

HENRIETTA MUIR EDWARDS:
THE JOURNEY OF A CANADIAN FEMINIST

by

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Abstract

Henrietta Muir Edwards (1849-1931), a Montreal native and feminist activist whose career spanned fifty-five years, is a shadowy figure in Canadian history. Famous among her contemporaries, she is remembered today only as one of the five Alberta women responsible for launching the Supreme Court case regarding women's eligibility for appointment to the Senate. This biography reconstructs Edwards' life beginning with her evangelical Baptist childhood, an important period which influenced her subsequent decision to enter "Christian service", launch a Working Women's Association, train women as printers and publish *Women's Work in Canada*. Marriage, motherhood and maturity brought new challenges. After living in the Northwest during the 1880s, Edwards settled in Ottawa, eventually joining the executive of ten women's organizations. Her evangelical feminism, the focus of my study, blossomed and matured in this environment. Falling under the influence of Lady Aberdeen and the National Council of Women of Canada in the 1890s changed Edwards' life. For the next thirty years she served as Convener of the NCWC's Law Committee. While living on the Blood Reserve in southern Alberta between 1904-1916, this tireless organizer created ten Local Councils of Women, a powerful network which spearheaded the Alberta women's campaign for political rights and economic equality. Advancing age, family deaths, opposition from younger Council women, and anti-feminism did not halt Edwards "work for women" during the 1920s.

This dissertation demonstrates that religion and specifically evangelicalism exerted a central and creative presence in the women's movement. My study critiques previous interpretations of first-wave feminism for over-emphasizing the movement's secular character. Henrietta Muir Edwards was the quintessential nineteenth-century feminist, bourgeois, religious and moderate. A traveler on a spiritual journey, Edwards quietly challenged her culture's construction of femininity. To be famous, female and old was a rare achievement in 1931, and one which makes Henrietta Muir Edwards worthy of a biography.

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Discovering and forming friendships with Henrietta's grandchildren - Claudia Whipple, Oliver E. Gardiner and his wife Margaret, and Joyce Scully - was an unexpected pleasure. I treasure the many hours we spent reminiscing and laughing. Unfortunately Gard died before I completed this biography. I have been blessed with good friends who came to my rescue when the task seemed impossible. My thanks to three special people, Leila Sujir, Sue Constable and Al Berti. To my family I owe a deeper debt, one which is impossible to repay. For this reason I dedicate the thesis to my parents, Jean and Fred Roome, sister Marilee, husband Leonard, and sons Sandro and Ryan.

Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
Prelude: Discovering Henrietta: Dilemmas of Biography and History	1
I. Daughter of the Montreal Muirs, an Evangelical Family	30
II. “A Woman’s Commission”: the Missionary Impulse, 1868-1883	58
III. “That very beautiful Indian curiosity”: The North West Experience, 1893-1890	89
IV. An Evangelical Among Ottawa Friends, 1890-1897	119
V. “My Dear Wife”: Negotiating Family and Faith From Montreal to Alberta, 1898-1904	149
VI. A Woman of Two Worlds: On the Blood Reserve, 1904-1909	182
VII. A Woman’s West: Political Success and Personal Tragedy, 1910-1915	212
VIII. A Council Ambassador, 1915-1920	244
IX. God’s Mouthpiece, 1921-1931	278
Postscript	302
Bibliography	312

Prelude:

Discovering Henrietta: Dilemmas of Biography and History

This dissertation addresses three questions: who was Henrietta Muir Edwards, how did she become a feminist, and why does her life deserve a biography? The following pages portray Henrietta as the quintessential nineteenth-century Canadian feminist, bourgeois, religious and moderate. Born in the world of Victorian Montreal she would die far away in Ft. Macleod, Alberta, just at the beginning of the Great Depression, having made a personal journey which was a metaphor for the young Canadian nation.¹ Before telling her story, this section discusses debates in women's biography, describes research techniques, analyses source material and outlines the problems encountered in reconstructing a woman's life in six different locations over almost a century of activity. An examination of each chapter's chronological divisions, the biography's intellectual framework, and relevant historiographic debates concludes this overview.

I

Women's biography emerged as a new field in the 1980s.² Previously, Canadian women rarely merited individual study, nor were they conceptualized by historians as "subjects" who created their own lives. Canadian political historians devote only a few sentences to female leaders³, and studies of the Canadian suffrage movement have been little better. Good biographies of feminists are rare.⁴

¹ Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

² For recent biographies see P. T. Rooke and R. L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, a Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); T. A. Crowley, *Agnes MacPhail and the Politics of Equality* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1990); Mary Kinnear, *Margaret McWilliams: An Interwar Feminist* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Irene Howard, *The Struggle for Social Justice in British Columbia: Helena Gutteridge, the Unknown Reformer* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992); Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis, *Firing the Heather: the Life and Time of Nellie McClung* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1993); Katherine M. J. McKenna, *A Life of Propriety: Anne Murray Powell and Her Family 1755-1849* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

³ See L. G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959); Paul Voisey, "Votes for Women," *Alberta History* 23:3 (Spring 1975), 10-23.

⁴ Catharine Cleverdon, *The Woman's Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Carol Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred: The Ideas of English Canadian Suffragists* (Toronto:

Although writers Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy have interested journalists and literary critics,⁵ Henrietta is not unusual in being without a scholarly essay to her credit. With a few exceptions, social and feminist historians have focused on women's organizations, political debates and class politics.⁶ During the last decade, Canadian historical biography, with its focus on important male political leaders, was often dismissed as elitist. Given this judgment, few scholars attempted to recover the life of bourgeois clubwomen and privileged suffragists such as Henrietta.

Fortunately, Henrietta remained a romantic heroine in popular history and Canadian folklore.⁷ For journalists, women's groups, and many of Henrietta's contemporaries, she was one of Canada's "leading ladies" in the fight for women's equality. Writers described Henrietta as "a Modern Hypatia", that is, "an Alexandrian lady noted for eloquence, learning and beauty," and claimed she knew more about "the laws affecting women than the Chief Justice."⁸ Fort Macleod Library's commemorative plaque calls Henrietta "a Crusader for Social and Legislative Reform",⁹ a public tribute echoed by the Alberta Council of Women's plaque at the Legislative Library¹⁰, by a Canada Post commemorative stamp¹¹ and by the Ottawa plaques and portraits of the "famous five"

University of Toronto Press, 1988).

⁵ Byrne Hope Sanders, *Emily Murphy, Crusader* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945); Hallett and Davis, *Firing the Heather*.

⁶ See Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976); Robert Craig Brown, "Biography in Canadian History," in *Clio's Craft: a Primer in Historical Methods*, ed. Terry Crowley (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988), 154-66. Patricia Roome, "Beware of the Suffragist": Class and Sexual Politics in the Historiography of the British Suffrage Movement," (Unpublished Paper, Simon Fraser University, August 1989) and "Embracing the Janus Face: the Historiography of the Canadian and American Suffrage Movement," (Unpublished Paper, Simon Fraser University, April 1989).

⁷ Grant MacEwan, "Henrietta Muir Edwards: the Lady and the Law," in ... *and Mighty Women Too* (Regina: Western Producer, 1982), 26-32.

⁸ Jean Bannerman, *Leading Ladies, Canada* (Belleville, Ont: Mika Publishing, 1977), 148-49.

⁹ *Ft. Macleod Gazette*, 6 August 1994.

¹⁰ *Edmonton Journal*, 24 June 1933.

¹¹ *The Advocate*, 21 November 1981.

Alberta women.¹² To her contemporaries, like Montreal biographer Henry Morgan, Henrietta personified the women's suffrage movement. In 1912, he wrote that Henrietta always "held her voice and pen ready when called upon to aid any effort for the higher development of women". She felt that "the recognition of her equality to man could only be attained by her becoming equal as a woman to her brother man, equal in education as a citizen, in breadth of view, and strength of purpose."¹³

Although Nellie McClung called Henrietta "the mother of women's suffrage", she emphasized her "radiant faith that lightened all the dark places of life." Henrietta "always had a glow on her face that comes only to those who have seen the heavens opened. She knew that life had a plan, and she saw herself as one who was helping to bring order and beauty to the earth."¹⁴ Alberta Premier J. E. Brownlee claimed she was "a missionary working for humanity".¹⁵ In a quiet Edmonton cemetery Henrietta's imposing tombstone declares: "'Let Her Own Works Praise Her', Her Delight was in the Law of the Lord." Although public tributes stressed Henrietta's achievements, friends and family often commented that the spiritual world was close to her.¹⁶ A committed evangelical Christian throughout her long life, religious faith guided and limited Henrietta's feminism, her marriage and her relationships. Such religiosity made Henrietta a representative figure of her day.

Beyond religion, ambition and dissatisfaction with a woman's life also motivated the bourgeois Henrietta. Along with other activists, she rarely admitted this either in public or in private. Literary critic and biographer Carol Heilburn has argued, "no one is easier to mock than the 'privileged' woman" who experienced difficulty transforming "private ambition to the public

¹² Eleanor Harmon, "Five Persons from Alberta," in *The Clear Spirit*, ed. Mary Q. Innis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 178.

¹³ Henry James Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women of The Times* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), 366.

¹⁴ *Edmonton Journal*, 13 November 1931; *Calgary Herald*, 19 November 1931.

¹⁵ *Edmonton Journal*, 24 June 1933.

¹⁶ Glenbow Alberta Institute (hereafter GAI), Edwards Gardiner Papers (hereafter EG Papers), Letter Alice Gardiner to Ishbel Aberdeen, n. d.

record". Only when speaking for an "oppressed or despised group" did women take up "the pen of self-revelation." Ironically, "the very fact of 'privilege' has prevented the women who supposedly enjoy it from acknowledging or recording their own profound dissatisfaction."¹⁷ The American feminist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's autobiography reflected her understanding that "being born female was the determining fact in her life", but the theme of accomplishment, which dominates male narratives, is almost absent in the recorded lives of famous women.¹⁸

My research on Henrietta revealed similar self-effacing tendencies. Feminine conventions dictated that anger, pain and frustration remain hidden. Women's accomplishments were celebrated as service. For women to exercise power and still claim to be feminine was unacceptable in the culture.¹⁹ Victorian women faced special circumstances which gave rise to a new feminine consciousness grounded in the question of female identity. Henrietta was not unique in wrestling with the dilemma of "male ambition and talent imprisoned in a female body."²⁰ Her generation's sense of women's powerlessness in the face of privilege derived from their marginal status in men's public world. Being "white" and privileged did not shelter women from experiencing the female condition complete with subordination, sexual abuse and misogyny. Defined as "the Sex" and as "Other", Victorian women often internalized patriarchal standards.²¹

A growing number of new feminist biographies/autobiographies have challenged the classical male genre's insensitivity to the social construction of gender.²² This biography also explores

¹⁷ Carolyn G. Heilbrun, "Non-Autobiographies of 'Privileged' Women: England and America," in Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, ed., *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 62, 76 and *Writing A Woman's Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988).

¹⁸ Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom, "Introduction," in *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography and Gender* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 7.

¹⁹ Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life*, 23.

²⁰ Heilbrun, "Non-Autobiographies," 65.

²¹ See Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: the Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

²² See Kathleen Barry, "The New Synthesis: Women's Biography," *Journal of Women's History*, 1:3 (1990), 75-105; Barbara Caine, "Feminist Biography and Feminist History," *Women's History Review*, 3:2 (1994); Phyllis Rose, "Fact and Fiction in Biography," *Writing of Women: Essays in a Renaissance*

gender, in this case evangelical womanhood, in Victorian and Edwardian Canada. Feminist biographers have rejected Freudian psychological explanations of sex differences, favoring instead a concept of gender defined as the “deep imprinting of cultural beliefs, values and expectation on one’s biological sex, forming a fundamental component in a person’s sense of identity.”²³ As critical theory has demonstrated, gender identity has been intricately bound up with the acquisition of language. The cultural critiques presented by postmodernism, however, deny “the concept of authorial subject” and challenge biography’s fundamental premise by asking whether there is “a consistently represented self” at a biography’s center.²⁴

Roland Barthes argued biography involves “a counterfeit integration of the subject”²⁵ and even moderate voices have noted that a biographer’s documents refer within systems of language.²⁶ These critiques ask, “What is a subject? a reader? an author?” For American historian Blanche Weiss Cook, the distinction between biography and autobiography is arbitrary since “all choices are autobiographical.”²⁷ After years of studying a subject the biographer becomes her subject and “mirroring the self” becomes the biographers’ contribution.²⁸ These theoretical debates have made “writing a woman’s life” challenging.²⁹ Scholars indebted to a feminist epistemology with its

(Middletown: Westley University Press, 1985) and *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (New York: Random House, 1984).

²³ For this debate see Brodzki and Schenck, *Life/Lines*; Groag Bell and Yalom, *Revealing Lives*; Teresa Iles, *All Sides of the Subject: Women and Biography* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992); Sara Alpern, Joyce Antler, Elizabeth Israel Perry and Ingrid Winther Scobie, eds., *The Challenge of Feminist Biography: Writing the Lives of Modern American Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); “Special Issues on Autobiography and History,” *Gender and History*, 2:1 (Spring 1990).

²⁴ Middlebrook, 159.

²⁵ Quoted in *Writing a Woman’s Life*, 50.

²⁶ Diane Wood Middlebrook, “Postmodernism and the Biographer,” in *Revealing Lives*.

²⁷ Blanche Wiesen Cook, “Biographer and Subject: a Critical Connection,” in *Between Women: Biographer, Novelist, Critics, Teachers and Artists Write about their Work on Women*, eds. Carol Ascher, Louise di Salvo, Sara Suddick (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 397.

²⁸ Belle Gale Chevigny, “Daughters Writing: Towards a Theory of Women’s Biography,” *Feminist Studies*, 9:1 (Spring 1983), 79-102.

²⁹ See Ken Mitchell, “Living the Biography, or the Importance of Being Norman”; Janice Dickin

critique of binary oppositions recognize the author is always situated within the text.³⁰ While acknowledging a debt to critical theory for demonstrating that gender relations are “embedded at the very root of the subject-object split”, this is not strictly a postmodern biography.³¹

Instead, I present a gender analysis of Henrietta’s life exploring the consequences of being female.³² Taking a central premise of feminist theory that any society is “gendered to the core”, biographers argue “no life story can be told without decoding the sexual politics of one’s time and place.”³³ The task of feminist historians, and especially biographers, is to “discover the acting subject” and uncover women’s agency in creating new scripts and making choices in their lives.³⁴ Thus my analysis moves beyond the dichotomies historians have constructed to assess the radical or conservative nature of suffrage politics³⁵ and presents Henrietta’s journey as the result of conscious determination. Her long career, I argue, was grounded in her adolescent conversion experience, her evangelical belief in women’s equality, her desire to serve God, her dreams of leadership, and finally her personal tenacity and intelligence. Seen by her friends as a woman of two worlds, Henrietta balanced her eastern life with her western one, united her spiritual and secular vision for women, and juggled her public life with the private demands of family.

McGinnis, “Aimee Semple McPherson: Fantasizing the Fantasizer? Telling the Tale of a Tale-Teller”; Anna Mokolkin, “Galt versus Bryon: ‘I’ and ‘Other’ in Biography,” in *Boswell’s Children: The Art of the Biographer*, ed. R. B. Fleming (Toronto: Durdurn Press, 1992).

³⁰ See Liz Stanley, “Process in Feminist Biography and Feminist Epistemology,” in *All Sides of the Subject*, 109-27. For a humorous reflection see Dea Birkett and Julie Wheelwright, “‘How could she?’ Unpalatable Facts and Feminists’ Heroines,” *Gender and History*, 2:1 (Spring 1990), 49-57.

³¹ Middlebrook, 165.

³² S. M. Trofimenkoff, “Feminist Biography,” *Atlantis*, 10:2 (Spring 1985), 1-9; Patricia T. Rooke and T. R. L. Schnell, “The Making of a Feminist Biography: Reflections on a Miniature Passion,” *Atlantis* 15 (1989), 56-64.

³³ Groag Bell and Yalom, 8.

³⁴ Kathleen Barry, “Toward a Theory of Women’s Biography: From the Life of Susan B. Anthony,” in *All Sides of the Subject*, 25.

³⁵ See Naomi Black, *Social Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). For a detailed analysis see Roome, “Embracing the Janus Face” and “‘Beware of the suffragists’: Class And Sexual Politics”.

II

Reconstructing this fascinating story proved to be a biographer's nightmare. Following marriage Henrietta moved at least twenty times, living in eight cities and towns in Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta. She travelled constantly, especially when living on the isolated Blood Reserve. Later, as a widow, she often escaped from Macleod and travelled as an NCWC organizer throughout Alberta and Canada. Tracing her many moves, her organizational activities and her intricate personal life was complicated by the fact that no single source yielded extensive information. To reclaim Henrietta from obscurity involved endless research, a common problem for biographers of women.³⁶ Only as I pieced together the many fragments did I discover the importance of her religious faith, and finally understand the public person.

Following the 75th Anniversary of the Person's Case, in the late 1980s, the Glenbow Alberta Institute acquired her family papers from two grandchildren. This collection, although incomplete and weakest on the early years, provided an entry into Henrietta's private life. Some important items have survived, for example: Henrietta's 1864 diary, several letters written by family members, her parents' marriage contract, some newspapers clippings on the Working Women's Association, and materials on her husband Oliver's family. The later years, especially 1898 to 1916, are better represented. The papers contain an excellent collection of her husband's letters, written between 1898 and 1904, his 1899 travel journal, her son's 1898 journal, Claude Gardiner, her son-in-law's letters, and Henrietta's correspondence to her daughter Alice, written between 1916 and 1929. The Glenbow Museum also owns the Edwards-Gardiner photographic collection, an assortment of Henrietta's china paintings, and a valuable set of ledger drawings which the couple collected in the Northwest between 1882 and 1898. Henrietta's three surviving grandchildren generously granted me numerous interviews and access to their personal papers.

