

The Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa:  
Constructing Public Memory and Preserving History  
in a Changing City, 1898-1932

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the membership and work of the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa from 1898 to 1932. Through commemorations, historical *tableaux*, exhibitions of artefacts, and the publication, *Transactions*, they participated in the construction of a nationalist and imperialist collective memory, celebrating connections to the British Empire, a mythologized settler past, and Ottawa's evolution from lumber town to national capital. Analysis of the origins, class and ethnicity of the Society shows that French-Canadian participation fell and membership broadened as Ottawa became a government town. The thesis describes competition from the male-dominated Bytown Pioneer Association in 1923 over the commemoration of Colonel By, and it posits that the masculinization of the historical profession led the Society to abandon written accounts in *Transactions*, and focus upon the collection and display of artefacts in the Bytown Museum.

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## Introduction

On 27 May 1898, a headline in the *Ottawa Journal* announced: “To Make a Local History – Women’s Historical Society May Be Formed Here.” The accompanying article noted that there was “considerable talk among the ladies of the city” about gathering to study and subsequently publish the history of Ottawa and the surrounding area, and to collect and preserve items relating to Ottawa’s pioneers and the province’s early history.<sup>1</sup> One week later, a group of thirty-one women were invited to meet at the home of Lady Matilda Edgar to discuss how local historical societies in other cities worked. Edgar, a Toronto native whose husband was Speaker of the House of Commons, was President of the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Toronto (WCHST) and spoke eloquently about its objects, motto, and annual meetings. Her words inspired the women present to go ahead with their plans.<sup>2</sup> But first, they informed the *Journal* to make clear in its next article that the society was “not designed to be merely an excuse for the gathering together of kindred spirits, nor of certain sets, but it is one which it is hoped will resurrect from oblivion things of interest to every patriotic Canadian woman, and preserve such things as are already treasures.”<sup>3</sup> Within another week, Annie Dawson, the wife of the Queen’s Printer, hosted a second meeting that featured an address by author and historian

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<sup>1</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “To Make a Local History: Women’s Historical Society to be Formed Here,” May 27, 1898, 3, accessed at the City of Ottawa Archives using newspapers.com, a paid subscription site. *Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to the Ottawa Journal refer to material found on newspapers.com.*

<sup>2</sup> According to the minutes of the first meeting, “At the close of Lady Edgar’s remarks Lady Ritchie moved and Mrs. Foster seconded the following resolution: ‘Resolved that steps be taken to form a Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa.’ Carried.” City of Ottawa Archives (COA), Historical Society of Ottawa (HSO), MG110-HSOT 01/003, A2009-0170, Organization plans for Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa, June 3, 1898.

<sup>3</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, June 4, 1898, 6.

Mary Agnes FitzGibbon, the founder of the WCHST, who was visiting Ottawa at the time. Twelve more women attended this meeting, and eleven sent word that they would like to join the new group. Business was then put on hold until autumn, but the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa was indisputably underway.<sup>4</sup>

The objects of the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa (the WCHSO or the Society) were three-fold: to encourage the study of Canadian history and literature; to collect and preserve Canadian historical records and relics; and to foster Canadian loyalty and patriotism. The Society's overarching message, like that of most historical societies at the time, was that Canada, as a British nation, must embrace its British roots in order for the country to be the most prosperous and influential colony in the Empire. Over nearly six decades, the Society met several times a year to present, discuss, publish, collect and display this message through local and national histories. In 1917, they acquired their own building in downtown Ottawa and opened the Bytown Museum (the Museum) to permanently display their growing collection of historical artefacts. In 1952, the Bytown Museum moved to a new location at the bottom of the Rideau Canal, where it is still in operation today; shortly thereafter, the Society decided to allow male members, and in 1955, it was renamed the Historical Society of Ottawa.<sup>5</sup>

This thesis examines the work, writing, and membership of the WCHSO during its first thirty-five years. One of twenty historical societies founded in Ontario between 1869 and 1900,<sup>6</sup> it was the only one established and managed entirely by women.<sup>7</sup> Its

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<sup>4</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 1/8, A2009-0171, box 36, Minutes, June 13, 1898.

<sup>5</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 1/18 a&b, A2009-0171, box 36, "Historical Society: Our 60 Years," Miss M. Wilson, February 28, 1958.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Elizabeth Tivy, "The Local History Museum in Ontario: An Intellectual History, 1851-1985 (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 2006), 72.

members, like many other women historians at the time, used history to participate in the project of nation-building that was, at least on the surface, largely the domain of men. In the first decades of the twentieth century, these women intended to play their part by carefully preserving and then sharing local and national history, which included shaping popular historical myths and creating heroes that embodied the ideals of loyalty to Britain, and reinforced the need to preserve the country's imperial connection.<sup>8</sup> By romanticizing the hardy, devoted character of Canada's pioneer and Loyalist settlers, historical societies across Ontario established their own moral and historical right to Canadian soil. For women, this justification was doubly important: women were still second-class citizens according to the law, and, as Cecilia Morgan notes, they risked "being excluded from stories of the dominion's inevitable march of progress to adulthood."<sup>9</sup> As a result, they helped to characterize what it meant to be Canadian, which gave precedence to race and class, and largely excluded the histories of Indigenous and

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<sup>7</sup> All of the executive members of the Pioneer and Historical Association of Ontario, which was founded in 1888 and became the Ontario Historical Society in 1899, were men. It was to this organization that Mary Anne FitzGibbon and Sarah Curzon applied for permission to start the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Toronto in 1895. Also in 1895, Janet Carnochan revived the Niagara Historical Society, which was originally founded by a man. In 1900, the women of the Wentworth Historical Society in Hamilton, no longer content to simply raise funds for the programs run by male members, formed their own women's organization. See Beverly Boutilier, "Women's Rights and Duties: Sarah Anne Curzon and the Politics of Canadian History," in *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*, ed. Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 65-66; and Cecilia Morgan, *Creating Colonial Pasts: History, Memory, and Commemoration in Southern Ontario, 1860-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 13.

<sup>8</sup> Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 133.

<sup>9</sup> Cecilia Morgan, "History, Nation, and Empire: Gender and Southern Ontario Historical Societies, 1890-1920s," in *Canadian Historical Review* 82 (2001): 2, accessed February 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/224298638?accountid=9894>.

non-white peoples.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, women could use the stories of loyal female pioneers to fight for women's rights.<sup>11</sup>

For the women of the WCHSO, the project of nation-building had an added dimension: they lived in Ottawa, a city, John H. Taylor writes, that went from "a small grubby, riot-ridden frontier" lumber town to (a still small and still grubby) national capital within the span of thirty-one years.<sup>12</sup> Ottawa's designation as capital city in 1857 was not universally well-received.<sup>13</sup> Even when the WCHSO was established in 1898, John C. Walsh tells us that Ottawa was "still thought by many Canadians to be on the cusp of the frontier and a second-class cousin to Montreal and Toronto."<sup>14</sup> Convincing the rest of Ontario and even Canada that Ottawa deserved to be the capital made the job of "history-making" different for the WCHSO than it was for local societies in other parts of the province. Its members worked, in the words of Brian S. Osborne, to "integrate a people separated by geography, history, ethnicity, class, and gender" to construct local and national identities that were "self-consciously aware of place."<sup>15</sup> They embellished the character and experiences of Bytown's and the Ottawa Valley's British pioneers, but they also focused much of their historical narrative on the city's growth. In much the

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<sup>10</sup> Lisa Gaudet, "The Empire is Woman's Sphere: Organized Female Imperialism in Canada, 1880s-1920s" (PhD diss., Carleton University, 2001), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Morgan, "History, Nation, and Empire," 13.

<sup>12</sup> John H. Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company and Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1986), 56.

<sup>13</sup> David B. Knight, *Choosing Canada's Capital: Conflict Resolution in a Parliamentary System* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991), 265.

<sup>14</sup> John C. Walsh, "Modern Citizens for a Modern City? Ottawa's Great Fire of 1900," in *Construire une capitale: Ottawa: Making a Capital*, eds. Jeff Keshen and Nicole St-Onge (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999), 165.

<sup>15</sup> Brian S. Osborne, "Landscapes, Memory, Monuments, and Commemoration: Putting Identity in its Place," *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* 33, 3 (Sept 2001): 39+. Accessed online, [https://proxy.library.carleton.ca/http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA89970651&v=2.1&u=ocu\\_carleton&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=f4e785cbd900e93895c37d8dd46982a3](https://proxy.library.carleton.ca/http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA89970651&v=2.1&u=ocu_carleton&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=f4e785cbd900e93895c37d8dd46982a3).



same way that preservation in the United States was often driven by boosterist initiatives,<sup>16</sup> the WCHSO worked in tandem with municipal and federal groups to brand the city of Ottawa as a national symbol, contributing to collective memory about the city's past in order to foster collective support for its future.<sup>17</sup> And they worked assiduously to ensure that Colonel By, the builder of the Rideau Canal, was properly memorialized as, in their own words, "the founder of Bytown – no, Ottawa, the Capital of the Dominion of Canada."<sup>18</sup>

The WSCHO also differed from other Ontario societies because of Ottawa's large French-Canadian population. In its early years, this gave the Society a more diverse membership, and French-Canadian women were able to add their voices to the Society's work by narrating histories about French peoples in Canada. These histories reflected an early-twentieth-century faith that Confederation was a contract between two equal groups, and that the rights of the nation's French population would be respected.<sup>19</sup> Over the next thirty years, however, as the federal civil service expanded and Anglicized, and French nationalism increased, the Society's attention to French history dwindled, and fewer French women participated in executive work.

The women of the WCHSO also took a gendered approach to history. They invoked the rhetoric of maternal imperialism to designate themselves the "keepers" and "custodians" of Ottawa's past, and they endeavoured to include women in the history of

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<sup>16</sup> Max Page and Randall Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 6.

<sup>17</sup> For more on how the various social groups use the present to reconstruct the past and create collective memory, see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans., ed., Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 182.

<sup>18</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/28, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1931-1932, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Québec: Historians and Their Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 24.

the area.<sup>20</sup> They collected objects associated with women (like cooking utensils and textiles), and preserved in writing the memories of long-time women residents. They never referred to themselves as historians, but they called themselves *makers* of history just as often as keepers of it, as discussed in Chapter 2. They inserted *themselves* into Ottawa's history, publishing their own stories and donating their own artefacts for exhibition, all while repeatedly making note of the importance of their work for future historians. Further, the Society's members embraced a variety of sources in their work, including memories, objects, and even landscapes. Their approach to history, to quote Pierre Nora, was not "suspicious of memory," nor did it try to "suppress and destroy it."<sup>21</sup> In this way, they were able to offer different perspectives on the past, and paint a full picture of Ottawa's history. But gender also eventually altered the way they told history. As the study of history professionalized and masculinized in the first decades of the twentieth century, the stories the Society told were considered by academic historians to be "popular" tales based on "unreliable secondary sources," and therefore without authority or validity.<sup>22</sup> By the mid-1930s, the Society calculatedly turned more to museological forms of public history at the Bytown Museum and increasingly left the writing of history to men.

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<sup>20</sup> For an examination of how women used their status as "mother-citizens" to care for the cultural and human reproduction of the nation, see, for example, Lisa Gaudet, "Nation's Mothers, Empire's Daughters: the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, 1920-1930" (MA Thesis, Carleton University, 1993); Gaudet, "The Empire is Woman's Sphere;" and Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spr. 1989): 9.

<sup>22</sup> George M. Wrong, H. H. Langton and W. Stewart Wallace, eds., *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada, Volume XVIII, Publications of the Year 1913* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1914): 121; and *Volume XXII, Publications of the Years 1917 and 1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1919): 106.

Much has been written in the last few decades about the proliferation of women's voluntary organizations in Canada between the 1880s and the 1920s, and their connection with social reform and the spread of middle-class values. Most of the scholarship has focused on advocacy or political groups, like the National Council of Women, the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the YWCA, and the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario.<sup>23</sup> This scholarship highlights, in the words of Naomi Griffiths, the growth of women's volunteer activity in the late nineteenth century as "part and parcel of a widespread proliferation ... of alliances and associations formed to confront provincial and national difficulties."<sup>24</sup> Working toward charitable or political goals – like safe housing for women, temperance, or the vote – these groups argued that women, as homemakers, were also well-placed to care for society outside the home, and their efforts helped move women into the public sphere.<sup>25</sup> "In theory," writes Jennifer Price, "every woman, rich or poor, was born with natural

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<sup>23</sup> See N.E.S. Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1993* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993); Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1929* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1976); Gaudet, "Nation's Mothers, Empire's Daughters"; Sharon A. Cook, *"Through Sunshine and Shadow": The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); Diana Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, 1870-1920: 'A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need'" (PhD diss., Carleton University, 1988); Wendy Lynn Mitchinson wrote about the YWCA, the NCW, and the WCTU in "Aspects of Reform: Four Women's Organizations in Nineteenth-Century Canada" (PhD Diss., York University, 1977); Margaret C. Kechnie, *Organizing Rural Women: The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, 1897-1919* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); Linda McGuire Ambrose, *For Home and Country: The Centennial History of the Women's Institutes in Ontario* (Erin: Boston Mills Press, 1996), and "Ontario Women's Institutes and the Work of Local History," in *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*, Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice, eds. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Anne-Marie Kinahan, "Transcendent Citizenship: Suffrage, the National Council of Women of Canada, and the Politics of Organized Womanhood," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42 (3) (Fall 2008): 6.

moral gifts.”<sup>26</sup> But in practice, the “separate spheres” ideology of the mid-nineteenth century, that prescribed the gendered division of male (public) and female (private) worlds, favored wealthy women over those who worked outside the home.<sup>27</sup> Thus the middle- and upper-class women who participated in volunteer organizations in the late nineteenth century took the opportunity to inculcate middle-class values of cleanliness, home economics, and morals; the WCTU, for example, held meetings where they taught women to cook and sew.<sup>28</sup> Women created for themselves “an influential role as ‘mothers of the race’” as their way into the project of nation-building, using their privilege to perpetuate ideas of who the “right” citizens of Canada were.<sup>29</sup>

Impelling the objectives of many reform and self-improvement groups was, in many ways, fear: fear of absorption into the more dominant American culture; fear of racial and religious divisions created by the Manitoba Schools question and the execution of Louis Riel in 1885; and eugenicist fears for the “Canadian race” due to the effects of industrialization in Canada, specifically the immigration of too many “foreign” (or non-British/non-white) residents and the resultant overcrowding, high crime, and poverty.<sup>30</sup> Still, industrialization also gave women even more opportunities to tackle meaningful social welfare work. Chores like preserving food and making clothes were being done in factories; and both the presence of domestic servants in the home and the fact that

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<sup>26</sup> Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 77.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Laura Brock, “Beyond Domesticity: The Use and Value of Women’s Leisure Time in Halifax, 1880-1930,” MA thesis, Saint Mary’s University, 1998, 98.

<sup>29</sup> Gaudet, “Nation’s Mothers, Empire’s Daughters,” 8.

<sup>30</sup> Cecily Devereux writes about how feminists used eugenicist ideas about controlled reproduction in the early twentieth century to gain more political power for women: *Growing a Race: Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005).

children were spending more time in school freed women from many of their traditional daily tasks.<sup>31</sup> Women engaged in volunteer work played a vital role in the development of Canada's cultural development.<sup>32</sup> As the subject of this thesis attests, they were instrumental in founding museums, art galleries, libraries, and music groups in cities all across the nation.

Andrew Holman writes that voluntary organizations in general “were essential to establishing a sense of social order, a *classed* society,” particularly in the late nineteenth century when “the forces of industrialization and urban growth had produced a society that comprised the extremes of wealth and poverty, luxury and want, capital and labour.”<sup>33</sup> Victorian Canadians had embraced ideals of self-improvement by forming societies that promoted intellectual study and cultured pursuits, and in turn helped shape a shared middle-class consciousness.<sup>34</sup> Literacy, in particular, was a common tool used by organized women to preserve their class position and reinforce their white Anglo-Saxon heritage.<sup>35</sup> David Sutherland adds that voluntary groups also gave people the opportunity to “assert that their community was no longer a provincial or colonial backwater but instead had come to embrace” modernity.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the WCHSO's historical work strove to provide proof of a modern Ottawa both made and still in the making.

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<sup>31</sup> Paula Bourne, ed. *Women's Paid and Unpaid Work: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1985), 83-84.

<sup>32</sup> Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision*, xiii.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew C. Holman, *Middle-Class Formation in Victorian Ontario Towns* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 6-7, 108.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-9.

<sup>35</sup> Anne Ruggles Gere, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women's Clubs, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 252.

<sup>36</sup> David Sutherland, “Voluntary Societies and the Process of Middle-Class Formation in early-Victorian Halifax, Nova Scotia,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (5) (1994): 240.

Thus historical societies were instrumental in perpetuating and disseminating myths that upheld prevailing notions of Anglo-Saxon progress and the associated rights of European peoples to Canada's heritage. Daniel Francis writes that it does not matter whether the legends about Canadian history were factually accurate: rather, that they expressed "important truths" about a particular era by idealizing (and, conversely, both demonizing and forgetting) different events from the past.<sup>37</sup> Pioneers were lauded for their ability to conquer the wilderness and build villages, roads, and businesses that set Canada on its path to progress, while the histories of Indigenous peoples and their relationships with settlers and the state were diminished, featured as another example of the hardships faced by Europeans.<sup>38</sup> Stories about the Loyalists' perceived devotion to the Empire and disdain for American ambition legitimized Canada's continuing relationship with Britain.<sup>39</sup> In Ottawa, stories about Colonel By and the building of the Rideau Canal were used to illustrate Ottawa's growth and the city's connection with the imperial family. Built to protect the Canadas against possible American invasion, the Canal was a feat of engineering paid for by the British, and was both a symbolic and material link to Empire. Finally, the myth of a British "Master Race," and later the "Canadian race," was told through stories not only about conquest and Confederation, but also French Canada's

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<sup>37</sup> Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 11. Elizabeth Furniss also talks about how ideas and symbols of the frontier have shaped, and continue to shape, Canadian notions of history and identity, and enhance inequality between Indigenous and European-Canadian peoples: *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Francis writes that Europeans manufactured images of Indigenous people that projected all of their own "fears and hopes" about life in the New World: *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011), 8.

<sup>39</sup> Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 92.

contentment with British rule following the battle on the Plains of Abraham.<sup>40</sup> Such myths satisfied a need in British Canadians, including women, to feel part of an important national undertaking; and maternal imperialist myths about pioneer mothers raising families in the wilderness, or the first white baby born in a settlement, highlighted their connection to Empire.<sup>41</sup>

This thesis adds a southeastern Ontario perspective to existing literature about early twentieth century historical societies, most of which focuses on southern and southwestern Ontario. Cecilia Morgan's substantial scholarship on the role of women in the historical enterprise examines how historical societies cultivated a common local identity through an appreciation of shared imperial roots. She writes that members of historical societies "took pride in pointing to the country's position as one of the 'white settler' dominions of the British Empire."<sup>42</sup> While they did not necessarily write any more about women in history than they did about men, their work nonetheless brought women's contributions to the forefront: it was women, for example (Sarah Curzon among them), who introduced Laura Secord into historical myths about the War of 1812.<sup>43</sup> Morgan also explores the history of commemoration in Canada, and how local knowledge constructs historical memory. She writes about Janet Carnochan, the founder of the Niagara Historical Society and its museum, Memorial Hall. Like the women of the WCHSO, Carnochan used a variety of sources to create her historical narratives, most specifically the local spaces of the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. In writing about

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<sup>40</sup> Francis, *National Dreams*, 57.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>42</sup> Morgan, "History, Nation, and Empire," 1.

<sup>43</sup> Cecilia Morgan, "'Of Slender Frame and Delicate Appearance': The Placing of Laura Secord in the Narratives of Canadian Loyalist History," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 5 (1) (1994): 202 and 204.

national battles and political events that took place on local sites, Carnochan made history more accessible to the area's citizens.<sup>44</sup>

Most historical societies in Ontario were affiliated with and advised by the Ontario Historical Society (OHS), which had a great influence on their research, writing, and collecting pursuits.<sup>45</sup> Gerald Killan's book about the history of the OHS charts its relationships with local groups, and its establishment as an advisory body to provide assistance and education. He writes that many of these societies were made up of people who were either original settlers themselves, or at least direct descendants of the area's first Europeans, so their own "personal and familial pride of accomplishments" came through in their work.<sup>46</sup> By 1912, fifteen of the twenty local historical societies that were affiliated with the OHS had their own museums, most of which worked without any assistance from local councils.<sup>47</sup> The WCHSO was able to open the Bytown Museum in 1917 with help from influential men in both provincial and federal politics, but it still struggled over the years to stay open. Mary Elizabeth Tivy's 2006 dissertation looks at other local historical societies in Ontario that established their own museums. She discusses how they perpetuated close relationships with early settlers and their descendants, and exhibited a keen sense of personal identity and tradition in their research and collecting practices.<sup>48</sup>

Museum exhibits also reflected the aforementioned fears that drove voluntary organizations in this time period, featuring primarily local pioneer artefacts that reflected

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<sup>44</sup> Morgan, *Creating Colonial Pasts*, 35.

<sup>45</sup> Tivy, "The Local History Museum in Ontario," 72.

<sup>46</sup> Gerald Killan, *Preserving Ontario's Heritage: A History of the Ontario Historical Society* (Ottawa: Love Printing Service Limited, 1976), 30.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>48</sup> Tivy, "The Local History Museum in Ontario," 80.



how much more involved people used to be in the production of food, clothing and furniture. These exhibits played into the common myth of the pioneer and “nostalgia for the idea of past values and past communities.”<sup>49</sup> Eileen Mak writes that the people who ran these museums did so to collectively share such middle-class values as “a belief in progress, science, industry, and God, a conviction of the value of knowledge and education, and a desire for respectability and status.”<sup>50</sup> The effort to extend and normalize these values was also part of a broader project of rule. As Tony Bennett has noted, early museums helped not only to “lift the popular taste and design,” but also to keep people out of taverns and even prevent rebellion and discontent.<sup>51</sup>

Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice’s *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History* is a collection of essays about some of the women who have engaged with history in multiple forms since the late nineteenth century. The book examines how gender influences historical consciousness, and argues that many women historians saw things in history that most men had previously written off as having no bearing on the events of the past.<sup>52</sup> Women found new ways of doing history, such as researching the lives of ordinary people, and finding women in events that previously only focused on the contributions of men.<sup>53</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, the WCHSO’s publication, *Transactions*, was criticized by prominent male

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<sup>49</sup> Mary Elizabeth Tivy, “Museums, Visitors and the Reconstruction of the Past in Ontario,” *Material History Review* 37 (Spring 1993): 35-36.

<sup>50</sup> Eileen Diana Mak, “Patterns of Change, Sources of Influence: An Historical Study of the Canadian Museum and the Middle Class, 1850-1950,” PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1996, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 21.

<sup>52</sup> Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice, eds, *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

historians for its research methods, especially the failure to use primary sources, between 1910 and 1920, which may have influenced the direction *Transactions* took in the 1920s.

The early twentieth century brought many changes both to Ottawa society and to the study of history, which are reflected in the evolution of the WCHSO. Throughout the late nineteenth century, historical study was dominated by men and women who were passionate about history. They published essays and books, founded local historical societies, and organized public commemorative events. By the mid-1930s, however, university academics and groups like the Canadian Historical Association had, as Donald Wright tells us, “cultivated expertise, authority, and status and marked boundaries between who could and who could not be a historian.”<sup>54</sup> These boundaries included both education and gender: A university degree was the difference between a professional and a mere amateur, and “the ‘ideal’ historian was male.”<sup>55</sup> University of Toronto professor George Wrong, for example, founded a journal in 1896, the ostensible purpose of which was to critique historical publications, but which implicitly “carried on a conversation” about who had the authority to study history.<sup>56</sup> In the late 1910s and 1920s, universities implemented or raised the status of graduate programs in history, introducing mandatory methodology courses and insisting that PhD theses must be original and worthy of publication.<sup>57</sup> As a result, it became increasingly common for schools to hire only professors who had doctorates.<sup>58</sup> Through the experiences of some of the country’s first female academic historians (like Sylvia Thrupp, Margaret Ormsby, and Hilda Neatby),

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<sup>54</sup> Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-59.

<sup>58</sup> Wright, *The Professionalization of History*, 59.

Prentice writes about the “gentlemen’s club” atmosphere that pervaded history departments, where female students were excluded from historical clubs that allowed male students to network with influential men; and where women with doctorates were told to apply to schools in the United States before trying to get a teaching position in their own country. Prentice’s chapter illustrates the difficulties that women, even those with advanced degrees, faced while trying to practice history in what remained a male-dominated field until well into the 1960s and even the 1970s.<sup>59</sup>

Prentice and Boutilier also note, however, that this masculinization narrowed the definition of history. While “amateur” women historians before and after the turn of the century included women, domesticity, and motherhood in their examinations of historical events, academic historians in English Canada spent most of the twentieth century focusing on “the history of politics and, by extension, the history of men.”<sup>60</sup> Further, academic historians largely ignored Canadian history until the 1950s, and rarely took notice of local history; so the work of historical societies in this period contributed greatly to the collective memory of communities across the country. Women outside of academia, including the women of the WCHSO, engaged with history in many different ways: by writing articles, novels and poetry; by collecting objects for exhibitions; and by creating scrapbooks to memorialize important events or summarize a year-in-the-life of their community. They contributed to a more complex picture of the past. As Bonnie G. Smith writes in her book about the professionalization of history in the United States, we must pay attention to historians who worked outside of academia. Ignoring them means

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<sup>59</sup> Alison Prentice, “Laying Siege to the History Professoriate,” in *Creating Historical Memory*, 197-232. See also Donald Wright, “Gender and the Professionalization of History in English Canada Before 1960,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, 1 (March 2000): 29-66.

<sup>60</sup> Boutilier and Prentice, *Creating Historical Memory*, 7.

validating the work the professionals did to put the science of facts and details at the forefront, and push “old-fashioned history-based chronicle, the evolution of spirit, and philosophical deduction” to the back of historical research.<sup>61</sup> Julie Des Jardins adds that the women who engaged with history in the early part of the century were the predecessors to later women historians who broadened the practice even further. They contributed greatly to the consumption of history in the community, and the shaping of collective public memory.<sup>62</sup>

The WCHSO’s activities were impacted, however, by the professionalization and masculinization of the field. During its first fifteen years, its members wrote and lectured authoritatively about local history, held important positions within the Historic Landmarks Association and the Ontario Historical Society, and were chosen to speak at commemorative events in front of large audiences. In the years following the First World War, however, their writing and public speaking decreased, and they relied more on male authorities to fill their publications and lecture at their meetings. By 1934, the Society’s focus had shifted significantly, from the written study of history to the collection and preservation of artefacts for the Museum. This is not to say that the public history in which they engaged was any less important than traditional written history. On the contrary, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, the members of the WCHSO believed history could be found in almost anything, from tea cups and desks, to the view from the site of a battleground, to family lore and, most predominantly, memories. But, as academics and university departments began stressing the importance of primary source

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<sup>61</sup> Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 67.

<sup>62</sup> Julie Des Jardins, *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America: Gender, Race, and the Politics of Memory, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 4-5.

research and critical analysis, and at the same time deriding the work of amateur historians (and particularly the work of the WCHSO), the Society responded by letting the “experts” do the writing – unwittingly contributing, in the process, to the professionalization and masculinization (or, in the words of Des Jardins, “regendering”<sup>63</sup>) of the very field in which they once thrived.<sup>64</sup>

The WCHSO’s evolution also reflects the changing face of Ottawa society in the first decades of the twentieth century, and shows how much local public memory-making can be affected by place.<sup>65</sup> In 1898, Ottawa was still a somewhat economically complex city, “rooted in a balance of lumber, government, and electric-powered manufacturing,” with the French and English, Catholics and Protestants vying more or less equally for political input. Concomitantly, the WCHSO’s officers were from a variety of backgrounds: there were Anglo-Protestants and Irish and French Catholics, and they were married to or descended from lumber barons, electricity magnates, Supreme Court judges, and other civil servants. As the new century progressed, however, lumber and manufacturing declined and the number of civil servants rose, and Ottawa became a more “one-dimensional” government town.<sup>66</sup> Between 1910 and 1920, the population increased by nearly 24 per cent, and the number of federal government employees increased by 35

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<sup>63</sup> Des Jardins, *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America*, 11.

