Authors Association, Nova Scotia Branch. *Writings by Bertha Archibald, Laura Carten (Farmer Smith), and Helen Creighton.* MG 20 vol. 16. Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1940-44.


8. **UNPUBLISHED ARCHIVAL: VSAD, NSCA, NSCAD**

Archives of the National Society for Education in Art and Design, housed in Liverpool, David Thistlewood, NSEAD Archivist. Information on Elizabeth S. Nutt: Society of Art Masters, List of Members and District Members and Rules of the Society (London: J.B. Nichols and Sons) file D/34, 1908, p. 7; file D/36,


Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax. Information on Elizabeth S. Nutt: MG 1 no. 730 a; manuscript outlining Nutt's career, MG 1 vol. 2625 no. 342; obituary, MG 9 vol. 36, p. 180; obituary, MG 9 vol. 218, p. 93; obituary, MG 100 vol. 202, no. 27; biographical data, MG 100 vol. 248, nos. 1b a-e, 16c; biographical article and sample of Nutt's paintings, vertical file vol. 69 no. 1.


B. PRIMARY SOURCES — PUBLISHED

1. BOOKS

a. Books, General


---. *The Relation of Art to Education and Social Life, Being an Address Delivered at the Leek Town Hall on Thirty-first of October, 1892*. Leek: The Leek Press, 1892.


b. **Chapters, Parts of Books**


c. **College Calendars**

*Catalogue Pratt Institute*. Brooklyn: Pratt Institute, 1892.

*Catalogue Pratt Institute Brooklyn, N.Y*. Brooklyn: Pratt Institute, 1897.


The Norwich Art School 1907-08. Academic calendar. Norwich, Conn.

d. Exhibition Catalogues


e. Textbooks, Student and Teacher


____. *Theory and Practice of Teaching Art*. 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College Columbia University, 1912.


2. **JOURNALS AND MAGAZINES**


"Books Received." *Journal of the National Society of Art Masters* 3, 2nd series, no. 4 (1918): 203-6.


Leonowens, Anna H. "Moscow 'The Holy'." The Critic, June 1887.


"What is Art?" Advertisement. Time, 23 May 1969.

3. NEWSPAPERS

a. Obituaries

"A.L. Davison and His Son Killed When Car Crashes Into Train." Halifax Star, 2 July 1931.

"Charles Archibald Dies at His Home. Was for Twenty Years Leading Figure in Coal Mining Industry. Former President of Bank of Nova Scotia. Philanthropic Citizen." Halifax Herald, 30 April 1929, 4 col. 3-4.


"Death of Mrs. J. F. Kenny." *Morning Chronicle*, 19 April 1897, 5 col. 2.


"Dr. E. Ritchie Passes: Real Loss to City." *Halifax Mail*, 5 September 1933, .

"Dr. A.W. Heartz Noted Preacher Dies at Amherst." *Halifax Star*, 8 November 1925.


"Last Tribute to the Late Mrs. F.H. Sexton." *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 17 December 1923, 5, col. 3.

Leonowens, Anna H. "A Tribute to the Late Mrs. J.F. Kenny." *Daily Echo*, 20 April 1897, 6 col. 4.


"Miss E.S. Nutt, Former Art College Head, Passes." *Halifax Mail*, 28 March 1946.


"Obituary" [Edna Mae Sexton]. *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 15 December 1923, 10, cols. 3-5.


"Will of Late Miss Ella Ritchie." *Halifax Chronicle*, 23 May 1928.

b. 1825-75: Private-Venture Artist-Teachers


"Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies, Phipps." Advertisement. *Yarmouth Herald and Western Advertiser*, 27 September 1833, 3.

"Drawing Academy, Miss Mary E. Morris." Advertisement. *The Novascotian*, 22 August 1833.


"Miss Tupper." Advertisement. *Yarmouth Herald and Western Advertiser*, 3 May 1847, 2.

"Miss Tupper's Establishment for Young Ladies." Advertisement. *Yarmouth Herald and Western Advertiser*, 8 April 1847, 4.