Supplementing these tantalizing fragments of information, especially for the years 1849 to 1890, initially proved challenging. This period is poorly represented in Canadian women's history

³⁶ See Barbara Allen Babcock, "Reconstructing the Person: The Case of Clara Shortridge Foltz," in *Revealing Lives*, 131-40.

and studies of English Protestant Montreal are equally uncommon.³⁷ Fortunately, the standard genealogical sources - the Montreal Baptist church registers, city directories, Mount Royal Cemetery records, notaries files, and Montreal newspapers - contained valuable information. After establishing the contours of her family's Montreal life, other sources became obvious. The Canadian Baptist Archives at McMaster University held important records for early Montreal and Ottawa Baptist Churches, rare Baptist newspapers - like the 1840s *Montreal Register* and the 1880s women's *Canadian Missionary Link* - Baptist yearbooks, and minutes of the Montreal and Ottawa women's missionary societies.

Given religion's importance to the Muirs, my search expanded to include other Protestant church records. Montreal evangelical societies, like the Canadian Sunday School Union, published annual reports with information on the Muirs. Later, several important sources pertaining to their cultural activities were discovered. McGill University owns the Montreal Natural History Society Papers which includes records of the Montreal Microscopic Club, both significant organizations for Henrietta's father. An extended search for Henrietta and Amelia's publications uncovered two surviving examples: *Agnes Harcourt: or "For His Sake"* and *Scripture Catechism Intended For the Instruction of Children*. Unfortunately, copies of their newspaper, *Women's Work in Canada*, have not survived.³⁸ The McCord Museum's extensive Notman Collection does contain many excellent photographic portraits of Henrietta's extended family and their Baptist friends. These visual records became important given the sparseness of personal papers.

Following Oliver and Henrietta to Saskatchewan in the 1880s involved solving another puzzle with only a few surviving clues. From a few letters, several photographs and their Native artifact collection, my search moved to Oliver's medical reports filed with the Department of Indian Affairs and the Treaty 4 reports contained in the Sessional Papers. Local newspapers contained extensive

³⁷ For an overview see John Cooper, *Montreal: A Brief History* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1967).

³⁸ Correspondence Patricia Roome with Celina Guitard June 1993 at the office of the Canadian Inventory of Historical Manuscripts in Ottawa. André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin, *La Presse Quebecois* (Quebec: Les Presses de l' Université Laval, 1976) does not list *Women's Work in Canada*.

coverage of the couple's activities in Ft. Qu'Appelle, Indian Head and Qu'Appelle. Recreating Henrietta's relationship with Native women proved more difficult. Nothing remains from Native women themselves. Unfortunately this means they cannot tell their side of the story. Only a few letters written by Henrietta's mother and sent to her daughter in Saskatchewan have survived. Working with the few surviving references and extensive reading in published sources, both primary and secondary, I was however able to situate her relationship with Aboriginal women within the context of liberal evangelicalism. Henrietta emerges as a colonizer and a Canadian nationalist.³⁹

Mapping Henrietta's relationship with Blackfoot women for the later period, the years 1903-1930, involved working with equally incomplete records. My interpretation utilizes every surviving clue, for example: photographs taken by Henrietta, causal references she made in family letters, interviews which I conducted with her grandchildren, and *The Letter Leaflet*, a publication of the Canadian Anglican Women's Missionary Auxiliary, along with records from the Grey Nun's Hospital and St. Paul's Mission. These document the work of the nuns and female missionaries and occasionally contain reference to Henrietta. More importantly, they establish a context for her life on the Reserve. A careful search did not locate any correspondence between Henrietta and either her Montreal family or her eastern friends. Such letters, if they exist, might document her views on Native people, the difficulties of Oliver's work, and life on the Reserve. Given this silence, only the broadest contours of her experience could be presented, a dilemma faced by other biographers of women.⁴⁰

Reconstructing Henrietta's public life was much easier thanks to the relative richness of records for women's organizations. The extensive papers of the National Council of Women and those of the Ottawa, Montreal, Edmonton, and Calgary Local Councils (LCW's) included important executive minutes, letters and reports. The NCWC Annual Reports and Yearbooks from

³⁹ See n76 and n77.

⁴⁰ Abi Pirani, "Sources and Silences," in *All Sides of the Subject*, 13-22.

1894 to 1931 formed the single most important source for examining Henrietta's organizational activities. She attended and addressed most Conventions, and filed reports as the Law Committee Convener and later, as vice-president for Alberta. Yearbooks, annual reports and minutes of the Ontario, Quebec and Alberta WCTU, the Ottawa Home for Friendless Women and the YWCA were also useful. Two women's newspapers, the WCTU's *Woman's Journal* and the NCWC's *Woman's Century*, supplemented these records. As I traced Henrietta's organizational life, a picture of a pragmatic politician, skillful leader, and a committed evangelical feminist slowly emerged.

This public person exerts a strong presence throughout the biography. Because most of her private correspondence has disappeared with time, the private Henrietta often remains in the background. The family did preserve Oliver's Northwest letters, permitting a partial reconstruction of family life for the years 1897-1904. In this one-sided correspondence, Henrietta appears to be independent, confident and self-centered. The equally headstrong Oliver, a poor negotiator, relied upon Henrietta to fight his political battles with the Department of Indian Affairs. Reconstructing Oliver's life was much easier since he left extensive documents, a reflection of his employment, travels, and masculine privilege. The intriguing and often tragic story of a doctor's life on a Native Reserve before World War I is told by the Agents' reports and Oliver's correspondence with the Department of Indian Affairs. Discovering these rich records meant that the couples' "parallel lives" could be presented in the biography.⁴¹

Although not particularly revealing, Henrietta's surviving letters to her daughter, written between 1916 and 1928, helped document her private life for this period. Always busy, Henrietta usually reported on her activities rather than reflecting on issues and people. She was not a good gossip. Fortunately, her grandchildren graciously shared their vivid memories with me and helped bring the elder Henrietta to life. The woman's issues files kept by the Alberta Attorney General's Department represent another important source for these Alberta years. They contained

⁴¹ See Rose, *Parallel Lives*.

correspondence on the dower campaign, the Communal Property Act, and Henrietta's legal pamphlets. Alberta newspapers and the United Farm Women of Alberta's Annual Reports are the only other significant sources for these years. Government records proved disappointing since most of the early Alberta premiers' papers were destroyed during a fire. Some useful private papers were those of Emily Murphy, located at the City of Edmonton Archives, Nellie McClung at the British Columbia Provincial Archives, and Irene Parlby at the Red Deer City Archives, as well as the Catherine Cleverdon and Sir Wilfrid Laurier collections at the National Archives. The absence of a good set of family and personal papers, a problem endemic to Canadian history, forces a determined biographer to use sources creatively and become a more skilled researcher.

III

Historical biography, and the life of Henrietta in particular, illuminates the numerous debates surrounding gender, religion, feminism, and politics in Canadian history. Her story begins in early nineteenth-century Montreal, as chapter one explains. For the first twenty years of Henrietta's life, from 1848-1868, her evangelical Baptist family played a central role in framing her life choices. Henrietta's story belongs with the recent revisionist scholarship of George Rawlyk, William Westfall, Marguerite Van Die, and Michael Gauvreau.⁴² They argued that the evangelical Protestant experience shaped Canadian cultural traditions, social forms, and political ideologies. Their work challenges the earlier assessment of evangelicalism as largely repressive, puritanical and essentially anti-modern, a thesis advanced by A. B. McKillop, Ramsay Cook and Carl Berger.⁴³

⁴² George A. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Religion, Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985); *The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1760-1990* (Burlington Ont. : G. R. Welsh, 1990) and *Champions of the Truth: Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists* (Burlington Ont. : G. R. Welsh Co., 1990). William Westfall, *Two Worlds. The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathaniel Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada 1939-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991). The only older study to treat the subject seriously is Goldwin French, "The Evangelical Creed in Canada," in *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age*, ed. W. L. Morton (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968).

⁴³ Michael Gauvreau, "Beyond the Half-Way House: Evangelicalism and the Shaping of English Canadian Culture," *Acadiensis*, XX:2 (Spring 1991), 158-77.

The Montreal Muirs do not fit the standard characterization of evangelicals as defensive conservatives who hindered the growth of scientific and critical thinking.⁴⁴ Instead, they were confident bourgeois community leaders who were convinced of their faith's superiority.

Evangelicalism, more a popular creed than a theology, was "one of the key cultural forces which promoted the emergence of the complex of ideas and attitudes we designate as modern," Gauvreau perceptively argues.⁴⁵ An extensive transatlantic literature has examined Protestant "evangelicalism"⁴⁶, originally "a movement of liberation" which rejected formal systems of theology and religious hierarchies.⁴⁷ Evangelicals emphasized personal conversion, Christ's sacrifice for all sinners, the Bible as the source of truth accessible for everyone to read, and the importance of living one's religious beliefs. Christian intellectuals like George Monro Grant were accepted by Henrietta's father, and her generation as well, as they constructed "a powerful intellectual alternative to evolutionary naturalism." This historical theology centered on the authority of the Bible as "fact" and doctrine for both professor and preacher as well as an "overriding prophetic belief in the links between the biblical record and the unfolding of history in their own age."⁴⁸

Understanding women's evangelical spirituality as distinct from men's, however, proved more challenging. Religious historians, Gauvreau and Westfall, have ignored women while Canadian

⁴⁴ A. B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979); Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in late Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

⁴⁵ Gauvreau, "Beyond the Halfway House," 166; Rawlyk, *The Canadian Protestant Experience and Champions of the Truth*. See also Ruth Compton Brouwer, "Transcending the Unacknowledged Quarantine": Putting Religion into English-Canadian Women's History," (Paper presented to Canadian Society of Church History/Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Kingston 1991).

⁴⁶ See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from 1730's to 1980's* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1989); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York Oxford University Press, 1980); L. I. Sweet, *The Evangelical Tradition in America* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984).

⁴⁷ See Nancy J. Christie, "In these times of Democratic Rage and Delusion: Popular Religion and the Challenge to the Established Order, 1760-1815," in *The Protestant Experience*, 9-47; Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*.

⁴⁸ Gauvreau, 230.

women's history has dismissed religion.⁴⁹ American historians, since the early 1970s, have investigated nineteenth century evangelical women's distinctive spirituality and cultural importance.⁵⁰ Older works by Barbara Welter, Nancy Cott, Anne Douglas, Mary Ryan and Carol Smith Rosenberg argued that women were increasingly confined to the private sphere in the male hegemony which arose with industrialization. "The Cult of True Womanhood," they argue, was an ideological construct, useful in limiting women's public life to volunteer work in religious societies.⁵¹ More recently, this separate spheres approach has been critiqued for misrepresenting women's reality.⁵² In privileging activism, evangelicals presented women, regardless of class background, with a paradox of opportunities and constraints.⁵³

A variety of historians, some influenced by critical theory, have directed their research towards evangelical women's own self-understanding. Women's diaries and letters reveal, Anne Boylan argued, that the "cult of true womanhood" was never a monolith.⁵⁴ Proponents of "evangelical womanhood" emphasized that the conversion experience was incompatible with the

⁴⁹ For a discussion see Brouwer, "Transcending the Unacknowledged Quarantine."

⁵⁰ See Carroll Smith Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City: the New York City Mission Movement 1812-1870* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971); Nancy F. Cott, "Young Women in the Second Great Awakening in New England," *Feminist Studies*, 3 (Fall 1975), 14-20 and *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977); Mary Ryan, "The Power of Women's Networks: A Case Study of Female Moral Reform in Antebellum American," *Feminist Studies*, 5 (Spring 1979), 66-86. Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822 - 1871* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

⁵¹ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), 151-74. Mary P Ryan, "American Society and the Cult of Domesticity, 1830-1860," (Ph. D diss., University of California at Santa Barbara, 1971).

⁵² See Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996), ch. 6.

⁵³ Lynne Marks, "Working-Class Femininity and the Salvation Army: 'Hallelujah Lasses' in English Canada: 1882-1892," in *Rethinking Canada: the Promise of Women's History*, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clare Fellman (2nd edition, Toronto: Copp Clark, 1991).

⁵⁴ Anne M. Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: the Role of Women in Sunday Schools," *Feminist Studies*, 4 (October 1978), 62-80; Ronald W. Hogeland, "The Female Appendage": Feminine Lifestyle in America, 1820-1860," *Civil War History* 17 (1971), 101-14; Cecilia Morgan, "Gender, Religion, and Rural Society: Quaker Women in Norwich, Ontario, 1820-1880," *Ontario History*, LXXXII:4 (December 1990), 273-87.

life of a “lady”, whose idle days were spent seeking pleasure and society approval.⁵⁵ Converted women were advised to lead useful lives serving Christ and saving other women trapped by the world’s vices, a commission Baptist Muir women accepted as consistent with their self image as “converted persons”. As Canadian historian Marguerite Van Die demonstrates, mid-Victorian evangelical belief and female spirituality gave evangelical culture its “continuity and integrity”.⁵⁶ Her biography of Nathaniel Burwash, which explored an evangelical mother’s impact on her son’s faith, illustrates the theme of evangelical womanhood.⁵⁷ “Precisely because nineteenth-century women had fewer acceptable avenues to usefulness and activity,” Van Die wrote “religious behavior became a more important means of self-expression for them than it was for men”.⁵⁸

Chapter two examines the young adult and explores the choices Henrietta made during the 1870s. During these years of religious revival, evangelical women founded missionary organizations, temperance groups, newspapers, and young women’s associations. Historical scholarship has ignored these subjects until recently when several American studies,⁵⁹ and Canadian works by Ruth Compton Brouwer and Rosemary R. Gagan established the movement’s importance.⁶⁰ Presbyterian missionaries became “new women for God” who were attracted to foreign mission fields,

⁵⁵ Boylan, 66.

⁵⁶ Marguerite Van Die, “A Woman’s Awakening: Evangelical Belief and Female Spirituality in Mid Nineteenth Century Canada,” in *Canadian Women: A Reader*, ed. Wendy Mitchinson et al (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 65.

⁵⁷ Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind*.

⁵⁸ Boyland, 76.

⁵⁹ See Barbara Welter, “She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women’s Missionary Careers in Nineteenth Century America,” in *Women in American Religion*, ed. Janet Wilson James (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980); Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household: the American Women’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986).

⁶⁰ See Ruth Crompton Brouwer, *New Woman for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Rosemary R. Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1926* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991).

Brouwer argued, “for autonomy and personal fulfillment” and “for assurances of divine approbation and social acceptance.” Gagan found a rich diversity of experience among the Methodist women missionaries who served in Canada and the Orient. Women chose this career as “an essential and rewarding alternative to marriage, home and family”, explains Gagan, supporting Marta Danylewycz’s earlier analysis on the Quebec Catholic sisterhoods.⁶¹

Henrietta’s dream for a career could only be realized through religious activism. As Bettina Bradbury demonstrates, Montreal’s rapid industrialization drew single and married working-class women into the labour force. Endless opportunities arose for well-bred ladies like Henrietta to “serve” these workers.⁶² Their evangelical projects illustrate themes previously analyzed by Kathleen Heasman, Joan Jacobs Brumberg and Patricia Hill. Heasman’s 1963 study demonstrated British evangelical women’s role as unpaid social workers while Brumberg, more recently, documented women’s importance in the evangelical press. As writers, editors, and publishers, their collective voice was “distinctively and self-consciously feminine”, argued Hill.⁶³

Chapter two establishes the importance of evangelical women’s creative agency, a subject overlooked in Westfall’s study but not by Diana Pedersen’s dissertation and subsequent publications. “At the Heart of the YWCA’s Program” lay a “female evangelical vision of the moral regeneration of urban and national life,” she argued.⁶⁴ Earlier studies of the YWCA conceptualized the movement as conservative, seeking only to protect the working girl from the evils of the city, whereas Pederson perceptively concludes that evangelical women had a creative “super vision”. As “God’s Own Cornerstones”, both as mothers and “linchpins”, young women would participate in a

⁶¹ Brouwer, 8; Gagan, 212; Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

⁶² Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 30-34.

⁶³ Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An appraisal of Their Social Work in the Victorian Era* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962); Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Mission for Life: the Story of the Family of Adoniram Judson* (New York: Free Press, 1985); Hill, *The World Their Household*, 88.

⁶⁴ Diana Pedersen, “Providing a Woman’s Conscience: the YWCA, Female Evangelicalism, and the Girl in the City, 1870-1930,” in *Canadian Women: A Reader*.

campaign to “reshape the Canadian city according to the teachings of Jesus Christ and in the interests of women, children and family life.”⁶⁵ Revival movements and evangelicalism crossed class lines, as Lynne Marks demonstrated in her research on working-class women’s participation in the Salvation Army. Being a “hallelujah lass” was often more exciting than becoming either a factory worker or a wife. “Religion did not act simply to buttress the social order, but also to challenge it,” concluded Marks.⁶⁶

Various other scholars, from Nancy Hardisty to Olive Banks, have identified evangelicalism as an influential tradition in nineteenth century feminism.⁶⁷ Because evangelical feminists accepted domesticity, emphasized women’s role within the family and sought to extend this role into the public sphere, Banks maintained, they were the most conservative. She argued that American women moved from evangelicalism to a more radical feminism. Hardisty, more knowledgeable and more sympathetic towards evangelical feminists, found women did not always desert their Christian faith in order to become “good feminists”.⁶⁸ Carol Bacchi has argued that this pattern prevailed in Canada. Her study represented maternal feminism as a secular movement which had outgrown its religious origins. Both a feminist and an evangelical Christian, Henrietta does not fit Bacchi’s generalization that “radical feminists who challenged sex stereotyping usually moved outside the traditional churches”.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Pederson, 196 and “The Young Women’s Christian Association in Canada, 1870-1920: ‘A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need,’” (Ph. D. diss., Carleton University, 1987); Wendy Mitchinson, “Aspect of Reform: Four Women’s Organizations in Nineteenth Century Canada (Ph. D. diss. : Carlton University, 1977).