<sup>64</sup> Museums, it should be noted, also experienced professionalization in North America in the early twentieth century, with the establishment in 1906 of the American Association of Museums. Lianne McTavish writes, however, that “professionalizing the museum world was a lengthy process, one scarcely begun during the 1930s and 1940s, especially in Canada,” where a dedicated museum association did not exist until 1947: *Defining the Modern Museum: A Case Study of the Challenges of Exchange* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 130.

<sup>65</sup> See James Opp and John C. Walsh, eds., *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2010).

<sup>66</sup> Wright, *The Professionalization of History*, 119.

per cent.<sup>67</sup> After World War I, the women who joined the WCHSO were married primarily to civil servants, and many of them were new to the city. These members spent significantly less time writing and speaking about local history than the Society's founders had. At the same time, they called on their connections in the civil service to help them open the Bytown Museum and contribute papers to their publication.

Regardless of the professionalization of history that began in the early twentieth century, the WCHSO gave many interesting women the chance to contribute to the shaping of public memory in Ottawa. The first chapter of this thesis examines the Society's membership, specifically the women who worked as officers or executive committee members during the Society's first thirty years. The chapter endeavours to give a sense of how the WCHSO's membership evolved as the city of Ottawa itself evolved, and the effect of that evolution on the Society's business and focus. But the chapter also, quite simply, gives the Society a "face." These women founded an organization and a museum that are still in operation today, through which memories, myths, and objects about Ottawa's past contributed to the city's cultural development. And yet, most of them are unknown, while the names and stories of the influential men to whom they were related appear time and again in the histories of the Ottawa Valley and the nation. This seems, to me, too great an injustice to ignore.

Chapter 2 looks at the work the Society engaged in, from hosting meetings and keeping records, organizing loan exhibitions and fundraisers, and lobbying for commemorative monuments and plaques, to opening the Bytown Museum in 1917. The chapter focuses on how hard women in voluntary organizations worked, how the work of

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<sup>67</sup> Laurie J. Smith, "'A Feeling of the Responsibility for Women': The University Women's Club of Ottawa, 1910-60 (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 2002), 21.

the WCHSO contributed to nation-building in Canada, and how they contributed to the government's attempts to re-mould Ottawa as a national symbol. It also tells the story of the Society's interaction with the Bytown Pioneer Association, which was founded by a group of men in 1923 to do, in essence, exactly what the Society had already been doing for twenty-five years. This period in the Society's history illustrates the effects of a masculinizing historical enterprise on women's groups, and the WCHSO's response.

Chapter 3 examines how the Society's written work and artefact exhibitions reflected the myths that made up so much of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canadian history. Using a variety of sources, including objects, memories, and archives, the WCHSO celebrated Canada's British roots and the superiority of the British people, and romanticized Ottawa's past in order to justify its place as the capital of Canada. I also discuss how *Transactions* contributors were criticized by the editors of the *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada* for using "unreliable" sources instead of archival documents. The professionalization and masculinization of history in this period changed the way the Society worked, and contributed to their decision in the early 1930s to focus more on Museum work than on writing history.

## Chapter 1: The Many Faces of the WCHSO

In 1955, an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* told the story of a woman who, before her death in 1936, was “one of Ottawa’s picturesque and well loved figures.” She was a descendent of United Empire Loyalists who settled in Merrickville. She was raised by one of Colonel By’s master carpenters. And she was passionate about history, throwing herself “zealously” into the work of the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa. Always in “great demand in her particular field,” she contributed “not a little,” her niece said, “to the historical data of the district and put on record many a fact that otherwise would have been lost.” Nevertheless, wrote *Citizen* columnist Madge Macbeth, this interesting woman “made no spectacular contribution to our history [which] explains why she is not so well known today.”<sup>1</sup>

The subject of the article was Eva Read, who joined the WCHSO in 1899 and sat on the executive for thirty-seven years, including twenty-five as the Society’s sole dedicated librarian.<sup>2</sup> Read was also an author and public speaker, publishing seven local history papers over five volumes of the Society’s *Transactions*, and presenting many more at general and annual meetings throughout the years. While Macbeth’s article touched on Read’s public speaking opportunities and her love of history, it focused primarily on her personality, home, and social graces. A loving tribute to one of Ottawa’s interesting citizens, the article’s title – “Miss Eva Read Belonged to Era of Gracious

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<sup>1</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, Madge Macbeth, “Miss Eva Read Belonged to Era of Gracious Living,” April 2, 1955, 18, accessed online through <https://news.google.com/newspapers>. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to the *Ottawa Citizen* refer to material found on Google News Archive.

<sup>2</sup> City of Ottawa Archives (COA), Historical Society of Ottawa (HSO), MG110-HSOT 3/24, A2009-0173, Box 38, Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa, Annual Report for 1936-1937, “In Memoriam,” 64.



Living” – nonetheless diminished the many thousands of hours of work that Read devoted to the WCHSO and the Bytown Museum. While Read’s obituary notes that she gained a reputation as “an authority on Ottawa history,” by the time she died in 1936, she would have been called an “amateur” by more formally educated historians, both for her local focus and her lack of academic training.<sup>3</sup> Eva Read died nineteen years before Macbeth wrote her article. Already forgotten in 1955, Read’s name and contribution to Ottawa’s civic history remain, unsurprisingly, anonymous today.

Within two weeks of the WCHSO’s first call in May of 1898 for women interested in studying the history of Ottawa and surrounding area, fifty-four women had joined the fledgling Society.<sup>4</sup> Like Read and the other “ordinary” members of Canadian women’s organizations at that time, most of these founding members of the WCHSO are unknown now. Very few would have been inclined or encouraged to leave personal records of their lives and work with any kind of formal archival institution. While the WCHSO published more than 130 local and national history papers over a thirty year period, the vast majority of authors submitted just one essay, so not many individual members stand out as being particularly prolific. That does not mean, however, that the WCHSO and other female-led historical societies did not contribute to the efforts of women in the early twentieth century to assert their authority as historians in a field that came to be dominated by men.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, “Miss E. G. Read Called by Death in Her 81<sup>st</sup> Year,” March 19, 1936, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “To Make a Local History – Women’s Historical Society May Be Formed Here,” May 27, 1898, 3, accessed at the City of Ottawa Archives using newspapers.com, a paid subscription site. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to the *Ottawa Journal* refer to material found on newspapers.com.

This chapter sheds light on some of the key women who played an executive role in the Society between 1898 and 1932, to add to the understanding of what kind of women engaged in memory-making in Ottawa during this period. This chapter also examines in general how the Society's demographics changed over time, and how those changes may have influenced its work. Ottawa was transformed in the early twentieth century, evolving, John H. Taylor writes, from a city with "ambitions for economic complexity" in the form of lumber, electric-powered manufacturing, and government, to one with a more "one-dimensional character as a government town."<sup>5</sup> This evolution affected the Society's membership over time, as its founding members retired or passed away and women from other parts of the country moved to Ottawa with husbands who worked for the federal government. I argue that these changes also had an impact on the Society's output.

Using census records, I provide a snapshot of the most basic facts about the women who attended the Society's first meetings in 1898, to highlight the relative diversity among members of the group. I also use newspaper articles and obituaries, and information gleaned from city directories and the biographies of their husbands and fathers, to provide brief profiles of each of these women. Of course, I do not attempt to offer information about every woman who worked with the WCHSO until 1932. Instead, I look at most of the women who attended the two founding meetings in 1898; and then only on a few of the women who served as officers or sat on the executive committee over the next thirty years. While general members attended meetings, volunteered at the

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<sup>5</sup> John H. Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company and Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1986), 119.

museum, and might write or present a paper, executive members did the bulk of the Society's work.

I recognize that by consulting newspapers and biographies about men, I offer profiles that are not only far from comprehensive, but also biased. Bridget Fowler tells us that obituaries may reflect on a person's life, but they also offer "a certain view of the past," thereby shaping collective memory in the process.<sup>6</sup> Early twentieth century obituaries might record a woman's participation in social reform or cultural groups, but they just as often described her in terms of her relationships with men, or focused on her reputation as a "charming hostess."<sup>7</sup> Obituaries were also shaped by class, for only women of a certain social strata were written about in the newspaper. Fortunately for my research, many of the WCHSO's members were wealthy and influential enough to be memorialized in this way. Some of them are also featured in *Types of Canadian Women*, a volume of short biographies that was published in 1903. *Types* was written by Henry James Morgan, the author of several publications that showcased the individuals behind Canada's political and social development. In his biographical sketch of Morgan, Robert Lanning writes that *Types* was really nothing more than a "vanity publication," as the biographies therein were of the wives of politicians and business élites, and offered "more information about the fathers and husbands of the subjects than the women

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<sup>6</sup> Bridget Fowler, *The Obituary as Collective Memory* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> Michelle Harper, "Reading the Lives of Women Through Their Obituaries: With Tips for Searching in Historical Newspapers," *The Readex Report* 2, 1 (February 2007), accessed November 11, 2015, <http://www.readex.com/readex-report/reading-lives-women-through-their-obituaries-tips-searching-historical-newspapers>.

themselves.”<sup>8</sup> Be that as it may, considering the dearth of records relating to most of these women, *Types* and obituaries are useful sources, adding to what little we can glean about them from the biographies of their husbands.

### 1.1 The Women at the Founding Meetings

The women who attended the WCHSO’s founding meetings in the spring of 1898 were no doubt interested in history; and for many of them, this was another opportunity to take on a leadership role in an organization not already dominated by men. Indeed, many of the women who attended the founding meetings of the WCHSO were also involved with the National Council of Women (NCW) and other organizations that worked for the betterment of women and children in Canadian society. Certainly for anyone familiar with the history of Canada or Ottawa – or just the city of Ottawa itself – the surnames of some of the Society’s founders are recognizable. The *Ottawa Journal* referred to them as the “ladies of the city,” employing a term commonly used to describe women in the late nineteenth century, but in truth, many of them really were the “aristocracy” of Ottawa society.<sup>9</sup> Some of them were descended from the area’s first settlers; and most of them were married to, or the daughters of, the people who essentially ruled the city and the country: high-ranking government ministers, judges, prominent merchants, business owners, and other influential men. But these women were more than just wives or daughters. If they did not grow up in the Ottawa area, they had

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Lanning, “Morgan, Henry James,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 21, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/morgan\\_henry\\_james\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/morgan_henry_james_14E.html).

<sup>9</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “To Make a Local History: Women’s Historical Society to be Formed Here,” May 27, 1898, 3.

lived in the city for many years, and many were known throughout for their own accomplishments.

At the turn of the century, only twelve per cent of women in Ottawa were over fifty years old,<sup>10</sup> but of the women who attended the Society's founding meetings, just under half were over fifty, and nearly seventy per cent were over forty.<sup>11</sup> Most of them were no longer raising young children, and therefore had the time to devote to voluntary work. Three of the Society's founders were widows, while about fifty-five per cent of them were married, and nearly forty per cent were single. As discussed in Chapter 2, not many unmarried women went on to take a leadership role in the WCHSO. Of the twenty women on the first executive council elected in the fall of 1898, fifteen were married or widowed and over forty years of age, three were married and in their thirties, and just two were single.<sup>12</sup> This is comparable to statistics on the executive members of the Ottawa Local Council of Women (OLCW), who were also primarily either married or widowed and over forty years old.<sup>13</sup>

At the turn of the century, nearly sixty-five per cent of Ottawa's residents were born in Ontario and just twenty-one per cent in Quebec.<sup>14</sup> Within the WCHSO, however, a larger proportion of members were born in Quebec than Ontario – thirty per cent and

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<sup>10</sup> Based on figures provided in Taylor, "Table XII: Ottawa Population by Age and Sex: 1851-1971," *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 214.

<sup>11</sup> The statistics discussed here are pulled from 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921 census records and *The Ottawa City Directory 1898-99*. They are approximations only, based on those women for whom data could be found. For example, one of the women, K. E. (or M.) Clarke, whose name appears on the list of those who attended the first meeting, is difficult to identify. Clarke does not seem to have remained affiliated with the WCHSO (at least under the name she wrote on the member list at the founding meeting).

<sup>12</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/2, 2/3, A2009-0171, box 36, Executive meeting minutes, 1898 to March 28, 1907.

<sup>13</sup> Dorothy Van Dyk, "Producing Force Among the Women of Ottawa: The Ottawa Local Council of Women, 1894-1930" (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1993), 22.

<sup>14</sup> Based on figures provided in Taylor, "Table X: Ottawa's Population by Birthplace, 1851-1981," *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 213.

forty per cent, respectively. Twenty per cent were born in the Maritimes, and ten in England, Ireland or the United States. Nearly eighty per cent of the members claimed English, Irish, or Scottish ethnicity, and only fifteen per cent were French; one woman called herself Welsh, and another, German. The Society's French to English ratio was smaller than that recorded within Ottawa as a whole, which was comprised of nearly thirty-five per cent French and sixty-three per cent "British Isles."<sup>15</sup> Still, Ottawa's large French-Canadian population gave the WCHSO a more diverse membership than other historical societies in the province, which Cecilia Morgan tells us "criss-crossed some lines of social and political demarcation, such as party political affiliations and religious allegiances (at least so far as mainstream Protestant denominations were concerned)," but tended to be connected by socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural similarities.<sup>16</sup>

Ottawa's significant Catholic population also set the WCHSO apart from other local historical societies – but not necessarily from other women's organizations in Ottawa. The local Council of Women, for example, elected six Catholic officers when it was established in 1894.<sup>17</sup> While nearly seventy-five per cent of the Society's early members were Anglican, Presbyterian or Methodist, a full twenty-five per cent were Catholic, and the German member was Lutheran. It must be noted, however, that at the turn of the century, there were more Catholics living in Ottawa than Protestants – fifty-seven per cent compared to forty-three – so the Society's much larger Protestant base is

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<sup>15</sup> Based on figures provided in Taylor, "Table V: Ethnic Origins of Ottawa's Population," *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 211.

<sup>16</sup> Cecilia Morgan, "History, Nation, and Empire: Gender and Southern Ontario Historical Societies, 1890-1920s," in *Canadian Historical Review* 82 (2001): 2, accessed February 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/224298638?accountid=9894>."

<sup>17</sup> N.E.S. Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1993* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), 31-32.

noteworthy.<sup>18</sup> Certainly, both anti-Catholic and anti-French sentiment existed in Ottawa at this time – *The Anglo-Saxon*, a monthly periodical published in the city between 1887 and 1900, routinely targeted Catholics and French Canadians as “threats” to Canadian development.<sup>19</sup> But the Society’s primarily Anglo-Protestant membership had more to do with class than culture or religion. Twenty-five per cent of its founders, whether French, English or German, were married or related to either government ministers, deputy ministers, or Supreme Court judges, and fifty-five per cent to civil servants, engineers, businessmen, or lawyers. The members’ addresses also reveal much about their class, for Ottawa was “severely divided,” in Taylor’s words, into neighbourhoods that had distinct economic, racial, religious, and political characters.<sup>20</sup> Lower Town was the city’s commercial centre, home to the Bytown Market. It was dominated by Ottawa’s French – sixty-three per cent of them, and forty per cent of the city’s French Catholics – the majority of whom worked in less prestigious, semi-skilled occupations.<sup>21</sup> Upper Town, on the other hand, was home to most of Ottawa’s primarily Anglophone lawyers and doctors: nearly fifty-five per cent of the city’s English, Scottish, and Irish lived there, and only seven per cent of its French.<sup>22</sup> Sandy Hill had the city’s highest-earning public servants, businessmen, and professionals, regardless of race or religion. It was home to fifteen per cent of the city’s English and Scottish, eighteen per cent of its Irish, and

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<sup>18</sup> Based on figures provided in Taylor, “Table XI: Ottawa’s Major Religion Affiliations, 1851-1981,” *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 214.

<sup>19</sup> Paula Hastings, “‘Our Glorious Anglo-Saxon Race Shall Ever Fill Earth’s Highest Place’: *The Anglo-Saxon* and the Construction of Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Canada,” in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, eds. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (British Columbia: UBC Press, 2007), 99.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 36 and 82.

<sup>21</sup> Based on figures provided in Taylor, “Table VI: Origins of the Population of Ottawa, by Wards, 1871 and 1901,” *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 211, and 94.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, “Table VI,” *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 211, and 84.

eleven per cent of its French.<sup>23</sup> Sandy Hill was also home to all five of the Society's founding French Catholic members. In fact, of the rest of the founding members – including the unmarried working women – only one lived outside of Upper Town or Sandy Hill. Gertrude Kenny, an Irish Methodist whose father managed a sawmill, lived in LeBreton Flats, adjacent to the Chaudière Falls timber mills, where all but the wealthiest mill owners lived alongside their industrial labour force, in a community nearly evenly split between English and Scottish, French, and Irish people.<sup>24</sup> Thus, although membership in the WCHSO was ostensibly open to women of any cultural background, it attracted only women who were part of or associated with Ottawa's middle- and upper-class communities. This division automatically excluded women from the small, primarily working-class Jewish, Italian, and Chinese communities that began to emerge in the late nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

Of those present at the founding meetings, Lady Grace Ritchie was one of the most prominent, and she sat on the Society's executive council until her death in 1911. A native of New Brunswick, Ritchie moved to Ottawa in 1875 with her husband, Chief Justice Sir William, who died in 1892.<sup>26</sup> She was the first president of the Local Council of Women at Ottawa, and became a Vice-President of the National Council; first president of the Women's Humane Society of Ottawa (which became the Ottawa Humane Society in 1896); and an original board member of the Victorian Order of

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, "Table VI," *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 211, and 94. Kenny, Florence G., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Dalhousie Ward (sub-district C), division 1, family 210, accessed [www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=2537217](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=2537217).

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 124.

<sup>26</sup> Gordon Bale and E. Bruce Mellett, "Ritchie, Sir William Johnston," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, accessed February 19, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ritchie\\_william\\_johnston\\_12E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ritchie_william_johnston_12E.html).



Nurses.<sup>27</sup> She was instrumental in bringing about the 1893 Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to and Better Protection of Children, or the Children's Protection Act, which led to the formation of the Ottawa-Carleton Children's Aid Society.<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, her obituary in the *Ottawa Journal* described Ritchie as "a woman of remarkable intellectual powers."<sup>29</sup> She was also, apparently, unstoppable: in 1898, at the age of sixty-one, she was the head of a house that included eight unmarried children – four sons between the ages of eighteen and thirty-nine, and four daughters between twenty-two and thirty-three – and just two live-in servants.<sup>30</sup>

Arma Sifton, who served as the WCHSO's president from 1914 until 1916 (when she was Lady Sifton), was descended from some of Ottawa's earliest and most prominent settlers: the Burrows family, whose patriarch, John, was an engineer on the Rideau Canal, and the family of Nicholas Sparks, a lumber merchant and land owner.<sup>31</sup> Sifton moved to Manitoba when she married Clifford Sifton (Laurier's Minister of the Interior in 1898); there, while raising five boys, she founded the Brandon chapter of the Woman's Christian

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<sup>27</sup> Henry James Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women and of Women Who Are or Have Been Connected with Canada, vol. 1* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1903), 283.

<sup>28</sup> The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, "History," accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.casott.on.ca/en/about-us/history/>.

<sup>29</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Lady G. V. Ritchie," May 8, 1911, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ritchie, Grace V., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Central Ward (sub-district B), division 7, family 27, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=3194490>.

<sup>31</sup> D. J. Hall, *Clifford Sifton: Volume 1: The Young Napoleon, 1861-1900* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1981), 23; Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women*, 312; Serge Barbe, "From Pathways to Roadways: The Origin of Selected Ottawa Street Names," in *Construire une capitale: Ottawa: Making a Capital*, edited by Jeff Keshen and Nicole St-Onge (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999), 74.

Temperance Union. The Siftons moved back to Ottawa in 1897, where she got involved with the NCW.<sup>32</sup>

Margaret Ahearn was president of the WCHSO from 1903 until just before her death in 1914; she also served as president of the Victorian Order of Nurses, and on the Local Council of Women.<sup>33</sup> She was the daughter of Alexander Fleck, who established the Vulcan Iron Works foundry in Ottawa in the early 1840s.<sup>34</sup> Ahearn's husband Thomas was an inventor and electrical engineer who owned the contracting business that controlled electricity supply, streetcars and streetlights in Ottawa.<sup>35</sup> When she died in 1915, Ahearn's obituary gave just the briefest mention of her "philanthropic and kindly" disposition, but it did include a long list of the prominent men who attended her funeral.<sup>36</sup>

Bessie Featherston was born in Dublin, Ireland in about 1843 and immigrated to Ottawa with her parents when she was a child. She was associated with a number of charitable causes in the capital over the years, including the Carleton Protestant Hospital (as president of the Ladies' Auxiliary), the Lady Stanley Institute for Trained Nurses (the first nursing school in Ottawa), and the Ottawa Humane Society.<sup>37</sup> Her husband J. P. was

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<sup>32</sup> Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women*, 312; Sifton, Arma B., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Central Ward (sub-district B), division 5, family 48, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=3327760>.

<sup>33</sup> Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women*, 4; "Knewin" [Ahearn], Margaret, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Wellington Ward (sub-district G), division 3, family 244, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=2561952>.

<sup>34</sup> *Industries of Canada: Historical and Descriptive Review* (Montreal: Historical Publishing Company, 1886), 109.

<sup>35</sup> Donald J. C. Phillipson, "Thomas Ahearn," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Toronto: Historica Canada, 1985--), last modified March 4, 2015, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/thomas-ahearn/>.

<sup>36</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Mrs. Thomas Ahearn," January 6, 1915, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women*, 114.

Ottawa's mayor in 1874-75.<sup>38</sup> Featherston was running a busy house in 1898: she and seventy-year-old J. P. shared their home with their widowed niece and her two daughters, a grandson from British Columbia, and Bessie's older brother.<sup>39</sup> She did not remain with the WCHSO after attending the founding meeting.

Marie Klotz, the Society's German member, was "closely identified" (according to her obituary) with church work and many charitable and philanthropic activities.<sup>40</sup> Born in the United States, she was the daughter of the German consul in Michigan when she met her husband Otto, Chief Clerk and Astronomer at the Dominion Observatory, and the couple moved to Ottawa in about 1875. Although Klotz attended the founding meeting of the WCHSO and remained an active general member, she did not join the executive until 1912, when she became a vice-president. She left in 1915, perhaps in part because (according to her husband's biography) she was quite vocally and controversially pro-German during the early years of the war.<sup>41</sup> Taylor notes that Germans were the largest ethnic group in Ottawa before the Second World War, but also "the least distinctive" because they were more easily accepted into the English community than Italian and Chinese people.<sup>42</sup> Still, they were not immune to the anti-German sentiment

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<sup>38</sup> Dave Mullington, *Chain of Office: Biographical Sketches of the Early Mayors of Ottawa (1847-1948)* (Renfrew: General Store Publishing House, 2005), 48-49.

<sup>39</sup> Featherston, Bessie, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), St George Ward (sub-district E), division 5, family 176, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=2122705>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Pay Final Tribute Mrs. Marie Klotz," December 18, 1928, 26; "Klaty" [Klotz], Marie W., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Wellington Ward (sub-district G), division 1, family 148, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=2559850>.

<sup>41</sup> Richard A. Jarrell, "Klotz, Otto Julius," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 24, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/klotz\\_otto\\_julius\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/klotz_otto_julius_15E.html).

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 124.

that swept through Canada during World War I, and German-Canadians with pro-German leanings were particularly feared.<sup>43</sup>

Prince Edward Island native Susan Davies, who became Lady Davies in 1913, moved to Ottawa in 1882 with her husband Louis, a former premier of PEI who became Laurier's Minister of Marine and Fisheries, and, in 1901, a Supreme Court judge. Susan Davies kept busy in her roles as vice-president of the Ottawa Humane Society and the NCW; and in 1898, she had four children between the ages of eleven and twenty-five living at home.<sup>44</sup> Fellow Maritimers Lydia King, Mary Sedgewick and Alice Burbidge were also married to Supreme Court judges.<sup>45</sup> All four remained executive members throughout the first decade of the twentieth century.

Lady Alice Caron attended the founding meetings with her daughter Alice. Caron's husband, Sir Adolph-Philippe, was a lawyer who was in charge of the Department of Militia and Defence in the 1880s, and later served as Canada's Postmaster General. Given her status as the wife of such an important figure, Lady Caron's obituary was quite prominently placed in the *Ottawa Journal* when she died in 1924 at the age of eighty-seven, but all it tells us of her life is that she was a "charming hostess, her graciousness and kindness endearing her to many."<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Lady Isabelle

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<sup>43</sup> Dr. Grant W. Grams, "Karl Respa and German Espionage in Canada During World War One," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 8 (1) (Fall 2005): 2, accessed November 12, 2015, <http://jmss.org/jmss/index.php/jmss/article/view/157>.

<sup>44</sup> J. M. Bumsted, "Davies, Sir Louis Henry," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 24, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/davies\\_louis\\_henry\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/davies_louis_henry_15E.html). See also Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women*, 74; Davies, Susan, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Central Ward (sub-district B), division 6, family 182, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=1981991>.

<sup>45</sup> Sedgewick, Mary S., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Central Ward (sub-district B), division 5, family 204; and King, "Lidia" [Lydia], family 201; accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=3292451>; and division 6, Burbidge, Alice E., family 20, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=1764454>.

Bourinot's obituary notes that she was "a musician of exceptional ability" who was also immersed in church and charitable work.<sup>47</sup> She was the third wife of Sir John, Clerk of the House of Commons and a noted historian and author. They married in Regina in 1889, and moved to Ottawa at that time.<sup>48</sup> Caron remained with the WCHSO for its first few years; Bourinot remained an officer until 1911.

New Brunswick-born Annie Dawson was president of the WCHSO in 1902-03, and a member until at least 1906. She came to Ottawa in 1891 when her husband Samuel was appointed Queen's Printer and Deputy Minister of Public Printing and Stationery. Their thirty-one and twenty-four year old daughters were living at home in 1898.<sup>49</sup> Dawson's neighbour, twenty-eight year old Mary O'Connor, was the mother of a seven-month-old boy – the only member with such a young child. Her husband Charles, a barrister with the firm O'Connor, Hogg & Magee on Sparks Street, was descended from Daniel O'Connor, one of Ottawa's first settlers.<sup>50</sup> Mary O'Connor served as the Society's recording secretary until 1902.

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<sup>46</sup> Serge Bernier and Pauline Dumont-Bayliss, "Caron, Sir Adolphe-Philippe," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 25, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/caron\\_adolphe\\_philippe\\_13E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/caron_adolphe_philippe_13E.html); *Ottawa Journal*, "Late Lady Caron Well Known Here," December 3, 1924, 8; Caron, Lady Alice, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), St George Ward (sub-district E), division 5, family 121, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=1816970>.

<sup>47</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Lady I. Bourinot Dies in Hospital Ill a Short Time," July 23, 1930, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Bourinot, Lady Isabella, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Central Ward (sub-district B), division 5, family 26, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=1701851>; Margaret A. Banks, "Bourinot, Sir John George," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 20, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bourinot\\_john\\_george\\_13E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bourinot_john_george_13E.html).

<sup>49</sup> Dawson, Annie, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Wellington Ward (sub-district G), division 1, family 118, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=1987938>; George L. Parker, "Dawson, Samuel Edward," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 25, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dawson\\_samuel\\_edward\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dawson_samuel_edward_14E.html).

<sup>50</sup> "OConnor" [O'Connor], Mary E., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Wellington Ward (sub-district G), division 1, family 124, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=1987938>.

Cordelia Rhéaume spent nearly twenty years, on and off, as an officer with the WCHSO, and also served as president of St. Joseph's Orphanage Ladies' Auxiliary. Her husband Louis was a civil engineer.<sup>51</sup> Electa Hutchison and Elizabeth Dobell were married to Liberal members of parliament: Colonel William Hutchison also owned a prosperous mill, and Richard Dobell was a lumber merchant.<sup>52</sup> Electa Hutchison was born in Montreal but had lived in Ottawa since the late 1870s.<sup>53</sup> Thirty-five year old widow Mary McGarvey, was born in Ottawa, and lived with her father, John Heney, a wealthy coal merchant who sat on Ottawa City Council for thirty-seven years.<sup>54</sup> Harriet Griffin's husband Martin was a former journalist in Halifax and Toronto: they moved to Ottawa in about 1880 and he became Parliamentary Librarian in 1885.<sup>55</sup> Mary Courtney grew up in Ottawa, the daughter of renowned biographer John Fennings Taylor; her

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lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=3028079; The Ottawa City Directory 1898-99 (Ottawa: The Night Directory Company of Toronto, 1898), 344, accessed [https://archive.org/details/cihm\\_46794](https://archive.org/details/cihm_46794). All subsequent references to the 1898-99 Ottawa City Directory refer to material found on archive.org.