"New School, Mrs. Sorenson and Mrs. Donnelly." Advertisement. *Yarmouth Herald and Western Advertiser*, 17 December 1838, 3.


"Yarmouth Academy." Advertisement. *The Yarmouth Herald and Western Advertiser*, 4 October 1833, 3.


c. 1878-91: Founding of VSAD


"Halifax Teachers Association." *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 1 December 1887.


"This List is Larger. The Rich Men and Women of Halifax." *Progress*, 16 March 1895.


"Royal Canadian Academy of Art." *Nova Scotian*, 14 May 1887.

"School Board." *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 16 December 1887.


"Victoria School of Art and Design." *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 16 June 1887, 3.

"Victoria School of Art and Design." *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 12 July 1887, 3.
"Victoria School of Art and Design." *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 16 July 1887, 3.


"The 'World's Fayre'." *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 30 August 1888.


"World's Fayre!" *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 29 July 1888.


d. 1905: VSAD's Art Lectures

"Art and Life—Dr. MacMechan Delivers the First of the Art Lecture Course Last Evening." *Halifax Recorder*, 13 January 1905.


"Early Italian Painters—Lecture Delivered Last Evening at the Victoria School of Art and Design by Dr. Eliza Ritchie." *Halifax Mail*, 10 February 1905.
"Early Italian Art: Lecture by Dr. Eliza Ritchie in Art School Last Evening." *Recorder*, 5 February 1905.


"Great Italian Masters—Eloquent and Instructive Lecture by Dr. Eliza Ritchie at the School of Art." *Halifax Chronicle*, 10 February 1905.


"Mr. Rosenberg's Lecture on Art." *Halifax Mail*, 5 May 1905.


e. 1907-18: VSAD Supporters: Local Council of Women


*Halifax Daily Echo*. [Lewis Smith resigns as VSAD principal]. 18 May 1912: 11 col. 3.

"Exemption from Taxation: City Council Last Night Placed Local Council of Women on Same Footing as Other Philanthropic Bodies." *Mail*, 14 April 1913.

"Express Appreciation of the Late Mr. Wright's Noble Gift." *Mail*, 11 May 1912.


[Houston, Alice]. "Duty of Public to the Children—The Relation of Supervised Playgrounds to a Reduction in the Number of Juvenile Delinquents. Enlightened Opinion. Well-known Men Express Themselves on Subject, Vigorously Approving and Advocating Them for All the Year." *Halifax Mail*, 22 June 1912.


"A League That Promises to Do Good." *Evening Mail*, 10 May 1914.


____. "How Far Does Housekeeping Go?" _Halifax Mail_, 3 April 1915.


____. "A Plea from Summer Playgrounds." _Halifax Daily Echo_, 30 May 1908.


"Shall We Have Women on School Board?" Editorial. _Halifax Mail_, 29 November 1912.


____. "Miss Fitzgibbon [sic] is Coming to Halifax: Local Council of Women Have Invited Her to Address Public Meeting." _Daily Echo_, 25 January 1908.


____. "Something About the Women’s Welcome Hostel." _Halifax Mail_, 27 September 1909.

____. "Welcome Hostel for Immigrants to Be Opened Here by Local Council of Women." _Halifax Mail_, 28 August 1909.

____. "Union of Interests is Desirable." _Halifax Mail_, 18 September 1912.

"The Victoria School of Art and Design Reopens on Sept. 30th." _Halifax Recorder_, 10 September 1907.

"Welcome Hostel to Branch Out." _Halifax Mail_, 17 November 1911.

"Woman’s Suffrage Bill Passed Its Second Reading in the House." _Halifax Morning Chronicle_, 22 March 1917, 1-2.

"Women on School Boards: Are They Eligible and is Their Appointment Desirable?" Editorial. _Mail_, 24 January 1911.


f. 1919-25: Nutt’s First Years


"Art School’s Successful Year." *Halifax Evening Echo*, 2 May 1925.


*Halifax Evening Echo*. [Book Week]. 29 November 1924.


"Honors for Marjorie Tozer." *Halifax Evening Mail*, June 1924.