⁶⁶ Lynne Marks, “Working-Class Femininity and the Salvation Army: Hallelujah Lasses’ in English Canada: 1882-1892,” in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, ed. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Claire Fellman (2nd edition, Toronto: Copp Clark, 1991); “The Knights of Labor and the Salvation Army: Religion and Working-Class Culture in Ontario, 1882-1890,” *Labour/le Travail*, 28 (Fall 1991), 128.

⁶⁷ Nancy Hardisty, *Women Called To Witness* (Nashville: Abigdon Press, 1985); Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1981), ch. 2.

⁶⁸ See Nancy Hardisty, “Your Daughters Shall Prophesy’: Revivalism and Feminism in the Age of Finney (1792 - 1875),” (Ph. D. diss., University of Chicago, 1976); Amanda Porter, *Feminine Spirituality in America: From Sarah Edwards to Martha Graham* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).

⁶⁹ Bacchi, 58-59.

Henrietta chafed at the gender restrictions placed on bourgeois women. Like the British feminists whom Philippa Levine studied, she married late, selected a man who supported "her work", and arranged a marriage which was a partnership.⁷⁰ To a degree unusual for her time, but common among feminists, Henrietta combined her artistic work and Christian philanthropy with the demands of a husband, pregnancy and small infants. My interpretation of Henrietta's struggle to become an artist rests on recent feminist analysis of art.⁷¹ Maria Tippet's examination of discrimination and Canadian women's failure to gain professional recognition provided a useful context to understand the evolution of women's separatist culture and the rise of the decorative arts movement, a tradition analyzed by Kathleen McCarthy whose work helped explained Henrietta's involvement in the decorative arts. Griselda Pollack's theoretical work which deconstructed the male monopoly on art forms and institutions, examined femininity and feminism in art history and explored the meaning of "vision and difference". Her conclusions provided a basis for understanding the art world's treatment of female artists.⁷²

Chapter three focuses on the family's Northwest sojourn during the 1880s. On the western frontier, as Eliane Silverman, Susan Jackel, Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson have demonstrated, women became civilizers, colonizers, reluctant pioneers, pleasure seekers, and rebels.⁷³ Henrietta and Oliver joined the many eastern Canadian and British immigrants as colonizers and, as Douglas Owsram has argued, aggressive proponents of Canada's manifest des-

⁷⁰ Philippa Levine, "'So Few Prizes and So Many Blanks': Marriage and Feminism in Late Nineteenth-Century Feminism," *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (April 1989), 150-74.

⁷¹ Maria Tippet, *By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art By Canadian Women* (Toronto: Viking, 1992); Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Norma Broude and Mary D. Gerrand, *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982).

⁷² R. Parker and Griselda Pollack, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981); Griselda Pollack, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988).

⁷³ Eliane Silverman, *Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier 1880-1930* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984); Susan Jackel, *A Flannel Shirt and Liberty: British Emigrant Gentlewoman in the Canadian North West, 1880-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982); Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds., *The Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).

tiny.⁷⁴ Other historians have observed that frontier society encouraged an ecumenical approach to religion,⁷⁵ a perspective which weakened the family's Baptist allegiance but not their evangelicalism. Christianity and civilization's expansion across the West would bring "enlightenment" to the Aboriginal people Henrietta and Oliver believed.

In portraying Henrietta as a cultural missionary, convinced Christianity would liberate native women from slavery, I have employed a perspective advanced by historian Joan Brumberg. Sarah Carter's argument that white women's presence contributed to Native women's marginalization also holds true in Henrietta's life.⁷⁶ Along with other settlers, government officials and the missionaries, the Edwards actively worked at "restructuring the domestic sphere" of Native women, a thesis Pamela White has explored.⁷⁷ White women's presence heightened racism, but whether it encouraged Native women's transition from wife to prostitute still remains to be established.⁷⁸ Myra Rutherdale found Canadian Anglican women missionaries⁷⁹ demonstrated a more complex pattern of complicity and resistance, a phenomenon identified by other feminist scholars of western women and imperialism.⁸⁰ Steeped in the ethos of imperialism and Christianity, few women of this

⁷⁴ Gauvreau, ch 5; Douglas Owsram, *The Promise of Eden: the Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

⁷⁵ See William E. Mann, *Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955).

⁷⁶ Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "Zenanas and Girlless Villages: the Ethnology of American Evangelical Women 1870-1910," *Journal of American History*, 68 (Sept. 1983), 347-71; Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada," *Great Plains Quarterly*, 13 (Summer 1993), 147-61.

⁷⁷ Pamela White, "Reconstructing the Domestic Sphere-Prairie Indian Women on Reserves: Image, Ideology and State Policy 1880-1930," (Ph. D. diss., McGill University, 1987).

⁷⁸ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 86.

⁷⁹ Myra Rutherdale, "Revising Colonization through Gender: Anglican Missionary Women in the Pacific North-West and the Arctic, 1860-1945," (Paper presented to the CHA, Calgary 1993).

⁸⁰ See Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1992); Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review*, 30 (Autumn 1988), 61-88; Viron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992).

era - whatever combination of missionary, reformer, or feminist - escaped the influence of racism.⁸¹

Chapter four examines Ottawa and the women's movement of the 1890s, a time when Henrietta's evangelical feminism blossomed. In central Canada, Henrietta emerged as a national figure within the National Council of Women (NCWC), the WCTU and the YWCA. Although Cleverdon and Bacchi underplayed religion's ongoing influence in Canadian feminism,⁸² Diana Pederson and Sharon Cook have established evangelicals' importance in these organizations.⁸³ Previously historians, influenced by the secularization thesis, have emphasized "maternal feminism" as the dominant ideological construct and privileged secular over religious values.⁸⁴ Did the "regenerators" that Cook analyzed predominate over "the evangelicals" examined by Gauvreau? The social purity movement did not make a "sharp distinction between secular and religious discourses," argues Mariana Valverde. Its advocates were "less highbrow" and "chose deliberately not to see any conflict between science (or at least social science) and religion."⁸⁵ This "powerful if informal coalition for the moral regeneration of the state, civil society, the family, and the individual"⁸⁶ presented a creative vision as well as a negative and repressive attack on "vice". A concern with sexual and moral questions, Valverde explains, separated this movement from the social gospel whose primary concern was economic.⁸⁷

Veronica Strong Boag and Naomi Griffith's interpretations of the NCWC have also

⁸¹ Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1991), 49-71.

⁸² Cleverdon, ch. 1; Bacchi, ch. 6.

⁸³ Pederson, "Providing a Woman's Conscience,"; Sharon Cook, "'Continued and Persevering Combat': The Ontario Women's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelism and Social Reform 1874-1916," (Ph. D. diss., Carleton University, 1990).

⁸⁴ See Wayne Roberts, "'Rocking the Cradle for the World': The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto, 1877-1914," in *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada 1880-1920s*, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: Women's Press, 1979), 15-46.

⁸⁵ Valverde, 175.

⁸⁶ Valverde, 17.

⁸⁷ Valverde, 18.

underestimated the strength of religious faith among active Council workers, especially the WCTU suffragist and moral reformers.⁸⁸ Recent studies by Brouwer, Gagan, Cook and Ernest Forbes critique the characterization of evangelical women as “soft feminists”.⁸⁹ They show instead, that evangelicals, especially in the WCTU, advanced a critique of male sexuality with a militancy that disturbed many society ladies. I argue that even the NCWC’s first president, Lady Aberdeen, provided Henrietta with an example of evangelicalism and feminism, encouraged Henrietta’s love affair with the Council Movement and tutored her as a female parliamentarian.

Chapter five moves to fin-de-siècle Montreal, Henrietta’s home for six years while Oliver worked in the Northwest. Ambitious and pragmatic, Henrietta negotiated challenges to both her faith and her family. Montreal evangelicals remained central, not marginal, to debates on Canada’s urban and industrial problems. Like the Protestant clergymen whom Gauvreau studied, Henrietta’s Baptist ministers created “a careful but firm resolution of the tension between evangelism and social reform in favour of the old creed’s emphasis on sin, the soul’s encounter with God, conversion and preaching.”⁹⁰ As Valverde found, the “language of mythology and religion was seamlessly integrated with the cold language of social science in the definition of the slums.”⁹¹ For evangelicals, science could be melded with applied Christianity. “Converted Christians” were responsible for social progress, a process they believed came only from applying spiritual principles to individuals and communities.

During her eastern residence, Henrietta became the NCWC’s Law Convener, a position which allowed her to campaign for legal and political reforms and seek personal fame. As studies by Yolande Pinard and Marta Danylewycz⁹² demonstrate, francophone feminists with whom Henrietta

⁸⁸ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1976); Naomi Griffith, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of NCWC, 1893-1993* (Ottawa: Carleton Press, 1993).

⁸⁹ Cook, “Continued and Persevering Combat,” ch. 1.

⁹⁰ Gauvreau, 197.

⁹¹ Valverde, 133.

⁹² Marie Lavigne and Yolande Pinard, *Travailleuses et féministes; Les femmes dans la société québécoise*

worked in the Montreal LCW were also motivated by Christian feminism and interested in legal reform.⁹³ Nineteenth century law, “an almost perfect example of a formally patriarchal institution”, regulated courtship, and as Constance Backhouse explains, marriage, sexual violence and family life. Her research provided the context for understanding the NCWC’s campaigns.⁹⁴ Along with other Canadian feminists, Henrietta asserted women’s equality and sexual difference, arguing the latter explained the necessity for protection. As her generation and subsequent ones discovered, the law both facilitated and constrained women’s demands for change.⁹⁵

Chapter six follows Henrietta to Alberta where she joined Oliver, now the medical officer on the Blood Reserve. This move inaugurated a new phase for Henrietta. She became better known in Alberta than she could have in Montreal. Living on a Native reserve from 1904 to 1915 meant Henrietta resumed her former role of cultural missionary and maternal imperialist. Like the British women activists in India whom Barbara N. Ramusack studied, Henrietta occasionally served as a feminist ally to Native women.⁹⁶ Bacchi, and recently Valverde have analyzed the relationship between “race” and reproduction in first-wave feminism.⁹⁷ Looking through the lens of evangelical feminism, Henrietta seems to have regarded Native women as “degraded”, needing Christian

(Montreal: Boreal Express, 1983); Marta Danylewycz, “Changing Relationships: Nun and Feminists in Montreal, 1890-1925,” in *The Neglected Majority*, eds. Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985).

⁹³ See S. M. Trofimenkoff, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1982), ch. 2.

⁹⁴ Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudices: Women and Law in Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: Osgood Society and Women’s Press, 1991), 327.

⁹⁵ Mary Jane Mossman, “The Paradox of Feminist Engagement with Law,” in *Feminist Issues: Race, Class, Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Mandell (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 1995).

⁹⁶ Barbara N. Ramusack, “Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India in 1865-1945,” *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 13:4 (1990), 309-21.

⁹⁷ Valverde, 107 and “‘When the Mother of the Race is Free’: Race, Reproduction and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism,” in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women’s History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 15-21; Carol Bacchi, “Race Regeneration and Social Purity: A Study of the Social Attitudes of Canada’s English-speaking Suffragists,” *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 11:22 (November 1978), 460-74.

liberation. Conversion, education and assimilation rather than addressing racism represented her solution.

Throughout chapters six and seven, marriage problems dominate the narrative, competing for space with Henrietta's public life. Success hides the couple's difficulties, but Henrietta's personal problems affected her involvement in the women's movement. With the exception of Barbara J. Nicholson's 1974 thesis, the Alberta movement and Henrietta leadership during the years 1905 to 1910 have been ignored or misinterpreted.⁹⁸ Nancy Sheehan's WCTU study which focused on education neglected political activism.⁹⁹ Sheehan credited the Alberta WCTU's progressive philosophy to strong leaders like Henrietta and to the province's settlement patterns. These chapters examine evangelical feminism as the driving force behind the suffrage, dower and legal reform campaigns.

Henrietta led the Alberta Council Movement, an important organization which receives only passing mention in Strong-Boag and Griffith's studies on the NCWC. The ten local councils organized by Henrietta led most of the province's political and legal campaigns, a phenomenon usually credited to Emily Murphy. As a writer, Murphy cast herself as "the heroine". Her biographer Bryne Hope Sanders accepted and popularized the idea, and historian Catherine Cleverdon repeated Murphy's claim to fame.¹⁰⁰ Preoccupation with a few "heroines" has discouraged research into the mechanics of women's politics and obscured the role of leaders like Henrietta, Irene Parlby, and Louisa McKinney. Henrietta's work as NCWC Law Convener also foregrounds the law's impact on women in the early twentieth century, a neglected topic.¹⁰¹ Studies of female crime and

⁹⁸ Barbara J. Nicholson, "Feminism in the Prairie Provinces to 1916," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1974). See also Patricia Roome, "Remembering Together: Reclaiming Alberta Women's Past," in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, eds. Catherine A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 183-84.

⁹⁹ Nancy Sheehan, "Temperance, the WCTU, and Education in Alberta, 1905-1930," (Ph. D. diss., University of Alberta, 1980) also "The WCTU in the Prairies, 1886-1930: An Alberta -Saskatchewan comparison," *Prairie Forum*, 6:1 (Spring 1981) and "The WCTU and Education Strategies on the Canadian Prairies," *History of Education Quarterly*, 24 (1984), 101-19.

¹⁰⁰ Sanders, *Emily Murphy Crusader*. Cleverdon, 65-66.

¹⁰¹ With the exception of James G. Snell, *In The Shadow of the Law: Divorce in Canada 1900-1939*

criminals rather than women's role in shaping legislation and interpreting the law predominate. One notable exception is Catherine Cavanaugh's thesis on the Dower Campaign in Alberta.¹⁰² The recent edition of *Canadian Women: a History* comments on women's campaign for legal reform, but is silent on the NCWC and its regional Law Committees' leadership.¹⁰³

Despite a growing emphasis on women's politics, religion remained central in Henrietta's later life. The years between 1910 and 1930 were tumultuous ones for many Canadian Protestants. Research by Ruth Brouwer¹⁰⁴ and Katharine Ridout¹⁰⁵ demonstrate the danger in advancing facile generalizations about a decline in Canadian women's spirituality. Henrietta remained a committed evangelical, even though Gauvreau maintains that Canadian evangelicalism became "a creed in disarray" during World War I. University elite "looked more to the explanations and solutions provide by the evolutionary social sciences than to a faith and theology forged in the late eighteenth century." Robbed of their former cultural authority, Christian scholars searched for "a new equilibrium between faith and knowledge".¹⁰⁶ Rawlyk suggests, however, that internal decay was the real culprit not external attacks. American consumerism presented a "greater negative impact on the nineteenth-century evangelical consensus" than modern scholarship.¹⁰⁷ Canadian

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

¹⁰² Catherine Cavanaugh, "The Alberta Women's Movement as Seen through the Campaign for Dower Rights," (Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1985). See Janice Dickin McGinnis, "Bibliography of the Legal History of Western Canada," in *Law and Justice in a New Land: Essays in Western Canadian Legal History*, ed. Louis Knafla (Toronto & Calgary: Carswell Co, 1986), 333-54. For an overview see Linda Silver Dranoff, *Women in Canadian Life; Law* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1977).

¹⁰³ Wendy Mitchinson et al, *Canadian Women: a History* (Revised edition, Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Co, 1996), 225-30.

¹⁰⁴ See Ruth Compton Brouwer, "The Between-Age Christianity of Agnes Machar," *Canadian Historical Review* (hereafter *CHR*) 65:3 (1984).

¹⁰⁵ Katherine Ridout, "A Woman of Mission: The Religious and Cultural Odyssey of Agnes Wintermute Coates," *CHR*, 71 (June 1990), 204-44.

¹⁰⁶ Gauvreau, 250-51.

¹⁰⁷ George A. Rawlyk, "A. L. McCrimmon, H. P. Widden, T. T. Shields, Christian, and McMaster University," in *Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 36-37.

evangelicals, as apostles and architects of bourgeois-industrial society, failed to see “the insidious anti-Christian bias of consumerism.”¹⁰⁸ Theologians fought the wrong battle, explains Rawlyk. The faith vs. knowledge debate increased bitterness and produced the fundamental/liberal splits which severed the Baptist consensus in Canada and the US.

Such disputes barely touched Henrietta and most Canadian evangelical women who seldom enjoyed spiritual authority either as preachers or theologians. Women occupied a “broad theological spectrum” whose center was the evangelical mainstream. Most Baptists whether male or female accepted basic evangelical truths and were “not really afraid of modernity.” Rawlyk argues “people *felt* their religion ... and they therefore saw no compelling need to intellectualize it. They expected their ministers to preach the old-time gospel but also to make it relevant to their situation.”¹⁰⁹ Henrietta shared this perspective as did Nellie McClung.¹¹⁰ Although these two crusaders found the prewar materialism and the subsequent turmoil created by W.W.I challenging, neither deserted the road.¹¹¹ McClung had a more difficult spiritual journey, but as her recent biographers argue Christian faith remained “the ground of her being and her action”, a conclusion I advance for Henrietta also.¹¹²

Chapter seven presents Henrietta’s emergence as a well-known public figure with the flowering of the Alberta women’s movement. In the prewar years, Canadian attention focused on

¹⁰⁸ Rawlyk employs a Marxian analysis like Marshall Berman, *All that Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). See also Ian Mackay, “Introduction: All That is Solid Melts Into Air,” in *The Challenge of Modernity: a Reader on Post-Confederation Canada*, ed. Ian Mackay (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1991), ix-xxvi.