<sup>51</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Ottawa 25 Years Ago," October 22, 1937, 4; "Rheaum" [Rhéaume], Cordelia, 1911 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 105), St George Ward (sub-district 33), family 124, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=6205720>.

<sup>52</sup> Library of Parliament, "Hutchison, William H.," accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo/Files/Parliamentarian.aspx?Item=68ca90e4-411e-41a7-8215-43fc6b3c6c46&Language=E&Section=ALL>; Jean Benoit, "Dobell, Richard Reid," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, accessed March 26, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?id\\_nbr=6680](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?id_nbr=6680); Dobell, Mrs. Hon. Richard, 1901 census of Canada, Québec, Québec (county) (district 185), St Columb-de-Sillery (sub-district F), division 4, family 41, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=5826677>.

<sup>53</sup> Hutchison, Electa B., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Wellington Ward (sub-district G), division 1, family 149, accessed <http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/1901/z/z002/jpg/z000091653.jpg>; *Ottawa Journal*, "Mrs. W. Hutchison Dies in 89<sup>th</sup> Year," September 4, 1939, 6.

<sup>54</sup> McGarvey, Mary I., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), St George's Ward (sub-district E), division 2, family 151, accessed <http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/1901/z/z002/pdf/z000091381.pdf>; *Ottawa Journal*, "Mrs. John McGarvey Dies in Ottawa," October 5, 1942, 12.

<sup>55</sup> National Archives of Canada [Library and Archives Canada], Manuscript Division, "Martin Joseph Griffin," MG30 D37, Finding Aid 80, accessed May 25, 2015, <data2.archives.ca/pdf/pdf001/p000001312.pdf>; "Griffon" [Griffin], Harriett, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), St George Ward (sub-district E), division 6, family 158, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=2284706>.

husband John, who helped form the Canadian Bankers' Association in 1891, was the Deputy Minister of Finance.<sup>56</sup>

Mary Campbell and Augustine Sulte were married to writers who were also civil servants. W. W. Campbell became a well-recognized and respected poet with a passion for history and the British Empire.<sup>57</sup> Benjamin Sulte was a noted French-Canadian historian, poet, and newspaper editor, as well as a founding member of the Royal Society of Canada.<sup>58</sup> Both women read some of their husbands' literature at WCHSO meetings.

The brief biographies in the preceding pages illustrate that the married or widowed women who joined the WCHSO, whether they were born in Ottawa or moved to the city later in life, held a prominent place in society largely because of their successful husbands' careers. The single women who attended the founding meetings varied, on the other hand, from women with well-known pedigrees to a few "unrecognizable" names. Thirty-year-old Anna Pinhey was likely the granddaughter of Hamnet Kirkes (H. K.) Pinhey, one of the first settlers of March Township on the Ottawa

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<sup>56</sup> Courtney, Mary E. S., 1891 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 103), St George's Ward (sub-district C), division 3, family 139, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1891/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=2309385>; Murray Barkley, "Taylor, John Fennings," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 20, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/taylor\\_john\\_fennings\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/taylor_john_fennings_11E.html); John A. Turley-Ewart, "Courtney, John Mortimer," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed May 26, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/courtney\\_john\\_mortimer\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/courtney_john_mortimer_14E.html); Arnott J. Magurn, ed., *The Parliamentary Guide and Work of General Reference, 1898-9* (Ottawa: James Hope & Sons, 1898), 5, accessed [https://archive.org/details/cihm\\_29451](https://archive.org/details/cihm_29451).

<sup>57</sup> Laurel Boone, "Campbell, William Wilfred," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 20, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/campbell\\_william\\_wilfred\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/campbell_william_wilfred_14E.html); Campbell, Mary, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Wellington Ward (sub-district G), division 2, family 232, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=1511742>.

<sup>58</sup> Hélène Marcotte, "Sulte, Benjamin (baptized Olivier-Benjamin Vadeboncœur)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 28, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sulte\\_benjamin\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sulte_benjamin_15E.html); Sulte, Augustine, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), St George Ward (sub-district E), division 5, family 8, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=3442145>.

River.<sup>59</sup> Caroline Hill was the daughter of Dr. Hamnet Hill, H. K. Pinhey's nephew and one of Bytown's first physicians.<sup>60</sup> Edna Snelling, on the other hand, does not seem to have been one of Ottawa's privileged daughters, but as the owner of her own millinery shop on Albert Street, she may have designed hats for the city's élite.<sup>61</sup> She does not appear to have remained with the WCHSO after the first meeting, likely because she was working when the Society met on weekday mornings and afternoons, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Twenty-three year old Gertrude Kenny – the Society's lone LeBreton Flats resident – went to the University of Toronto and was involved with the Ottawa branch of the Toronto University Club, as well as the Faithful Circle of King's Daughters.<sup>62</sup> In 1901, Kenny married J. Lorn McDougall Jr., a lawyer and the son of Canada's Auditor General.<sup>63</sup> Kenny became the Society's corresponding secretary before she was married, and retired from that position in 1902. She was also a long-time member (and later president) of the Ottawa Women's University Club, along with Elizabeth Cluff and Margaret Northwood.<sup>64</sup> Cluff taught at the Elgin Street Public School and lived at home with her parents – her father was the City of Ottawa's Auditor, who ran for mayor twice

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<sup>59</sup> Pinhey, Anna H., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Wellington Ward (sub-district G), division 7, family 75, accessed <http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/1901/z/z002/pdf/z000091831.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Miss Caroline Hill Dies at Her Home," November 27, 1945, 13. For more on Dr. Hamnet Hill, see Serge Barbe, "From Pathways to Roadways," 77.

<sup>61</sup> Snelling, Edna, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Central Ward (sub-district B), division 2, family 128, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=3374858>; Ottawa City Directory 1898-99, 397.

<sup>62</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, November 21, 1900, 3; and April 2, 1900, 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, Kenny-McDougall marriage announcement, May 31, 1901, 3; Ottawa City Directory 1898-99, 279.

<sup>64</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Graduates Hear Miss W. H. Gordon," March 7, 1927, 8.



in the late nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> Northwood also lived with her parents: her father owned a hardware and home furnishings store on Rideau Street. Margaret was not working in 1898 – the 1901 census taker wrote in the profession column next to her name that she was, simply, “At Home” – but she served as the librarian of the Toronto University Club, alongside such officers as Clifford Sifton and Otto Klotz.<sup>66</sup> Another Elgin Street Public School teacher, Annie M. Chambers, lived at the YWCA.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps she and Jenny Coleman attended the first Society meeting together: Coleman was the “loving” and “untiring” superintendent of the YWCA boarding house, and she was also involved with the Young Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (YWCTU).<sup>68</sup>

In 1898, Margaret Kee was a teacher of physical culture, elementary science, and English at the Presbyterian Ladies’ College of Ottawa on Albert Street. One year later, she married A. E. Attwood, principal of the Waller Street School and, later, Osgoode Public School. Not surprisingly, the 1901 census shows that Margaret Attwood was no longer a salaried teacher, for women had to retire from teaching when they married; but she continued to find opportunities to teach. For example, she spoke about health at the Girls’ Club, became a “leader in botany” with her husband for the Ottawa Field

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<sup>65</sup> *Ottawa City Directory 1898-99*, 195 and 188; Cluff, Elizabeth, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Wellington Ward (sub-district G), division 4, family 108, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=1877950>.

<sup>66</sup> Northwood, Margaret Lorne, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), St George Ward (sub-district E), division 8, family 156, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=3015936>; *Ottawa Journal*, “Toronto University Club,” January 24, 1900, p. 7. See also Laurie J. Smith, “‘A Feeling of the Responsibility for Women’: The University Women’s Club of Ottawa, 1910-60 (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 2002), 24 and 14.

<sup>67</sup> *Ottawa City Directory 1898-99*, 313.

<sup>68</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “YWCA Work of Past Year,” May 29, 1903, 4; *Ottawa Journal*, Feb 9, 1900, 3.

Naturalists Club, and served as president of the Alumnae Association of the Ottawa Ladies' College.<sup>69</sup> Attwood remained on the executive of the WCHSO until 1921.

Mary McKay Scott was the founder and editor of the *Woman's Journal*, the national publication of the WCTU, and helped found the YWCTU in about 1885.<sup>70</sup> She was involved with the YWCA, and remained a member, and occasional officer, of the WCHSO until her death in 1932. Her obituary notes that Scott made the interests and rights of women one of her main considerations, but that "she always maintained the essential charm of her sex, [and] battled for what she believed was right without rancor or exaggeration." Further, "she radiated the abiding charm of a gracious and helpful womanhood." In other words, while Scott may have been a "strong advocate" and "forceful" writer,<sup>71</sup> the *Journal* was sure to note that she was always "properly" feminine. Scott was the daughter of Alexander Scott, the nephew of Thomas McKay, one of Colonel By's masons and the builder of the Commissariat Building (home of the present-day Bytown Museum).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Ottawa City Directory 1898-99*, 148; *Ottawa Journal*, "Mrs. A. E. Attwood Former Teacher, Dies," February 18, 1947, 12; *Ottawa Journal*, March 18, 1902, 7; *Ottawa Journal*, June 18, 1900, 3; *Ottawa Journal*, November 23, 1909, 10; Attwood, Margaret, 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), St George Ward (sub-district E), division 6, family 68, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=1572446>.

<sup>70</sup> Sharon Anne Cook, *"Through Sunshine and Shadow": The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930* (Montreal-Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 71 and 156.

<sup>71</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, October 26, 1932, 6; Ancestry.com, *1921 Census of Canada* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2013), Scott, Mary McKay, Reference Number: RG 31; Folder Number: 76; Census Place: Central Ward, Ottawa, Ontario; Page Number: 26.

<sup>72</sup> Ancestry.com. *Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869-1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939-1947* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010), source citation: Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 438; Nancy Thompson, December 11, 2011, "McKay and Scott Connection," Genealogy.com, last modified 2015, accessed September 9, 2015, <http://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/mackay/959/>.

Respected music teacher Belle Christie, described by the *Ottawa Journal* as “one of the best known figures in the teaching work of the city,” taught the children of some of Ottawa’s wealthiest citizens in her home on Elgin Street.<sup>73</sup> Belle, who died in early 1899, was the granddaughter of Dr. Alexander James Christie, assistant to Colonel By’s staff surgeon during construction of the canal, Bytown’s coroner, and the founder of the *Bytown Gazette* newspaper in 1836.<sup>74</sup> The weekly column that he wrote in the *Gazette* provided the women of the WCHSO with much evidence for their local history papers.<sup>75</sup>

Abby Maria Harmon also taught some of Ottawa’s privileged daughters: she was the founder and principal of the Harmon Home and Day School for Girls, and one of her more well-known pupils was Sir John A. Macdonald’s granddaughter Daisy.<sup>76</sup> Harmon was the daughter of a North West Company fur trader, Daniel Harmon, and his Métis wife, Lizette Duval.<sup>77</sup> She was born in Vermont, and moved to Ottawa as an adult in 1861. She served as one of the Society’s vice-presidents for a few years, and was also involved with the NCW and causes attached to the Presbyterian Church. Sadly, her story has an unhappy ending, for in 1904, she killed herself by jumping off Ottawa’s

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<sup>73</sup> *Ottawa City Directory 1898-99*, 192; *Ottawa Journal*, February 11, 1899, 12.

<sup>74</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Death of Miss Belle Christie This Morning,” February 17, 1899, 7; Carleton University Archives (CUA), RAR FC1 W63 v. 1/3, Margaret Howitt Ahearn, “The Early Settlers of March Township,” *Transactions Vol. I*, Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa (Ottawa: E. J. Reynolds & Son, 1901), 53; Barbe, “From Pathways to Roadways,” 77.

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, CUA, RAR FC1 W63 v. 1/3, *Transactions Vol. I*, 9-20 and 41-42.

<sup>76</sup> Richard Gwyn, *Nation Maker: Sir John A. Macdonald: His Life, Our Times, volume two: 1867-1891* (Random House Canada, 2011), 418.

<sup>77</sup> George Woodcock, “Harmon, Daniel Williams,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, accessed April 17, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/harmon\\_daniel\\_williams\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/harmon_daniel_williams_7E.html).

Alexandria Bridge after suffering, according to the *Journal*, from “temporary insanity, produced by nervous prostration and mental depression.”<sup>78</sup>

Richard Gwyn writes that Macdonald knew about Harmon’s Métis ancestry, but I do not know if it was common knowledge in Ottawa or the WCHSO.<sup>79</sup> It is not mentioned in the *Journal*, which noted, “Miss Harmon was a firm believer in a thorough English education.”<sup>80</sup> As the daughter of a white man, she recorded her “racial or tribal origin” as “English” in the 1901 census, and her “colour” as “white”<sup>81</sup> – not at all surprising given the poor treatment of Métis and Indigenous people in Canada, and given that the North-West Rebellion of 1885 was still so fresh in the minds of Canadians. Whiteness, in the words of Catherine Hall, “carries with it authority and power, the legacy of having ‘made the modern world.’”<sup>82</sup> By identifying as white, and joining a local historical society that celebrated Ottawa’s British roots, Harmon was able to claim a space for herself in Ottawa that other Indigenous people could not.

Of all the women at the founding meetings, only Adeline Foster, the Society’s first president (until 1902), has her own page in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. This is primarily because of Foster’s considerable involvement with the Ontario WCTU – she served as president, published their periodical, and authored a number of influential

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<sup>78</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, September 20, 1904, 1. Ottawa historian Christopher Ryan has an in-depth article about Abby Maria Harmon on his web site, “The Margins of History,” which can be found at <http://www.historynerd.ca/?p=506>.

<sup>79</sup> Gwyn, *Nation Maker*, 418. The catalogue for the Society’s 1906 loan exhibition lists the diary of *George* [sic] Harmon, “father of the late Miss Harmon,” as one of its exhibit items. It was loaned to the WCHSO by a Mrs. Campbell, of Perth: 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1906, 17.

<sup>80</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, Wednesday, October 5, 1904, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Harmon, Abby M., 1901 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 100), Central Ward (sub-district B), division 6, family 52, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=2328882>.

<sup>82</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 6.

pamphlets – but undoubtedly also has something to do with her rather intriguing personal life. Adeline’s first husband was a lawyer and one-time mayor of Hamilton, Ontario, who deserted Adeline and their son. In 1885, she moved to Ottawa, where she met George Foster. She obtained a divorce from her first husband and she and George were married in 1889, but for the next few years, Adeline was shunned by Ottawa society because of her “questionable” past. She was finally accepted in 1893 when Lady Aberdeen, the Governor General’s wife, invited her to a concert at Government House – and an invitation to Rideau Hall, writes Taylor, “was the pinnacle of social success.”<sup>83</sup> Besides Adeline’s role as the first president and a long-time vice-president of the WCHSO, she was involved with the Ottawa Humane Society, Women’s Morning Music Club, Women’s Canadian Club, and the Ottawa Victorian Order of Nurses.<sup>84</sup> Her husband George, Minister of Finance from 1888 to 1896, was a Conservative MP.<sup>85</sup>

## 1.2 1900 - 1910

The brief biographies in the preceding pages illustrate that the initial meetings of the WCHSO attracted a broad range of women – at least in terms of religious affiliation, cultural background, and even, to some extent, economic standing. This relative diversity was reflected in the first group of elected officers, which consisted of eleven Anglican or Presbyterian women, three Methodist, and five Catholic; and, if their own political

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<sup>83</sup> John Taylor, “Ottawa: Canada’s Evolving Capital,” *Historian* 66 (Summer 2000), 19.

<sup>84</sup> Sharon Anne Cook, “Davis, Adeline (Chisholm; Foster, Lady Foster),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003 – accessed September 20, 2014, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/davis\\_adeline\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/davis_adeline_14E.html).

<sup>85</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Sir George Eulas Foster,” accessed September 20, 2014, [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/214626/Sir-George-Eulas-Foster; Foster, “Adelaide” \[Adeline\], 1911 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa \(City\) \(district 105\), Wellington Ward \(sub-district 55\), family 57, accessed http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=5780843](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/214626/Sir-George-Eulas-Foster; Foster, “Adelaide” [Adeline], 1911 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 105), Wellington Ward (sub-district 55), family 57, accessed http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=5780843).

affiliations corresponded with those of their husbands, a nearly even split between Conservatives and Liberals. This variety lasted through the first decade of the twentieth century – as did the preponderance of women who were married to high-ranking officials, and who were raised in Ottawa or had lived there long enough to feel a real local connection. New members included Julia Gwynne, who was also president of the Ottawa Humane Society, and married to a Supreme Court judge;<sup>86</sup> and Marie Lamothe, who was active with the Children’s Aid Society, and whose husband Henri was Clerk of the Crown in Chancery.<sup>87</sup> Harriett Egan’s husband Henry was the son of lumber baron John Egan, and himself the founder and managing director of a large lumber company.<sup>88</sup> Annie Keefer was the daughter of the aforementioned Thomas McKay.<sup>89</sup> Sarah Burritt, who had been involved with charitable work as far back as 1864, when she helped found the Protestant Orphans’ Home, was married to Alexander, Ottawa’s longest serving registrar and a descendent of United Empire Loyalists.<sup>90</sup> Mary O’Connor’s mother-in-law Mary Anne Friel claimed the distinction of being the first white baby born in Bytown, and her

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<sup>86</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Inspector Wanted,” June 5, 1899, 7.

<sup>87</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Mme. Lamothe Dies After Long Illness,” May 26, 1922, 3.

<sup>88</sup> W. Stewart Wallace, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Canada*, Vol. II (Toronto: University Associates of Canada, 1948), 283.

<sup>89</sup> McKay built Earncliffe for Annie and her first husband, the mansion that eventually became Sir John A. Macdonald’s home. Annie’s second husband was T. C. Keefer, a civil engineer and noted proponent of railway improvements in Canada. L. D. Cross, *Ottawa Titans: Fortune and Fame in the Early Days of Canada’s Capital* (Ottawa: James Lorimer & Company, 2011), accessed March 15, 2015, [https://books.google.ca/books?id=mSUwf9IzFt4C&pg=PT58&lpg=PT58&dq=Annie+Keefer+Ottawa&source=bl&ots=UZDeU8Di00&sig=mZNBuHuuwyo4NaGwh\\_Ucib6weg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TAxRVbXbCYegyQSYpYGQCw&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Annie%20Keefer%20Ottawa&f=false](https://books.google.ca/books?id=mSUwf9IzFt4C&pg=PT58&lpg=PT58&dq=Annie+Keefer+Ottawa&source=bl&ots=UZDeU8Di00&sig=mZNBuHuuwyo4NaGwh_Ucib6weg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TAxRVbXbCYegyQSYpYGQCw&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Annie%20Keefer%20Ottawa&f=false); H. V. Nelles, “Keefer, Thomas Coltrin,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 15, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/keefe\\_r\\_thomas\\_coltrin\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/keefe_r_thomas_coltrin_14E.html).

<sup>90</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Protestant Orphans’ Home is Forty Years Old Tomorrow,” December 8, 1904, 11; Cynthia Coristine, “Report of September Meeting: Glenn Wright, Beechwood Cemetery – Formation History,” *Historical Society of Ottawa Newsletter*, issue 139, January 2013, 5, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://hsottawa.ncf.ca/Dnlds/HSOnewsJan13.pdf>.

husband Henry was Ottawa's mayor at the time of his death in 1869.<sup>91</sup> Edith McLean, who served as WCHSO president from 1919 to 1921, was also busy with the Women's Auxiliary of the General Protestant Hospital, and took charge of a new YWCA that opened in Hintonburg in 1910.<sup>92</sup> Her husband Donald Hector McLean was Reeve of Hintonburg from 1897 to 1899, and a solicitor for the County of Carleton.<sup>93</sup> Finally, Marion McDougall, Gertrude Kenny's future mother-in-law, was married to the Auditor General of Canada; she was the Society's president from 1916 to 1919, and also the president of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of Bethany Presbyterian Church in Hintonburg. She also raised eleven children, so no doubt her organizational skills were impeccable.<sup>94</sup>

During the Society's first ten years, three women joined who would each go on to spend more than thirty years as officers. The first of these was the aforementioned Eva Read. Read was raised by her aunt and uncle, Maria and James Fitzgibbon – he was a master carpenter on the Rideau Canal and, later, a Justice of the Peace – and educated at Abby Maria Harmon's school. It is thanks to Read that the Bytown Museum came to

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<sup>91</sup> Michael S. Cross, "Friel, Henry James," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 20, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/friel\\_henry\\_james\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/friel_henry_james_9E.html); "Biography of Daniel O'Connor," AccessGenealogy.com, last updated August 6, 2012, accessed April 20, 2015, [www.accessgenealogy.com/canada/biography-of-daniel-oconnor.htm](http://www.accessgenealogy.com/canada/biography-of-daniel-oconnor.htm).

<sup>92</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "The Library Committee 'At Home'," January 17, 1901, 7; "Y.W.C.A. Will Open Branch," January 22, 1910, 5; *Ottawa City Directory 1915* (Ottawa: Might Directories Limited, 1915), 634, accessed <https://archive.org/details/ottawadirec191500midiuoft>.

<sup>93</sup> Hintonburg Heritage Walking Tour, "Biographical Sketches," accessed April 19, 2015, [http://www.hintonburg.com/walking\\_tour.html](http://www.hintonburg.com/walking_tour.html).

<sup>94</sup> Philip Creighton, "McDougall, John Lorn (1838-1909)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed February 6, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdougall\\_john\\_lorn\\_1838\\_1909\\_13E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdougall_john_lorn_1838_1909_13E.html); *Ottawa Journal*, "Bethany W.F.M.S.," September 10, 1903, 8; *Ottawa Journal*, "More By Town Relics," March 13, 1920, 8.

possess so many of Colonel By's antiques, which she inherited from her uncle.<sup>95</sup> Read, who never married nor had children, was clearly an intelligent and thoughtful person: when she lectured for the WCHSO, she never used notes, even when speaking for an hour or more.<sup>96</sup> She must have been funny too: after all, she had a cat named Sir John Macdonald, whose name "was never shortened below the dignified level of Sir John."<sup>97</sup>

Charlotte Billings also spent more than three decades with the Society. She was the widow of Major Braddish Billings, whose parents were the first settlers on the banks of the Rideau River in Ottawa; he died when Charlotte was in her mid-thirties, and they had no children. According to her obituary, not only did Billings write for the WCHSO, but she was also "a correspondent for Montreal newspapers and a talented poetess." The paper was more specific about her personality, noting that she was well known in social circles for her geniality, wit, brilliant conversational skills, and sense of humor. Billings served as the Society's corresponding secretary for at least ten years, and as president from 1924 to 1926. She died in 1940, at the age of eighty-seven.<sup>98</sup>

Sometime before 1908, Jenny Russell Simpson joined the WCHSO. Simpson was one of the Society's most active and prominent members – and arguably one of its most successful, by what might be called "professional" standards. Simpson was born in Montreal in 1847. Her father Andrew Russell was the Assistant Commissioner of Crown Lands from 1857 to 1869; and her uncle was Alexander Jamieson Russell, an influential surveyor and bureaucrat and an accomplished artist. Simpson moved to Ottawa sometime

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<sup>95</sup> Macbeth, "Miss Eva Read," 18; Bytown Museum, "Founding Families of Ottawa," 2013, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.bytownmuseum.com/en/families.html#6>.

<sup>96</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, "Miss E. G. Read Called by Death," 2.

<sup>97</sup> Macbeth, "Miss Eva Read," 18.

<sup>98</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Mrs. B. Billings Member Well-Known Ottawa Family, Dies," January 15, 1940, 4.



after her 1869 marriage to John Barker Simpson, a civil servant. She was an avid artist, and designed the Society's motto (see Figure 1), and the Dominion Archives employed her periodically to reproduce historical paintings. She was also a member of the Ottawa Woman's Canadian Club, the NCW, the League of Nations, and the Woman's Art Association.<sup>99</sup>

It is interesting to note that Jenny's uncle Alexander wrote a pamphlet in the late 1860s that greatly contributed to the misrepresentation of Champlain's Astrolabe. His



Figure 1: Motto of the Historical Society of Ottawa. Source: The Historical Society of Ottawa web site

analysis of how the Astrolabe was lost in 1613 helped create a myth about both Champlain and the navigational instrument that continues in Canadian public memory and historical consciousness today.<sup>100</sup> It was a myth that the WCHSO perpetuated: Jenny

Simpson loaned the Astrolabe to the Society for its 1906 loan exhibition, and in the exhibit catalogue, it is listed definitively

as "Champlain's astrolabe, lost 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1613, found August 1867."<sup>101</sup>

In 1914, Simpson "retired" as the WCHSO's recording secretary – a post she had held since before 1910 – when the Historic Landmarks Association (HLA) hired her as

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<sup>99</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Mrs. J. B. Simpson Dies in Ottawa," April 25, 1936, 3 and 20; Library and Archives Canada, Jenny Russell Simpson collection [graphic material], 1864-1920, MIKAN no. 3992827; *Ottawa Journal*, "Social Round," April 25, 1900, 4; Margaret Coleman, "Russell, Andrew," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 6, 2014, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/russell\\_andrew\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/russell_andrew_11E.html).

<sup>100</sup> Douglas Hunter, "The Mystery of Champlain's Astrolabe," accessed October 5, 2105, [http://www.douglashunter.ca/douglashunter.ca/readings/Entries/2006/12/2\\_The\\_mystery\\_of\\_Champains\\_Astrolabe.html](http://www.douglashunter.ca/douglashunter.ca/readings/Entries/2006/12/2_The_mystery_of_Champains_Astrolabe.html). Alexander J. Russell's fonds is at Library and Archives Canada: [http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_tim=2015-08-19T17%3A26%3A44Z&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft\\_dat=98198&rft\\_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/ourl/res.php?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_tim=2015-08-19T17%3A26%3A44Z&url_ctx_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=98198&rft_id=info%3Asid%2Fcollectionscanada.gc.ca%3Apam&lang=eng).

<sup>101</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1906, 5. Despite this claim, it is not clear if Jenny Simpson in fact had the Astrolabe in 1906. According to Douglas Hunter (see previous footnote), it was sold in 1901 to Samuel Verplanck Hoffman, a New Jersey antiquarian who became president of the New York Historical Society in 1903.

general secretary to revive the organization's dramatically dwindling membership numbers. She was initially paid an annual stipend of \$50 – a small sum, but its significance magnified given that Simpson was the HLA's only paid member at that time. Simpson became something of a saviour to the association, increasing its individual membership by more than 350 per cent in just four years. Her stipend was raised to \$125 a year in 1918, and then to \$200 in 1920; and when she retired in 1921, the HLA's president graciously admitted the association owed much of its success to her.<sup>102</sup> Simpson remained a vice-president of the WCHSO throughout her term with the HLA, and in 1923, she became the first official curator of the Bytown Museum. In 1926, Simpson published the Museum's first catalogue (discussed in Chapter 2). She retired in 1932 and died just four years later, at the age of eighty-nine.<sup>103</sup>

### 1.3 1911 - 1932

With its membership consisting of so many women who were either born in Ottawa or had lived there for most of their adult lives – or whose family names call to mind the history of the area – it is no wonder volumes I, III and IV of the Society's *Transactions* (published in 1901, 1910 and 1911, respectively) contained primarily local histories that used oral accounts and included detailed physical descriptions of Ottawa in days past.<sup>104</sup> By 1911, however, a few of the most prominent Ottawa family names were no longer on the WCHSO's executive list (Friel, Burritt, and Pinhey), and some of the

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<sup>102</sup> Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 19-20.

<sup>103</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Mrs. J. B. Simpson," April 25, 1936, 3 and 20.