"To Lecture on Canadian Art." *Halifax Evening Mail*, 10 February 1925.


"Miss Nutt Lectures on Debt to Past." *Halifax Evening Echo*, 22 January 1925.
Nutt, Elizabeth S. "A Romantic Chapter in the History of the Provincial Art School." 
*Halifax Evening Mail*, 31 December 1924.


g. 1926-31: Nova Scotia College of Art


"Another First Thing." *Halifax Star*, 29 November 1930.


"Gave Fine Address on Art Subject Matter." *Halifax Star*, 16 March 1927.

"Graduate Nurses Association Meet." *Halifax Evening Echo*, 27 October 1926.

"Guest of Authors' Association." *Halifax Mail*, 12 March 1927.


"Large Number of Leading Local Women to Head up Campaign for New Building." *Halifax Mail-Star*, 19 November 1931.

"Lewis Smith's Pictures." *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 6 October 1926.


"Many Visiting Exhibition at College of Art." *Halifax Mail*, 27 November 1930.

"Mayor Agrees to Place for Art College." *Halifax Mail*, 18 February 1931.


"Miss Nutt Gives Lecture on Art." *Star*, 31 October 1928.

"Miss Nutt Highly Honored." *Halifax Star*, 3 March 1927.


"Paintings by Late Lewis E. Smith." *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, 5 October 1926.
"Rejoicing Over Continuance of Grant to College." *Halifax Mail*, 20 March 1926.


"Royal Canadian Academy Honors Local Artist." *Halifax Mail*, 23 November 1927.


"Word Received." *Halifax Mail*, 3 March 1927.


h. 1931-35: Nutt-Royle Years


Halifax Mail. [About Stanley Royle exhibit, NY]. 23 March 1933.

Halifax Mail. [About Stanley Royle exhibit, Montreal]. 1 March 1934.


"A Noteworthy Array of Very Fine Pictures." Halifax Mail, 6 November 1931.

"Nova Scotia Has Good Reason to Be Proud of Art College Chief." Halifax Star, 19 March 1934.

"Nova Scotia in Royal Academy." Halifax Chronicle, 13 May 1933.


"Nova Scotians at Big Exhibition." Halifax Mail, 5 December 1932.


"Sheffield Artist: Canadian Appointment for Mr. Royle." Sheffield Telegraph, 13 October 1931.


Staden, S. "Art Society Members Owe Much to President." Halifax Star, March 1934.


"Wins First Place." *Halifax Star*, 1 April 1935.


i. 1936-43: Miss Nutt Carries On


"J.A. Zwicker, Art Store." Halifax Mail, 28 March 1936.


"Noted Teacher Retires." Halifax Star, 12 May 1943.


"Stresses Need for Steps to Aid Progress of Art." Halifax Mail, 17 April 1936.


4. PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

a. Census


"Enumeration District No. 14." 1881 Census. Film no. 4655. Sheffield Local Studies Library, 1881.


b. Inspectors' and Supervisors' Reports


Report of the Board of School Commissioners for the City of Halifax, for the Year Ended 31st October, 1884. Halifax, 1885.


c. Laws and Statutes


d. Reports, General


Richards, Charles R. *Art in Industry, Being the Report of an Industrial Art Survey Conducted Under the Auspices of the National Society for Vocational


e. **Superintendents’ Reports**


f. VSAD, NSCA, & NSCAD Reports


C. SECONDARY SOURCES

1. BOOKS

a. Books, General


Sheath, Nora C. C. *Some Events in the Life of Walter Smith*. Published by author, 1982.


Vallance, Aymer. *William Morris, His Art His Writings and His Public Life.* London: George Bell and Sons, 1897.


b. *Chapters, Parts of Books*


Wood, B. Anne, and Donald Soucy. "From Old to New Scotland: Nineteenth Century Links Between Morality and Art Education." Chap. 3 in Framing the Past:


c. Exhibition Catalogues


2. JOURNALS, MAGAZINES, ARTICLES


"The Eye is a Nobler Organ': Ruskin and American Art Education." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 51-64.


3. **THESIS, DISSERTATIONS**