¹⁰⁹ Rawlyk, “A. L. MacCrimmon,” 39.

¹¹⁰ Randi R. Warne, “Literature As Pulpit: Narrative As A Vehicle for the Transmission and Transformation of Values in the Christian Social Activism of Nellie McClung,” (Ph. D. diss., University of Toronto, 1988); Nellie McClung, *The Stream Runs Fast. My Own Story* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1945), x-xi.

¹¹¹ Veronica Strong-Boag, “‘Ever a Crusader’: Nellie McClung, First-Wave Feminist,” in *Rethinking Canada, 178-90* and “Introduction,” *In Times Like These* (1915, reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), vii-xxii.

¹¹² Hallett, 299.

the West. Public discourse emphasized the frontier as a place of spiritual and political regeneration. In the prewar years few dissenting voices were heard from any segment of western society. Novels by Nellie McClung, Ralph Connor, and Robert Stead gave expression to the West as a garden and virgin land.¹¹³ Henrietta and Alberta feminists echoed the same frontier mythology as American historian Frederick Jackson Turner. The "spirit of the West" exerted a tremendous impact on the consciousness of a society in which "Wheat was King." Even in 1950, Catharine Cleverdon called the prairie provinces' campaign, "democracy's 'grass roots'". She waxed eloquent about how Alberta, "a pioneer community, displayed a liberal attitude towards women." She featured Judge J. Boyd McBride's explanation that such success reflected the "public appreciation of their heroic pioneering qualities" and the high calibre of the women who immigrated. They were "quite as fitted as men to take their part in the intellectual and administrative development of the new country."¹¹⁴ Ramsay Cook and Carol Bacchi accepted this frontier thesis, but ignored McBride's emphasis on women leaders.

Chapter eight focuses on 1916-1921, years when the widowed Henrietta emerged as a mature politician. By dismissing club women's importance, most historians have missed a golden opportunity to study women's politics. Sylvia Bashevkin, M. Janine Brodie and Jill McCalla Vickers,¹¹⁵ and American political philosophers Jean Bethke Elshtain, Catherine MacKinnon, and Nancy Hartstock¹¹⁶ have argued that scholars need to redefine the "political" and reconceptualize

¹¹³ See Patricia Roome, "Images of the West: Social Themes in Prairie Literature, 1896-1930," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1976).

¹¹⁴ Cleverdon, 64-67.

¹¹⁵ Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *Toeing the Lines: Women and Party Politics in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); M. Janine Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1985); Jill McCalla Vickers, "Feminist Approaches to Women in Politics," in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, eds. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 16-36.

¹¹⁶ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981); Catharine MacKinnon, *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State* (London: Harvard University Press, 1985); Nancy Hartstock, *Money, Sex and Power: Towards a Feminist Historical Materialism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985).

how and where women “do politics.” Their valuable insights have encouraged a fresh reading of women’s politics in the post-suffrage era. As Margaret McCallum and Catherine Cavanaugh’s work already demonstrated, the pioneering partnership thesis is flawed. Viewing the women’s movement from the perspective of economic issues and the dower campaign revealed not women’s equality but “patriarchy preserved on the prairies.”¹¹⁷ Chapter eight examines the women’s network which operated behind the scenes and the mechanism of women’s politics. For the first time, Henrietta receives credit for the central role which she played in this campaign, through organizing LCW Law Committees as the NCWC Law Convener, and through her legal publications and public speaking.

Chapter nine explores Henrietta’s role in advancing women’s politics in the 1920s and examines the irony of being an elderly activist, unwilling to retire. The fate of feminism during these years has attracted much attention from scholars. Most have condemned individual feminists and blamed the inadequacies of their philosophy for the movement’s failure. With the exception of Veronica Strong-Boag, few Canadian historians have either appreciated or examined anti-feminism,¹¹⁸ a significant omission since politics remained the art of the possible for women as for men. Political scientist, Sylvia Bashevkin argued that women’s central political dilemma was “independence versus partisanship,” a problem she attributes to the ideological weakness in “social feminism” where social reform was more important than female emancipation.¹¹⁹ Her analysis, while important, needs to be reconsidered in several ways. First, as scholars like Ernest Forbes have lucidly demonstrated, maternal vs. equal rights feminism is a false dichotomy.¹²⁰ Henrietta and

¹¹⁷ Catherine Cavanaugh, “The Limitations of the Pioneering Partnership: The Alberta Campaign for Homestead Dower, 1909-1925,” *CHR*, LXXIV:2 (1993), 197-225. Margaret E. McCallum, “Prairie Women and the Struggle for a Dower Law, 1905-1920,” *Prairie Forum*, 18:1 (Spring 1993), 19-34.

¹¹⁸ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Independent Women, Problematic Men: First And Second Wave Anti-Feminism in Canada from Goldwin Smith to Betty Steele,” *Occasional Working Papers in Women’s Studies and Gender Relations*, Center for Research in Women’s Studies and Gender Relations (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1993).

¹¹⁹ Sylvia B. Bashevkin, “Independence versus Partisanship: Dilemmas in the Political History of Women in English Canada,” in *Rethinking Canada*, 252.

¹²⁰ Ernest R. Forbes, “The Ideas of Carol Bacchi and the Suffragists of Halifax,” *Atlantis*, 10, 2 (Spring

her contemporaries used many arguments when waging their political battles. Secondly, although some women believed in “a social and political millennium”, realists such as Henrietta and Emily Murphy knew organization, education and persistence were necessary to achieve women’s demands. The Alberta example questions Bashevkin’s conclusion that except for British Columbia “English-Canadian suffragists established few ongoing political organizations following enfranchisement, and women generally floundered politically as a result.”¹²¹ Most scholars have dichotomized the interests of rural and urban women, looked for conflict, minimized cooperation and left the frontier-as-equalizer thesis to explain Alberta’s progressive record on women’s legislation. Until recently,¹²² few historians credited women’s extensive organizing, able leadership, innovative structures, fragile alliances and common feminism as significant forces behind Alberta’s progressive legislation.¹²³ Despite feminists allies in government and the efforts of the Provincial Executive Committee outside the Legislature, patriarchal structures remained firmly intact.¹²⁴ Nancy Langford’s essay examines Alberta’s female politicians, but overlooks the importance of networking. The same omission also occurs in the well-know narrative of the campaign for women’s appointment to the Senate.¹²⁵ Most interpretations give Emily Murphy too much personal credit and Council women too little acknowledgment. Although dismissed as conservative and prudish moral reformers, Council women were actually skilled female politicians operating in an

1985). See also Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988); Marlene Le Gates, *Making Waves: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

¹²¹ Bashevkin, 255. See also Veronica Strong-Boag, “Canadian Feminism in the 1920s: the Case of Nellie L. McClung,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 12 (Summer 1977), 58-68.

¹²² Nancy Langford, “‘All That Glitters’: The Political Apprenticeship of Alberta Women, 1916-1930,” in *Standing on New Ground*.

¹²³ See Roome, “Amelia Turner and Calgary Labour Women,” in *Beyond the Vote*, 89-117.

¹²⁴ Veronica Strong-Boag, “‘Pulling in Double Harness or Hauling a Double Load’: Women, Work, and Feminism on the Canadian Prairies,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 21:3 (Fall 1986), 32-52.

¹²⁵ See Rudy G. Marchildon, “The Persons Controversy: The Legal Aspects of the Fight for Women Senators,” *Atlantis*, 6:2 (Spring 1981), 99-113. Olive M. Stone, “Canadian Women as Legal Persons,” *Alberta Law Review*, 17:3 (1979), 331-71.

adverse political environment. Scholars have argued that women's politics still demonstrates a tension between independence and partisanship. An analysis of this "guilded ghetto" needs to move beyond the ideological flaws of maternal feminism to examine the complex structural problems which women encountered.¹²⁶

In portraying conflicts between younger women and senior feminists, I have relied on studies of the impact of mass consumerism and modern advertising. American sociologist Stuart Ewan argues that advertisements in the 1920s demonstrate "how the feminist demand for equality and freedom for women was appropriated into the jargon of consumerism."¹²⁷ Liberation for women lay in smoking cigarettes, buying toasters, owning self-regulating ovens and using fireless cookers. Ewan perceptively argues that "corporate America had begun to define itself as *the father of us all*."¹²⁸ Whether it was alcohol, tobacco, clothes or appliances, consumption became seductive and the mark of the ideal new woman.¹²⁹ The first laid roots of today's beauty myth, analyzed so forcefully by Naomi Wolf, were first laid in the 1920s.¹³⁰ Veronica Strong-Boag identified the dilemma experienced by Henrietta and other middle-aged female activists. "An essential conflict existed between a feminist ideal that relied on middle-aged and older women for the energy, time and talent to take on the reform of their society," she explained "and a commercial culture that

¹²⁶ See Sydney Sharp, *The Guilded Ghetto: Women and Political Power in Canada* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1995).

¹²⁷ Stuart Ewan, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975), 160

¹²⁸ Ewan, 184. See also Stuart and Elizabeth Ewan, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982) and *The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

¹²⁹ See Cynthia Wright, "'Feminine Trifles of Vast Importance': Writing Gender into the History of Consumption," in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 229 -60. Christine Foley, "Consumerism, Consumption and Canadian Feminism," (Master's thesis, University of Toronto, 1979). Rayna Rapp and Ellen Ross, "The Twenties' Backlash: Compulsory Heterosexuality, the Consumer Family, and the Waning of Feminism," in *Class, Race and Sex: The Dynamics of Control*, eds. Amy Swerdlow and Hanna Lessinger (Boston: G. K. Hull, 1983).

¹³⁰ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1990).

denigrated the same group just as it directed them to narcissistic consumption.¹³¹ While men could aspire to be elder statesmen, few writers have viewed such “eccentric” female behavior kindly. As feminist sociologists explain: “aging is a profoundly feminist issue.”¹³² During her long life, Henrietta had pursued a spiritual journey, ignoring each roadblock especially the final one of age. To be famous, female and old was a rare achievement in 1931, and one which makes Henrietta worthy of a biography.

¹³¹ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988), 183.

¹³² Sharon McIrvin Abu-Laban and Susan A. McDaniel, “Aging Women and Standards of Beauty,” in *Feminist Issues*, 97.

I. Daughter of the Montreal Muirs, an Evangelical Family

Henrietta Louise was born into an evangelical and bourgeois Montreal family on December 18, 1849.¹ Significantly, the previous year the American feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton had convened the Seneca Falls Women's Rights' Convention and women's rights were to be "in the air" throughout the life of Henrietta. Destined to become a feminist, Henrietta entered the movement slowly, following the avenue of religion, a common path for most nineteenth-century women. Her Baptist family had aggressively pursued an evangelical mission in Canada since 1820. Hoping for great Christian achievements William and Jane Muir named their new daughter after the Swiss Protestant missionary, Henriette Feller, the charismatic founder of Quebec's Grande Ligne Mission.² Although Henrietta never became a Baptist missionary, her crusade for women's rights reflected the evangelical Protestant legacy she had inherited from her Scottish grandparents.³

Ebenezer and Jean Muir were often compared to the Biblical Abraham and Sarah. Romantic and heroic figures to the young Henrietta, these pioneers had risen to prominence in Montreal from a humble peasant but also a radical religious background. The Ayrshire parish of Maybole, Ebenezer's birthplace in 1791, was well-known for its religious nonconformity.⁴ In 1813, the young Ebenezer joined Kilwinning's Baptist Chapel and married Jean Steele, a equally zealous Christian who hailed from a family of nonconformist weavers and Muirkirk farmers, too poor to provide a formal education for their daughter.⁵ Ebenezer apprenticed as a tailor and the couple settled down

¹ Archives Nationale du Quebec à Montreal (hereafter ANQ-M), St. Helen's Baptist Church, Register.

² J. M. Cramp, *A Memoir of Madame Feller* (London: Elliot Stock, n. d.); René Hardy, "Henriette (Feller) Odin," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (hereafter DCB), Vol. 9, 607-10.

³ See Goldwin French, "The Evangelical Creed in Canada," in *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age*, ed. W. L. Morton (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 15-35; Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), ch. 1.

⁴ Old Parochial Register (hereafter OPR) Maybole, Ayreshire Scotland; P. Lawson, *Places of interest about Maybole: with sketches of persons of interest* (Ayre: n. p. 1891). William Robertson, *Ayreshire, its history and historic families* (Kilmarnock: n. p., 1908).

⁵ OPR, Ayr, Dalry 19 June 1813; OPR, Ayr, Muirkirk, 22 April 1792; Rev. Jones Leecham, "Memoir of

to raise a family in Scotland. The Napoleonic Wars, unemployment, depressed wages and religious persecution encouraged them, however, to emigrate to British North America.⁶

Lured to Montreal in 1820 by the promise of religious freedom and economic opportunity, the Muirs quickly prospered. As the center of the commercial empire of the St. Lawrence, Montreal industrialized and expanded rapidly.⁷ By Henrietta's birth, her grandparents' humble roots were well concealed. Established as a prominent merchant tailor, Ebenezer imported and sold Scottish woolens, trained apprentices to create "ready made clothes" and owned valuable property on the corner of Notre Dame Street and Place D'Armes across from the new Catholic Cathedral.⁸ An enterprising capitalist, Ebenezer built a handsome block of shops on Notre Dame Street. Just before his death, Grandfather erected another impressive Muir's Building which stood as a landmark to the patriarch for nearly a century linking his descendants to a proud family tradition.⁹ Grandfather

the Late Rev. George Barclay, of Irvine Scotland," *The Canada Baptist Magazine*, October 1839, III, 4; Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthey and of his Brother James Alexander Haldane* (London: Hamilton Adams and Co., 1853). See David Beddington, *The Baptists in Scotland: A History* (Glasgow: Baptist Union of Scotland, 1988) and *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from 1730s to the 1930s* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1989).

⁶ St. Helen's Church, Register. Kilwinning residents who came to Montreal include: Baptist Printer Rollo Campbell; publisher J. C. Becket; stone mason and builder of the Montreal Baptist College, William Hutchinson. See Nancy Christie, "In these Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion: Popular Religion and the Challenge to the Established Order, 1760-1815," in *The Protestant Experience in Canada, 1760-1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Burlington, Ont: G. R. Welsh, Co., 1991), 9-67.

⁷ Donald Creighton, *The Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1950); Gerald J. J. Tulchinsky, *The River Barons: Montreal Businessmen and the Growth of Industry and Transportation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) and "The Montreal Business Community, 1837-1853," in *Canadian Business History: Selected Studies, 1497-1971*, ed. D. S. Macmillan (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 125-43.

⁸ ANQ-M, Nicholas-Benjamin Doucet Notarial Papers, "Engagement by Henry McCaughan to Eb. Muir," 2 December 1822; "Engagement by Peter Fahey to Ebenezer Muir, 7 April 1826; "Bail par Ebenezer Muir à John MacGruer 29 Janvier 1826; "Bail par Ebenezer Muir à Thomas Madigan," 13 Mars 1827. See also *Canada Baptist Magazine and Missionary Register* (hereafter CBMM Register) 1 July 1839; Mary Anne Poutanen, "For the Benefit of the Master: the Montreal Needle Trades during the Transition, 1820-1842," (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1985).

⁹ Newton Bosworth, *Hochelaga Depicta, or a new picture of Montreal* (Montreal: William Greig, 1839). *Montreal Herald*, 19 December 1865. Charles P. de Volpi and P. S. Windworth, *Montreal. Recueit Iconographie. A Pictorial Record*, Vol. II (Montreal: 1963). ANQ-M, J. James Smith Notarial Papers, "Last Will and Testament of Ebenezer Muir Esquire," 23 May 1857.

Muir's entrepreneurial genius created bourgeoisie status for his children and grandchildren like Henrietta.

Ebenezer and Jean bequeathed to Henrietta a religious culture even more important than the bourgeois one.¹⁰ Inspired by the famous Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson, the Muirs built a "righteous empire" in Quebec. They accepted Judson's advice that the "motto of every missionary, whether preacher, printer or schoolmaster, ought to be Devoted for Life". More than other Protestants, Baptist evangelicals like Ebenezer and Jean believed they each had a "mission for life". While some served foreign fields, others like the Muirs laboured in Canada. Regardless of gender or class, such missionaries dedicated their lives to evangelization, even at times sacrificing personal comfort and entrepreneurial success. As the elder Muir's lives illustrated, evangelicals personified Christ's last commission to Christians to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."¹¹

For over forty years Ebenezer used his wealth to build a Baptist community in Montreal. In 1831, a handful of believers who had worshipped in the Muir's parlour formed St. Helen's Chapel, Quebec's first Baptist Church. Ebenezer financed the building and paid the passage from Scotland for the first minister.¹² Muir's rise to religious importance, so characteristic of other Scottish Baptists, prompted a rather smug British Baptist minister to remark that Montreal in 1836 was a place where a "nobody may become somebody".¹³ Ebenezer and Jean's large family formed the

¹⁰ For Ontario see Westfall William, *Two Worlds; The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

¹¹ Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Mission for Life: the Story of the family of Adoniram Judson, the dramatic events of the first American Foreign Mission, and the course of Evangelical Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), x-xii. Martin Marty, *Righteous Empire* (New York: n. p., 1970). Also Leonard I. Sweet, *The Evangelical Tradition in America*, (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1975).