<sup>104</sup> The vast majority of papers published in volumes III and IV of *Transactions* were actually written before 1906.

older doyennes of Ottawa society (Ladies Gwynne, Ritchie, Bourinot, Davies, and Strong) had retired. While a core of women who joined before 1906 remained officers right through to 1918, other women came and went, including a slate of women who were relatively new to Ottawa – thanks, in large part, to a dramatic increase in the federal civil service. From 1900 to 1910, the civil service nearly tripled in size, from about 1,200 employees to more than 3,200.<sup>105</sup> Taylor points out that it is thanks to Ottawa’s “adopted sons and daughters” who came to work for the government that the city’s cultural life flourished, so the WCHSO’s fresh faces were in good company.<sup>106</sup>

The newer members also changed, ever so subtly, the WCHSO’s historical output. The papers published in volumes V (1912) and VI (1915) of *Transactions* are more national in scope, covering battlegrounds in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes, and European and Canadian treaties, respectively. This is not to say that the papers were necessarily written by members who were new to Ottawa; in fact, most of the authors in volume V and VI were born in the city, or had lived there for most of their lives. However, it may be that as the Society took on more women newly arrived from other parts of Ontario and Canada, whose personal history was less likely to be reflected in local history, the officers decided to broaden their focus to include more national content. The war in Europe may also have spurred the Society to focus on topics that featured Canada united with Britain in both battle and politics.

While fewer young, unmarried women served on the Society’s executive during this period, Protestant and Catholic members continued to work together. Throughout the 1910s, there were always five or six Catholics on the twenty-three person executive

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<sup>105</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 120.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

committee. The number of French Canadian officers dropped, however. In 1910, five French women were serving as vice presidents, four of whom had been with the Society since the turn of the century. By 1920, only two remained as officers, and between 1920 and 1932, just two new French women were elected: Louise Belisle, whose husband was a doctor;<sup>107</sup> and Mme. de Salaberry, who was married to a lawyer with the Department of Justice.<sup>108</sup> There were a few French Canadian names on the general membership list every year, but the executive increasingly Anglicized.<sup>109</sup> As a result, the number of French-Canadian women who contributed to *Transactions* fell, from six in volume I, to three in volume VI, to zero in volume X. The lack of French women in the Society may have had something to do with the fact that the English and French in Ottawa generally participated in intellectual and cultural activities through separate groups.<sup>110</sup> It may also have been due to changes within the civil service and the city government that diminished somewhat the political clout of French people in Ottawa. In 1908, the city created a Board of Control to act as a policy gate-keeper, and because elections for Board members were city-wide, the interests of the dominant Anglo-Protestant community took precedence.<sup>111</sup> After 1918, the number of French-Canadians in the civil service declined significantly, as the government increasingly emphasized in its hiring procedures educational qualifications the French did not typically have, and, at the same time,

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<sup>107</sup> Ancestry.com, *1921 Census of Canada* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2013), Bélisle, Louise, Reference Number: *RG 31*; Folder Number: *119*; Census Place: *Hull (City), Hull, Quebec*; Page Number: 7.

<sup>108</sup> Department of Justice, "Out of the Shadows: The Civil Law Tradition in the Department of Justice Canada, 1868-2000," last modified 2015-01-07, accessed November 12, 2015, <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/civil/lr1.html>.

<sup>109</sup> See, for example, COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/14, A2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1921-1922, "Members," 6-7.

<sup>110</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 133.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

discounted the French language. At the end of the First World War, French-Canadians made up about twenty-two per cent of public servants, but that figure dropped steadily to thirteen per cent by 1946.<sup>112</sup>

Tension between the French and English also mounted during the 1910s due to the separate school board controversy and differing ideas of nationalism brought on by the conscription crisis in World War 1. In 1912, the Ontario government prohibited French language instruction in the province's education system after the second year of school, resulting in "ferocious" resistance from French-Canadians in Ottawa.<sup>113</sup> And when conscription was introduced in 1917, many French Canadians voiced strong opposition to the idea of their young men fighting for the British in Europe. As the 1920s dawned, so too did a stronger sense of French nationalism. Alan Gordon writes that a growing number of French Canadians "embraced a more Quebec-centred vision" of nationalism that focused on the survival of the French language and Catholic religion in a primarily Anglo-Saxon country.<sup>114</sup> It is possible these issues kept French Canadian women away from the WCHSO, but the Society's records do not contain any overt anti-French rhetoric. In fact, the final volume of *Transactions*, published in 1928, includes an essay by Dr. Séraphin Marion, an archivist and academic who (later in life) lectured all over Canada on the rights of French-speaking minorities. In the essay, he implores

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>114</sup> Alan Gordon, "Lest We Forget: Two Solitudes in War and Memory," in Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick, eds., *Canadas of the Mind: The Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalisms in the Twentieth Century*, 158-173 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 166.

French and English Canadians to help each other “in preserving and improving that which each thinks best in its own culture” in order to reach “true unity.”<sup>115</sup>

Fewer of the women who joined the WCHSO between 1910 and 1920 are featured as prominently in the pages of the *Ottawa Journal* or *Citizen* as their predecessors were. Obviously, if they were newer to Ottawa, they may not yet have had time to involve themselves with many causes or organizations. But of the new members who joined at this time, not one was married to a chief justice, Supreme Court judge, government minister, former mayor, or lumber magnate, so they were not as high on Ottawa’s social ladder as many of the women who joined in 1898, who were part of a social circle that centred around Rideau Hall.<sup>116</sup> Even though many of the women who joined after 1910 were married to civil servants, their names did not carry the same social capital.

Nevertheless, many interesting women served on the WCHSO executive during this period, including Dr. Elizabeth Smith-Shortt, one of the first three women in Canada to be granted a medical degree, who moved to Ottawa with her husband in 1908;<sup>117</sup> Annie Rothwell Christie, a writer of poetry and prose who moved to Ottawa in 1898 with her

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<sup>115</sup> Ottawa – Raconte Moi, “S raphin Marion, Archivist, Professor, Writer and Historian,” accessed November 12, 2015, <http://www.racontemoiottawa.com/en/46.html>; CUA, RAR FC1 W63 v. 8/10, Dr. S. Marion, “Canadian Unity,” *Transactions Vol. 10* (Ottawa: Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa, 1928), 183.

<sup>116</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 133.

<sup>117</sup> University of Waterloo Library, Special Collections, “Finding Aid: WA 10, Elizabeth Smith Shortt fonds,” 1829-1979, 8.2m of textual records and other materials, accessed February 10, 2015, <https://uwaterloo.ca/library/special-collections-archives/sites/ca.library.special-collections-archives/files/uploads/files/wa10.pdf>; A. A. Travill, “Elizabeth Smith-Shortt,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Toronto: Historica Canada, 2008), last modified December 15, 2013, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/elizabeth-smith-shortt/>; *Ottawa Journal*, “Mrs. Adam Shortt to Give Address,” February 26, 1910, 1.

husband, the minister of St. Stephen's Anglican Church on Kent Street;<sup>118</sup> and Mary Foran, who came to Ottawa from Montreal in 1899, and was a councillor on the Philemon Wright chapter of the IODE and a member of the Women's Art Association.<sup>119</sup> Foran married into an established first family of the area: she was the second wife of Thomas, a lawyer who was born in Aylmer and who became, in 1865, the first student to receive a B.A. from the University of Ottawa.<sup>120</sup>

Caroline Gullock was one of just four new women out of the fifteen who joined the executive during the war years who stayed into the 1920s. Volume VII of *Transactions* reflects, in a way, this turnover: Published in 1917, it contains just six essays, three of which are personal reminiscences, and one that looks at the war work of female students at the University of Toronto. Society members were simply too busy with other wartime charitable work to write. In fact, the WCHSO did not hold as many regular or executive meetings as usual between 1915 and 1918, specifically to allow Society members "more time for practical patriotic work."<sup>121</sup> Fewer meetings and less historical research also allowed them to focus on finally securing a permanent home for the Society's growing collection of artefacts, as discussed in Chapter 2.

A former teacher, Gullock was president of the WCHSO from 1926 until 1930. She also served as the local Council of Women's recording secretary; was the "regent" of

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<sup>118</sup> Queen's University Archives, Fonds F01825 – Annie (Fowler) Rothwell Christie fonds, 1885-1886, 136 p. of textual records, accessed 10 Feb 2105 at <http://db1.archives.queensu.ca/ica-atom/index.php/annie-fowler-rothwell-christie-fonds;rad> ; *Ottawa Journal*, "Merit Recognized," May 30, 1903, 1.

<sup>119</sup> Bibliothèque et Archives nationales Québec, Fonds Famille Foran, P137, s2, Famille Hay, 1760-1908, .73m textual material; *Ottawa Journal*, "Philemon Wright Dansant," 13 Feb 1919, p. 6 ; *Ottawa Journal*, "Fine Collection of Baxter Prints," November 10, 1921, 8.

<sup>120</sup> Michel Prévost, "L'Université d'Ottawa: plus de cent cinquante ans d'histoire," in *Construire une capitale: Ottawa: Making a Capital*, edited by Jeff Keshen and Nicole St-Onge (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999), 204.

<sup>121</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT 3/9, A2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1916-1917, 13.

the Iroquet chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire; president of the Women's Missionary Society of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church; became president of the Ottawa Women's Canadian Club in 1934; and was an Ottawa Public School Board trustee for the central ward.<sup>122</sup> Her husband William, who died before 1921, worked for a wholesale hardware store. Gullock died in 1945 at the age of 81.<sup>123</sup>

Between 1910 and 1920, the federal civil service once again grew dramatically, from 3,219 to nearly 8,500 employees.<sup>124</sup> This brought more men and women to the city, and this change is again reflected in the WCHSO's membership. At least two civil servants joined the executive in the 1920s, representative of the service's growing acceptance of women. In 1911, only eleven per cent of working women in Ottawa had jobs with the civil service (the rest were in service industries, most as domestics); but by 1931, the number had risen to nearly twenty-three per cent.<sup>125</sup> Mary McKay Scott, the former WCTU journal editor who attended the Society's founding meeting nearly thirty years prior, now joined the list of officers. She was also working as a secretary with the Department of the Interior.<sup>126</sup> Ida M. C. Thompson was a clerk with the school lands branch of the Department of the Interior and editor of the "Topographical Survey of

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<sup>122</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Broader Vision for Women in the World's Work Today," February 22, 1916, 8; "Mrs. W. C. Gullock is Again Regent," February 8, 1922, 8; "Mrs. W. C. Gullock," March 29, 1922, 8; "Mrs. W. C. Gullock Elected President," April 24, 1934, 11; *Ottawa Journal*, "Vote for Mrs. W. C. Gullock," December 31, 1923, 11; *Ottawa Journal*, "Six P. S. Trustees Get Acclamations," November 24, 1924, 7.

<sup>123</sup> *The Ottawa City Directory 1916* (Ottawa: Might Directories Limited, 1916), 480, accessed <https://archive.org/details/ottawadirectory00ottauoft>; *Ottawa Journal*, "Funeral Tomorrow of Mrs. W. C. Gullock," January 9, 1945, 17.

<sup>124</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 120.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *The Ottawa City Directory 1923* (Ottawa: Might Directories Limited, 1923), 748, accessed <https://archive.org/details/ottawadirec192300midiuoft>. All subsequent references to the 1923 Ottawa City Directory refer to material found on archive.org.



Canada” until she retired in 1932.<sup>127</sup> That only a very small number of the WCHSO’s members were working is not surprising: in 1911, just sixteen per cent of women in Canada were in paid occupations, and by 1921, this figure had only risen to seventeen per cent, and most of these women would have been working-class.<sup>128</sup>

The women elected president in 1921 and 1930 were relatively new to Ottawa, but brought considerable experience working with organizations in the cities from which they moved. The first of these was Beatrice Ashton, who was president from 1921 to 1924. Ashton was a teacher in Toronto, and published a fiction book about a girls’ boarding school in 1920, the same year she married Colonel Edward James Ashton and moved to Ottawa. She raised five children, and spent many years working with the Red Cross.<sup>129</sup> In 1930, Fanny Kains was elected president. Her husband Archibald worked for the Canadian Bank of Commerce in London and Vancouver, and was the first governor of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. The couple moved to Ottawa when he retired in 1925.<sup>130</sup> While they were living in the States, Fanny was an officer of the

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<sup>127</sup> *Ottawa City Directory 1923*, 797; I. S. MacLaren, *Culturing Wilderness in Jasper National Park: Studies in Two Centuries of Human History in the Upper Athabasca River Watershed* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2012), 18.

<sup>128</sup> Based on figures provided in M. C. Urquhart, ed., and K. A. H. Buckley, asst. ed. 1<sup>st</sup> edition, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983), “Series D107- 122: Population, labour force and labour force participation rates, by age and sex, census years 1921 to 1961, and by sex, 1901 and 1911 (10 and over).”

<sup>129</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Mrs. E. J. Ashton Dies, Church, Welfare Worker,” April 29, 1958, 5; SFU Library Digital Collections, *Canada’s Early Women Writers* (Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 1980-2014), accessed April 25, 2015, <http://content.lib.sfu.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/ceww/id/35/rec/1>; *Ottawa Journal*, “Mrs. E. J. Ashton Elected Regent,” February 3, 1926, 8; *Ottawa Journal*, “Mrs. E. J. Ashton New President,” October 26, 1932, 8.

<sup>130</sup> Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, “Federal Reserve History: Archibald C. Kains,” accessed April 23, 2015, <http://www.federalreservehistory.org/People/DetailView/177>; *Ottawa Citizen*, “Archibald Kains, Retired Bank President, Dies,” December 26, 1944, 10.

American NCW; treasurer of an aid society affiliated with the American Red Cross; and secretary of an orphans' home.<sup>131</sup>

Unlike the women who joined in the 1910s, most of the women on the executive in the 1920s were married to higher-ranking civil servants and businessmen. Louise Saunders was the wife of the Deputy Minister of Finance;<sup>132</sup> Eleanor Bond, a member of the Iroquet chapter of the IODE and president of the Chalmers Women's Missionary Society, was married to the assistant medical advisor for the Board of Pension Commissioners;<sup>133</sup> Flora McTavish was married to a judge;<sup>134</sup> and M. Ferris Kindle, who became Simpson's assistant curator at the Bytown Museum, was married to a paleontologist and Director of the Geological Survey of Canada.<sup>135</sup> These civil service connections and the dwindling number of women affiliated with Ottawa's timber and manufacturing trades are indicative of Ottawa's evolution, in the first half of the twentieth century, from a more economically complex city into one where the government was the primary corporate entity.<sup>136</sup> The expanding civil service also provides one explanation for a significant change to *Transactions* in the 1920s, as

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<sup>131</sup> National Council of Women Incorporated, "Biennial Report of the National Council of Women, Washington, January 1916," 60, accessed April 23, 2015, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/rbc/rbnawsa/n8355/064.gif>; E. O. Watson, ed., *Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America: Yearbook of the Churches 1921-22* (Washington: Hayworth Publishing, 1922), 308, accessed April 23, 2015, <https://archive.org/stream/yearbookamerica00amergoog#page/n7/mode/2up>; *San Francisco Call*, "Officers Elected by Charity Institutions," January 16, 1910, 24, accessed online through <https://news.google.com/newspapers>.

<sup>132</sup> Ancestry.com, *1921 Census of Canada* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2013), Saunders, Louise, Reference Number: RG 31; Folder Number: 77; Census Place: *Capital Ward, Ottawa, Ontario*; Page Number: 1.

<sup>133</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Analysis of Noted Novel 'To Let' Evokes a Lively Discussion," January 18, 1922, 8; *Ottawa Journal*, "Chalmers W. M. S. Auxiliary," September 10, 1936, 10; *Ottawa City Directory 1923*, 253.

<sup>134</sup> McTavish, Flora, 1911 census of Canada, Ontario, Ottawa (City) (district 105), Central Ward (sub-district 11), family 181, accessed <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=6680562>.

<sup>135</sup> Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie and Joy Dorothy Harvey, "Wilson, Alice Evelyn," in *The Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science: Pioneering Lives from Ancient Times to the Mid-20th Century*, edited by Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie and Joy Dorothy Harvey (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1383.

<sup>136</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 122.

discussed in Chapter 3: the addition of papers written by men, particularly men who were noted historians, civil servants, and federally-employed anthropologists. No doubt some of them were acquainted with the women who joined the Society in this period, and were willing to add their expertise to the publication.

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

This chapter provided some detail about the women who, through the WCHSO, made a contribution to the study and understanding of history in Ottawa. Through statistics and biographical information, I illustrated the élite status of the Society's leaders and the relative diversity of its founding members, who came from different cultures and different religions, and whose husbands were employed in government, lumber, and business. Analysis of the Society's later years illustrates how much more homogenized the group became as Ottawa's economy evolved, from a combination of timber, electrical-powered manufacturing, and government revenues, to government alone. Further, as French Canadians found it increasingly hard to find work with the civil service, and tension between French and English people in Canada rose during the First World War, the WCHSO's membership took on an increasingly Anglo-Canadian character. The Society's ever-evolving membership changed the contents of its publication, *Transactions*; but as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, it did not change the WCHSO's objectives. Like many Canadians, the Society's members held onto the belief that Canada's connection with the British Empire was part of a privileged heritage, and their writing and museum work maintained the myths of British settler loyalty and superiority right through the 1920s.

## Chapter 2: The Work of History

The women who ran the WCHSO were obviously interested in history; but as Chapter 1 shows, they also had the experience, determination, and time needed to manage a voluntary society. Publicly, the members worked to meet the goals set out in their constitution: “the encouragement of the study of Canadian history and literature, the collection and preservation of Canadian historical records and relics, and the fostering of Canadian loyalty and patriotism.”<sup>1</sup> But they worked just as hard behind the scenes. Officers observed formal procedures around written meeting minutes, elections, and organizational decisions; coordinated dozens of volunteers who maintained a library and the Bytown Museum’s ever-growing collection; communicated and exchanged publications with numerous organizations in North America and Europe; wrestled with habitually insufficient budgets; planned and hosted fundraising events; attended two to three meetings a month for eight months of the year; attended the meetings of other historical societies in Canada and the United States; organized agendas, speakers, and refreshments for annual meetings; and lobbied the federal and provincial governments for money, and to save historic sites, erect memorials, and install commemorative plaques.

This chapter examines the business of the WCHSO, specifically how the members governed the organization, established the Bytown Museum, and involved themselves in the commemoration movement in Ottawa and across the country. The intent is to show how much work it took to manage the cultural activities of the Society, and how their

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<sup>1</sup> The Society’s constitution can be found in every annual report: City of Ottawa Archives (COA), Historical Society of Ottawa (HSO), MG110-HSOT 3/0 – 3/34, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Reports for the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa.

work reflected their ideas of nationalism, imperialism, and devotion to the British Empire. I also elaborate on the discussion started in Chapter 1 about Ottawa's rapidly expanding civil service; and I look at the federal government's plans in the 1910s and 1920s to beautify Ottawa and make it a national symbol, which had an impact on the WCHSO. Finally, I discuss how the Society faced the growing masculinization and professionalization of the field of history during this period.

## **2.1 Administration**

Before the Society's first official general meeting in the fall of 1898, a sub-committee met at Alice Burbidge's house on 15 October to draw up the new organization's constitution. Committee leader Adeline Foster, along with Burbidge, Harriet Griffin, Annie Dawson, Margaret Ahearn, Mary Sedgewick, Lydia King, and Sarah MacLean, established the roles and responsibilities of the Society's officers, the rules for membership, by-laws regarding elections procedures, and the order of business to be followed at each meeting.<sup>2</sup> The wife of the sitting Governor General bestowed her patronage: the hope was that her support would be a sign of the importance of the Society's work, and encourage the members, in their own words, "to still greater and better efforts."<sup>3</sup> She was invited to every annual meeting and special event, although it would appear only Lady Minto (1898-1904) and Lady Bessborough (1931-1935) ever attended.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the Society's secretaries regularly reported receiving thank you

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<sup>2</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/1, 2009-0171, box 36, "Minute Book," Minutes from October 15, 1898.

<sup>3</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, MG001-12-19, Annual Report for 1911-1912, 11; and MG110-HSOT, 3/32, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1932-1933.

<sup>4</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/1, 2009-0171, box 36, "Minute Book," Minutes from the annual meeting, March 29, 1899, 28.

letters from their benefactors. Jonathan Vance writes that Canadians expressed their relationship to Britain in many different ways in the late nineteenth century: through, for example, wall maps showing Canada “the same colour as a quarter of the globe,” and streets and schools named after British heroes.<sup>5</sup> As a women’s patriotic group, recognizing the support of the vice-regal patroness was an essential part of the Society’s expression of participation in a hierarchical British colonial society. Her patronage was also a sign of the Society’s status in Canadian society.

The Society did not start publishing annual reports until the end of its first decade, so most of the information about the work they did in the first ten years comes from the minutes of both general and executive meetings, and newspaper accounts. A quick glance through the Society’s minute books reveals that each incoming secretary recorded the minutes as succinctly and efficiently as her predecessor had done. If there were ever any arguments between members, or major disagreements about Society business, these were never included in the records, or were, at the very least, downplayed by the secretary. In fact, the minutes rarely comment on anything except the essential business at hand, which makes it difficult not to wonder what arguments the women of the WCHSO may have hidden over the years. This will be discussed later in this chapter in relation to the Society’s interactions with the Bytown Pioneer Association.

The Society relied on membership fees to fund its activities, which were set at fifty cents per annum, and voting rights at the annual meeting were contingent on full

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire: Canada, Britain, and Two World Wars* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33-34.

payment of the yearly fee. Honorary members were not required to pay an annual fee.<sup>6</sup> Membership fees brought in anywhere from \$35 to \$45 a year.<sup>7</sup> The membership fee did not change until 1930, when it was raised to \$1. At the same time, a one-time fee of \$25 was introduced for those wishing to become life members.<sup>8</sup> The following year, the Society's officers clearly felt the need to justify this new life membership fee, and noted in the annual report that the funds would be used "solely for the purchase of necessary equipment for the Bytown Museum."<sup>9</sup>

Starting in the first decade, the Society received a provincial government grant of \$200 per year, to be used specifically for publishing reports and historical papers. Nevertheless, members spent much time raising funds for activities and events. In 1899, for example, a loan exhibition (discussed in Chapter 3) raised \$150 for the Society.<sup>10</sup> In 1901, members were asked to contribute 10 cents towards the rental of a hall for the annual meeting that spring.<sup>11</sup> The report of the first decade, published in 1909, includes a thank you to two men who helped the Society raise \$200 to publish their papers.<sup>12</sup> In

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<sup>6</sup> This was one decision that did cause a slight disagreement that was included in the minutes. At the first general meeting in 1898, Mary McKay Scott and Bessie Featherston moved that honorary membership should not be complimentary, but rather cost the same annual sum as a regular membership. The majority of members, however, did not agree, and a proposed amendment did not pass: 2/1, 2009-0171, box 36, "Minute Book," Minutes from first general meeting, November 8, 1898.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Annual Report for 1910-11, 19, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191000womeuoft>; Annual Report for 1915-1916, 23, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191500womeuoft>; COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/14, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1921-1922, 21.

<sup>8</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/23, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1930-1931, 13.

<sup>9</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/28, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1931-1932, 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, Friday, March 30, 1900, 7, accessed online through <https://news.google.com/newspapers>. *Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to the Ottawa Citizen refer to material found on Google News Archive.*

<sup>11</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/2, 2/3, 2009-0171, box 36, "Executive Minutes," March 22, 1901.

<sup>12</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/1, 2009-0173, box 38, Report of the First Decade, 1908-1909. It is unclear if they are talking about *Transactions Vol. 1*, published in 1901, or Vol. II, published in 1909.

1921, a fundraiser for the museum brought in \$42.<sup>13</sup> There are numerous mentions throughout the minutes from the first ten years and the annual reports thereafter of fundraisers at members' homes, such as drawing room concerts and socials; and all of the members were asked to contribute either "ice cream, cake, tea and bread and butter" as refreshments to be served at loan exhibitions.<sup>14</sup> The annual meeting expenditures also often included fresh flowers; and while flowers and food may seem frivolous, including them was simply *de rigueur* within the world of respectability these women inhabited, where social events were reported on in the newspaper and, Brock notes, "the time spent planning, organizing and participating in [them] was regarded as time necessarily spent."<sup>15</sup>

The WCHSO's fundraisers also often included historical *tableaux vivants*, at least during the first decade.<sup>16</sup> These essentially consisted of women in costume, posing in historical scenes, holding a set position for about thirty seconds at a time, and were perfect for drawing room socials because they did not require a lot of space. Monika M. Elbert describes *tableaux* as being "especially intriguing to women" because it gave them the opportunity to "act" without actually "acting," and the lines between "what was acceptable and what was real" were conveniently blurred.<sup>17</sup> Further, H. V. Nelles reminds us that re-enacting the past for an audience was an effective way of teaching history.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/14, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1921-1922, 21.

<sup>14</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/1, 2009-0171, box 36, "Minute Book," May 22, 1899.

<sup>15</sup> Brock, "Beyond Domesticity," 135-36.

<sup>16</sup> In, for example, COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/31, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1902; and 3/1, Report of the First Decade, 1908-1909.

<sup>17</sup> Monika M. Elbert, "Striking a Historical Pose: Antebellum Tableaux Vivants, *Godey's* Illustrations, and Margaret Fuller's Heroines," *The New England Quarterly* 75 (2) (June 2002): 237.

<sup>18</sup> H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 14.



Unfortunately, no record of any of the WCHSO's *tableaux* remain; but no doubt they would have featured scenes similar to those described by Allana C. Lindgren in her examination of the *tableaux* performed in Toronto by the International Order Daughters of the Empire during Canada's Diamond Jubilee in 1927. These included female characters who embodied "allegorical political entities that symbolically equated women with countries... [and] accentuated the closeness of Canada's relationship to Britain." In particular, portraying historical women like Laura Secord, Madeleine de Verchères, and Ursuline nuns landing at Quebec (all of whom the WCHSO wrote about in *Transactions*) promoted "ideals that cast women as protectors of home, country, and King."<sup>19</sup> Regardless of the content, however, the WCHSO reported that *tableaux* were "a great success, financially and otherwise."<sup>20</sup>

During World War I, the Society funnelled some of its fundraising activities into the war effort, contributing their membership fees in 1914 to the Hospital Ship Fund, and sending boxes of reading material to the soldiers overseas.<sup>21</sup> They defined Canada's part in the war, and their own support, using the rhetoric of maternal imperialism: the Empire was a family, and Britain was its mother.<sup>22</sup> "Canada is sending her sons" to uphold the principles of truth and justice, wrote Caroline Gullock in 1914; and, she added, now was the time for Canadians of all creeds, "forgetting petty racial differences," to unite.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Allana C. Lindgren, "Amy Sternberg's *Historical Pageant* (1927): The Performance of IODE Ideology During Canada's Diamond Jubilee," *Theatre Research in Canada* 32.1 (Spring 2011): 5. Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan also discuss how the images of Secord and de Verchères were used to "invoke notions of 'the nation'" and to help create "the nation" as well. *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>20</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/31, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1902.

<sup>21</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/6, 2/7, 2009-0171, box 36, Minute Book, August 15, 1914; Annual Report for 1915-1916, 14, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191500womeuoft>.

<sup>22</sup> Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Annual Report for 1914-1915, 9, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191400womeuoft>.

Coming just two years after the separate school board controversy that created so much tension between the French and English in Ottawa, Gullock's statement is revealing.

Throughout the war years, the Society continued to receive the \$200 grant from the Ontario government; and in 1920, Alberta Somerville began lobbying the province for an increase. In 1921, the Society was granted \$300 per year.<sup>24</sup> The annual report shows that in the 1923-1924 season, the grant was again increased, to \$400.<sup>25</sup> Later in 1924, however, provincial grants to all local historical societies were discontinued; and not surprisingly, the WCHSO referred to this cut as a "crisis."<sup>26</sup> Killan writes that the grant's termination contributed to a significant decline in activity and interest within local historical societies, and it certainly did affect the WCHSO.<sup>27</sup> The lack of money meant that they could no longer publish *Transactions* without increasing their fundraising activities, and the last volume was printed in 1928. In 1927, however, curator Jenny Simpson managed to secure a grant of \$100 from Ottawa City Council for the Bytown Museum's upkeep.<sup>28</sup> This may have come from the Ottawa Town Planning Commission (OTPC), which was established in 1921 to improve the aesthetics of the city. City Council, however, essentially lost interest in the OTPC's improvement plans by the mid-1920s; so the impetus for the Museum's grant may have come instead from the federal government. In 1927, the government created a Federal District Commission to make plans to beautify the capital, and its head was none other than Thomas Ahearn, the

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<sup>24</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/13, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1920-1921, 17-18.

<sup>25</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/16, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1923-1924, 28.