¹² J. A. Gordon, *History of the First Baptist Church of Montreal* (Montreal: n. p. 1906).

¹³ Rev. F. A. Cox and Rev. J. Hoby, *The Baptists in America: A Narrative of the deputation from the Baptist Union in England to the United States and Canada* (London: T. Ward and Co. 1836), 187-93. Stuart Ivison and Fred Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper And Lower Canada before 1820* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1945), 94-95.

backbone of St. Helen's Chapel.¹⁴ During the religious awakening of the 1830s, Henrietta's father experienced conversion, participated in baptism and followed his family into missionary endeavors. Although St. Helen's Scottish Baptists showed "a prevalent attachment to protracted meetings and revival efforts", these conversion experiences molded the next generation of Muirs into zealous Baptists.¹⁵ By Henrietta's birth, St. Helen's was the home of a prosperous Baptist community.¹⁶

The Muir clan grew to maturity sheltered by Ebenezer's status as a rich merchant and respected evangelical pioneer. Religious leadership became a family pattern. In 1836 Ebenezer launched the Ottawa Baptist Association and sons William and George served on the executive for over forty years.¹⁷ Ebenezer also created the Baptist Canadian Missionary Society, which trained Canadian ministers, built the Montreal Baptist College, and published a newspaper.¹⁸ When Henrietta became involved in Christian service, she drew heavily on her family's evangelical legacy of missions, newspapers, printing, books and libraries. Ebenezer Muir's Christian faith permeated his many community projects from temperance societies to religious publications.¹⁹ Like most Baptists, Ebenezer supported the first Montreal temperance society in 1828 and remained a lifelong

¹⁴ ANQ-M, St. Helen's Baptist Church, Register. Births- Margaret 1814, Mary Anne 1816, Willima 1818, George Barclay 1821, Amelia 1823, James 1825, Jane 1827, Elizabeth 1829, Ebenezer 1832, Quintinna 1834.

¹⁵ Cox and Hoby, *The Baptists in America*, Whitney Cross, *The Burned-over District. The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), ch. 9.

¹⁶ There are no secondary studies of this group. Baptist history focuses on either Ontario or the Maritimes. E. Muir sponsored his brother William's emigration to Quebec in the 1830s and played an active role on the Committee of the Emigrant Society, *Montreal Pocket Almanack* (Montreal: Starke & Co:1844), 96. See ANQ-M, Erskine Presbyterian Church Papers, 7 March 1837, 12 May 1839 for further information on the William Muir Sr. family. This brother and many of his children became prosperous farmers around Montreal and attended the evangelical and session chapel, later called Erskine Church.

¹⁷ Isobel Loutit, *First Baptist Church in Montreal* (Montreal; n. p., n. d., 2); Harry Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon, The Baptist Story in Canada* (Mississauga: Canadian Baptist Federation, 1988), 93.

¹⁸ Renfree, 96-97; "The Story of the Ottawa Baptist Association", *CBMM Register*, June 1837, 48; John I. Cooper, "The Canada Education and Home Missionary Society," *CHR*, xxvi:1 (1945), 42-47. On the College see T. A. Higgins, *The Life of John Mockett Cramp, 1792-1881* (Montreal: W. Drysdale, 1887).

¹⁹ *12th Annual Report of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society* (Montreal:1832) and *19th Report of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society* (Montreal:1840); Bosworth, 186-88.

temperance activist.²⁰ His membership in the Montreal Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society showed his commitment to evangelical work over the fashionable benevolent activities favoured by other bourgeois Montrealers.²¹ Businessmen like the Ayrshire capitalist Hugh Allan invested their profits in canals, railways and steamships but Ebenezer placed much of his surplus into the Baptist community's evangelical missions in Quebec and often sustained serious financial losses.²²

Grandmother Jean's gender, humble beginnings, and evangelical faith each left their mark on her life. Even after thirteen prosperous years in Montreal, she remained unable to sign her name when her children's births were registered at St. Helen's. Married at twenty, between 1813 and 1834 she bore a child every two years. With the exception of her eldest daughter who died in childbirth, her ten children married, produced families and outlived their parents. Each Muir child also became an evangelical Christian, a testimony to Jean's religious influence.²³ In her beloved grandmother, Henrietta saw a model of evangelical womanhood, an ideal which held "converted women" jointly responsible for their family and community's salvation. Jean Muir believed a lady's life to be incompatible with her conversion experience which had given her a mission to serve Christ wherever she was called.²⁴ Evangelicals' personal piety and social vision imparted greater

²⁰ Bosworth, 188-90. The *Canadian Temperance Advocate* was published by Muir's close friends J. Becket and Rolio Campbell whose printing offices were housed in Muir's building. See also Ghislaine Blais-Hildebrand, "Les débuts du Mouvement de Temperance dans le Bas-Canada: 1828-1840," Master's thesis, McGill University, 1975.

²¹ See J. I. Cooper "Canada Education and Home Missionary Society," *CHR*, XXVI:1 (March 1945), 42-48.

²² Brian J. Young, "Sir Hugh Allan," *DCB*, Vol. 11, 5-15; Tulchinsky, *The River Barons*.

²³ See St. Helen's Church, Register.

²⁴ See Anne E. Boyland, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: the Role of Women in Sunday Schools," *Feminist Studies*, 4 (October 1978), 62-80; Mary Ryan, "'A Woman's Awakening': Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York, 1800-1840," *American Quarterly*, 30 (1978), 602-23. For Canada see Marguerite van Die, "'A Women's Awakening': Evangelical Belief and Female Spirituality in Mid Nineteenth-Century Canada," (Paper delivered to the CHA Kingston 1991); Michael Gauvreau, "Protestantism Transformed: Personal Piety and Evangelical Social Vision 1815-1967," in *The Protestant Experience in Canada, 1760-1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Burlington, Ont: G. R. Welsh Co., 1991).

religious significance to women. One Montreal minister explained:

The pious mother may put forth an influence which, blessed of God, may save her child ... If females were all Christians, and such Christians as they ought to be, a hope might be cherished that the world would soon be converted. The next generation might live a new earth, and as a part of their employment, celebrate the final victories of the cross.²⁵

As Henrietta would discover, Muir women took this weighty commission to heart.²⁶ Baptist women's spiritual importance generated tensions with the men but often it created partnership possibilities, especially as Montreal industrialized.

Being one of the original twenty-five members of St. Helen's Church gave Jean Muir privileged status as a church matriarch. For Baptist women, the New Testament verse in Galatians iii: 28, "There is neither male nor female: for ye are one in Christ Jesus", meant personal conversion and religious faith should take precedence over gender.²⁷ During the 1830s revival, Baptist women gained power as missionaries, deacons, Sunday School teachers and principals of academies. Montreal Baptists favoured American traditions which permitted women to speak and pray in men's presence over the British requirement for silence and subservience.²⁸ The Baptists' radical democratic tradition which dictated local church autonomy benefited women by allowing each congregation to decide the extent of women's leadership.²⁹ Gender segregation still meant

²⁵ "Female and Influence and Obligations," *The Peoples Magazine*, I:14 (6 January 1847), 108.

²⁶ See also Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion 1800-1860," in *Dimity Convictions: the American Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Barbara Welter (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976); Katherine M. J. McKenna, "The Union Between Faith and Good Works": the Life of Harriet Dobbs Cartwright 1808-1887," (Paper presented to Canadian Historical Association, Victoria 1990); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: the Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), ch. 3.

²⁷ *CBMM Register*, February 1840 reports that at the Sunday School's annual General Meeting there were five female and nine male teachers.

²⁸ "Ought Women to Speak in Church," *Montreal Register*, 12 September 1844, 3 April and 22 May 1845; George A. Rawlyk, "New Lights, Baptists and Religious Awakenings in Nova Scotia 1776-1843," *Journal of Canadian Church History*, XXV: 2 (Oct 1983), 64-67; Nancy Hardisty, *Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the 19th Century* (Nashville: Abigdon Press, 1984), 30; Ryan, "A Woman's Awakening."

²⁹ Judith Colwell, "The Role of Women in the Nineteenth Century Church in Ontario," (Unpublished paper, May 1985). My interpretation differs in highlighting the flexibility and local church decision making regarding the role of women. The American Baptist tradition allowed women a larger role as did

women deacons worked with women, and female Sunday School teachers with female students, leaving men the important position of Sunday School Superintendent.³⁰ The Second Awakening and the Baptist's radical democracy combined to give Grandmother Muir's generation power in their church and the Montreal community. When early radicalism lessened so did women's authority, victims of the Baptists' new respectability and bourgeois status. Fresh revivals, however, brought renewed missionary fervor and activism for women. The pendulum swung toward this larger role for women in the late 1830s' and early 1840s, and again in the mid 1860s and early 1870s, during Henrietta's young adulthood. Muir women's activism paralleled these evangelical revivals.³¹

More than most Protestant Canadian girls, the Baptist Henrietta felt born to the cause of missions and evangelical women's organizations. In 1844, five years before her birth and thirty years before other Canadian evangelicals, Montreal Baptist women created the Montreal Grande Ligne Ladies Association to support Madame Feller's Christian Institute.³² This charismatic leader and able administrator, who presided over the Mission's evangelical work among French Canadian Catholics, relied heavily upon Montreal Baptist women's fund-raising expertise.³³ Three generations of Muir women led the Association largely ignoring the endless disputes among Baptist churches over Feller's Baptist purity.³⁴ Aunt Isabella Muir, the Association's President, taught

rural church where the education level was lower and class distinctions fewer.

³⁰ "The Office of Deacon," *CBMM Register*, September 1839, 63. See the *Annual Report Canada Sunday School Union* (Montreal:1844), 30 for note on women superintendents.

³¹ A point also developed by George A. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Revivals, Baptists, and Henry Alline* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985). Nancy Cott, "Young Women in the Second Great Awakening in New England," *Feminist Studies*, 3 (Fall 1975), 14-20.

³² *Montreal Register*, 14 January 1847, 29 June and 26 October 1848; *9th Annual Report of Canadian Baptist Missionary Society*, (Montreal: Rollo Campbell, 1846), 17. American Baptist women also pioneered the missionary movement and contributed a disproportionate number of leaders. See Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Following the Sunrise: A Century of Baptist Missions, 1813-1913* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publishing Society, 1913).

³³ Cramp, 147-49; Renfree, 135-43; Theodore Lafleur, "A Brief Historical Sketch of the Grands Ligne Mission From its Beginning in 1835 to 1900," *The Baptist Yearbook* (Toronto:1900).

³⁴ *Montreal Register*, 4 May 1848; Hardy, 609; Cramp, 147-57; *11th Report of Canada Baptist Missionary Society* (Montreal: Rollo Campbell, 1848), 24-25.

Henrietta important lessons in cooperation and emphasized the power of Christian women's organizations.³⁵

The Montreal Magdalene Asylum, launched in 1844, represented a further example of evangelical womanhood for Henrietta. In contrast to the successful New York Magdalene Asylum, the Montreal project led a troubled and precarious existence. Advertised as a "refuge for females out of employment", its explicit goal was to keep domestic servants and young emigrants away from prostitution.³⁶ Grandmother Jean became a member of the Ladies Committee, an active group which complained publicly that the Men's Committee failed to generate adequate financial support because of their lukewarm commitment. Montreal women followed their American mentors criticizing the double standard and men's sexual exploitation of young women.³⁷ The Asylum closed in 1857 but the Muirs maintained involvement with other rescue homes, such as the Female Home created in the 1860's and the Montreal Home for Friendless Women of the 1870s, which kept alive this tradition of moral reform with its sexual critique.³⁸

Evangelical networks and a shared vision linked generations of Canadian women in missionary service. Grandmother Jean passed the mantle of evangelical womanhood to her daughters, daughters-in law, and granddaughters like Henrietta. Along with Catholic women, Montreal evangelicals launched organizations long before either the Women's Christian Temperance

³⁵ Further family connections with the Grande Ligne Mission include Oliver Cromwell Edwards' Uncle Rev. John Edwards who was employed as the travelling agent for the Mission until 1866. William Edwards, *Correspondence and Papers on Various Subjects together with a sketch of his life compiled and arranged by his brother, James Edwards*. (Peterborough, Ont. : J. R. Stratton, Printer, Examiner Steam Presses, 1882), 12.

³⁶ *The Pilot*, 19 March 1844; *Montreal Witness*, 2 February and 20 April 1846. See also Carroll Smith Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City: The New York Mission Movement, 1812-1870* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970).

³⁷ *Montreal Register*, 29 July 1847; *Montreal Witness*, 28 February, 3 April, 16 October and 23 October 1848; and 1 December 1854, 15 April 1857. Ebenzer and William Muir were two of the benefactors of the Montreal Asylum. See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Beauty, the Beast, and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian American," *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: 1985).

³⁸ See *Annual Report of the Female Home Society* (Montreal: 1871-1872); *First Annual Report of the Managers of the Montreal Home for Friendless Women* (Montreal: 1875).

Movement or the women's foreign missionary societies of the 1870s.³⁹ Grandmother Jean joined the Montreal Ladies Temperance Society in 1846 and worked with her daughters in the Montreal Ladies Bible Association distributing Bibles and tracts.⁴⁰ Jean's evangelical beliefs, humble background and lack of education prevented her from participating in the more prestigious Montreal Women's Benevolent Association or the Protestant Orphan Asylum led by the Molson women.⁴¹

Literacy, education and the organization of academies and colleges for both sexes were important priorities for Montreal evangelicals like the Muirs who ensured that their children received a respectable Christian education.⁴² Henrietta's father studied with private tutors and attended several Montreal nonconformist academies before continuing his education in Glasgow.⁴³ All the male Muirs subsequently prospered as merchants, lawyers and chemists. The eldest daughter became a schoolmistress while other daughters received enough formal education to be useful Christians and wives of prosperous bourgeois gentlemen.

William Muir worked in the family clothing firm until Ebenezer's retirement, then with brother James he formed a partnership which lasted until the mid 1860s.⁴⁴ Earlier, in the mid 1850s, the

³⁹ There is no secondary literature on this subject. For Catholic women see Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

⁴⁰ *12th Annual Report of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society* (Montreal: J. C. Becket, 1832), 6-7. See "Advantage of Female Effort in the Bible Cause," *The Bible Advocate. A Monthly Periodical*, October 1837 published by Rollo Campbell and J. C. Becket from their office in Muir's Building; *Montreal Witness*, 15 February and 4 October 1847.

⁴¹ See Janice Harvey, *Upper Class Reaction to Poverty in Mid-Nineteenth Century Montreal: the Protestant Example* (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1978), ch. III.

⁴² See Gauvreau ch. 1; George A. Rawlyk, ed., *Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988). For America see Brumberg, 237, n37 who argues that "evangelical religion was the primary organizational force behind higher education in the antebellum period"; Donald G. Tewksbury, *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities before the Civil War, with Particular Reference to the Religious Influences Bearing upon the College Movement* (New York, 1932).

⁴³ Louis-Philippe Audet, "John Bruce," *DCB*, Vol. 9, 93-94.

⁴⁴ *The Pilot*, 12 June, 5 July 1849; and 27 April, 21 May 1850.

enterprising William had created a second partnership with Baptist merchant William Ewan. The lucrative "wholesale clothiers" firm of Muir and Ewan expanded throughout eastern Canada and the Maritimes.⁴⁵ Business success allowed William to purchase warehouses and other valuable Montreal real estate. Like his father, William applied his Christianity in business. In 1860 he was one of the merchants who publicly supported early shop closure on Saturdays to give female clerks the evening to rest before the Sabbath.⁴⁶ His example of Christian philanthropy influenced his young daughter who later demonstrated a similar paternalist approach to class questions.

Henrietta's maternal ancestors, the Johnstons, also Scottish immigrants to Montreal, were more peripheral to her life. Grandfather George was born in 1790 to a humble Aberdeen Presbyterian gardener and his illiterate wife. They managed to give their son an education before he joined the Royal Navy. He settled in Montreal in 1813 becoming the "government baker."⁴⁷ Enjoying modest financial success Johnston expanded his business, hired and trained apprentices and purchased property.⁴⁸ Four years later, he married Henrietta's maternal grandmother, a seventeen-year-old orphan, who subsequently bore fourteen children by 1842.⁴⁹

The saga of illness, tragedy and death which plagued the Johnston family robbed Henrietta's mother of the happy childhood which her husband William enjoyed.⁵⁰ By age nineteen Jane had

⁴⁵ *Montreal Directories, 1854-1874.*

⁴⁶ *Montreal Witness*, 28 May, 8 June 1859, and 22 August 1860.

⁴⁷ Donald Whyte, *Dictionary of Scottish Emigrants to Canada Before Confederation* (Edinburgh: 1986), 146; Rev. Robert Campbell, *A History of the Scottish Presbyterian Church* (Montreal: W. Drysdale and Co., 1887), 435-36. *Canadian Courant and Montreal Advertiser*, 26 May 1821.

⁴⁸ ANQ-M, Nicholas-Benjamin Doucet Notarial Papers, "Obligation par P. Moreau à Johnston and Rennie, 16 Fevrier 1820; "Bail par F. A. Larocque à George Johnston," 16 avril 1821; "Engagement of Henry Stevenson to George Johnston," 4 April 1822; "Vente par James Strothers à Geo. Johnston," 15 September 1825.

⁴⁹ St. Gabriel Presbyterian Church, Register, 10 May 1817, 11 May 1823. For George Johnston see the OPR, Old Machar, 28 July 1790.

⁵⁰ See Jean Claude Robert, "The City of Wealth and Death: Urban mortality in Montreal, 1821-1871," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Medicine*, eds. Wendy Mitchinson and Janice Dickin McGinnis (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988).

witnessed the death of seven siblings and her mother. Just before Jane's marriage to William, her older brother accidentally drowned. A month before Henrietta was born Jane's youngest sister died. From these tragedies and onerous family responsibilities Jane Johnston Muir grew serious and severe.⁵¹ Her Presbyterian upbringing further emphasized pious behavior, good deeds and female subservience rather than evangelicalism.⁵² Until 1844, when an acrimonious battle caused by the Free Church movement divided the congregation, the family attended the prestigious St. Gabriel's Presbyterian.⁵³ Grandfather Johnston who had supported separation from the Church of Scotland remained a pillar of the Church until his death in 1875, but Jane left St. Gabriel's to become a Baptist. She joined St. Helen's Chapel following her marriage to William Muir on October 15, 1844. Jean's Christian commitment never equaled that of her husband or his brothers and sisters although she had a conversion experience and was baptized.

The liberal terms of Jane and William's marriage, like their democratic religious faith, would later serve as a model for Henrietta. When she married in 1876, she copied her parents' marriage contract carefully preserving it among her personal papers. Such care reflected her concern for married women's property rights and her merchant families' attitude towards property and money. Their contract canceled the Quebec "communauté de biens", guaranteed Jane would have her own property and protected her from legal responsibility for William's business obligations and personal debts. In further stipulating that Jane would receive five hundred pounds currency from William's estate six months after he died, the will gave Jane more financial security than most British women.⁵⁴ She benefited from William's desire to protect his personal property in the event of a

⁵¹ GAI, EG Papers, "Johnston Genealogy," ANQ-M, William Francis Lighthall Notarial Papers, "Deed of Sale & Adjudication from the Heirs of the late William Thompson and Margaret Tiffin, his wife to James Baylis, Esquire, 28 October 1871; Nicholas-Benjamin Doucet Notarial Papers, "Last Will and Testament of Mr. William Thompson," 18 July 1849.

⁵² See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1869," *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), 151-74.

⁵³ Campbell, 60.

⁵⁴ EG Papers, "Marriage entre William Muir and Jane Johnston, Copie" 15 October 1844. See Peter Ward, *Courtship, Love and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 44-46 argues that businessmen used marriage contracts to limit liability

business failure, a reality which occurred in 1849 and 1875. The Muirs also sympathized with women's desire for financial security and followed the debate on the Married Women's Property Act in Britain.⁵⁵ Ebenezer Muir's will departed from patriarchal tradition and specified that his estate be divided equally between all of his nine children regardless of age or gender.⁵⁶

Henrietta cherished fond memories of her Muir grandparents' prestigious "Willow Cottage", a large stone residence on St. Monique Street. In the late 1820s, Ebenezer had purchased several acres of land which he later divided into lots with the growth of the fashionable St. Antoine district. Although Montreal had industrialized by 1849, the large St. Antoine estates preserved their rural characteristics. The family raised livestock, kept a large garden and walked to Chapel, to market and to Ebenezer's business. Ebenezer's prosperity and the poverty of Montreal's working class had enabled the Muirs to employ young Irish and Canadian servants for over thirty years.⁵⁷

A tightly-knit and stable community formed around the Muirs' residence. As a child, Henrietta played with the grandchildren of neighbours, Benjamin and Delia Lyman, prominent American Presbyterians who shared the elder Muirs' religious beliefs and business values. Three generations worked together beginning with Benjamin and Ebenezer who joined the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society and the Montreal Temperance Society. A younger brother, Henry Lyman, employed in the family druggist firm became a close friend of Henrietta's father and an older brother served as a missionary in Sumatra. Henrietta's aunts attended Hannah Willard Lyman's Seminary, a

in the event of bankruptcy, so that domestic property could not be used to pay his debts. *Montreal Witness*, 18 March 1857 argued that the bill to protect married women's property deserved "careful attention of Parliament" and noted that French law gave women better protection.

⁵⁵ *Montreal Witness*, 18 March 1857. Montreal evangelical and neighbour Benjamin Lyman, also a rich man, left his entire estate to his widow when he died in 1878. For a discussion of the legislation see Constance B. Backhouse, "Married Women's Property Law in Nineteenth-Century Canada," *Law and History Review*, 6:2 (Fall 1988), 211-57; Lee Holcombe, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women's Property Law in Nineteenth Century England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

⁵⁶ ANQ-M, J. James Smith Notarial Papers, "Last Will and Testament of Ebenezer Muir Esquire. "

⁵⁷ *Census*, Quebec, 1842, Montreal-Queen's Ward no. 1412. See also Charles E. Goad, *Atlas of the City of Montreal* (Montreal: n. p. m 1879), plate XII, 50-51; Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Montreal: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), ch. 1.

prestigious Montreal school which educated young women for over thirty years until Hannah became the Principal of Vassar College in the 1860s. Like Benjamin, Ebenezer's youngest son became a chemist. One of Muir's many sons-in-law owned a Bytown chemist business with one of Benjamin's sons. Long after Ebenezer and Benjamin's death Henrietta's youngest brother entered business with a Lyman grandson. These two families' story illustrate the common outlook shared by Montreal evangelicals.⁵⁸

Henrietta spent a privileged childhood surrounded by the Muir clan. Aunt Jane Muir, her husband Alexander Milloy, the prosperous agent for the Inland Steam and Navigation Company, and their six children resided next door. Nearby lived Aunt Quintinna Muir Foley and her husband James Foley, also a successful merchant.⁵⁹ Henrietta often visited her beloved Uncle James and Aunt Isabella Milne. Three lively male cousins kept her entertained when she visited Uncle George Muir and Aunt Isabella Cramp, daughter of the President of Acadia University. Henrietta's parents raised their four daughters and three sons in one of the prestigious stone residences on Ebenezer Muir's estate.⁶⁰ Their first child had died just before Henrietta's birth, leaving sister Amelia as the eldest. Eva Jane and Ida Elizabeth were born in 1853 and 1854, followed by William Ebenezer in 1857 and George Ernest in 1864. When Henrietta was twenty, Jane had a final baby girl who died at birth.⁶¹ The busy household always included more members than these seven children. Charles Lang, an orphan close in age to Henrietta, was adopted in 1854. Then, during the 1860s and early 1870s, Jane's sister Caroline and father George joined the family circle. Other relatives, like Uncle Ebenezer, and an assortment of Baptists travelers came and went, often staying for months. Even

⁵⁸ Frederick Armstrong, "Benjamin Lyman," *DCB*, Vol. 10, 540-45. Henry James Morgan, "Miss Lyman," *Types of Canadian women and of women who are or have been connected with Canada* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1903), 211.

⁵⁹ *Montreal Directories, 1861-1873. Census, Montreal, 1861.*

⁶⁰ Owning your residence was rare in Montreal. See Stephen Hertzog and Robert D. Lewis, "A City of Tenants: Home Ownership and Social Class in Montreal, 1847-1881," *Canadian Geographic*, 30 (1986), 316-23.

⁶¹ Mount Royal Cemetery Company Papers (hereafter MRCC).

with the help of two young Irish servants, Jane Muir's large family consumed all her time since William's business took him to New York and Glasgow.⁶² The Muir's extended family, typical of the Montreal bourgeoisie, continued until Jane's death in the 1890s.⁶³

A large family counterbalanced the impact of Henrietta's domineering parents. Family photos, taken by the fashionable Montreal photographer William Notman in the 1860s, attest to their strong character. Jane Muir, a small and stocky matron, is seen in a practical dress and a simple hairstyle staring intensely into the camera while her attractive daughters modeled fashionable gowns and elaborate hairstyles.⁶⁴ William Muir, also small in stature, displayed an elegant vest and frock coat as becoming a clothier. With a full beard and longish hair, Muir conveys an authoritative and intellectual presence.⁶⁵ Along with these photographs, Henrietta's diary also documents family relationships. In 1864 Henrietta carefully recorded her adolescent opinions of herself, her family and her faith. "Oh why was I not made pretty and good so people would love me. It seems as if it was my fate to be always hurting people's feelings," lamented the fourteen year old Henrietta. Since sister Amelia was pretty, calm and obedient, Henrietta's conclusion that she was plain and rebellious was a painful one. Her brother's birth that winter produced further unhappiness. "I thought I had got over that feeling of lonesomeness all together but it has come back with all its old power," she reflected.⁶⁶ Henrietta believed that her "mama" preferred Amelia and her younger

⁶² MRCC, 25 November 1854. William Lang is buried in William Muir's Family plot. His connection to the family is unclear but he may have been a servant or the husband of one of Jane's sisters who predeceased William. *Canada East Census 1861*, Montreal St. Antoine's Ward lists Charles as born in Canada. See also *Canada East Census 1871*, Montreal St. Antoine's Ward.

⁶³ Michale B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family, Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 233-38.

⁶⁴ Notman Photographic Collection, McCord Museum (hereafter NCM). See Gordon Dodds, Roger Hall, Stanley Triggs, *The World of William Notman* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992) and *William Notman the Stamp of a Studio* (Art Gallery of Ontario and Coach House Press, 1985); Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross, *Form and Fashion Nineteenth Century Montreal* (Montreal: McCord Museum, 1992), 30-35.

⁶⁵ NCM, Messrs. Muir's Group, 1864.

⁶⁶ EG Papers, Diary Henrietta Muir, 7 April 1864.

siblings and regarded her as stubborn and difficult to govern. In rebellion, Henrietta smugly confided to her diary that she loved her Papa and “he prefers me.”⁶⁷ Henrietta developed a closer relationship with her mother in later life, but as a young girl she identified with her more affectionate father who supervised her education and encouraged her independence. In a surviving letter, William lectured thirteen year old Henrietta to be more grateful to her mother.⁶⁸ Such family tensions influenced Henrietta’s adolescent years.

The outspoken, stubborn and independent Henrietta resembled her Grandfather Ebenezer and Uncle James more than her pious mother and stern grandfather Johnston who expected young ladies to be obedient and submissive. The Muirs’ evangelical passion suited Henrietta’s romantic tendencies. Flamboyant and unconventional by comparison to the Johnstons, the extended Muir clan included gifted musicians, artists and athletes. Henrietta’s preference for the Muir clan continued into adulthood. She named her son William Muir Edwards after her father but her daughters after women friends and notable community activists.

The evangelical community provided young Henrietta with many spiritual mentors from family elders and Sunday School teachers to Baptist ministers.⁶⁹ They guided her religious education in Bible classes, at Sunday School and in prayer meetings which she attended with her sisters, cousins and friends at St. Helen’s Chapel. Each New Year’s Day Henrietta participated in the large annual meeting of the Sabbath School children from Montreal’s evangelical churches. In August 1856 when she was six years old, St. Helen’s began an annual Sabbath School excursion down the St. Lawrence in a steamer.⁷⁰ Henrietta joined both the Juvenile Missionary Society and the youth temperance groups at the Chapel. When the Prince of Wales visited Montreal during August 1860, she marched with two thousand other Montreal children in the temperance Bands of

⁶⁷ Diary, 13 June 1864.

⁶⁸ EG Papers, Letter William Muir to Hettie Muir, 26 February 1863.

⁶⁹ Diary, 7 April 1864.

⁷⁰ *Montreal Witness*, January and August 1856.

Hope.⁷¹

As Henrietta's diary recorded, religion formed the core of the Muir household's life. From family prayer meetings to Sunday School classes and the fund-raising soirees, Jane and William closely supervised their children's spiritual progress. "I am glad that your prayer meeting is getting on so well. You remember Papa every morning," William requested from Scotland.⁷² Throughout their lives, each of the Muirs - the grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles - worked in the Baptist Sunday School as superintendents, teachers, or fund-raisers. The nineteenth-century Sunday School, so important in Henrietta's childhood, was created primarily by women during the Second Awakening and became the central institution for training evangelicals.⁷³ In 1836 Grandfather Ebenezer with other Montreal evangelicals created the Canada Sunday School Union. William Muir devoted thirty years to the expansion of evangelical Sunday Schools across eastern Canada by provided books and tracts, teacher training and leadership assistance through the Union.⁷⁴

During the 1860s Montreal's flourishing evangelical community provided Henrietta with a rich cultural life.⁷⁵ Each January the Baptists participated in the Anniversary Week hosted by Montreal's Canadian Evangelical Alliance. Five religious societies- Canada Sunday School Union, Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society, the French Canadian Missionary Society, Montreal Temperance Society and the Montreal Religious Tact Society- held their annual meetings, one on each night of

⁷¹ *Montreal Witness* 29 August 1860.

⁷² EG Papers, Letter William Muir to Hettie, 26 February 1863. On the topic of family devotions and their importance see Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington, Ind. : Indiana University Press, 1986).

⁷³ Boylan, 64; M. Lucille Marr, "Sunday School Teaching: A Women's Enterprise," (Paper presented to joint session of Canadian Society for Church History & Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, June 1991).

⁷⁴ *Annual Reports Canada Sunday School Union 1842-1849*. One of the few examples of William Muir's writing is a twelve page circular published in October 1873 "To the Members and Committee of the Canada Sunday School Union," examining and refuting on behalf of his church the allegations of former Baptist Sunday School Superintendent S. B. Scott. On the Institute, see *Montreal Herald*, 2 January 1868; 26-27 February, and 1-2 March 1869. See also Edwin Wilbur Rice, *The Sunday School Movement, 1780-1917, and the American Sunday School Union, 1817-1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971).

⁷⁵ Westfall, ch. 1; Gauvreau, 287.

the week in a different church.⁷⁶ Henrietta and her family attended these meetings in company which often attracted crowds of two thousand people. Attending evening meetings and lectures became a regular feature for the Muir family life especially during the winter months when the Montreal harbour closed and merchants enjoyed leisure time.⁷⁷

The evangelical creed allowed Christians to move between Protestant churches especially when disputes over doctrine divided congregations. During Henrietta's childhood, the communion question bitterly divided Montreal Baptists. Many preferred British and Scottish ministers, an educated ministry and open communion: others supported American ministers, revivalist leaders, and closed communion.⁷⁸ Class issues further complicated the debate over doctrine. Richer members who carried the financial burden of the Church, the College, and the missionary activities dominated the debate. Ebenezer Muir found his children often took opposing positions.⁷⁹ Although William remained a staunch Baptist, James left for another evangelical church. William, the liberal who was loyal to Ebenezer's vision, supported the Montreal Baptist College, served as deacon at St. Helen's and selected each new minister.⁸⁰ St. Helen's produced two mission churches in the 1860s with the main congregation dividing in the 1870s. Each generation of male Muirs participated in building a new and typically Canadian Gothic church: Ebenezer at St. Helen's in 1831, William at First Church in 1861 and Olivet in 1879 and William Ebenezer at Westmount Baptist in 1900.⁸¹

⁷⁶ *Montreal Witness*, 5 January 1846 and 28 February 1855.

⁷⁷ *Diary*, 27 January 1864.

⁷⁸ S. D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), 300-03; Renfree, ch. 11.

⁷⁹ Higgins, *The Life of John Mockett Cramp*, 101-06. See Robert S. Wilson, "John Mockett Cramp as a Church Historian," in *An Abiding Conviction: Maritime Baptists and Their World*, ed., Robert S. Wilson (St. John: Acadia Divinity College and the Baptist Historical Committee of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1988).

⁸⁰ Renfree, 203.

⁸¹ See Westfall, "Epics in Stone: Placing the Sacred in a Secular World", ch. 5.

Denied a public role in church building, Baptist women placed greater emphasis on religious experience. For evangelicals conversion occurred when a person recognized their sinful state, committed their life to God, and emerged a different person. Adolescents like Henrietta encountered conversion after careful tutoring by teachers and parents.⁸² As Henrietta explained to her diary, she and a favorite cousin Millie Rice “gave our hearts to Christ”, were baptized together on the next Sunday and “received into the church”.⁸³ This formative experience would profoundly influence the course of Henrietta’s life. Not surprising then that she carefully preserved this journal, a record of her conversion. The diary reflects that, in the weeks following her conversion, she agonized about her friends’ spiritual condition and searched for an appropriate moment to speak to them about their salvation. Her parents helped foster Henrietta’s concern. As others have noted, peer testimonials were “probably one of the evangelical movement’s greatest persuasion techniques” providing “unambiguous and parallel support”.⁸⁴

In keeping a spiritual journal Henrietta followed an honoured Baptist tradition.⁸⁵ Opening a new book on January 1, 1864 Henrietta committed to personal growth and promised: “First to try & do more for Christ. Second try to be kinder at home & try to be pleasanter in company. Third, to study & try to improve my mind & give up the books which I have been reading. Fourth to practice and steadily improve in musick. By God’s help I hope to keep them.”⁸⁶ But her diary also recorded slow progress towards these goals during the next six months. The first goal was easier for her to fulfill, whereas the second one proved challenging. Proud, passionate and artistic Henrietta chaffed at her mother’s emphasis on politeness and etiquette. Despite Henrietta’s strong desire for ap-

⁸² Van Die, “A Women’s Awakening”, 6, 11; Boylan, 65-66.

⁸³ Diary, 5 March 1864.

⁸⁴ Brumberg, 32.

⁸⁵ Baptist ministers at St. Helen’s kept extensive journals. For Canadian literature on this theme see Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw and Donna Smyth, *No Place Like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771-1938* (Halifax: Formac, 1988). Helen M. Buss, *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women’s Autobiography in English* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993).

⁸⁶ Diary, 1 January 1864.

proval, she often refused to conform and always enjoyed her mildly rebellious escapades. Later, however, her remorse and guilt for not being a good Christian produced intense headaches.