<sup>26</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/17, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1924-1925, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Gerald Killan, *Preserving Ontario's Heritage: A History of the Ontario Historical Society* (Ottawa: Love Printing Service Limited, 1976), 195.

<sup>28</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/19, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1926-1927, 12.

widowed husband of Margaret, the Society's president from 1903 to 1914.<sup>29</sup> Ahearn was one of the WCHSO's most loyal supporters over the years, so his influence may have had something to do with the City grant.

Over the years, the Society held anywhere from four to eight regular meetings a season for members, one or two public meetings, and an annual open meeting. Executive members also met an additional eight to ten times a year. Regular meetings were usually held on the second Friday of every month in the afternoon, and the executive met on the first Saturday of the month at 10:45 in the morning. That none of the single, wage-earning women who attended the first two meetings continued in executive roles is not surprising given the Society's meeting schedule. While participation was ostensibly open to anyone who could afford the annual fifty cent fee, the business of the WCHSO could really only be run by women who did not have to support themselves or their families financially. This changed in 1927, however, when the general meeting moved to Friday evenings instead, which proved to be a very popular decision.<sup>30</sup> The time may have been changed to accommodate Ottawa's increasing number of working women, as discussed in Chapter 1.

The date of the annual meetings reflects the Society's patriotism: it was 29 March, "the date on which in the year 1867 the Royal Assent was given to the British North America Act."<sup>31</sup> Each annual and open meeting followed a formal schedule, which included a piano or vocal solo to open the meeting, and the singing of "O Canada" and

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<sup>29</sup> John H. Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company and Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1986), 148.

<sup>30</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/20, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1927-1928, 14.

<sup>31</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/1, 2009-0171, box 36, "Minute Book," Minutes from first general meeting, November 8, 1898.

“God Save the Queen/King” at its close. The collective performance of these patriotic pieces reinforces, of course, the Society’s belief that, to paraphrase Carl Berger, Canadian nationality and imperial unity “were interlocked and identical.”<sup>32</sup> While the membership was entirely Christian – whether Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist – the Society does not seem to have included The Lord’s Prayer at any of its meetings, unlike the Federated Women’s Institutes of Ontario, where the Christian prayer was a standard part of all meetings.<sup>33</sup> In this way, at least, the WCHSO adhered to its constitutional policy that religious denomination would not be recognized in the business of the Society.<sup>34</sup> They may have been following in the footsteps of the National Council of Women, which instituted a silent prayer policy at its meetings in an attempt to provide women divided by religious beliefs with a common meeting ground.<sup>35</sup>

While men were not admitted as full members until 1955, they were elected to honorary membership starting in 1899. Even in the Society’s earliest days, prominent men were called on to participate in open meetings, chairing and giving an address, and even moving and seconding motions.<sup>36</sup> For the first few years, the president of the Society presided over the annual meeting and another member read a paper, but it soon became the norm for the roles of both chair and keynote speaker to be played by men (although WCHSO members still read papers). Over the years, honorary members and

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<sup>32</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 48.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret C. Kechnie, *Organizing Rural Women: The Federated Women’s Institutes of Ontario, 1897-1919* (Montreal-Toronto: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 62.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Annual Report for 1915-1916, “Article 8 – Policy,” Constitution of the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa, 14, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191500womeuoft>.

<sup>35</sup> Anne-Marie Kinahan, “‘A Splendid Army of Organized Womanhood’: Gender, Communication and the National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1918” (PhD. diss., Carleton University, 2005), 103.

<sup>36</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/2, 2/3, 2009-0171, box 36, “Executive Minutes,” December 17, 1898.

men who participated in meetings included the husbands of Society members, members of the Ontario Historical Society and Royal Geographic Society, and – as the civil service expanded in the second and third decades of the twentieth century – government employees from the National Museum.<sup>37</sup> Men were also asked to represent the Society at other events. In October of 1908, for example, the principal of the Normal School asked the WCHSO to provide a lecturer “to be one of a series under the auspices of the Literary, Scientific and Art Societies of Ottawa.” Rather than send a member, the Society instead chose Benjamin Sulte to give the lecture.<sup>38</sup> That the Society regularly called on prominent men does not mean the women believed themselves incapable of speaking in public. Rather, it was a strategic way to garner more public support for their work; for as Price notes in her discussion of the Audubon Society in the United States, men’s access to “formal avenues of power” conferred an “essential cachet of male authority” on the organization.<sup>39</sup>

The Society members demonstrated their commitment to the work of history by affiliating with the Ontario Historical Society and sending delegates to various historical meetings and conferences over the years. In December 1909, Jenny Simpson travelled to New York City as the WCHSO’s delegate at the American Historical Association’s annual meeting, making the WCHSO the first Canadian society to send an official

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<sup>37</sup> For example, COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/15, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1922-1923, 13.

<sup>38</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/31, 2009-0173, box 38, Report of the First Decade, 1908-1909, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Price, *Flight Maps*, 100. Other women’s organizations relied on male input too: Mitchinson points out, for example, that some branches of the YWCA even had men report on financial records at public meetings. The WCHSO’s treasurer, it must be said, always spoke for her own books. Mitchinson, “Aspects of Reform,” 117.

representative to this conference.<sup>40</sup> In June 1914, the Society hosted the Ontario Historical Society's annual meeting in Ottawa, where WCHSO president Margaret Ahearn stood up in front of dozens of assembled guests to welcome them to the capital. In her speech, Ahearn played the part of Ottawa "booster," pointing out that although the capital did not have "the historic places and battlefields" of other cities, its "splendid national monuments, majestic buildings and beautiful scenery... the federal parliament buildings, the Victoria Memorial museum, lovely parks and driveways" would show the visitors why it had become such a "Convention City."<sup>41</sup> Taylor notes that between 1896 and 1913, "eleven new government buildings were erected" in the downtown core, "including showcase structures like the Public Archives, Royal Mint, and Victoria Memorial Museum."<sup>42</sup> The Ottawa Improvement Commission had also recently completed a network of parks and driveways. Ahearn's statement pointed out to her visitors – delegates from historical societies across the province – that Ottawa had well and truly earned its right to be Canada's capital city. Her remarks were also made with her Society's best interests in mind: for it was thanks to the Ottawa City Council's generous donation of \$150 that the Society could afford to entertain OHS guests at the Chateau Laurier.<sup>43</sup> The City's support was clearly indicative of its recently-approved mandate to make Ottawa a more attractive place in which to live and work.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> 3/31, 2009-0173, box 38, "Report of the Delegate, Mrs. J. B. Simpson, to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Celebration of the American Historical Association, held in the City of New York, December 27<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, 1909."

<sup>41</sup> Annual Report for 1914-1915, 22-23, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191400womeuoft>; *Ottawa Citizen*, "Need of a Thorough Historical Training," June 3, 1914, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 148.

<sup>43</sup> Annual Report for 1914-1915, 33, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191400womeuoft>.

<sup>44</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 148.

In its first few years, the Society regularly used local newspapers to not only advertise meetings and exhibitions, but also to publicize some of the essays that were written and presented by its members. In December of 1898, the *Ottawa Journal* described an open meeting at Ahearn's house, where Mary Anne Friel read a paper about her reminiscences of early Bytown; two weeks later, the paper published Friel's paper, along with another by Mary McKay Scott.<sup>45</sup> The *Journal* published a few more papers in 1899,<sup>46</sup> but this practice seems to have ceased before the first issue of *Transactions* was released in 1901, perhaps because the WCHSO wanted to encourage people to contact them directly for copies of their historical scholarship. They also advertised in and submitted reports to *The Anglo-Saxon*. In October of 1899, Kenny was appointed editor of a monthly column about the WCHSO in *The Anglo-Saxon*, but the journal shut down in January of 1900, so this effort was short-lived.<sup>47</sup> The Society's affiliation with the staunchly anti-Catholic and anti-French periodical – despite the number of French and Catholic members on its roster – is evidence of their interpretation of Britishness in the early years. Phillip Buckner writes that Britishness at the turn of the century “did not preclude multiple overlapping identities and one could remain English, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh while becoming British and Canadian.”<sup>48</sup> But because it was such an “ambiguous concept,” Britishness signified more a “code of behaviour and a cultural

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<sup>45</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, December 17, 1898, 8; December 31, 1898, 10, accessed at the City of Ottawa Archives using newspapers.com, a paid subscription site. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to the *Ottawa Journal* refer to material found on newspapers.com.

<sup>46</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, January 28, 1899, 10; February 25, 1899, 10; March 25, 1899, 10.

<sup>47</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/2, 2/3, 2009-0171, box 36, “Executive Minutes,” Tuesday, November 8, 1898 and October 6, 1899. For more about *The Anglo-Saxon*, see Paula Hastings, “‘Our Glorious Anglo-Saxon Race Shall Ever Fill Earth’s Highest Place’: *The Anglo-Saxon* and the Construction of Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Canada,” in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, eds. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 101.

<sup>48</sup> Phillip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the British Empire* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

identity that could be acquired given time and commitment,” and was thus defined more clearly as “whiteness.”<sup>49</sup> The Society’s French members were apparently subsumed into this more racialized definition.

The Society’s annual reports, which they started publishing in 1909, included not only the officers’ accounts of the season’s activities and finances, but also any compliments the WCHSO received from other societies, historians, or prominent men – which of course helped establish its growing importance in the field.<sup>50</sup> After the war, the annual reports became more of a mouthpiece for some members’ political opinions, predominantly with regard to immigration. This is not surprising, of course, considering Canadians’ immigration fears immediately following the war. With the economy in trouble and unemployment rates rising, the government amended the Immigration Act in 1919 to deny admission to people deemed unsuitable to Canada’s climate, and to those who would have trouble assimilating because of their “strange” foreign habits and customs.<sup>51</sup> In the early 1920s, however, some of these restrictions were lifted, and at the same time, the economy in Britain picked up, so the number of British immigrants to Canada dwindled.<sup>52</sup> These were, of course, just the people that British-Canadians wanted in their country, so WCHSO president Beatrice Ashton’s opinions on the matter are typical for her time. In 1923, she wrote that “Canada’s greatest need at the present time is

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<sup>49</sup> Phillip Buckner, “The Creation of the Dominion of Canada, 1860-1901,” in *Canada and the British Empire*, 84.

<sup>50</sup> N.E.S. Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1993* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), 75. See, for example, Annual Report for 1910-1911, 9, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191000womeuoft>; Annual Report for 1913-1914, 16, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191300womeuoft>; Annual Report for 1915-1916, 22, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191500womeuoft>.

<sup>51</sup> Ninette Kelley and Michael J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 184.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.



selected immigrants preferably from Great Britain and Northern Europe, as these are more likely to withstand the climate, and are more easily assimilated.”<sup>53</sup> The following year, she added: “A country is saved by its traditions, and though young in years, Canada has had many examples of heroic struggle... Canada has need of settlers of sturdy stock from Great Britain and Northern Europe to people the vast areas yet unoccupied, in order to develop her vast resources.”<sup>54</sup> In 1928, Lisbeth Brown echoed the sentiments of many when she declared that “British Stock” should be “the backbone of the country.”<sup>55</sup> These statements, and words like “stock,” are typical of early twentieth century eugenicist discourse. As Cicely Devereux has argued, this discourse undergirded much maternal feminism at this time. To be Canadian was to sustain British imperial ideas of natural racial hierarchies.<sup>56</sup>

The annual reports were not the only vehicle the Society used to comment on history as it was being made. In its first year of operation, the WCHSO started compiling scrapbooks, primarily made up of newspaper clippings about Ottawa and Canada, and members were also encouraged to make a conscious effort to collect “all kinds of literary trifles, invitation cards, descriptions of entertainments, pamphlets, posters.”<sup>57</sup> In 1901, MacDougall suggested that members should also keep diaries to be handed over to the Society after a certain date. Dawson agreed to this proposal, and from 1902 to 1903, she wrote brief entries about what the Society was doing, events around the country (e.g., January 11: “900 cases smallpox in London England”), and, primarily, social events in

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<sup>53</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/15, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1922-1923, 12.

<sup>54</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/16, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1923-1924, 12.

<sup>55</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/19, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1926-1927, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Cecily Devereux, *Growing a Race: Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 11.

<sup>57</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/1, 2009-0171, box 36, “Annual meeting minutes,” March 29, 1899, 27.

Ottawa.<sup>58</sup> Recent scholarship on scrapbooks and diaries note that these represent material forms of memory that reflect both the person (or group) who made them, and the time period in which they were compiled.<sup>59</sup> They are interesting examples of how broadly the Society defined the collection and preservation of history. The members clearly believed that by pasting together disparate newspaper clippings, or keeping a record of day-to-day life in Ottawa, future generations would better understand the collective memory of Ottawa's citizens in days past.

## 2.2 The Bytown Museum

It took the WCHSO nearly twenty years to find a permanent space for their publications, documents, and artefacts. In 1910, the YWCA let the Society install a shelf in its library for their books, but was not able to provide an entire room.<sup>60</sup> In both 1903 and 1916, they tried (and failed) to secure a room on the top floor of the Carnegie Library.<sup>61</sup> After the second attempt, the WCHSO instated a committee devoted to looking for a space, and soon found out that the former City Registry Office at 70 Nicholas Street, across from the Carleton County Gaol, was empty. Armed with letters of support from a number of influential men, including Robert Borden, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and William

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<sup>58</sup> The Society's *fonds* does not include any other diaries, so the project does not seem to have been repeated: COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 27/17, 2011-0229, box 65, "Diary – 1902 – by Mrs. S. E. Dawson, President."

<sup>59</sup> Susan Tucker et al, ed, *The Scrapbook in American Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>60</sup> Annual Report for 1910-1911, 8, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191000womeuoft>. It is unclear what the Society did with any artefacts it may have collected before 1917. The librarian recorded the pamphlets, publications, photographs, and paper documents (like maps) received in each annual report, but the Society did not start listing objects received until 1919, after the Museum opened (see COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/11, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1918-1919, 13).

<sup>61</sup> In 1916, Billings wrote that the Society decided not to take a space at the library because the arrangement specified by W. J. Sykes, the head librarian, practically meant "the handing over of our treasures for all time." Annual Report for 1915-1916, 21, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191500womeuoft>.

Lyon Mackenzie King, the Society managed to lease the rather dilapidated building from the City for the annual sum of one dollar.<sup>62</sup> With such powerful friends in the federal government on their side, the Society does not appear to have had a lot of trouble securing the lease.

The Nicholas Street building was built in 1874 for the registry of land deeds, mortgages, and plans. It was used in this capacity until 1909, when a new registry office was built on Elgin Street; thereafter, it went through a series of uses and tenants.<sup>63</sup> When the WCHSO obtained their lease in the spring of 1917, they spent the first few months cleaning the building up enough to move in. They again used their influence, calling on the Minister of Public Works for his assistance in finding contractors to repair and clean the roof, replace some of the windows and bricks, and install two outside signs.<sup>64</sup> Other services were donated to the Society: the governor of the neighbouring jail supplied inmates to paint and decorate the building; Thomas Ahearn installed a fireplace, a gas stove for making tea, and a water heater; and lumber magnate J. R. Booth replaced the uncomfortable “flag floor” with wood.<sup>65</sup> (It is interesting to note that in these three men are the three faces of the economic diversity – government, water-power, and lumber – that was already fading as government grew in the early twentieth century to become the “corporation” of Ottawa.<sup>66</sup>) In total, the Society spent \$302.35 on repairs and upgrades, all of which was raised through member fees, sales of *Transactions*, the proceeds of two money showers given by Marion MacDougall and Edith McLean, and a voluntary

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<sup>62</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/6, 2/7, 2009-0171, box 36, General meeting minutes, January 12, 1917, 107.

<sup>63</sup> Canada’s Historic Places, “The City Registry Office, 70, Nicholas Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N, Canada,” accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=8463>.

<sup>64</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/10, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1917-1918, 25-26.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 122.

collection at the Museum's opening in October.<sup>67</sup> Even though the Society's members gained some power from their influential government connections, they still had to work hard to turn the Nicholas Street building into a museum that people would want to visit.

The WCHSO held its first meeting at the new Museum in September 1917. "After eighteen years of wandering from place to place," Somerville wrote in the year's annual report, "we have at last arrived at the dignity of a home."<sup>68</sup> Her words call to mind the idea of woman's influence extending from the home base into society at large; and indeed, organized women in the early twentieth century used this rhetoric of home, writes Naomi Griffiths, "to demand compassionate and enlightened care for their cities."<sup>69</sup> The Society immediately started planning the Museum's grand opening for 25 October, and called on family and friends to gather together enough artefacts for a loan exhibition. The mayor, Harold Fisher, declared the Museum officially open. Lady Borden attended the opening, and in the absence of the patroness, Government House was represented by the Governor General's daughter Lady Dorothy Cavendish, Lady Violet Henderson (daughter of the Governor General's military secretary), and Lady Mary Kelly Stanley.<sup>70</sup>

The fact that the WCHSO found its new home in the middle of a world war in which Canada played a major role is not insignificant. One reason women won the right to the federal vote in 1918 is because of the work they did during the war: Gail Cuthbert Brandt notes that politicians could no longer deny them "formal involvement in public

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<sup>67</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/10, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1917-1918, 25.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision*, 72.

<sup>70</sup> 2/6, 2/7, 2009-0171, box 36, General meeting minutes, October 25, 1917.

affairs.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the war gave the women of the WCHSO the opportunity to persuade the City of Ottawa that its citizens needed a cultural institution to remind them of their history of struggle and progress, their connection with Britain, and Canada’s past participation in military achievements. Indeed, Somerville’s review in the annual report makes it clear that the work of history – both studying and preserving it – is just as much war work as raising money or making socks for the soldiers overseas:

...one of the greatest helps to steadfastness of purpose has been the re-perusal of the history of former wars waged just as bravely by our forefathers on the self-same battlegrounds in Europe... That the history of these days in this Capital City of Canada may not be forgotten or lost with passing time, we have endeavoured to intensify the interest in the Women’s Canadian Historical Society, the pen by which these historical facts may be chronicled during these years of such tremendous effort, both at home and Overseas. The War has truly forged us anew for it [sic] own purposes, as it has all things pertaining to our lives today, but the sooner we realize the importance of a faithful record of these days of stress and storm, and that we, the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa, must make and keep that record for Ottawa, the sooner our fellow citizens will realize that our War Work, as a Society, is of the sort that each year will make more valuable.<sup>72</sup>

Somerville’s words are also indicative of the Society’s sense of its role as *makers* of history. The members clearly believed that if *they* did not take on the task of recording Ottawa’s part in the war, that information would be lost forever. This anxiety about forgetting the past was common at the turn of the century, when, Pierre Nora tells us, rural life and its associated traditions began to disintegrate. By preserving history and

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<sup>71</sup> Gail Cuthbert Brandt, “Organizations in Canada: The English Protestant Tradition,” in *Women’s Paid and Unpaid Work: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Paula Bourne (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1985), 88.

<sup>72</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/10, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1917-1918, 20.

building monuments, people filled the void left by the loss of these traditions.<sup>73</sup>

Somerville's desire to save history before it was gone also reflects how the War was changing the Canadian way of life, and the country's relationship with Britain.

Despite all of the improvements made to the Nicholas Street building, it was years before the Society was able to obtain an adequate heating system for it. For the first few years, the Museum was open on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons during pleasant weather, and closed during the winter. Members volunteered for shifts, and the names of the women who would be "in charge" were printed in the *Ottawa Citizen* and *Ottawa Journal* – in the "social" section, conveying a sense of the Museum as a female space. In 1923, the decision was made to install a gas steam radiator and radiant gas fire so the building could be open year-round.<sup>74</sup> However, in 1928, the Society reported that heating was still an issue, and they were only able to keep the Museum open on Saturdays during the winter.<sup>75</sup> Thanks to a new heating system installed in 1928, the Museum was finally open year-round, and the Society reported a "large increase" in the number of visitors that year: 1,200, to be precise, a number that stayed relatively steady over the next few years.<sup>76</sup> Despite the new heating system, the executive were still obliged to hold their meetings elsewhere during the winter, but this may have been to save money on gas rather than to avoid the cold: for in 1933, they reported changing the Museum's winter hours "as a measure of economy," from Wednesday and Saturday afternoons to all day

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<sup>73</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 15.

<sup>74</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/16, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1923-1924, 25.

<sup>75</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/20, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1927-1928, 15.

<sup>76</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/21, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1928-1929, 13; 3/22, 1929-1930, 14; 3/23, 1930-1931, 26.

Saturday instead. This change did not affect the number of visitors, however; in fact, more than 1,800 people went through the Museum that year.<sup>77</sup>

In 1920, the Society started listing in its annual reports all of the objects it now had in its collection. Each year, they made special note of the artefacts they had received from community and Society members that season; consequently, this catalogue got longer and longer every year, increasing from 178 artefacts in 1920 to more than 300 in 1925. Recognizing the need for a dedicated person to oversee the collection, the WCHSO appointed Simpson its official curator in 1923, and the 1924 annual report contains her first account of the year's activities. She wrote about spending a lot of time that year helping "many Collegiate and Normal School students... thus testifying to the increasing value of the little Bytown Historical Museum."<sup>78</sup> Her use of the word "little" is interesting, for by her own admission, Museum work was not easy. After publishing a thirty-one page Guide to the Museum in 1929, which accounted for 481 artefacts – testament to how much the WCHSO had grown in thirty years – Simpson wryly noted in the annual report that recording each "historic treasure" for the Guide was lovingly done to "assure the givers of our grateful appreciation," but that "few realize the amount of technical work involved in its preparation."<sup>79</sup>

Even though people continued to donate items and visit the Museum, money was always an issue for the Society. In 1929, the members decided to implement a 10 cent admission charge to the Museum, with the caveat that if the fee was not well received, it

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<sup>77</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/32, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1932-1933, 5 and 8.

<sup>78</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/17, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1924-1925, 24.

<sup>79</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/21, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1929-1930, 23.

would be discontinued.<sup>80</sup> (It seems to have stayed in place, at least for the next several years.) This came at the same time that the Society heard the old Nicholas Street building appeared to be under threat of demolition, possibly related to Mackenzie King's Federal District Commission and his ongoing plans to assert more of a federal presence in Ottawa's core.<sup>81</sup> The WCHSO wrote a letter to King, "seeking his influence regarding the preservation of Bytown Museum." King assured the Society "of his heartiest co-operation," and also promised to visit the Museum in the near future.<sup>82</sup> Perhaps the visit from Sir Henry Miers and S. F. Markham during the 1931-1932 season halted demolition plans. Miers, president of the London, England, Museums Association, and Markham, his secretary, were commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation in 1931 to survey museums in Canada.<sup>83</sup> Their report named Canadian museums as some of the worst in North America, thanks to inadequate financial support and lack of trained employees.<sup>84</sup> However, the report also made "favourable" mention of the Bytown Museum, specifically the historical value of the Nicholas Street building.<sup>85</sup> The subject of demolition is not mentioned again in either the Society's reports or minutes; and indeed, the Nicholas Street building still stands today.

The Miers and Markham report seems to have encouraged the WCHSO to make some changes to the Museum's collection. A 1931 note signed by Fanny Kains, who was

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>81</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History*, 148.

<sup>82</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/21, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1929-1930, 18.

<sup>83</sup> Karen A. Finlay, *The Force of Culture: Vincent Massey and Canadian Sovereignty* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), accessed October 2, 2015, [https://books.google.ca/books?id=fQONBgAAQBAJ&pg=PT147&lpg=PT147&dq=Miers+Markham&source=bl&ots=H1w2sfDedf&sig=9jRUG27LbgkPxasziG7S-tX4sY4&hl=en&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Miers%20Markham&f=false](https://books.google.ca/books?id=fQONBgAAQBAJ&pg=PT147&lpg=PT147&dq=Miers+Markham&source=bl&ots=H1w2sfDedf&sig=9jRUG27LbgkPxasziG7S-tX4sY4&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Miers%20Markham&f=false).

<sup>84</sup> McTavish, *Defining*, 136.

<sup>85</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/28, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1931-1932, 10.



president at the time, mentions that, with more financial and physical help, the Museum could be rearranged chronologically to “reflect the stages of municipal life, its successive social and commercial development, and mirror for present and future citizens phases through which the little settlement of Bytown has passed.”<sup>86</sup> The following year, however, Simpson retired from her position as curator due to failing health, so the Society’s “best informed” member was not able to see any changes through to completion.<sup>87</sup>

### **2.3 Commemoration**

All through its first thirty years, and even after the Bytown Museum began to take up so much of its time, the WCHSO dedicated itself to the commemoration of Ottawa’s important people, places, and events by way of monuments and plaques. The commemoration of Canada’s disappearing historical forts and sites associated with Loyalists and the War of 1812 became a focal point, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of local historical societies.<sup>88</sup> C. J. Taylor tells us that such sites were seen as “symbols of a recognized national history,” and memorials to both places and people were important to the formation of a Canadian identity.<sup>89</sup> It is no surprise, then, that the subject of commemoration came up at the WCHSO’s very first general meeting in November of 1898. The Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Toronto forwarded a

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<sup>86</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/8, 2009-0173, box 38, “Members and Friends of the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa,” 1931.

<sup>87</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/32, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1932-1933, 6.

<sup>88</sup> C. J. Taylor, “Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review* 64, 1 (1983): 4.

<sup>89</sup> Christopher James Taylor, “National Historic Parks and Sites, 1880-1951: The Biography of a Federal Cultural Program” (PhD diss., Carleton University, 1986), 15.

resolution to the new Ottawa Society asking its members to join other local historical organizations in protesting a proposed monument to General Montgomery in the public square of Quebec City. Montgomery was a former British soldier who turned against Britain during the American Revolutionary War and tried (and failed) to invade Canada in 1775; an American patriotic order called the Sons of the American Revolution wanted the memorial.<sup>90</sup> Imbued with late nineteenth century fears about the threat of Canadian absorption into American culture and values, the WCHSO heartily endorsed the resolution.<sup>91</sup> In 1899, the Society wrote to Sir Sandford Fleming about “efforts being made to prevent further disfigurement of Major’s Hill Park.”<sup>92</sup> In 1901, the OHS asked local societies to petition the Ontario government for a grant to be used to erect monuments or tablets, and each member of the WCHSO pledged to “invite an influential person to write” to the province about the matter.<sup>93</sup> In 1908, Mary Anne FitzGibbon visited the Society and suggested that one of the members write and present a paper on the story of Dollard, then publish and sell the paper and donate the proceeds towards “a monument on the sight of his heroic downfall.”<sup>94</sup> The myth of the martyrdom of Adam Dollard des Ormeaux, the soldier who was killed by Iroquois at the Long Sault, was at its peak in the early part of the twentieth century when Abbé Lionel Groulx used it as a call

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<sup>90</sup> Killan, *Preserving Heritage*, 77-78.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Despite strong protests on the part of the OHS and other societies, the City Council of Quebec gave the Sons of the Revolution permission to replace an existing wooden tablet to Montgomery with a more permanent monument, and the government of Canada refused to get involved. However, the Sons of the Revolution abandoned their plans for the monument in 1902, out of respect for the feelings of Quebecers. See *Boston Evening Transcript*, “Monument to Montgomery to be Erected at Quebec Despite Protests,” April 11, 1901, 4; “Canada Will Not Interfere,” May 16, 1901, 14; and “No Montgomery Monument,” March 4, 1902, 1, accessed online through <https://news.google.com/newspapers>.

<sup>92</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/2, 2/3, 2009-0171, box 36, “Executive Minutes,” January 5, 1899.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., March 1, 1901.

<sup>94</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/4, 2/5, 2009-0171, box 36, “Executive Minutes,” October 31, 1908. See Carleton University Archives (CUA), RAR FC1 W63 v.4/7, Magdalen Casey, “Siege of the Long Sault,” *Transactions Vol. V, Battlegrounds Series* (Ottawa: The Esdale Press, 1912), 51-60.

to French-Canadian identity. In 1908, it featured as one of the pageants at the Quebec tercentenary, where Nelles tells us it “occupied a disproportionate amount of space in all of the newspaper accounts.”<sup>95</sup> Although Magdalen Casey wrote about Dollard in 1911, there is no record of anyone selling the essay to raise money for a statue.