Aware she should strive to emulate the ideal Christian lady, the spirited and ambitious Henrietta found, as her diary revealed, that it was a painful process to acquire self confidence and develop an identity. Reassuring parents aside, Henrietta reported feeling merely “the blank in the family”. Each sister seemed to have special qualities while her young brother was unique as the first son. Finding a niche prove difficult for the red-headed and fiery Hettie who wanted to be everything, clever, talented and beautiful. The emerging self which her journal revealed desired love and achievement.⁸⁷ While her evangelical upbringing encouraged serious pursuits and Christian activism, class and cultural restriction frustrated these attempts.⁸⁸ Evangelicals understood the central role youth played in their mission to evangelize the world. At the crucial age when adolescents search for identity, they hoped conversion and commitment would mold character toward the ideal of evangelical womanhood. Henrietta never saw humility, self-denial or silence as useful qualities in Christian women. Her faith and the Baptists’ acceptance of women’s equality before God eventually would empower the adult Henrietta to discover her mission.⁸⁹

Henrietta’s religious instruction served her better than her secular education. Like other Victorian girls from Montreal’s merchant families, she received an informal and eclectic education suitable for a lady but useless for an ambitious female. After tutoring by Scottish governesses, Henrietta attended various Christian female academies which blossomed in Montreal by the mid 1850s.⁹⁰ At fourteen she was enrolled in language courses at the German school and preparing for

⁸⁷ Diary, 13 June 1864.

⁸⁸ See Joan N. Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 146-47 for a discussion of the torment experienced by women reformers from evangelical families.

⁸⁹ For a very conservative view by a British Baptist minister of women as “saviors of society” and “men’s guardian angels” see Williams Landels, *Woman: Her Position and Power*, Reprinted 1859 and 1870 (London: n. p., n. d.). In contrast some American Baptists advocated higher education for women. In Canada see Rev. Wm. A. Caldwell, “On the Duty of Churches in Regard to the Education of Their Sons and Daughters,” *Canadian Baptist Register*, 1859, 27-31.

⁹⁰ For example, Miss Hervey’s Young Ladies Seminary, The Montreal Institution for the Education of

the examinations at Mrs. Lay's Young Ladies Seminary, a school which enjoyed a reputation for providing young ladies with a Christian education.⁹¹ Principal Eleanor H. Lay, a well-educated American widow⁹² who served as a role model for Henrietta, demonstrated the right combination of missionary zeal, intellectual and scientific interests, and enthusiasm for women's education and advancement.⁹³ At Zion Congregational Church, she organized the Women's Board of Mission which cooperated with the Baptists' Grande Ligne Ladies Association.⁹⁴ Lay taught ancient and modern history and especially science to her pupils. In 1866 she had petitioned the Natural History Society to admit women as members.⁹⁵ As a graduate of the Troy Female Academy in neighboring New York State, Eleanor Lay followed Principal Emma Willard in advocating professional training for women in public women's colleges.⁹⁶ In the 1870s Lay became one of the founding members of

Young Ladies, and Mrs. Simpson's Establishment. While the educational history of French Catholic women's education in Quebec has its historians, the education of English Canadian Protestant girls in Montreal in the nineteenth century is a totally neglected field. One author investigates the women's academies in the eastern townships, see Anne Drummond, "From Autonomous Public Academy to Public High School: Quebec Protestant Education 1829-1889," (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1986) and "Gender, Profession, and Principals: the Teachers of Quebec Protestant Academies, 1875-1900," *Historical Studies in Education*, 11 (Spring 1990), 59-71.

⁹¹ Diary, 27-28 May 1864; *Montreal Witness*, 12 February 1855; 6 February 1856; 10 February 1858. *Montreal Herald*, 1 February 1866; *Montreal Daily Star*, 23 January 1874.

⁹² Robert W. Lay edited the *Maple Leaf* (1852-53) in Montreal. After his death in 1853, Eleanor Lay took over the *Maple Leaf*. See Carole Gerson, *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 21-22, 161 n34.

⁹³ Baptists in Nova Scotia created a Female Seminary in 1859 but after the experience of the failed Montreal Baptist College, Montreal Baptists do not appear to have entered the field of female education. See James Doyle Davidson, "Alice Shaw and her Grand Pre Seminary: A Story of Female Education," in Barry M. Moody, ed., *Repent and Believe. The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada* (Hantsport, N. S.: Lancelot Press: 1980), 124-37.

⁹⁴ *Montreal Star*, 9 January, 7 February, 11 May and 21 October 1874. The Women's Board of Mission was established in the United States by women of the Congregational Church in 1868. When the Montreal group began is unclear. On the question of cooperation and the formation of the Canadian Evangelical Alliance see Rev. John Wood, *Memoire of Henry Wilkes, DD. LLD His life and times* (Montreal: F. E. Grafton and Sons, 1887), 127.

⁹⁵ *Proceedings at the Annual Meeting of the Natural History Society of Montreal For the Year Ending May 1868* (Montreal: 1868), 14, 34 (hereafter *MNHS Proceedings*); *Montreal Herald*, 14 June 1867.

⁹⁶ Anne Firor Scott, "The Ever-Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Seminary 1822-1872," in *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press,

the Ladies Educational Association connected with McGill University.⁹⁷

At home, Henrietta's father reinforced the importance of natural science as a useful Christian pursuit. In 1865, Muir and several prominent Baptists became life members of the Montreal Natural History Society, the oldest scientific institution in Canada.⁹⁸ Her father's passion for science inspired Henrietta to develop an interest in botany,⁹⁹ but more importantly it demonstrated that education, scientific study and Christianity were compatible. When Muir purchased his microscope in 1864, he was indifferent to the controversy surrounding Charles Darwin's theories.¹⁰⁰ Instead, Muir pursued microscopy to discover evidence of God's plan in nature. "To the Christian Philosopher, the microscope reveals the most amazing evidence of that Creative Power and wisdom before which great and small are terms without meaning," explained one writer, adding "he rises from the contemplation of the minutiae which it displays, more certain of his faith in God."¹⁰¹

The evangelical creed flourished among Protestant Montrealers as it did elsewhere in Canada forming an important part of English Canada's cultural life for the next forty years.¹⁰² Undisturbed

1984), 64-88.

⁹⁷ *Report of Montreal Ladies' Educational Association 1871-1872* (Montreal: 1872) listed as ordinary members Mrs. William Muir and Miss Muir who were possibly Henrietta's mother and sister Amelia.

⁹⁸ *MNHS Proceedings* (1865). On the importance of natural history see Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

⁹⁹ Pamela Miller and Brian Young, "Private, Family and Community Life," in *The McCord Family: a Passionate Visions* (Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992), 61-65. McCord's wife Anne Ross McCord shared his passion in botany and became an accomplished wild flower artist.

¹⁰⁰ Patricia Roome, "The Darwin Debate in Canada: 1860-1880," in *Science, Technology and Culture in Historical Perspective*, eds. L. A. Knafla, M. S. Staum, T. H. E. Travers (Calgary: University of Calgary, 1976), 183-205; Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 273.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in John Harley Warner, "'Exploring the Inner Labyrinths of Creation': Popular Microscopy in Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Science*, 37:4 (October 1982), 23.

¹⁰² Gauvreau, 287. For opposing views see Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), ch. 2. A. B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

by Darwinian debates, William Muir and his friends found natural science spiritually uplifting, fashionable and eminently bourgeois. In 1869, William became a founding member and President of the Montreal Microscopic Club, a select male club which brought wealthy, amateur enthusiasts together with McGill Christian scientists such as William Dawson. Each gentleman took a turn at “receiving the members” and their microscopes at his home. When Muir hosted the Club, Henrietta and her sisters remained discretely in the background, allowed to listen to the men’s discussion.¹⁰³ William invited Henrietta to accompany him to the Second Annual Conversazione of the Natural History Society, a highlight of the social season for the Montreal elite.¹⁰⁴

During the Civil War years, neither the Muirs, their Baptist friends, nor other evangelicals participated in the “brilliant society functions” created in honor of the British military stationed in Montreal.¹⁰⁵ Serious Christians disdained these elaborate balls with their emphasis on flirting, dancing, smoking and drinking rather than intellectual improvement. Henrietta’s life was however far from boring. Between church socials, lectures, skating, sliding parties and visiting, she was often too tired to attend school. Her diary speaks enthusiastically about the Literary Club where Baptist youths met regularly and discussed politics and books. “I have read this month Longfellow’s ‘Spanish Students’, & Goldsmith’s ‘She Stooped to conquer’ not very fine pieces but still I would like to know what I can about workes (sic) by these celebrated men”, she wrote. For summer reading, the earnest Henrietta purchased “A History of English Literature”.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ McGill Archives, MNHS Papers, Minute Book of the Montreal Microscopic Club, 2 March 1868. See also the Montreal Microscopic Club Album which contains seven Notman photographs of members including an excellent one of William Muir. *Montreal Herald*, 28 February 1866 notes William Muir and other displayed microscopes with objects. On the Scottish influence and role of science in Canada see Zeller, *Inventing Canada*, 273.

¹⁰⁴ Diary, 2 February 1864. *Montreal Witness*, 12 February 1864. McGill Archives, MNHS Papers, Stanley B. Frost and Helen Bakanopanos, “The Natural History Society of Montreal, 1827-1925,” (Unpublished Paper, 1980).

¹⁰⁵ For a fictionalized portrait see Rosanna Leprohon, *Antoinette De Mirecourt: or Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing* (1864, reprint with an introduction by John C. Stockdale, Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), xxiii.

¹⁰⁶ Diary, 30 March 1864. See also Gerson, *A Purer Taste*, ch. 2.

Often during quiet moments, the young Henrietta dreamed of becoming a writer or a painter. When adolescent self-doubt often overshadowed her fantasies, passionate friendships with Baptist girls sustained her desire to paint. "I could scarcely keep my eyes from her face," Henrietta confided after spending an evening with Mary. "I long so for a painter's pencil to sketch her face with all its expressions."¹⁰⁷ Her family and Montreal's vibrant culture gave Henrietta further encouragement. The Muirs commissioned portraits, displayed an early interest in photography, and subscribed to the Art Association of Montreal founded in 1860. An eager patron of the arts, William Muir chaired a fund created to erect a statue of Queen Victoria in the mid 1860s.¹⁰⁸ Henrietta's art studies were typical of those given to privileged Victorian women. Her first teacher, Kate De Goyler, attended the Baptist Church, taught drawing at Mrs. Lay's Academy, and exhibited her paintings at the Montreal Art Association's 1865 *Conversazione*, an important cultural event which Henrietta also attended in her father's company.¹⁰⁹ Women artists like Kate De Goyler were rare, most Montreal drawing masters were male. Artists John Arthur Fraser and William Lewis Fraser, who worked at the Notman Photographic Studios, taught Henrietta the polite art of drawing and painting.¹¹⁰

Even at fourteen, Henrietta wanted to participate in the male world and spent as much time as possible with her father. Between attending school and evening lectures, she devoted many hours to becoming an excellent chess partner. Her diary profiled her father's activities and interests whether it was the grand piano he had purchased for his daughters or his magic lantern displays. Given such an education Henrietta could discuss science with a young male caller while simultaneously

¹⁰⁷ Diary, 13 June 1864.

¹⁰⁸ Mario Beland, *Painting Quebec, 1820-1850: New View, New Perspectives*, (Quebec: Musée du Québec, 1992); Roslyn Rosenfeld, "Miniatures and Silhouettes in Montreal, 1760-1860" (M. F. A thesis, Concordia University, 1981). "An Index of Miniaturists and Silhouettists who worked in Montreal," *Journal of Canadian History*, V: 2 (1981), 111-21. *Montreal Herald*, 28 February and 18 December 1865.

¹⁰⁹ Marie Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (London: Viking, 1992), 13; *Montreal Herald*, 28 February 1865.

¹¹⁰ For women and art in the Victorian era see Tippett, ch. 1; Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), ch. 1.

teaching him to crochet.¹¹¹

Like most bourgeois girls, Henrietta developed intimate female friendships during these adolescent years.¹¹² The experience of conversion and evangelical commitment bound young friends closely together. Henrietta treasured her friendship with Amelia Rice, her cousin with whom she shared baptism.¹¹³ “I will not keep any thing from her bad or good she knows me more than Mama or Papa,” Henrietta passionately exclaimed demonstrating her friend’s emotional centrality. “Sweet girl how I love her she would not kiss me today but encouraged me to hope for one tomorrow. She knows my love to her too well and I am thinking, she can afford to be saucy. How sweet she looks today so bright and mischievous when she hid her face from me & promised a kiss tomorrow.”¹¹⁴ The girls attended prayer meetings, Sunday School, and church services. Together they attended teas, skated, shopped, sewed, studied music and went on holidays. A group photocopy of Henrietta, Millie and their cousins captures their affection and warm friendship.¹¹⁵ Whether the girls’ friendship lasted beyond adolescence remains a mystery, but as an adult Henrietta sought women’s companionship.

As the Muir girls grew older, sister Amelia (not to be confused with cousin Millie) became Henrietta’s closest companion sharing her dreams, work, and family life. The calm, quiet and musical Amelia more closely resembled the ideal Christian young lady, or so Henrietta believed. On New Year’s Day Henrietta pouted that, “Mama and Amy have been receiving callers all day. What

¹¹¹ Diary, 18 January, 2 February, 24 March and 11 May 1864.

¹¹² Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 53-76.

¹¹³ Amelia Elizabeth Rice was born 12 April 1848 to Mary Anne Muir Rice- William Muir’s sister- and Rev. William Henry Rice, a American Baptist minister who had been pastor at St. Helen’s in 1836. Mary Anne Rice died in 1848 leaving a son Ebenezer Rice and other daughter Anne Rice. The three children were raised in Montreal by Grandparents Ebenezer and Jean Muir. Young Ebenezer Muir Rice became a Baptist minister and one of Ebenezer Sr. ’s favorite grandchildren.

¹¹⁴ Diary, 6 January 1864.

¹¹⁵ There is a carte de visite photograph of Amelia Rice dated 1867 in the Notman Collection.

stupid work it is. I am so glad that I was excused from it today. I have been drawing the map of Africa instead."¹¹⁶ During that winter, Amelia helped Henrietta with her piano studies. Henrietta, always an eager student of languages, preferred her French, German and Italian studies. When Amelia decided she wanted to learn Italian, Henrietta happily tutored her sister. From childhood through to adulthood, the sister learned to respect their differences.

In this cosmopolitan atmosphere, even young women were encouraged to engage in political debate. An ardent abolitionist, William Muir supported the Montreal anti-slavery society. Throughout the American Civil War, Henrietta listened to abolition sermons in church, while at dinner her family discussed Canada's position and a Christian's responsibility. With the naiveté of youth, Henrietta absorbed her family's evangelical commitment to individual freedom and spiritual equality, only vaguely understanding the implication of such concepts. "I was glad to read the Russians had emancipated the serf", she commented in 1864.¹¹⁷ The Muirs like other evangelical families encouraged their children to adopt liberal views based on their distinctive concept of history. They believed that political liberty and social progress arose because of God's blessing on Anglo-Saxon people. Colonial evangelicals argued that "history itself bound Protestantism, nationalism, and liberty and endowed their fledgling colonial society with a divine mission in the scheme of salvation." By the millennium all peoples would "experience God's redemption in history."¹¹⁸

Colonial politics while important always took second place to the Muirs' religious commitments. Liberals and Reformers by religious persuasion, Ebenezer and his sons supported the separation of church and state especially in education. The Quebec situation, however, often challenged their Reform politics and led them occasionally to adopt the Tory cause,¹¹⁹ as during the

¹¹⁶ Diary, 1 January 1864.

¹¹⁷ *Montreal Witness*, 7 December 1859 noted that the anti-slavery society was created in Montreal with S. Lyman Esq. as treasurer.

¹¹⁸ Gauvreau, 117.

¹¹⁹ Walter G. Putman, *The Baptists and Public Affairs in the Province of Canada 1840-67* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 79 quotes a source as saying "we fear some Baptists among the duped." For a

1837-38 Rebellion when some of the Muir family joined the Loyalist and constitutional forces.¹²⁰ The debate on the secularization of the clergy reserves brought the family back to their Reform cause. Along with other Baptists, they supported the establishment of a non-sectarian university.¹²¹ The events of 1849 presented Quebec evangelicals with another dilemma. Britain's repeal of the Navigation Acts, the passage of the Rebellion Losses Bill and a financial recession encouraged the Muirs to desert Baptist Reformer Rollo Campbell, Ebenezer's brother-in-law. Likewise they parted company with Principal J. M. Cramp, son George's father-in-law. In pursuing their business interests they supported the Tory faction. Facing bankruptcy, the Muirs signed the Annexation Manifesto and supported the British American League.¹²² When rioters burned the Parliament buildings, ransacked Hincks and Lafontaine's home and damaged the offices of The Pilot located in Ebenezer's Building, the Muirs retreated. One of the instigators was Henrietta's uncle's law partner who was subsequently charged in connection with the riot.¹²³ After their law firm dissolved, George Muir retired from law and the Muir family from colonial politics.¹²⁴ Before Confederation, various Muirs entered Montreal municipal politics. During the 1850s grandfather Ebenezer served with Rollo Campbell as city assessor. From 1861-1865, Henrietta's Uncle George served first as a city council and later assessor but was eventually defeated for supporting temperance. Unlike the Muirs, Henrietta's great uncle Rollo Campbell maintained a consistent Reform position and thus prospered politically in the 1850s. His newspaper The Pilot served as the government's mouthpiece

prominent Baptist Reformer and liberal politician see "William McMaster", *DCB*, Vol. 11, 574-77.

¹²⁰ See J. Douglas Borthwick, *Historical and Biographical Gazetteer of Montreal to the year 1892* (Montreal: J. Lovell, 1892), 65-71.