In 1910, the WCHSO began lobbying for a symbolic memorial to Confederation, to be erected on Connaught Place, the triangular plaza that was under construction between Wellington and Elgin streets in downtown Ottawa (now Confederation Square). The women drafted a resolution, “earnestly” advocating for the memorial, and arranged for it to be brought before Parliament. In their minds, all of the provinces would be asked to contribute some design element, such as symbolic figures or coats of arms. A few delegates met with Laurier and two of his ministers, who promised to think about the proposal.<sup>96</sup> Laurier’s government, after all, had created the Ottawa Improvement Commission in 1899 (precursor to the Federal District Commission), and had, as already mentioned, funded the construction of many new buildings. Three years later, Borden also promised to give the idea some thought.<sup>97</sup> In 1914, the Society seems to have changed its mind somewhat about which memorial they wanted to see on Connaught Place, noting in a *Journal* article that they were still working toward a memorial to the birth of the Dominion, but that Connaught Place – “the true centre of Ottawa, the Capital of the Dominion of Canada” – needed “a memorial of Peace – as an outward expression of the soul of the Canadian nation.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, 160.

<sup>96</sup> Annual Report for 1910-1911, 13, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191000womeuoft>.

<sup>97</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/5, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1912-1913, 8.

<sup>98</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, January 31, 1914, 3.

Also in 1914, Jenny Simpson's son Karl, an artist, sculpted a bust of Colonel By that was placed in the Council Chamber at City Hall, but whether the Society had anything directly to do with this memorial is unclear.<sup>99</sup> They were certainly focused, even before 1914, on having a statue built in honour of Colonel By, and noted in the 1913-1914 annual report that, in their opinion, "an equestrian statue showing the Colonel on his famous old charger would be an adequate representation."<sup>100</sup> In March 1915, they settled for bringing the attention of the Historic Landmarks Association to the idea of memorializing Colonel By and his engineers on Major Hill Park, and marking the site where By's house once stood, using old canal stones. These stones were unveiled by the Duke of Connaught in May 1915, and can still be seen today next to the remains of By's house.<sup>101</sup>

In June of 1914, during the OHS's annual meeting in Ottawa, Margaret Ahearn – in her role as a member of the OHS's Historic Sites and Monuments Committee – turned the first sod for the foundation stone of the Champlain monument that was later built on Nepean Point.<sup>102</sup> Later that year, the Society received, from Dr. W. F. King, the Director of the Dominion Observatory, one of the international boundary posts that had been placed on the boundary between Quebec and New York in 1845. They presented the post to the City, and had it erected on Nepean Point in memory of Ahearn, who had died in early January 1915.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Annual Report for 1913-1914, 18, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191300womeuoft>.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 and 18.

<sup>101</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Lady Sifton Again Elected President," March 30, 1916, 8. For more on the Historic Landmarks Association and the evolution of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, see Taylor, "National Historic Parks and Sites."

<sup>102</sup> Annual Report for 1914-1915, 10, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191400womeuoft>.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. The monument is still there today.

After 1915, the WCHSO took something of a break from advocating for memorials, as the members were busy enough with war work, finding a space for their Museum, and building up their collection of artefacts relating to Ottawa's history. With so many of its members active in other historical associations (Simpson with the HLA, for example, and Gullock on the executive of the OHS); having received the help of so many influential men during their search for a Museum building; and with visitor numbers at the Museum steadily rising, the work of the Society must have been making some impact on the cultural landscape in Ottawa – or at least on the way Ottawa's history was being remembered.

But in October 1923, an article appeared in the *Ottawa Journal* that throws into question, in some small way, how seriously the public – and in particular, some of Ottawa's prominent male historians – perceived the work of the WCHSO. The article tells of a meeting held at City Hall to form a pioneer association that would bring together the descendants of Ottawa's early settlers and “perpetuate the traditions of the pioneer period.” The larger goal of the Bytown Pioneer Association (BPA), however, was to ensure that when Ottawa turned 100 years old in 1926, the city's centenary would be “properly celebrated.”<sup>104</sup>

The meeting's attendees were all men. They included Hamnet P. Hill, an Ottawa lawyer and local historian; William H. Cluff, a City alderman and Official Auditor who ran (unsuccessfully) for mayor in 1895 and 1899;<sup>105</sup> Dan O'Connor, likely a descendant of early settler Daniel O'Connor; Charles Billings, Charlotte's brother-in-law, who

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<sup>104</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Bytown Residents Form Association,” October 23, 1923, 1.

<sup>105</sup> Dave Mullington, *Chain of Office: Biographical Sketches of the Early Mayors of Ottawa (1847-1948)* (Renfrew: General Store Publishing House, 2005), 92.

managed and subsequently inherited the Billings family home (which is, today, a historic house) and most of the land;<sup>106</sup> John E. Askwith, who was born in Bytown in 1841, and was chief police magistrate from 1916 to 1922;<sup>107</sup> George H. Wilson, who published a popular column in the *Ottawa Evening Citizen* in the 1920s and 1930s called “Old Time Stuff: Reminiscences of the Ottawa of Earlier Days”;<sup>108</sup> W. H. Sproule, probably descended from Robert Sproule, a “miniature painter and drawing master” who opened a painting school in Bytown in 1844;<sup>109</sup> Charles W. Carson, Assistant Superintendent of the Ottawa Electric Railway Company;<sup>110</sup> and Mr. J. Eyre Holmes, the great-grandson of a Bytown postmaster.<sup>111</sup> The men stipulated that membership in the BPA would be open to anyone born in the Bytown period (pre-1854) and their descendants; as well as the descendants of the pioneers of March, Richmond, Aylmer, Cumberland, Hull, and other counties that were settled before Bytown. Women were welcome to join, and the WCHSO would be asked to help out with centenary celebrations.

By February 1924, the BPA boasted a membership of nearly 600 people. At that month’s meeting, members made presentations about pioneers and Bytown’s history, and the group officially declared its object as “the preservation of the traditions of the Ottawa

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<sup>106</sup> City of Ottawa, “Charles Billings, 1859-1936,” in “The Billings Family Virtual Exhibit,” accessed August 13, 2015, <http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/arts-culture-and-community/museums-and-heritage/billings-family-virtual-exhibit-0/charle-0>.

<sup>107</sup> Beechwood Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services, “22-3 John English Askwith,” in *Historical Portraits* (Ottawa: Beechwood, Funeral, Cemetery & Cremation Services, 2015), 23, accessed April 12, 2015, <http://www.beechwoodottawa.ca/about-us/famous-burials/>.

<sup>108</sup> Gatineau Valley Historical Society, “The Way We Were,” accessed September 15, 2015, <http://www.gvhs.ca/digital/lowdown/were/display.php?row=0&search=371>.

<sup>109</sup> Bytown Or Bust, “Art History in the Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, Area: The Interplay of Art and Local History/Genealogy,” last modified February 6, 2015, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://www.bytown.net/arhistory.htm>.

<sup>110</sup> *The Ottawa City Directory 1923* (Ottawa: Might Directories Limited, 1923), 297, accessed <https://archive.org/stream/ottawadirec192300midiuoft#page/296/mode/2up>.

<sup>111</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Bytown Residents Form Association,” October 23, 1923, 1.

district [and] the collection and dissemination of historical data of interest to its members.”<sup>112</sup> The *Journal* lauded its aims and its founders, “men of the highest civic standing,” particularly “that indefatigable and able enthusiast about early Bytown, Mr. H. P. Hill.”<sup>113</sup> The WCHSO was represented on the Bytown Pioneer Association’s planning committee by Caroline Gullock; former executive member Ella Thorburn was appointed treasurer; and long-time member Mary McKay Scott became a vice-president.<sup>114</sup>

However, it is interesting to note that there is absolutely no mention of the BPA in either the WCHSO’s minutes or annual reports for 1923 or 1924. Considering the Society’s meticulous recounting in its minutes over the years of any public accolades it received, the absence of information about the BPA and its goals is intriguing. One can only presume that the founders of the BPA instigated their plans without first consulting the WCHSO, because if the executive had been approached by Hill and his associates for help before the men met in October of 1924, it is very likely the Society would have eagerly documented such an honour in its records. Hill was, in fact, a keen supporter of the Society’s work, having expressed, in writing, his appreciation of volume XIII of *Transactions* in 1923, and then graciously accepting their offer of an honorary membership in 1924.<sup>115</sup> It is entirely possible that the WCHSO was not especially happy with the BPA’s activities. After all, the Society had effectively spent the last twenty-five

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<sup>112</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Bytown Pioneers are Enthusiastic in Preserving its Best Traditions and Gathering Historical Data,” February 20, 1924, 7.

<sup>113</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Bytown Pioneers,” February 21, 1924, 6.

<sup>114</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Suggest a Monument to Col. By’s Memory: Bytown Pioneers’ Society Endorse Proposal,” November 3, 1923, 2.

<sup>115</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/15, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1922-1923, 22; 3/16, Annual Report for 1923-1924, 14.

years bringing together the descendants of Bytown and area pioneers, and collecting and preserving their stories and artefacts.

One of the BPA's first orders of business was to actively pursue the erection of a fitting monument to Colonel By.<sup>116</sup> As already mentioned, this had been one of the Society's goals – if not its *primary* goal – since its inception in 1898. In 1925, the *Journal* declared that Ottawa's centenary celebrations would centre on Colonel By's legacy and that a memorial to him would be built on Connaught Place. In the accompanying directory of organizations and individuals who "heartily endorsed" the plan, the WCHSO is conspicuously missing; and in the long list of the celebration's general committee members, not one woman's name appears.<sup>117</sup>

From a twenty-first century perspective, the BPA's seeming dismissal of the Society's expertise is questionable. During the 1920s, however, many social and reform activities previously performed by women's voluntary groups in Canada were being assumed by municipal, provincial, and federal governments. The Ottawa Local Council of Women, for example, had to refocus some of its social welfare projects in the 1920s because the City of Ottawa's Social Service Department took over a number of initiatives.<sup>118</sup> Government involvement in national historical commemoration also rose in the 1920s. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) was created in 1919, with members appointed by the government to advise on sites of historical significance that were deserving of recognition.<sup>119</sup> None of the Board's members were

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<sup>116</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Suggest a Monument to Col. By's Memory," November 3, 1923, 2.

<sup>117</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Will Celebrate the Centennial on Grand Scale," April 30, 1925, 3.

<sup>118</sup> Dorothy Van Dyk, "Producing Force Among the Women of Ottawa: The Ottawa Local Council of Women, 1894-1930" (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1993), 95.

<sup>119</sup> Taylor, "Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board," 4.



women, despite the large number of women across Canada who were involved with local historical societies and the erection of monuments and plaques. This does not mean women were missing from commemorative activities in Canada. Governor General Grey made a point of involving women's groups in the plans to save Quebec's battlefields in the early 1900s, knowing that with their social connections and energy, they would be able to raise a considerable amount of funding.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, some WCHSO women were listed on the Ottawa centenary program of events as members of both the historical sub-committee (the main historical committee was all men), and the "ladies" committee. No women were listed, however, on the committee established to honour Colonel By with a monument.<sup>121</sup>

Ottawa's centenary took place during the week of 15 August 1926. Among the events scheduled were two unveilings: on Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup>, the corner stone of Colonel By's monument was unveiled "in By Park," with special speakers including H.P. Hill; and on Thursday the 19<sup>th</sup>, a Colonel By tablet was erected on the north side of Wellington Street bridge by the Bytown Museum, under the auspices of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.<sup>122</sup> About 2,000 people gathered to watch the former, which included a performance by the regimental band of the Governor General's Foot Guards, a speech by Ottawa's mayor, J. P. Belharrie, and the placing of a wreath by a representative of the Royal Engineers. At the same time, across the ocean, a wreath was placed on Colonel By's tomb in Sussex, England. Besides Hill, Joseph-Médard Emard, the Catholic Archbishop of Ottawa; John Charles Roper, the Anglican Bishop; and the Reverend G. A.

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<sup>120</sup> Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, 87-88.

<sup>121</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Excellent Teamwork has been Evident all Through Centenary Preparations," August 17, 1926, 16.

<sup>122</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, August 6, 1926, 9. It is not clear what the paper meant by "By Park."

Macdonald spoke at the ceremony.<sup>123</sup> The Society was well represented at the event: Eva Read – the niece of By’s master carpenter – helped unveil the stone, and Mary McKay Scott attended along with a few other members. They were not, however, identified as members of the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa. Rather, the *Ottawa Citizen* referred to them as “ladies representing the historical societies of the city.”<sup>124</sup>

Two days later, the WCHSO officiated at the unveiling of the Connaught Place tablet, “in the presence,” the *Citizen* reported, “of a large crowd of interested spectators.” Once again, the regimental band of the Governor Generals Foot Guards played; but even though the Mayor was there to introduce the Society, and members of both the Ontario and Canadian Historical Associations and the HSMBC attended, the event did not garner the attention of any religious dignitaries. If H.P. Hill was there, his presence was not recorded in the *Journal*, *Citizen*, or the WCHSO’s annual report for 1925. The Society’s president, Charlotte Billings, dryly remarked to those present that they “must be bored to death with all these unveilings.” She then corrected Mayor Balharrie’s introductory statement that this tablet was in memory of Colonel By, the man. Instead, she pointed out – in what could only have been a very calculated performance – that it was a commemoration of By’s *work*, intended to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the beginning of construction on the Rideau Canal.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Gabriel Clément, “Emard, Joseph-Médard,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, accessed October 5, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/emard\\_joseph\\_medard\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/emard_joseph_medard_15E.html); Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, “The Bishops of Ottawa,” last modified October 15, 2015, accessed October 15, 2015, [http://www.ottawa.anglican.ca/Past\\_Bishops.html](http://www.ottawa.anglican.ca/Past_Bishops.html).

<sup>124</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Paid a Fitting Tribute to the Founder of City,” August 17, 1926, 1; *Ottawa Citizen*, “Corner Stone of Monument to Col. By Unveiled Today at Site of His Great Work,” August 17, 1926, 1.

<sup>125</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, “Commemorate Beginning of Rideau Canal Construction and Women’s Memorial Building,” August 19, 1926, 1.

It should be noted that the WCHSO only received the invitation to take charge of the tablet unveiling eight days before it was scheduled to take place. Billings got a letter from City Controller H.H. McElroy on 11 August, asking the Society's executive if they would like to preside, and the women scrambled to pull together a programme and secure the attendance of enough prominent guests to attract a crowd.<sup>126</sup> They asked Archbishop Emard and Bishop Roper to participate, but both men sent letters of regret.<sup>127</sup>

Why was the Society, which had worked so hard for so many years, not asked to play a more prominent role on the By monument planning committee, or properly recognized in either the centenary program or the local papers? Did this reflect a general lack of knowledge or interest in the Society's work? Or was it a reflection of the power these women actually *did* have within the historical field in Ottawa, thanks in some measure to their considerable connections, and a feeling on the part of some of the area's male historians that they needed to be constrained? The timing does suggest that the increasing masculinization of historical study in Canada had something to do with the BPA's actions.

In the end, the statue proposed by the Bytown Pioneer Association, so ceremoniously announced on Connaught Place in 1926, was never built. Following the centenary celebrations, the BPA appears to have faded from existence; and none of its founders seems to have discussed the statue's design or construction in any formal venue again. In 1930, however, the Society suddenly recorded in its 8 December minutes how unfortunate it was that the monument to Colonel By "remains in this unfinished state."

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<sup>126</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/8, 2/9, 2009-0171, box 36, General and executive meeting minutes, August 11, 1926.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, September 17, 1926.

The executives took it upon themselves to send a letter to City Hall asking to bring the matter to fulfillment.<sup>128</sup> Early the following year, the Society received word from former Mayor Balharrie that in 1926, the city was not in any financial state to erect the monument, but that it had built the base in Confederation Park simply to hold the site. The Society then sent a letter to the current mayor, John J. Allen, stating “as a historical society we feel it a reflection of our city to have the monument to its founder left so long,” and asking that something be done to complete the project.<sup>129</sup> In February 1931, Mayor Allen told the Society that he believed the group in charge of the 1926 base was the “Colonel By Memorial Committee,” and that it was not, therefore, the City’s responsibility.<sup>130</sup> Not until forty years later did the Ottawa Historical Society finally achieve the goal its founders had spent so many years trying to attain: A statue of Colonel By was unveiled in Major Hill Park in 1971, where it stands today.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter examined the considerable amount of work undertaken by the WCHSO in its first three decades, from basic administrative duties and correspondence with societies across North America, to fundraising and networking for commemorative monuments and a dedicated museum space. The Society’s work reflected their devotion to preserving Ottawa’s history and its British roots, and their work served the same

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<sup>128</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/8, 2/9, 2009-0171, box 36, General and executive meeting minutes, December 8, 1930.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, January 5, 1931, 34.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, February 8, 1931, 41. It is interesting to note that in October of 1931, Hamnet P. Hill chaired the Society’s first general meeting of the season. Whether he and the WCHSO ever discussed the unfinished Colonel By monument, however, remains a mystery.

purposes as municipal and federal initiatives to make Ottawa a truly national symbol and justify its position as the capital of Canada. Over the years, they lobbied for the erection of monuments and the preservation of important sites to bring the attention of Ottawa's citizens and government to the legacy of Colonel By and the Rideau Canal. Despite the many years they put into the preservation of the public memory of Ottawa's past – including through the loan exhibitions and publications that will be discussed in Chapter 3 – the Society was forced, in 1926, to face the fact that history was becoming more masculinized and professionalized as the century progressed. Chapter 3 looks at how the WCHSO responded to this trend through the 1920s.

### Chapter 3: Telling History

The women of the WCHSO saw Ottawa's history in a variety of sources. They saw it in textual records like old newspapers, treaties, and government manuscripts; in memories passed down orally from one generation to the next; in photographs and paintings; in familiar household objects; in landscapes, landmarks, and even rocks. Through loan exhibitions and the Bytown Museum, they displayed objects that they felt best-represented local and national history; and through *Transactions*, their ten-volume series of historical essays, they used archival documents to shed light on the events of the past. But their written work also routinely used objects and places as historical sources, and unlike their academic contemporaries, they embraced memory as a legitimate form of knowledge, and regularly solicited local citizens for their stories about the past.<sup>1</sup> Memory, with its "intimate connections to things and people," writes Matt Matsuda, contributes greatly to group identity.<sup>2</sup> By connecting memories with locations in and around Ottawa, the Society's work told a meaningful, personal history of the area and the people who settled it. In some ways, the women of the WCHSO were ahead of their time, using an archive – memory – that transcended the static written word found on the shelves of archival institutions.

The WCHSO's exhibitions and papers contributed to myths that supported a certain vision of not only what Ottawa and Canada were, but also what they should

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<sup>1</sup> Cecilia Morgan, *Creating Colonial Pasts: History, Memory, and Commemoration in Southern Ontario, 1860-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 44.

<sup>2</sup> Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.

become.<sup>3</sup> The stories the Society told through objects and words reflected the early twentieth century fascination with pioneer life and the hardships faced by the first settlers and United Empire Loyalists (who were often lumped together as the same group<sup>4</sup>), celebrated the superiority of the British over the French, connected Canada's pioneer past with ideals of Britishness, and situated women in the story of Empire.<sup>5</sup> Whether or not the myths they participated in were true or verifiable is irrelevant: what matters is that these narratives satisfied for these women a "deep need," in the words of Daniel Francis, to feel "engaged in [the] important national enterprise" of nation-building.<sup>6</sup> By depicting local progress as having been attained through the hard work of British settlers – including members of their own families – they made Ottawa's history their own, and secured their own positions within Ottawa society. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the women of the WCHSO helped establish novel forms of historical expression.<sup>7</sup> They wrote about and depicted not only the stories of important Canadian men and national events, but also local stories about ordinary people, "at a time," write Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice, "when national history was fast becoming the norm among professional historians."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Elizabeth Tivy, *The Local History Museum in Ontario: An Intellectual History, 1851-1985* (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 2006), 73.

<sup>5</sup> Cecilia Morgan, "History, Nation, and Empire: Gender and Southern Ontario Historical Societies, 1890-1920s," *Canadian Historical Review* 82 (2001), retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/224298638?accountid=9894>.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 172.

<sup>7</sup> Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice, "Introduction: Locating Women in the Work of History," in *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*, edited by Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

This chapter examines how the WCHSO told history, and how they contributed in the first three decades of the twentieth century to narratives that supported a specific version of Ottawa and Canada's past. Through two loan exhibitions held in 1899 and 1932, and through *Transactions*, I examine how the version of local and national history represented through objects, memories, and archives celebrated Canada's British roots – even (or especially) as Ottawa was growing and changing, and earlier imperialist sentiments began to fade. I do not discuss the general Bytown Museum collection in this thesis, or how the Society displayed its objects in the Museum between 1917 and 1932. Starting in 1924, curator Jenny Russell Simpson included a "Report of the Curator" in each of the Society's annual reports, but her accounts were very brief and generally only listed any new artefacts received during the year. If Simpson kept any detailed records about the way the Society displayed artefacts in the Museum, these do not appear to have survived in the Historical Society of Ottawa's *fonds*. This chapter also discusses how *Transactions* contributors were criticized by George Wrong, and the other editors of the *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada*, for relying too heavily on personal accounts instead of the archival documents available in the Dominion (or Public) Archives. I argue that the professionalization and masculinization of history in the first part of the century impacted the content of *Transactions*, and contributed to the Society's decision in the early 1930s to focus more on Museum work than on writing history.

### **3.1 Loan Exhibitions**

From 1899 to 1932, the WCHSO held four exhibitions of artefacts that were loaned to them by Society members and the general public: the first in May 1899, before



the Society was even one year old; the second, in October 1906; the third, on the opening of the Bytown Historical Museum in October 1917; and the fourth, in May 1932, to coincide with the one hundredth anniversary of the opening of the Rideau Canal. Because the themes of each exhibition were the same – a celebration of the area’s early settlers – the content was generally very similar, relying as the Society did on community donations. As a result, I examine the 1899 and 1932 exhibitions in the following pages, in order to examine how the Society’s exhibition focus evolved.

Plans for the 1899 exhibit were put in place in February of that year, when the Society received a letter from the Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Toronto (WCHST), asking them to participate in an exhibition in Toronto in June that was being sponsored by the Ontario Historical Society.<sup>9</sup> No doubt inspired by the WCHST, the Society decided to hold an exhibition of its own prior to sending artefacts and delegates to the provincial capital.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, neither the general nor the executive meeting minutes reveal much about the planning stages of the loan exhibition. Presumably, members approached friends and family to ask for artefacts. They certainly advertised the upcoming exhibition in the *Ottawa Journal*: three weeks before, a brief write-up noted

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<sup>9</sup> City of Ottawa Archives (COA), Historical Society of Ottawa (HSO), MG110-HSOT 02/15, 2009-0171, box 36, “Executive Minutes,” February 3, 1899. The Canadian Historical Exhibition (CHE) was devised by the OHS to foster the interest of the public and the provincial government in the possibility of a publicly-funded Ontario historical museum, which never materialized, due to lack of both government funding and the time and interest of OHS members. Mary Elizabeth Tivy, “The Local History Museum in Ontario: An Intellectual History, 1851-1985” (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 2006), 91.

<sup>10</sup> Although the Society’s records do not contain any mention of the items loaned to the CHE in June, the names of some of the members, along with other Ottawa citizens, are peppered throughout the catalogue beside the artefacts they donated, including Eva Read (who loaned, among other things, one of Colonel By’s dining-room chairs), Marion MacDougall, Margaret Ahearn, Justice Désiré Girouard, Benjamin Sulte, Jenny Russell Simpson, and Annie Dawson: “Catalogue, Canadian Historical Exhibition, Victoria College, Queen’s Park, Toronto, June 14<sup>th</sup> to June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1899” (Toronto: William Briggs, 1899), 17, 25, 93, and 140, accessed April 20, 2015, <https://archive.org/stream/cataloguecanadia00onta#page/150/mode/2up>.

that the WCHSO planned to serve a “colonial luncheon” every day of the exhibition “at very moderate prices,” as well as afternoon tea; and that historical *tableaux* would take place on two of the evenings.<sup>11</sup> While an article published on the exhibition’s opening day mentions “refreshments,” whether the Society actually provided the colonial lunch or the *tableaux* is unclear, as neither activity is mentioned in their minutes or the exhibition catalogue. Serving refreshments was, of course, not uncommon at these types of events. The promise of tea and cake was an effective way of enticing people in: in fact, visitors to the Society’s first exhibition had to walk through the exhibit before they could ascend the stairs to the second floor to get something to eat. But Lianne McTavish writes that the sale of food at museum exhibitions was also crucial to legitimizing the “social and financial existence” of museums, thereby creating the sense that cultural and physical consumption were not so different from each other.<sup>12</sup> Nelles adds that bringing people together to both commune and commemorate was another manifestation of nation-building, for by “gathering in fellowship for the common purpose of honouring founders, a people made themselves.”<sup>13</sup>

The loan exhibition took place from 31 May to 3 June at 116 Sparks Street, which was next door to the *Ottawa Citizen* office at that time.<sup>14</sup> The response by the public was

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<sup>11</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, May 8, 1899, 3, accessed at the City of Ottawa Archives using newspapers.com, a paid subscription site. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to the *Ottawa Journal* refer to material found on newspapers.com.

<sup>12</sup> Lianne McTavish, *Defining the Modern Museum: A Case Study of the Challenges of Exchange* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 84.

<sup>13</sup> Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately there is nothing in the Society’s records that explains why this particular location was chosen or whether the WCHSO had to pay for the space. According to a cultural heritage impact statement prepared in early 2014, 116 Sparks Street was built between 1870 and 1875 as a combined retail and office building, and housed a variety of businesses over the years before it became the largest cinema in Ottawa in 1915. D. Jeans, “Appendix C: Supplementary Notes on the History of 110-116 Sparks Street,” in Julie Harris, “111-113 Queen St. & 106-116 Spark St., Cultural Heritage Impact Statement”

impressive: two hundred objects, pictures, and documents were donated for display. Two photographs of the exhibition space can be found in the Bytown Museum's collection today.<sup>15</sup> Taken from either end of the long, narrow room, the photos reveal exactly what the *Ottawa Citizen* noted in its June 1 article about the exhibition: that this was a “seemingly unending” collection of artefacts “spread about on every hand in bewildering profusion.”<sup>16</sup> The walls are hung with flags (the Royal Union Flag and others), bunting, and framed paintings, maps, and documents; every inch of a long table against one wall and another down the middle of the room is covered with objects; and lined up along the other wall are chairs and large pieces of furniture, also covered with display items. There are two small glass cases on one of the tables; otherwise, all of the artefacts are in the open. This jumble of objects is reminiscent of a Renaissance Europe “cabinet of curiosities,” which displayed a vast accumulation of artefacts.<sup>17</sup> The Society was not trying to impose a chronological or logical narrative in its exhibition, but wanted instead to impress on visitors just how much history Ottawa had, and where they stood within it. Not evident from the photographs is the fact that the front window of the building was set up to look like “an Indian camp,” a fact mentioned in the *Ottawa Journal*, but not

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(Ottawa: prepared for Ashcroft Homes, January 2014), 23-24. The building was approved for demolition in 2014 for a hotel/condo development, but the façade was to be restored and preserved. *Ottawa Citizen*, “Planning Committee Approves Sparks Street Demolition,” Michael Woods, February 26, 2014, last updated May 20, 2014, accessed October 3, 2015, <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/planning-committee-approves-sparks-street-demolition>.

<sup>15</sup> The images can be found in the Bytown Museum, P2726 1981.035.01 and P427a.

<sup>16</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, “Is Historic: Exhibit of Many Unique and Valuable Relics,” Thursday, June 1, 1899, 7, accessed online through <https://news.google.com/newspapers>. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to the *Ottawa Citizen* refer to material found on Google News Archive.

<sup>17</sup> Giuseppi Olmi, “Science – Honour – Metaphor: Italian Cabinets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth-and-Seventeenth-Century Europe*, eds. Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 2.

elaborated on in any other articles or the Society's records.<sup>18</sup> Greeting exhibition visitors with this type of display set the stage, so to speak, for the rest of the pioneer story they were about to see, denoting as it did the conquest and displacement of Indigenous peoples, and the inevitable march of progress, by British settlers.<sup>19</sup>

The exhibit's "bewildering profusion" did not bother the *Citizen* writer who commented on it: in fact, the article goes on to say that the exhibition's fascination lay in the way it encouraged "minute investigation," and that, by examining each object individually, "a mine of historical wealth is disclosed." The writer lists some of the artefacts that he or she found interesting, along with the history behind them, and even some of the donors' names – which is helpful, considering the exhibition catalogue published by the Society provides only the barest detail about each item and does not include donors.<sup>20</sup> From the photographs, however, it is clear that each (or at least most) of the objects were labelled, and as both the *Ottawa Journal* and *Citizen* mention donors' names in their articles, these labels likely included more information than the catalogue.

It is impossible to tell from the photographs, however, if the artefacts were displayed in the room in the order in which they were listed in the catalogue or if they were grouped according to typology, time period, donor, or any other category. For the most part, items are not listed in the catalogue in any particular order. "Big Bears [sic] Pipe of Peace, 1885" is slotted between an early-nineteenth century Roman Catholic catechism and a Boston Almanac from 1772; and a 200-year-old desk is between 100-

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<sup>18</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, "Ancient and Curious Are the Things at the Historical Exhibit Which Opened Today on Sparks St.," May 31, 1899, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Michelle A. Hamilton, *Collections and Objections: Aboriginal Material Culture in Southern Ontario* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 7.

<sup>20</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue (Ottawa: Reynolds Print, 1899).

year-old belt buckles and a Gaelic psalm book, following which is listed a photograph of Champlain's Quebec residence.<sup>21</sup> Even if the artefacts were not displayed in the same order as they appeared in the catalogue, the WCHSO had to deal with such a variety of items that grouping them by function, location, or time period would have been difficult, and it is likely they simply placed objects haphazardly, wherever they could find space.

The Society's display approach was typical of many small historical museums at the time. Despite the best efforts of OHS secretary David Boyle, most did not subscribe to any formal display philosophy. Michelle A. Hamilton tells us that Boyle was, for all intents and purposes, the "guiding influence" over historical societies in Ontario. He believed that a museum should educate the public, not simply be "a junk-shop" or "a heap of curiosities." Canada's first professional archaeologist, he encouraged museums to group artefacts by typology and location, as he did with the stone tools and other archaeological finds displayed at the Ontario Provincial Museum. Local museums, however, generally collected such a variety of artefacts that they had to adopt whatever display rules best suited their own interests and audiences. The Niagara Historical Society (NHS), for example, under Janet Carnochan, chose to group artefacts by donor, in an attempt to recognize and appreciate the people who supported their museum.<sup>22</sup> The Hamilton Association for the Advancement of Literature, Science and Art organized its exhibits around "personal efforts and family legacy"; and Dundurn Castle's curator Clementina Fessenden chose to display objects in the rooms in which they made the most sense, even if they were never the possessions of the castle's prior owners. In short, the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., items 21-23 and 103-105.

<sup>22</sup> Hamilton, *Collections and Objections*, 69 and 74-75.

focus of the WCHSO and other local historical organizations was “more community-centred than scholarly,” and Boyle’s suggestions just did not work for them.<sup>23</sup>

The 1899 loan exhibition’s objects related primarily to a British-centred history of Ottawa and Canada, but also included artefacts from French-Canadian history, from Britain, and from other parts of the world. Like the NHS museum collection, the WCHSO’s artefacts “suggested that the town’s history included a wide range of historical developments and historical actors.”<sup>24</sup> Not surprisingly, most of the actors who were specifically identified were men, and much of the history “spoke of men’s historical actions and agency” in business, publishing, religion, industry, government, and war.<sup>25</sup> These included furniture that once belonged to Colonel By, and a number of “firsts”: the first post office box, a yardstick from the first dry goods store, the first issue of Bytown’s first newspaper, and portraits of or items from some of Bytown’s earliest male settlers.<sup>26</sup> Bytown’s progression from small town to national capital was also represented, by the trowel and spirit level used to lay the first stone of the Parliament Buildings; three photographs of the unfinished buildings, dated 1862; and a silver coffee pot used by the first speaker of the House of Commons.<sup>27</sup> This mix of tools, images, and household objects deftly illustrates local and national progress, as a rough lumber town became the centre of political activity in the Dominion. Communion tokens from Knox Presbyterian

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>24</sup> Morgan, *Creating Colonial Pasts*, 27 and 16.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>26</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1899, items 1, 8, 9, 42, 46, 66, and 121. This emphasis on “firsts” in pioneer and settler historical narratives was widespread in this era. See John C. Walsh, “Performing Public Memory and Re-Placing Home in the Ottawa Valley, 1900-58,” in *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada*, eds. James Opp and John C. Walsh (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 44-45.

<sup>27</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1899, items 7, 87, and 94.

Church (founded in 1844) represented the civilizing presence of religion in Bytown and Ottawa, alongside two old bibles, collection cards, and prayer books; but Catholicism was not excluded, as evidenced by the items relating to Jesuit priests and the catechism card from a Catholic church in Montreal.<sup>28</sup> A “medicine measure” from the “time of Champlain” and a photograph of Champlain’s house in Quebec reminded visitors that the country’s French beginnings could be celebrated by French and English Canadians alike.<sup>29</sup> Canada’s connection to Britain could be found in a chair made and used by the Prince of Wales in 1860 during his famous Royal Tour of Canada, which would have been part of the living memory of many of Ottawa’s citizens in 1899; as well as Queen Elizabeth’s glove, Queen Victoria’s autograph, a plate belonging to the Duke of Kent, and a set of bagpipes used at the Battle of Culloden.<sup>30</sup> Visitors were also reminded of the reach of Empire by the Orientalist display of a “Soudanese” sword, a piece of rock from Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem, and Dutch and Japanese dishes.<sup>31</sup> Raw materials and crafted objects from non-European cultures reminded visitors, in the words of Edward W. Said, of the West’s authority over the Orient, and promoted ideas of the difference between what was familiar (“us”) and what was “strange” (“them”).<sup>32</sup> They could also be

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., items 29, 57, 82, 105, 10, 18, and 21.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., items 93 and 106. See Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*,” 47-48 for more about joint English and French-Canadian celebration. Alan Gordon also writes about how English Canadians incorporated the histories of French Canada in this era: see “Heroes, History, and Two Nationalisms: Jacques Cartier,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 10, 1 (1999), 81-102.

<sup>30</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1899, items 151, 141, 190, 152, and 186. For more on the Prince’s wildly popular tour, see Ian Radforth, *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1899, items 198, 189, 146, 147, and 150.

<sup>32</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House Inc., 1979), 7 and 44. See also Elizabeth Edwards et al, eds., *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 3.

viewed as “trophies” of the British Empire, offering visitors a safe way of connecting Ottawa with “strange” and “exotic” places.<sup>33</sup>

The gentler reminders of the role of women in Ottawa’s history were displayed in the form of household goods and textiles. They included two spinning wheels, silverware, snuffers, bellows, china, candlesticks, samplers, quilts, handkerchiefs, an apron, “old lace,” and a “piece of embroidered bedspread, 17<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>34</sup> The only dishes attributed to a specific person belonged to men (e.g. a plate and spoon used by the Jesuit missionary who founded Sault Ste. Marie);<sup>35</sup> the rest were simply assigned a general age or date. Sadly, none of the textiles came with the names of the individuals who made them. Were these quotidian items the only things on display, their rather generic nature might make them seem insignificant to the history of Bytown. Because they were shown alongside other more impressive objects, like Colonel By’s furniture and the House of Commons teapot, they were imbued with a sense of importance, as items belonging to the area’s intrepid pioneers.

The 1899 exhibition also included a few items relating to Indigenous people, including the aforementioned Pipe of Peace that belonged to Big Bear, the marriage belt of “chief’s daughter, British Columbia Indians,” a sling shot, medicine rattle, and stone pipe. There were also three objects attributed to Sitting Bull: a glove, a saddle, and a

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<sup>33</sup> Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 99; Constance Classen and David Howes, “The Museum as Sensescape: Western Sensibilities and Indigenous Artifacts,” in *Sensible Objects*, 203.

<sup>34</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1899, see pages 3-4, and items 142 and 144.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, item 10.



“complete war costume.”<sup>36</sup> As with the other objects, there is no indication of where these items came from or who donated them; but generic labels on Indigenous artefacts were commonplace in turn of the century museum displays, and served to relegate “Indianness” to the past.<sup>37</sup> Ruth B. Phillips adds that, in late nineteenth century museums, “familiar emblems of Indianness,” like pipes and slingshots, “were appropriated to constitute a national identity for Canada that could be subsumed, in its turn, within a larger construct of British imperialism.”<sup>38</sup>

As already noted, the Society held another loan exhibition in 1906, and one to celebrate the opening of the Bytown Museum in 1917. Following the Museum’s opening, and after curator Jenny Russell Simpson took charge in 1923 of cataloguing and displaying the Society’s growing collection, there would seem to have been no need for another loan exhibition. In early 1932, however, Dominion Archivist Arthur Doughty asked the WCHSO to organize an exhibition to commemorate the one-hundredth birthday of the opening of the Rideau Canal in May.<sup>39</sup> The exhibition was held at the Public Archives, and featured more than three hundred artefacts “having valuable association with the early days of Bytown,” including “a table case of interesting personal articles belonging to the late Sir John A. and Lady Macdonald; our Honorary Member Mr. H.P. Hill’s private collection; and maps, documents and books loaned by Dr. Doughty.” The exhibition was open some evenings during the week, and on these occasions, Doughty spoke about the collection and other historical displays that were set up throughout the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., items 62, 135-137, 34, and 138-139.

<sup>37</sup> Deborah Doxtator, “The Home of Indian Culture and Other Stories in the Museum,” *Muse* 6 (October 1988), 27.

<sup>38</sup> Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 98-99.

<sup>39</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/32, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1932-1933, 4.

building.<sup>40</sup> Like the Society's earlier exhibitions, this was a celebration of early pioneers; but the organizers appear to have been more discerning about the items they put on display, for nearly every object was directly related to the history of Bytown and the canal. In fact, with the exception of one piece of what was "thought to be Persian Art,"<sup>41</sup> there were no Imperial artefacts on display, nor any Indigenous pieces. The 1920s saw a decline in imperial enthusiasm following the devastation of World War I and a growing sense of national identity among Canadians.<sup>42</sup> But British loyalty remained, and a distinct sense of Britishness pervades the WCHSO's exhibit catalogue, which notes throughout which objects were brought to the area from England, Ireland, and Scotland.

The exhibition catalogue attests to the Society's professional growth over the years. Objects that were displayed together are listed together in the catalogue, and each artefact is given a brief description, along with the donor's name. Some of the groupings are logical: a bust of Colonel By, his cup, and a photograph of his monument in England sit on top of a bookcase, for example; and household items like dishes and embroidery are grouped in the same cases.<sup>43</sup> But the general set-up was still rather mixed, with a round iron pot sitting next to a rifle on one shelf, or the plaster cast of D'Arcy McGee's hand on one case and his photograph and funeral badge on another.<sup>44</sup> The lack of coherent order suggests that perhaps the WCHSO understood that its exhibition was a

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, WCHSO Loan Exhibition catalogue (Ottawa: Runge Press Limited, 1932), 23.

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 211.

<sup>43</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1932, 9-10, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 8, 14-16.

repository of information already understood by its audience, and that the meaning of its artefacts did not need to be articulated.<sup>45</sup>

A more noticeable difference between the 1899 and 1932 exhibitions is the larger number of objects now relating to Ottawa women, like photographs of Mary Anne Friel (the “first white girl-child born in Bytown”), Marion McDougall, Abigail Wright (the wife of Philemon, founder of Hull), and other individual women; photographs of the Ladies Aid Society of St. Andrews Church; a dress worn by the daughter of the first senator appointed after Confederation; and other clothing and textiles directly attributed to the women who made them.<sup>46</sup> With thirty years of significant advances to the status of women in Canada behind them, it is not surprising the Society wanted to give Bytown’s women their due.

An article in the *Ottawa Journal* about the 1932 exhibition notes that “Dr. Doughty had earned the gratitude of the people for his work in reviving interest in the pioneers,” and thanked the WCHSO “for keeping alive the memory and achievements of the early days of Ottawa.”<sup>47</sup> It is interesting to note that between 1901 and 1931, the number of people living in rural areas in Ontario dropped from fifty-seven per cent of the population to just thirty-nine. Linda M. Ambrose writes that this filled local historical societies with a “psychological need to preserve and record the rural past” in the 1930s.<sup>48</sup> The WCHSO had been collecting local pioneer artefacts for many years at this point – it

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<sup>45</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 147.

<sup>46</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1932. See, for example, pages 20-22, 24, 25, and 28.

<sup>47</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, “Relics of Bytown Put on Exhibit at the Archives,” May 26, 1932, 13.

<sup>48</sup> Linda M. Ambrose, “Ontario Women’s Institutes and the Work of Local History,” in *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*, eds. Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 78.

donated a number of objects to the 1932 exhibition from its own Museum collection<sup>49</sup> – but this event relied, as usual, on community members for donations. As the donors were comprised of members of Ottawa’s wealthier, Anglo-Saxon population – including Society women and people from prominent local families (Hill, Keefer, Wright, Booth, and Pinhey, for example) – the objects on display offer a more exclusive impression of the city’s pioneer past than if they had belonged to humbler citizens. A snuff box would be a mundane item if it were not for the fact that it was owned by Dr. Alexander Christie and donated by H.P. Hill.<sup>50</sup> A copper preserving pan would be a simple kitchen tool if it had not been used by the wife of a Captain from the Richmond Settlement and donated by Anna Pinhey.<sup>51</sup> In essence, the exhibition celebrated a certain type of British pioneer of Ottawa, one who could comfortably occupy an important place in the city’s history alongside Colonel By and his canal.

### **3.2    *Transactions***

The Society’s written work also focused over the years on a British history of Ottawa, and contributed to a mythology about early settlers – including Loyalists in other parts of southeastern Ontario – and the superiority of the British over the French.

Between 1901 and 1928, the WCHSO published more than one hundred and thirty local and national history papers in ten volumes of *Transactions*.<sup>52</sup> In the early years,

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example, page 10 of the 1932 catalogue for the “First hydrant key used in Ottawa” and an “Old Fire Brigade Hat,” or page 13 for a “Broad Axe” from the old Victoria Foundry: COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1932.

<sup>50</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, Loan Exhibition catalogue 1932, 18.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>52</sup> The papers in *Transactions* could form the basis for an entire thesis; as a result, I only mention here some of the essays pertaining to the stories and mythologies the Society most commonly upheld over the

*Transactions* was a mouthpiece for staunchly imperialist beliefs about Canada's British roots. During World War I, *Transactions* took on a quieter, more introspective view of Canadian history, and focused on themes of national unity and celebration, even while continuing to revisit the triumphal story of the principled, culturally élite British and Loyalist immigrants.<sup>53</sup> As the years passed, academic historians criticized *Transactions* because its writers combined memory and personal history with archival and secondary sources – and indeed, often favoured them over the written word. In the 1920s, the Society began to include papers written by men, including well-educated, professional men from other disciplines, and I argue in this section that this was a direct response to their critics, as was their decision to focus less on historical writing and more on the important work they were doing through the Bytown Museum.

The vast majority of papers published in *Transactions* pertain to the history of Bytown, the Ottawa Valley, and the Rideau Canal. Volume I, however, features seven essays focusing on French-Canadian history, part of the Society's "programme of study" for its first year.<sup>54</sup> With the exception of a paper by Annie Dawson on the Acadians, these papers were written by French-Canadian members, and are, in essence, lessons on how much better life was for French-Canadians under Britain's care than it had been under

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years, and refer to other papers and volumes in the footnotes. Volume II (1909), for example, *The Waterways of Canada*, illustrates how far Canada has come in its short history and affirms the importance of waterways to the "material prosperity" of the country. Volumes V and VI (1912 and 1915) contain essays that relate to coherent themes: the Battlegrounds of Canada, and Treaties Relating to Canada. Volume VI (1915), *Treaties Relating to Canada*, is one of the longest in the entire set, but that is because every paper includes at least four pages of directly transcribed text from the treaty under study. Each paper uses State Papers and manuscripts, but primarily published secondary sources, to explore treaties from the early seventeenth century right through to 1871.

<sup>53</sup> Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>54</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 17/0, A2009-0221, box 57, "Programme of Study, 1898-99: The French Regime in Canada."

France. This myth of British superiority stemmed from the English Canadian belief that the conquest of French Canada on the Plains of Abraham was, in the words of Daniel Francis, “a liberation and not a defeat at all.” English writers argued that because Britain treated the French Canadians so well afterwards, their loyalty was easily won, and the French rarely nursed hard feelings about the situation.<sup>55</sup> In truth, as Nelles points out, many French Canadians felt a sense of pride that it was a French citizen – Champlain – who opened Canada “to the benefits of Christianity and civilization,” and that their loyalty during the American Revolutionary War gave them a special place in the Crown’s heart.<sup>56</sup> The papers by Augustine Sulte, Marie Lamothe, and other French Society members reflect these emotions. Sulte writes about the French government’s lack of aid for the first colonies in Quebec, because its sole interest was in making money from the fur trade.<sup>57</sup> She blames their ineptitude on the fact that they were “recruited from the working classes (if not of the worst)” of France and had no idea how to fend for themselves.<sup>58</sup> Lamothe praises the eagerness of the first French nuns and priests to help the English soldiers after the Battle of Quebec in 1759, ironically referring to them as “the cradle of the race... that now forms that portion of Her Majesty’s loyal subjects.”<sup>59</sup> Lea La Rue notes how sad it is that “France knew not the warmth of a Canadian heart and the love he bears to his country.”<sup>60</sup> Dawson writes that Acadians suffered greatly under the French regime, but “prospered and multiplied to a very remarkable degree under the

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<sup>55</sup> Francis, *National Dreams*, 93-95.

<sup>56</sup> Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building*, 47-48.

<sup>57</sup> Carleton University Archives (CUA), RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, Augustine P. Sulte, “Early French Colonization,” *Transactions Vol. I* (Ottawa: E. J. Reynolds & Son, 1901), 101-104.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, Mme. H. G. Lamothe, “A Page from the Annals of Our First Missions,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 115.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Lea La Rue, “The Second Administration of Frontenac,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 131.

English.” She does not condone the way the British government treated the Acadians, but lays some of the blame for their expulsion on the fact that they stubbornly never allowed themselves to be “reconciled to English rule.”<sup>61</sup> Adrienne Walker writes that while French Canadians will always have a “tender spot” for France, they have “fared much better” under the British flag, having been so generously and justly treated by the English government.<sup>62</sup>

The presence of seven papers about the French in Canada in volume I is significant because future volumes only included one or two papers on the subject.<sup>63</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, by the time volume X was published in 1928, the number of French women active in the Society had dropped, and a total of just three French-Canadian members contributed papers over the final three volumes of *Transactions*. But *Transactions* had also assumed a more national, forward-looking focus, with papers about Confederation, a celebration of the country’s artists, and national unity, and imperial sentiments about the superiority of British rule were no longer as prominent.<sup>64</sup>

The most common narratives that were developed throughout all ten volumes of *Transactions* pertain to early pioneers and Loyalists, focusing specifically on their British (or loyal) roots and, of course, their devotion to the Crown. Despite the fact that the Ottawa Valley was not a Loyalist destination, some of the Society’s members (such as

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Annie M. Dawson, “The Acadians,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 94.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., Adrienne Walker, “The French Régime from 1700 to 1760,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 128-9.

<sup>63</sup> Volume II (1909) discusses some French history in its examination of Canada’s waterways and canals; volume V (1912) looks at the Plains of Abraham, and at Madeleine de Verchères; in volume IX (1925), Lucienne Roy writes about the French origins of a town in Maine and the French founder of Toronto, and Edith MacLean about social life in “Old Quebec;” and in volume X (1928), Lilian Scott Desbarats included a paper about pioneer women of French Canada, including Mademoiselle Mance, Madeleine de Verchères, Margaret Bourgeon, Mother Marie de l’Incarnation, Madame de la Peltrie, and Madame d’Youville.

<sup>64</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 8/10, Women’s Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa, *Transactions Vol. X* (Ottawa: The Esdale Press, 1928).

Eva Read, as mentioned in Chapter 2) were descended from Loyalists; and Society members generally included the Valley's American settlers in their definition of Britishness (as discussed more below). A fascination with both Loyalists and early settlers in general was common among historical societies right through the 1920s, partly in response to urban development and an influx of immigrants who threatened the older, more established way of life in Canada with their "strange" new customs and values.<sup>65</sup> Norman Knowles writes that the Loyalist myth in Canada evolved over the nineteenth and early twentieth century out of a desire to find "guidance and inspiration" from the past.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the WCHSO's ruminations on the old days reflect in many ways an urge to return to a simpler time.

First and foremost, it is made clear in virtually every paper that the Ottawa area's earliest settlers were not just *anyone*. Margaret Ahearn notes that, while they could portage a canoe and break a forest path with the best of them, they were also "people of education and refinement," which allowed them the determination to "forget the disadvantages of their environments."<sup>67</sup> Edith Kerr describes the men of the first parliament of Upper Canada as cultured "exiles" from their former "luxurious" homes, having proudly chosen "the vast solitude... where they were free to serve their King under the dear old flag."<sup>68</sup> Gertrude Kenny brags that nearly every one of them "could boast of a bear-fight."<sup>69</sup> Mary Campbell describes Loyalists as shrewd and practical,

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<sup>65</sup> Morgan, "History, Nation, and Empire," retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/docview/224298638?accountid=9894>.

<sup>66</sup> Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*, 7.

<sup>67</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, Margaret Howitt Ahearn, "The Early Settlers of March Township," *Transactions Vol. 1*, 53.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, Edith Kerr, "The First Parliament of Upper Canada," *Transactions Vol. 1*, 164.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, F. Gertrude Kenny, "Some Account of Bytown," *Transactions Vol. 1*, 25.



adept at handling both personal hardships and public affairs, and not easily daunted by the loneliness and struggles that would have defeated a “less hardy and indomitable race.”<sup>70</sup> In the volume published during World War I, Annie Rothwell Christie further embellishes the United Empire Loyalist myth by using language that calls to mind the battle overseas: “They fought the forest, they fought the climate,” she writes, and they even fought “the wolf and the bear.”<sup>71</sup> Loyalists were still a subject for discussion nearly ten years later, when Ethel Penman Hope wrote that “we owe the integrity and backbone of our country” to those forefathers “who tolerated no authority but justice.”<sup>72</sup>

*Transactions* authors were insistent that Canada’s pioneers were not to be confused with the more recent prairie immigrant, who could ship supplies west by train and have “his home ready by the afternoon and three quarters of an acre of his land broken by the evening.”<sup>73</sup> Amey Horsey writes that the early settlers did it all “by the sturdy arm and by the sweat of the brow.”<sup>74</sup> There is no doubt early nineteenth-century settlers had to overcome very real physical and mental challenges in order to survive and thrive in Canada. Exaggerations, however, about both their journeys and their innate superiority over the experiences and personalities of later immigrants reflect the anxiety central and eastern Canadians felt in the early twentieth century about immigrants who were flooding the prairies. Although Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton (whose wife Arma was president of the WCHSO from 1914 to 1916) listed British and American

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., Mrs. W. Wilfrid Campbell, “Origin of Canadian People,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 134.

<sup>71</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 4/7, Annie Rothwell Christie, “The Settlement of the County of Lennox and Addington,” *Transactions Vol. VII* (Ottawa: The Esdale Press, 1917), 25.

<sup>72</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 8/10, Ethel Penman Hope, “Early Settlement of Meach Lake,” *Transactions Vol. IX* (Ottawa: The Esdale Press, 1925), 32.

<sup>73</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, Mrs. J. Lorn MacDougall, “Renfrew in the Early Days,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 53.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., Amey Horsey, “Early Settlement of Prince Edward County,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 70.

farmers as the ideal immigrants, the government was not opposed to people from northern, eastern and western Europe, and offered land and other resources to help them settle the West. These newcomers, with their different cultures and ways of life, filled Anglo-Canadians with anxiety.<sup>75</sup> By minimizing the difficulties new immigrants faced, and exaggerating the difficulties faced by early nineteenth-century settlers, descendants of the first British colonists were declaring their status as *true* Canadians. Because they were “first,” they were “already indigenous” and “civilized,” Daniel Coleman writes, and could therefore claim priority and superiority over not only newer immigrants, but also non-whites and Canada’s actual Indigenous peoples.<sup>76</sup>

This concept of the “right” sort of immigrant is also embodied in statements about class and race in the Society’s papers. Mary Campbell writes about the early upper-class British immigrants who, “bred and nurtured in refinement and affluence,” were not always successful farmers, but who were nonetheless “heroic” in their attempt.<sup>77</sup> Ella Walton calls them “men who thought deeply,” a trait that was passed down to their descendants, and refers to the immigration journey, of United Empire Loyalists in particular, as “a march of triumph.”<sup>78</sup> As for those who went into governance, Campbell notes that those of “humble Scotch origin” were by far the “ablest.”<sup>79</sup> Margaret Northwood writes that educated men “will always possess influence even in bush

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<sup>75</sup> See Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> Daniel Coleman, *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 16. Indigenous history is only glossed over in *Transactions*, and generally only in relation to acts of violence against white settlers.

<sup>77</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, Campbell, “Origin of Canadian People,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 136.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, Mrs. Ella Walton, “The Founding of Upper Canada,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 139.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, Campbell, “Origin of Canadian People,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 136. For an interesting look at the role the Scottish played in settling the Ottawa Valley, and the impact their imperial connections and conservative and reform politics had in the area, see Michael E. Vance, *Imperial Immigrants: Scottish Settlers in the Upper Ottawa Valley, 1815-1840* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012).

society.”<sup>80</sup> That influence included the maintenance of “old country” ideals, but more importantly, “loyalty to England, to her sovereign and her institutions, which we all now feel so strongly and value as a part of our birthright.”<sup>81</sup> Even American-born Philemon Wright, the founder of Hull, is safely folded into the Society’s story of Canada’s British heritage, in an essay by Frances Howard that attributes Wright’s move to Canada to “his English blood (for he was the son of a gentleman of Kent, England),” and thus “not averse to travel and exploration.”<sup>82</sup> Campbell brings her portrayal of brave and hardy settlers into the present, arguing that Canadians need to live up to their heredity by continuing to eradicate the country’s reputation as a “mere bushwhacking colony... We are British, and all that is best in our ideals of life and government is British. Should we break away tomorrow from the Great Empire, we would still remain British in aim and ideal.”<sup>83</sup> Obviously, the women writing these words came from a position of privilege: but they were women, and therefore still labelled “other” in medical, legal and religious terms.<sup>84</sup> By pointing out the characteristics they shared with early settlers – whiteness, Britishness (or loyalty to Britain), education, and cultural sensibilities – white women could claim their place as “proper” Canadians.

Many of the *Transactions* authors’ discussions of the hardships faced by settlers pertain specifically to women. Marion McDougall describes women’s work as difficult and full of anxiety. She talks about such arduous tasks as candle-making and bread-

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., M. A. Northwood, “Early Immigration into Upper Canada,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 143.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., Campbell, “Origin of Canadian People,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 138.

<sup>82</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, Frances L. Howard, “The Lumbermen of the Ottawa Valley,” *Transactions Vol. III* (Ottawa: The Esdale Press, 1910), 22-23.

<sup>83</sup> Campbell, “Origin of Canadian People,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 131 and 138.

<sup>84</sup> Morgan, “History, Nation, and Empire.”

making, and the spinning and weaving that went into making clothes.<sup>85</sup> Kenny writes that the first houses of even the people who “became wealthy and influential” were small and uncomfortable, often exposed to the weather.<sup>86</sup> Ahearn notes the ingenuity of one woman who used a large tea tray to shelter her baby’s cradle from a leaky roof – which also says something about the woman’s class and Britishness.<sup>87</sup> Further, the women of the Society made it clear in their papers that they or someone they knew were descended from the hard-working women and brave settlers they described. They inserted themselves into the memories of Bytown and Canada by attributing the settlement of the area to their ancestors. Some wrote about people with whom they shared a last name, inferring a familial connection but never explicitly articulating what that connection was. In a paper ostensibly about the charitable work of one of the first ministers of St. Andrew’s Church, for example, Mary McKay Scott is sure to mention her ancestor Thomas McKay, who built the church and the Rideau Canal locks.<sup>88</sup> Others were more obvious: Mrs. Charles MacNab, a “prominent citizen” of Ottawa and member of the Society, was descended from the first settler of March township; Marion McDougall mentions that “a near connection” established a Hudson’s Bay Company post in Renfrew County; and Sarah Burritt gives a short history of her husband’s family, who were United Empire Loyalists who immigrated to Grenville County.<sup>89</sup> In later volumes, women who were not originally from Ottawa continued this trend: Christie discusses her family’s Loyalist roots outside

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<sup>85</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, MacDougall, “Renfrew in the Early Days,” *Transactions Vol. 1*, 55.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, Kenny, “Some Account of Bytown,” *Transactions Vol. 1*, 28.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, Ahearn, “The Early Settlers of March Township,” *Transactions Vol. 1*, 47.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, Mary McKay Scott, “A Hero of Fifty Years Ago,” *Transactions Vol. 1*, 41-42.

<sup>89</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, Ahearn, “The Early Settlers of March Township,” *Transactions Vol. 1*, 47; MacDougall, “Renfrew in the Early Days,” *Transactions Vol. 1*, 53; Mrs. Alexander Burritt, “Early Settlement of Grenville County,” *Transactions Vol. 1*, 63.

of Kingston, and Mary Gerenish Foran writes about a Scottish ancestor's move to Canada in the late eighteenth century.<sup>90</sup> Making ancestral connections obvious, and authenticating themselves as second- or third-generation Canadians, bolstered their social class position within Ottawa society. It also, however, established them as historical authorities on a different scale from the male historians whose work they were reading and referencing. These men may have written about great men in the history of the nation, but the women of the WCHSO wrote just as authoritatively about great men in the history of their city. This allowed them to make important claims about their "place" and their authority to tell Ottawa's story.

In her essay in volume I, Gertrude Kenny declared, somewhat romantically but also revealingly, that there is "no better study than that of local history to awaken a national sentiment."<sup>91</sup> The papers in *Transactions* that examine the early years of Bytown and the eponymous Colonel By's role in its development correspond with this assertion. What's more, they illustrate how the Society's authors combined memory and textual records to connect people and places with the city's history. At the first annual meeting in 1900, then-president Adeline Foster specifically asked members to find their information about Ottawa and the local townships "in the places themselves."<sup>92</sup> Many of the essays provide boastful detail about what Bytown looked like in its earliest years when it was the biggest lumber producer in the world, and, at the same time, do not shy away from

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<sup>90</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 4/7, Christie, "The Settlement of the County of Lennox and Addington," *Transactions Vol. VII*, 16-25; Mrs. T. P. Foran, "My Native County – Glengarry," *Transactions Vol. VII*, 26-37.

<sup>91</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, Kenny, "Some Account of Bytown," *Transactions Vol. I*, 29.

<sup>92</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 2/2, 2/3, Executive meeting minutes, March 29, 1900.

revealing how unattractive Bytown was.<sup>93</sup> Kenny quotes from Philemon Wright and her own grandmother to corroborate the detail found in an early Bytown map.<sup>94</sup> Marion Jamieson takes readers on a pre-1850 “walking tour” of the town. She describes the cedar swamp just south of Rideau Street, the field of Indian corn halfway down Ottawa Street, and the mud that pooled under the plankwalk at the corner of Bank Street after a shower, and thanks a friend for her memories of the place, in effect citing her as a source.<sup>95</sup> Charlotte Billings uses old newspapers and eyewitness reports to talk about the fires that ravaged Ottawa in 1870.<sup>96</sup> Finally, while they are not about Bytown, Margaret Ahearn and Mary Masson’s essays in volume V and VII, respectively, are beautiful examples of using a variety of sources to create a meaningful historical narrative. In her paper on the well-known subject of the War of 1812, Ahearn includes poetic physical descriptions of the battle fields themselves, noting that these now commemorate the memories of the people who fought and died there, allowing them to live on in “the loyal hearts of all Canadians, and... in the glorious annals of the British Empire.”<sup>97</sup> And Masson writes about how a rock cairn on a small island in Glengarry County first piqued her interest in history, because it held memories about the area and produced stories that gave local citizens a sense of pride and unity.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See, for example, Kenny’s description of conditions in Bytown as “of the rudest,” with bad roads, and too much whisky: CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, “Municipal Growth in the District of Dalhousie,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 14-15.

<sup>94</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, Kenny, “Some Account of Bytown,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 25.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, M. Jamieson, “A Glimpse of Our City Fifty Years Ago,” *Transactions Vol. I*, 35-40.

<sup>96</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 1/3, Mrs. Braddish Billings, “The Great Fires of 1870,” *Transactions Vol. III*, 27-35.

<sup>97</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 4/7, Mrs. Thomas Ahearn, “The Battlegrounds of Niagara Peninsula,” *Transactions Vol. V, Battlegrounds Series* (Ottawa: The Esdale Press, 1912), 36.

<sup>98</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 4/7, Masson, Mary, Miss, “The Cairn,” *Transactions Vol. VII*, 38-41.

Over the years, *Transactions* continued to include personal, nostalgic reminiscences about Ottawa and surrounding areas. It also came to express frustration with the fast-moving pace of modern life and, notes Society member Edith MacLean, the “too evident demoralization [of our towns] by the ever-present tourist.”<sup>99</sup> This sense that history needed to be saved before it was lost in the advance of time and progress may have pushed the Society after 1917 to focus on collection and preservation efforts through the Museum. The next few volumes of *Transactions* were shorter than usual, perhaps because more money and time were being put into the Museum, especially after government funding ceased in 1924 and the Society had to scrounge to find the money to publish its written work. The publication’s focus began to change as well, as imperial sentiment began to fade and national unity to become more prominent. *Transactions* began to feature more papers about Canada as a distinctly separate entity from Britain, including ethnographic studies about contemporary Indigenous peoples; synopses of Confederation anniversary celebrations not only in Ottawa, but across the nation; and, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, national unity among the French and English.<sup>100</sup> Most strikingly, however, is the fact that in the final three volumes of *Transactions*, many of the papers are written by men. This may have been partly due to the increasing criticism the publication received over the years, as discussed in the next section.

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<sup>99</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 8/10, Edith M. MacLean, “Social Life in Old Quebec,” *Transactions Vol. IX*, 78.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, F. W. Waugh, “The Iroquois, an Historical and Ethnographical Sketch,” *Transactions Vol. IX*, 116-125; Eva G. Read, Miss, “The Peace Bridge and celebration Elsewhere in Canada,” *Transactions Vol. X*, 74-81; Dr. S. Marion, “Canadian Unity,” *Transactions Vol. X*, 170-185.

### 3.3 Criticism and the Society's Response

Over the span of eighteen years, the *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada* (the *Review*), the journal founded by George Wrong in 1897, regularly evaluated the Society's written work. Wrong was head of the University of Toronto's history department from 1894 until 1927. He and other academics contributed greatly to the professionalization and masculinization of history in the early part of the twentieth century, by limiting both the roles women were allowed to play in academia, and the types of sources deemed reliable or suitable for academic research.<sup>101</sup> In 1902, the *Review* gave the first volume of *Transactions* its best critique, congratulating the "ladies of Ottawa" for their effort. The editors noted that the volume was the largest "we have yet seen from any of the Women's Historical Societies of the province, and compares favourably with those published by older and more pretentious societies." They also critiqued the WCHSO, however, for their dependence on primarily "books which are more or less within reach" instead of original documents. The journal remarked that because the stories of Canadian "valour and endurance" had been written so many times, the Society should focus on accounts that "illustrate the history and habits of past generations... the minor details which go to make up the life of the family or the municipality [that] are fast fading away."<sup>102</sup> This comment seems to be aimed at the volume's French Canadian papers, which referenced the works of established male

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<sup>101</sup> As discussed in Alison Prentice, "Laying Siege to the History Professoriate," in *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*, edited by Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

<sup>102</sup> George M. Wrong and H. H. Langton, *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada, Volume VI, Publications of the Year 1901* (Toronto: University of Toronto Librarian, 1902): 78.



historians like Francis Parkman, and the three papers dealing with the already well-documented War of 1812. The *Review*'s suggestion to focus on local history was certainly not unreasonable, but in the editors' remark about using original documents instead of published books, we can see the seeds of the professionalization of history being sown.

Curiously, volume II, "The Waterways of Canada," was the only issue of *Transactions* that was not mentioned in the *Review*. However, in the Society's 1913 annual report, Charlotte Billings made a point of including a letter from Dr. Alexander Fraser, Archivist for the Province of Ontario, in which he congratulated the Society on the volume's admirable qualities and "great value as a permanent record."<sup>103</sup> This must have been some compensation for the *Review*'s analysis of volumes III and IV, in 1910 and 1911, respectively. The editors were lukewarm, to say the least. They referred to both collections as "light," and only one paper from each garnered any praise: volume III's "The Early Bibliography of Ontario," by Billings, was complimented primarily because it was "an interesting summary of the late Mr. Kingsford's essay on the same subject." (This, of course, is ironic given that the paper was not based on original primary source research, which, the *Review* insisted over the following years, was something the Society needed to do.) Volume IV's paper on Trinity Church was praised for "some interesting notes regarding the U. E. Loyalists in New Brunswick," but the rest of the papers, the *Review* noted, showed few signs of independent investigation.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Annual Report for 1913-1914, 16, accessed <https://archive.org/details/report191300womeuoft>.

<sup>104</sup> Wrong and Langton, eds., *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada, Volume XV, Publications of the Year 1910* (Toronto: University Press, 1911): 63-64; Wrong and W. Stewart Wallace, eds., *Review of Historical Publications, Volume XVI, Publications of the Year 1911* (Toronto: University Press, 1912): 86.

To be fair, the *Review*'s assessments of other society publications in the same issues were hardly glowing. In 1910, the only other Ontario historical society to be reviewed was the Lennox and Addington, whose essays were "not so valuable as the records," but the "Index is good, and the printing is well done."<sup>105</sup> In 1911, the papers of the same organization "hardly rank as the work of an historical specialist." In 1911, the Niagara Historical Society was praised for being active, but Janet Carnochan's report on Robert Gourlay "shows few signs of original research," and Reverend A. F. MacGregor's paper about Confederation "is without any value." The *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Historical Society* was called out for not including references and relying on "local and family tradition, which is notoriously unreliable." The first volume of papers by the Thunder Bay Historical Society was called "slight," but "it is pleasing to see a beginning made by so young a society"; and although the Elgin Historical and Scientific Institution's collection of settlers' reminiscences was "interesting," the highest praise the editors of the *Review* could muster for it pertained to its superior proofreading, which "is much better than is usually the case in the publications of local societies."<sup>106</sup>

Morgan writes that women's historical writing "drew the scorn and amusement of twentieth-century university-based male historians," who felt that too much romanticism made historical research sound biased and "overly sentimental."<sup>107</sup> The critique of volume V, "Battlegrounds Series," in *Review of Historical Publications* certainly echoes this: the editors described the papers as "all of a somewhat popular character, and they lack the local interest which one looks for in the publications of a local historical

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<sup>105</sup> Wrong and Langton, eds., *Review, Volume XV*, 106.

<sup>106</sup> Wrong and Wallace, eds., *Review, Volume XVI*, 83-87.

<sup>107</sup> Morgan, "History, nation, empire."

society.” Amey Horsey and Teresa Armstrong were praised for showing “signs of independent research” in their papers, but the editors maintained that the Society was not making “the full use of its opportunities in connection with the material at its hand in the Archives Department.”<sup>108</sup> In the same issue, the Niagara Historical Society and the WCHST were generally well reviewed, but other societies were called out for their shoddy proofreading.<sup>109</sup>

Volume VI, “Treaties Relating to Canada, 1632-1871,” received a decent review in 1916. The editors called the papers “interesting and well written,” but also noted that the volume fell short of adding “to the sum of human knowledge,” and questioned, as they did with volume V, “whether local historical societies are best employed in publishing papers of this character.”<sup>110</sup> In other words, the message seems to be that amateur historians should stick to local history. In the same issue, papers about the social history of United Empire Loyalists by the Lennox and Addington Historical Society were criticized for their lack of footnotes, references and authorities; on the other hand, they were praised for being “based on a long and thorough study of the subject,” which does not seem to make much sense.<sup>111</sup>

Given its wartime publication date, and the fact that so many women across Canada were involved in war work, the assessment volume VII received in 1919 hardly seems fair. The *Review*’s editors wrote a terse note stating simply that the volume “contains nothing to which attention needs to be called. Most of the papers appear to be

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<sup>108</sup> Wrong, Langton and Wallace, eds., *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada, Volume XVIII, Publications of the Year 1913* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1914): 121.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-122.

<sup>110</sup> Wrong, Langton and Wallace, eds., *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada, Volume XX, Publications of the Year 1915* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1916): 63.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

compilations from well known and often unreliable secondary sources.” The comment seems to refer particularly to essays by Jenny Simpson, Mary Foran, and Annie Rothwell Christie that used oral history and memoirs as their primary sources.<sup>112</sup> The Thunder Bay and Wentworth historical societies both received similar reviews for their publications that year as well; further, in the Wentworth review, a paper written by a woman is the only one from that year’s publication singled out as being particularly pointless. While the WCHST’s annual report was well-received this time around, it is interesting to note that virtually all of the other positive reviews given to Ontario historical societies in this issue were for papers written by men (i.e., Niagara, London and Middlesex, Kent, Waterloo, and Simcoe County).<sup>113</sup>

Volume VII was the last volume of *Transactions* to be appraised in Wrong’s publication. In 1920, the *Review* became the *Canadian Historical Review*, which focused on publishing articles on Canadian history and no longer reviewed the work of local historical societies.<sup>114</sup> While the women of the WCHSO never formally acknowledged the *Review* in their minutes or annual reports, it is hard to believe they were not aware of the negative press. They seem to have chosen a more subtle response, however. In the 1919-20 annual report, Corresponding Secretary Alberta Somerville noted that the Society had already received a “number of requests” for volume VIII of *Transactions*, “which, of course, has not been published,” and that organizations as far away as

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<sup>112</sup> Wrong, Langton and Wallace, eds., *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada, Volume XXII, Publications of the Years 1917 and 1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1919): 106; see CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 4/7, *Transactions vol. VII*, pages 5-11, 16-25, and 26-37.

<sup>113</sup> Wrong, Langton and Wallace, eds., *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada, Volume XXII*, 103-107.

<sup>114</sup> Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 65.

Stockholm were asking for copies of other publications.<sup>115</sup> Perhaps more tellingly, however, of the ten essays published in the 1922 volume, *seven* were written by men.<sup>116</sup> Neither the annual reports nor the minutes give any explanation for this sudden change. It is not out of the realm of possibility that it was one response to the *Review*'s negative assessments, and that the Society wanted to boost its publication's reputation by including the opinions of men who were experts in their fields, including Supreme Court justice Francis Latchford, respected local historian H. P. Hill, Canadian Patent Office Chief William Lynch, Canadian Historical Association President Lawrence J. Burpee, National Museum of Canada anthropologists Diamond Jenness and Edward Sapir, and House of Commons Clerk Arthur Beauchesne.<sup>117</sup>

The Society published its final two volumes of *Transactions* in 1925 and 1928, using funds available in its own account from the sale of previous volumes and fundraising activities.<sup>118</sup> Five years later, the Society's president Gertrude McDougall wrote that it was time for the WCHSO to ruminate on the fact that its work had progressed "more along the lines of a Municipal Museum." She encouraged members to "continue in this direction and so increase [the Museum's] value to the community." Most strikingly, she alluded to changes in the field of history in her comment that Ottawa was becoming a respected "lecture centre," and that the community no longer required the Society's "small contribution to that form of education." Nevertheless, McDougall wrote, they must hang onto all of the papers "especially prepared" for the WCHSO over

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<sup>115</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/12, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1919-1920, 20.

<sup>116</sup> CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 8/10, *Transactions Vol. VIII* (Ottawa: The Esdale Press, 1922).

<sup>117</sup> See CUA, RAR FC1 W63, v. 8/10, *Transactions Vol. VIII* (1922), *Vol. IX* (1925), and *Vol. X* (1928).

<sup>118</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/21, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1928-29, 20.

the years, for these would only “increase in value with the years to come.”<sup>119</sup> McDougall was not wrong, for some of the papers published in *Transactions* are still cited today, primarily in books and web sites about local Ottawa history.<sup>120</sup>

### 3.4 Conclusion

Through an analysis of the Society’s exhibitions and writing between 1898 and 1933, this chapter examined how the WCHSO used objects, memories, and archives to contribute to a history that celebrated and mythologized the superiority and loyalty of Ottawa and Canada’s British and Loyalist pioneers. By preserving the memories of Ottawa’s residents in print, and allowing so many different sources to inform their work, the women of the WCHSO created a personal, nuanced, and meaningful interpretation of the area’s history. Facing increasing criticism by the editors of Canada’s foremost historical journal for not focusing more on archival documents, the Society adapted to the ever-growing professionalization and masculinization of history in the 1920s and 1930s by publishing papers written by men, and ultimately turning their focus more to the work of Bytown Museum.

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<sup>119</sup> COA, HSO, MG110-HSOT, 3/29, 2009-0173, box 38, Annual Report for 1933-1934, 6.

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, Don Nixon, *The Other Side of the Hill: Behind the Scenes Stories of Parliament Hill* (Carleton Place: Don Nixon, 2012); Council of Heritage Organizations in Ottawa, “Bibliography and Resources,” *Ottawagraphy: Sharing Ottawa’s Stories*, 2015, <http://www.ottawagraphy.ca/bibliography>; George Raudzens, *The British Ordnance Department and Canada’s Canals 1815-1855* (Waterloo: Wilfrid University Press, 1979).

## Conclusion

In its first thirty-five years, the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa provided a variety of women with the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of local public memory. Its founders and early members, who were primarily from among the city's most élite citizens, were active in many causes and organizations; and most of them had ancestral ties to the area that impelled them to preserve the personal histories of Ottawa's past. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Society's executive reflected Ottawa's bilingual and multi-denominational population, consisting of French and English, Catholic and Protestant, and young and old members. This diversity was in turn reflected in the Society's first four volumes of *Transactions*, which featured papers by French and English women on both French and British history; and papers that put in writing the memories of some of the city's early settlers or their descendants.

Between 1911 and 1932, lumber and electric-powered manufacturing in Ottawa declined and government became the city's dominant economic entity. As the number of people employed in the civil service rose, bringing many new faces to Ottawa's neighbourhoods, the WCHSO's membership changed. During the war years, the executive included more women married to lower-ranking civil servants, many of whom came from other parts of the province. Without the core group of long-time Ottawa residents that dominated the executive before 1910, the Society turned from writing personal local histories in volumes V and VI of *Transactions*, to writing about famous Canadian battles and treaties that related to the nation. The number of French-Canadian women on the Society's executive dropped, from five in 1910 to two in 1920, perhaps

because of increased tension between Canada's French and English-speaking residents during and after the First World War. With changes to the civil service just prior to 1920 that marginalized and discounted French-Canadians, the Society's membership Anglicized even more: just two joined the executive board between 1920 and 1932. Not only did French history feature much less prominently in the pages of *Transactions* as a result, but so did the number of French-Canadian women who contributed papers to the publication.

The women who joined the Society's executive in the 1920s reflected another, even greater increase to the federal civil service, which not only brought more men to Ottawa, but also opened more employment opportunities for women. At least two of the women who served in the Society's third decade worked for the government. Other women were married to high-ranking civil servants, further illustrating Ottawa's evolution from a more economically complex city into one where government was essentially its largest corporation.

The WCHSO's behind-the-scenes work between 1898 and 1932 reflected Ottawa's economic evolution as well, and also the members' devotion to Empire, and the growing professionalization and masculinization of the study of history that began in the late nineteenth century and continued well into the second half of the twentieth century. The Society followed rules and protocols that recognized and expressed their participation in a hierarchical British colonial society, like boasting of the support of the wife of the Governor General in all of their invitations and annual reports; closing their meetings with 'God Save the King'; and contributing reading material to soldiers overseas during World War I. While they welcomed the participation of Catholics and



French-Canadians, they submitted, for a brief period, reports for publication in *The Anglo-Saxon*, a staunchly anti-French and anti-Catholic periodical. They also used their annual reports to talk about Canada's need for British immigrants, giving voice to the fears many Canadians had after the war about immigrants from non-British or northern European cultures.

The WCHSO's work was impacted through the decades by funding needs. At the provincial level, they benefited in their first twenty-five years from an annual grant of \$200-\$300 for the publication of reports and historical papers. This funding was discontinued in 1924, which forced them to stop publishing *Transactions* after 1928. At the municipal and federal levels, the Society and its Museum contributed significantly to plans in the early twentieth century to beautify the city of Ottawa and turn it into a national symbol. When the WCHSO hosted the Ontario Historical Society's annual meeting in June 1914, the City of Ottawa gave them \$150 so they could properly entertain the delegates from organizations across the province. When the Society found a building for their Museum in 1917, high-ranking federal officials (including the Prime Minister) wrote letters to the City on their behalf, and the Ministry of Public Works subsequently helped make repairs. In 1927, three years after the Society's provincial funding ceased, City Council granted the WCHSO \$100 a year to help defray the costs of the Nicholas Street building's upkeep. The City likely contributed this funding under the auspices of the Town Planning Commission, which was mandated to clean up and improve Ottawa; but the Federal District Commission's plans to turn the city into a national symbol were just as likely to have played a part, thanks to its chair, who was one of the Society's biggest supporters.

As the twentieth century progressed, the Society experienced the effects of the masculinization of the historical profession. Early on, WCHSO members expressed a deep desire to properly commemorate Colonel By with a monument, and began discussing this seriously, including in their annual reports, even before the First World War. In the mid-1920s, however, their expertise in local history and commemorative expression was largely overlooked by the male organizers of the Bytown Pioneer Association (BPA). The BPA was formed in 1923 to collect, preserve, and disseminate information from descendants of the city's early settlers – a job the WCHSO had been doing since its inception – and pursue the erection of a monument to Colonel By. Its members did not include the WCHSO on the Ottawa Centenary Colonel By committee, calling into question how the Society's work was viewed by some of Ottawa's male historians. The Society – whose members regularly included in the annual reports any compliments or flattering requests for advice that they received – never mentioned the BPA in any of their records. Their silence, and Charlotte Billings's speech at the unveiling, implies that they were not happy with the BPA's actions.

Throughout its first thirty-five years, the Society contributed to myths about local and national history that reflected their devotion to Empire and their own sense of Britishness, and contributed to the project of nation-building in Canada. They romanticized Ottawa's early British pioneers and the wider United Empire Loyalist legacy, and wrote themselves into the area's past by telling the stories of their own ancestors. Their definition of history was very broad. Through loan exhibits, they collected and displayed objects that they felt best represented the past; and they used archives, landscapes (like battlegrounds), images, and memories to make their written

work more meaningful and personal than academic work that relied on archival documents alone. Their first loan exhibition, in 1899, did not impose any logical narrative on its visitors, but simply expressed, through its lack of organization, the fullness and breadth of Ottawa's history, and its connection with Empire. The exhibition focused on Ottawa's early settlers, its growth, and its notable men, and appropriated "familiar" items relating to both French and Indigenous history – objects associated with Champlain, and slingshots and pipes – into the local and national story. It also featured items from other parts of the world that reminded visitors of their participation in the imperial project.

Thirty years later, the Society held another loan exhibition that also celebrated the area's pioneers, but the lack of objects representing the British Empire reflected the decline of imperial sentiment in Canada over the 1920s. The more organized catalogue attested to the Society's professional growth, and the inclusion of objects attributed directly to women illustrated a desire on the part of the exhibition's organizers to ensure that Ottawa's early female pioneers were lauded just as much as its male settlers. The objects and the descriptions that accompanied them, which featured the names of many of Ottawa's elite citizens, told the story of a certain type of British pioneer.

This certain type of pioneer also featured prominently in the Society's papers in *Transactions*. Essays mythologized the hardships faced by British settlers who came to the Ottawa area, and the Loyalists who settled other parts of southeastern Ontario. The writers insisted that settlers were able to adapt so easily to life in Canada because they were both educated *and* tough, and above all, because they were British – even those from the United States – and therefore naturally curious and adventurous. These papers subtly (and sometimes overtly) defended the idea that the first British people who came

to Canada were far superior to more recent immigrants to the Canadian prairies. The myth of British superiority also played into papers written about French history, primarily in volume I of *Transactions*, for the subject of French history was never looked at in any great detail in subsequent volumes, as French participation in the Society declined. Both French and English writers discussed how much better life was for the French after their defeat by the British on the Plains of Abraham. Finally, papers throughout all ten volumes of the publication inserted the Society members into the history of Ottawa (and southeastern Ontario), by highlighting the work of their ancestors and thereby claiming their own place as authorities in the creation of local collective memory.

While the loss of provincial funding forced the Society to stop publishing *Transactions* in 1928, criticism the publication received from members of the professionalizing world of academic history likely also contributed to its demise. The editors of the *Review of Historical Publications in Canada* did not appreciate the authors' use of published work instead of original documents; but at the same time, they implied that oral history and memoirs were "unreliable" and produced papers that were "light" and too "popular." The Society was also chastised for trying to tackle national subjects, like treaties and battles, and told to focus on local history; but again, the *Review* emphasized the ultimate importance of using written archival material. After the dismal review bestowed on volume VII of *Transactions*, the Society began publishing papers by male authors: men wrote at least fifty per cent of the essays in the last three volumes. A few years later, the annual report intimated that because Ottawa was becoming known for its pool of experts in the ever-expanding civil service, the WCHSO should concentrate on moving forward with valuable Museum work, and not on writing history.

This thesis contributes to our understanding of how women engaged with history in the early twentieth century, and how they reacted and adapted to the changes to the historical profession. By examining how the WCHSO evolved as Ottawa evolved between 1898 and 1932, and how the Society worked with and sometimes through government initiatives that focused on Ottawa as a symbol of Canada, this thesis also illustrated how “place” can affect our interpretation of history. Ottawa was also home to French-Canadians, whose cultural background contributed to interpretations of history and thoughts about nation that must have differed from those espoused by English-Canadians. The historical essays written by the WCHSO’s French-Canadian members, however, conformed more to the English narrative. I believe that more scholarship could be done to further our understanding of how French and English Canadians in Ottawa worked together and separately to contribute to the city’s collective public memory.

Just three years after the Society officially stated its decision to turn to a more museological public history focus, an article published in the *Ottawa Citizen* illustrates how serious they were becoming about their museum work. In February 1936, the newspaper’s Pat Waddington interviewed the Bytown Museum’s curator, Fanny (Mrs. A. C.) Kains, for an article about the Museum’s collection.<sup>1</sup> “There is a small public building in Ottawa,” he wrote, “seemingly unknown to many inhabitants of the city, as the number of visitors is not overly large, which houses what is probably the most fascinating assemblage of documents, relics and articles generally associated with Ottawa’s history, in existence.” He described the Museum’s exhibits as “curious,”

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<sup>1</sup> Waddington, incidentally, married Canadian poet Miriam Waddington in 1939. She was the first Jewish Canadian woman to publish poetry in English, and her work often focused on female lived experience. See Miriam Waddington, *The Collected Poems of Miriam Waddington: A Critical Edition, volume 2*, ed. Ruth Panofsky (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014).

consisting of “an almost impossible variety,” but allowed Kains much space to explain the Society’s approach. She told him that the museum “is by no means a dead or meaningless collection:”

It is a living commentary, she said, on Ottawa’s past and present, given in as vivid a form as possible. The collection is so arranged, she explained, that on entering one sees Bytown’s history unfolded visually and in chronological order... The executive of the society has an eye for news value quite as much as anyone else in the ‘show’ business and no event connected with Ottawa or Canadian history is permitted to pass without the collection being arranged so that a part of it bears upon the incident.

Finally, Kains mentioned a recent visit to the Museum by C. Jackson Booth, son of the lumber magnate. Delighted to find that he had a personal connection with one of the exhibits, Booth spent some time elaborating on the objects on display to several other visitors present.<sup>2</sup> The article was written during the Depression, when “the sheer inertia of Ontario people” when it came to history was, according to Gerald Killan, palpable.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, all fifteen of the Ontario historical societies that operated small museums received less and less help from their parent body, the OHS, in the 1930s, which was no doubt frustrating for organizations that did not employ professional curators and relied instead on loyal but inexperienced volunteers.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of these constraints, however, and of the changes that took place in the historical profession in the twentieth century, the women of the WCHSO never gave up on their original goal to collect and preserve Ottawa’s past. Booth’s personal connection with the objects in the Museum and his

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<sup>2</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, “Bytown Museum Collection Visualizes History of Ottawa,” February 8, 1936, 14, accessed online through <https://news.google.com/newspapers>.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald Killan, *Preserving Ontario’s Heritage: A History of the Ontario Historical Society* (Ottawa: Love Printing Service Limited, 1976), 208.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

eagerness to share the memories associated with them illustrate the influence the WCHSO had on collective public memory in Ottawa.

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