¹²¹ *Montreal Register*, 20 July, 5 October and 28 September 1843.

¹²² Josephine Foster, "The Montreal Riot of 1849," *CHR*, XXXII:1 (March 1951), 63-64; *Elgin-Grey Papers*, 1493-1494; *Montreal Register*, 26 April and 3 May 1849.

¹²³ *Pilot*, 7 July, 2 August and 16 October 1849. For a petition of those opposing annexation containing the signatures of J. M. Cramp, Rollo Campbell and William Muir Jr. see *Pilot*, 20 October 1849. Throughout the political turmoil William Muir placed advertisements in Campbell's newspaper, *Pilot*, 12 June and 5 July 1849.

¹²⁴ *Montreal Register*, 12 October 1848; *Montreal Witness*, 6 April 1854, 17 January 1867.

until its bankruptcy in the 1860s.¹²⁵

During the 1860s, Henrietta's family and the Montreal Baptists enthusiastically supported Confederation seeing the union of the British colonies as the beginning of a Christian nation. In common with other evangelicals they demonstrated a "messianic nationalism" which reflected their religious conviction that their "evangelical efforts to convert the world would hasten the advent of the millennial kingdom."¹²⁶ Religion and business mixed well in the heady 1860s. With the building of the Intercolonial Railway and increased business from the British Army, William Muir had expanded his wholesale clothing business. "One of the principal elements of the increase has been our getting the Maritime Provinces as a market. Not less than one-third of my own trade is with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick," Muir explained to a Parliamentary Committee in 1874.¹²⁷

Basking in this prosperity, William sent Henrietta and Amelia on a European Grand Tour in the fall of 1867 to finish their education. With other affluent Canadians, they journeyed to the Paris Exhibition to see, among many other sights, William Notman's award-winning photographs.¹²⁸ The young ladies trekked from Glasgow to London, Paris, Rome, Venice and Florence accompanied by either their father or Uncle James. They had studied Italian in preparation for Henrietta's winter art studies in Venice. The European Grand Tour had become an institution for "elegant Canadians" who followed traditional itineraries hoping to acquire the cultural and social polish needed to be successful members of the bourgeoisie. Conversely, it seemed a less customary pilgrimage for evangelical ladies.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ *Montreal Herald*, 12 December 1863, 21 February 1864.

¹²⁶ Gauvreau, 121.

¹²⁷ Quoted in Peter Waite, *Canada 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 8.

¹²⁸ *Montreal Gazette*, 20 July and 22 December 1867. Andrew Learmont Spedon, *Sketches of a Tour from Canada to Paris, by Way of the British Isles, During the Summer of 1867* (Montreal: J. Lovell, 1868).

¹²⁹ Eva-Marie Kroller, *Canadian Travellers in Europe 1851-1900* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 46. See also Peter Gay, *Education of the Senses: the Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, Vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

This important trip marked the end of the sisters' youth. Henrietta carefully preserved her journal, and other souvenirs of jewelry, china, art and antiques as treasured symbols of this memorable adventure and an elegant era.¹³⁰ Besides encouraging Henrietta's artistic dreams, this year abroad introduced the sisters to their Glasgow relatives and other Scottish Baptists. When the sisters visited Venice, northern Italy was just recovering from the effect of the Austrian occupation. During their winter visit, the women grew sympathetic to Italian nationalism and unification, a movement which reminded them of Canada's recent success.¹³¹ Following these adventures, in 1868 Amelia and Henrietta returned to Montreal to face empty days, the plight of young women of the leisure class. As evangelical Muirs, the sisters hoped to serve God, their Church and their community. Although missionary work did not leap out to meet them, eventually both sisters, and Henrietta in particular, discovered their commitment.

¹³⁰ Claudia Whipple who inherited this diary has not been able to locate it. But she remembers reading it and being impressed with the sisters' adventures.

¹³¹ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 14 November 1917.

II. "A Woman's Commission": the Missionary Impulse, 1868-1883

"Have we as Christian women, any commission given us by Christ, to spread the precious Gospel message from pole to pole?" a Baptist women's newspaper asked its readers. Henrietta decided God had indeed called her to do work "special, or peculiar to our sex."¹ Montreal's industrial growth, an evangelical revival, and the nascent women's rights' movement created an opening for Henrietta and Amelia to launch a reading room, an association for young working women, a newspaper and a printing business.² Despite art studies, marriage and motherhood, "her work", as Henrietta termed these projects, prospered, faltering only after her husband abandoned Montreal for the Northwest. Raised amid bourgeois elegance, Henrietta lacked her grandparents' single-minded devotion to religion. Although she wanted an exciting career, becoming an overseas missionary seemed too radical in 1870. If she had been a man she would have become a lawyer, as she often told her own children. She was born thirty years too early to realize this dream. Nor did a teaching career interest Henrietta although she could have attended the Canadian Literary Institute, a new Ontario Baptist coeducational college. Her father, ever the evangelical and proud of his family's reputation, encouraged Henrietta to follow in familiar footsteps and study art or literature with an eye to religious publishing.

Art presented Henrietta with limited options, caught as she was between the restrictions of gender and religion. Painting for women "remained merely a polite hobby" and, as art historian Maria Tippet concluded, "if they did reach any degree of proficiency, professional disaster waited them". In this male profession, women's work was either marginalized or ignored but never

¹ *Canadian Missionary Link* (hereafter *Link*), November 1878. On missions see Ruth Compton Brower, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Patricia R. Hill, *The World their Household: the American Women's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985).

² See Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993).

celebrated.³ American art schools rarely accepted women students until the early 1870s, while the new Montreal School of Arts and Design refused female applicants before 1880. Denied entrance into a formal program, Henrietta continued private lessons with John Bell-Smith and the Fraser brothers. In 1867, William Fraser had just organized the Society of Canadian Artists (SCA) but this male club excluded women from membership. Henrietta relied upon her male friendships for access to the art world.⁴ Given such problems, an aspiring female artist like Henrietta was fortunate Montreal now provided artists with exhibition opportunities. At an 1870 exhibition, Henrietta met Wyatt Eaton, a young painter from a good Quebec Baptist family. Eaton left for Paris but when he returned Henrietta followed him to New York.⁵ She also attended British artist Frances Hopkins' exhibition of water colour drawings in 1866. Hopkins, an exceptional artist who considered herself a professional, painted unconventional themes taken from the Canadian fur trade.⁶ But it would take more than twenty years for Canada to develop strong women's art organizations to sustain professionals.⁷ Art studies led Henrietta and most women of her era into conventional feminine areas: porcelain and ivory painting, botanical art, lace and embroidery designs and children's book illustration. Henrietta enjoyed working in these traditional "feminine" fields although she also aspired to a professional reputation. A prize possession, given to her by her father, was Catharine Parr Traill's *Canadian Wild Flowers Painted and Lithographed by Agnes Fitzgibbon* published in Montreal in 1868.⁸

³ Maria Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Viking, 1992).

⁴ Anthea Callen, *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870 - 1914* (London: Astragal, 1979); Denis Reid, *Our Own Country Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery, 1979), 101-06; *Montreal Gazette* 12 January, 9, 22 and 26 October 1869; J. Russell Harper, *Early Painters and Engravers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970) 120-21; *Edmonton Journal*, 24 June 1933.

⁵ Harper, 101-02. *Montreal Gazette*, 7 February 1870.

⁶ Tippett, 19.

⁷ G. Durand, "Women's Position in Art," *The Crayon*, 8 February 1861, 25; K. Lyn Sinclair, "Witness to Her Identity: Sidney Strickland Tully Canadian Woman Artist 1860-1911," (Master's thesis: University of Alberta, 1990), 14.

⁸ Tippett, 16; Pamela Miller and Brian Young, "Private, Family and Community Life," in *The McCord*

In contrast to the art world's cool reception, philanthropy and social reform provided endless possibilities for Henrietta.⁹ Evangelical women, among the movements' most dynamic leaders, encouraged their daughters efforts. Many like Henrietta and Amelia chafed at their idleness and "despaired at the meaninglessness of their lives."¹⁰ The evangelical revival of the 1860s and early 1870s encouraged young women to reject their traditional domestic role in favour of serving God wherever he called them to work, whether it be in Britain, America, India or China. Many British feminists, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Emily Davies, Sophia Jex-Blake and Constance Maynard to name only a few, came from evangelical families and, like the Muir sisters, they each had questioned the dominant Victorian ideal of womanhood.¹¹ Exciting careers opened up for evangelicals whom God called into service. Henrietta found inspiration from women like Annie Macpherson, Josephine Butler and Elizabeth McMaster. Macpherson, a young Scottish woman and recent evangelical convert, decided in 1865 that God had chosen her to minister to the poor. She began the Rescue Refuge, a London home for young match-box makers in 1868. When the editor of an evangelical British newspaper publicized her cause, Macpherson raised enough money to transform an empty warehouse into a children's hostel.¹² To aid the London hostel Macpherson organized a Canadian receiving home. With the support of Montreal evangelicals, she launched an extensive child emigration program in 1870. Josephine Butler, the English reformer who formed the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, insisted that she was called by God to rescue fallen women. Between 1870 and 1886 Butler led the "shrieking

Family: A Passionate Vision (Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992), 61-65.

⁹ Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Burstyn, 136.

¹¹ See also Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of Their Social Work in Victorian Era* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962).

¹² Clara M. S. Lowe, *God's Answer: A Record of Miss Annie MacPherson's Work at the Home of Industry, Spitalfields, London and in Canada* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1882); Kenneth Bagnell, *The Little Immigrants: the Orphans Who Came to Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980), 19-25.

sisterhood”, as their opponents labeled them, in a controversial campaign which critiqued male sexuality and defended the prostitute. Like Macpherson, she used her pen in defense of her cause. Henrietta and Canadian evangelicals read Butler’s essays in the Association’s journal and followed her campaign.¹³ Closer to home, Elizabeth McMaster, a Baptist whose work was not as sensational as Butler, was similarly “led by the Spirit of God” to found the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children in 1875. For the next twenty years, McMaster dedicated her life to the hospital’s development, even leaving her family to study nursing in the United States.¹⁴

Along with these Christian women, Henrietta saw evangelical work as a challenge. When she returned from Europe, she became a Sunday School teacher and volunteered for mission work.¹⁵ Between 1862 and 1886 Montreal Baptists created five missions in response to the city’s rapid industrial growth. Merchant T. James Claxton developed the Eastend Mission from a small Sunday School. Six years later, Claxton, William Muir and several affluent Baptists built Russell Hall to accommodate the growing mission.¹⁶ Henrietta and her sister became two of the best teachers in Claxton’s large Sunday School, which contemporaries judged as the most successful of “any denomination in the city of Montreal”. By 1874 the expanding mission had become St. Catharines Street Baptist Church.¹⁷ James and Jane Cridiford Claxton provided Henrietta with further models of evangelical leadership. An English Baptist, Claxton settled in Montreal in 1850, opened a dry goods business, built himself a commercial empire, and eventually founded and became Vice-President of the Sun Life Assurance Company. Although younger than Henrietta’s parents, the

¹³ Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 150-51. Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), ch. 5.

¹⁴ Judith Young, “A Divine Mission: Elizabeth McMaster and the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, 1875-92,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, II:1 (1994), 71-90.

¹⁵ Anne M. Boylan, “Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: the Role of Women in Sunday Schools,” *Feminist Studies*, 4 (October 1978), 62-80.

¹⁶ J. A. Gordon, *History of the First Baptist Church of Montreal 1820-1906* (Montreal: n. p., 1906), 18.

¹⁷ *Montreal Star*, 15 June 1874.

Claxtons became their close friends. While raising a family of sixteen children at St. Helen's Church, James and Jane showed incredible energy, evangelical zeal and financial largess. During these years, there was hardly a project the Claxtons did not champion. Nor were all their ventures religious. T. James was "an ardent sportsman renowned for his sponsorship of lacrosse."¹⁸

Baptist men combined religious and secular interests more easily than either their wives or daughters. Henrietta struggled to reconcile the secular and the sacred, the male and the female spheres in her life. Evangelical work and the financial recession of 1874 created the opportunity, if not the excuse, for Henrietta to pursue further art studies in New York. Painting became a way to finance her special philanthropy, the Working Women's Association (WWA). Begun as an interdenominational Christian project, the WWA reflected concerns that Henrietta and Amelia shared with many other evangelicals. The sisters had followed the debates on women's emancipation, the emigration of British gentlewomen, employment opportunities for single women, and the fate of young rural women arriving in Montreal to work. Young Baptist women could best serve "their sex", argued their minister, by following the example of the Montreal Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Revival meetings, their father's support and later Henrietta's fiancée's encouragement set the stage for the sisters' work. Constant exposure, through print and traveling missionaries, to prominent American and British female evangelicals bolstered the sisters' confidence in their mission.

Throughout the late 1860's, the Montreal bourgeoisie followed debates on "the women's question". Henrietta's father and uncles, members of the Mercantile Library Association, sponsored a debate in 1865 on the question, "Ought women to exercise the right to suffrage."¹⁹ Newspapers covered the spectacle of a woman campaigning to be a Toronto school trustee in 1868, while the *Montreal Herald* invited its readers to attend lectures on "the Women's Rights Question" given by

¹⁸ David J. Bercuson, *True Patriot: the Life of Brooke Claxton* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 13. Brooke Claxton, Liberal Minister of Defense 1946 -1954 was T. James and Jane's grandson.

¹⁹ *Montreal Herald*, 14 April 1865. *26th Annual Report of Mercantile Library Association 1866-67* (Montreal: 1876).

a British actress and a clergyman in 1869. Henrietta's liberal father and a significant segment of the Baptist community favoured female suffrage.²⁰ The Muir family also subscribed to the *Canadian Illustrated News*, a progressive Montreal paper which featured a women's column edited by Blanche B. This outspoken journalist reminded readers that:

Women suffrage is, it appears, an old institution in some of the nonconformist bodies, which freely allow women to vote, but not to speak in public. Some suffer women both to speak and to vote. It has been alleged that such was the rule in the primitive Church, so far at least as the voting is concerned. A book published some twenty years ago or more, says that in earliest Christian times, 'The Church moreover, befriended woman, not only by teaching that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, but by exemplifying the truth is the not less effective, because of the modestly silent voice which it gave to her in all the affairs of the society.' It is to this right of female suffrage recognized by Christians, that Porphyry, who lived at the close of the third century, still alluded with a sneer. "Matrons and women" said he, "compose their senate and rule in the churches, and the priestly order is disposed of according to their good pleasure."²¹

Such Biblical and historical arguments defending women's spiritual authority and equality became familiar to Henrietta who quietly supported women's suffrage.

Henrietta's family participated in the public debates on women's education, legal rights, and employment. They followed the campaign for women to attend university exams spearheaded by the Woman's Educational Associations of Boston and Edinburgh.²² Begun in 1871, the Montreal Educational Association included Mrs. T. J. Claxton, Eleanor Lay, Jane Muir and her daughters as members. While Henrietta and Amelia attended lectures, the elder women lobbied for the establishment of a woman's college at McGill.²³ Principal Dawson, a close friend of William Muir, supported the separatist idea in principle although in practice he remained opposed to women attending McGill in any capacity. The campaign for a woman's' college, not surprisingly, failed but the Normal School and the Montreal High School for Girls opened in 1875. Women finally

²⁰ *Montreal Herald*, 15, 21 March, 9 July, 3 August and 8 October 1868; 3, 5 March 1869.

²¹ *Canadian Illustrated News* (hereafter *CINews*), 15 March 1873.

²² *CINews*, 17 June 1871 and 12 July 1873; *Montreal Herald*, 8 May 1873; Principal Dawson, *Thoughts on the Higher Education of Women* (Montreal: Gazette Printing, 1871).

²³ McGill Archives, Dawson Papers, *Report of the Montreal Ladies Education Association. First Session 1871-1872* (Montreal: Gazette Printing House, 1872).

gained admittance to McGill and the Faculty of Arts in 1884.²⁴ The debate on women's education and employment reflected the plight of the "surplus", single, middle-class women. Untrained, dependent and barred from employment, their talents lay wasted and their lives often became tragic. In Canada many well-bred ladies like Henrietta and her sisters faced similar situations.

The elder sisters, both avid readers, followed these debates in the *Englishwoman's Review* and met Maria Rye, a regular contributor, during her yearly Canadian visits. Rye worked with the Female Middle Class Emigration Society bringing women seeking employment to Montreal.²⁵ Motivated by a feminist desire to see middle-class women achieve greater independence, the mid-Victorian women's movement gave priority to women's education and employment. Rye was one of the London reformers who had created the *Englishwoman's Review* and founded the Society for the Promoting the Employment of Women.²⁶ Emily Faithfull, an innovative member, established the Victoria Press, trained female compositors and published the *Victoria Magazine and Work and Women*. From the pens of these British feminists came numerous influential essays and books on women's work.²⁷

The Montreal debate focused on domestic labour and the servant problem. As industrial development made the city the "work shop of Canada", working-class women entered factories in preference to domestic service. Others found employment in the shops on Notre Dame Street.²⁸ Distressed by this trend clergymen, masters and mistresses convened a conference in November

²⁴ Donna Ronish, "The Development of Higher Education for Women at McGill University from 1857-1899 with Special Reference to the Role of Sir William Dawson," (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1872). See also Margaret Gillett, *We Walked Warily: A History of Women at McGill* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1981).

²⁵ A. J. Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Gentile Poverty and Female Emigration 1830-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 124-29.

²⁶ Andrew Rosen, "Emily Davies and the Women's Movement 1862-1867," *Journal of British Studies*, XIX (1979), 101-21; J. Kamm, *Rapiers and Battleaxes* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966).

²⁷ See William E. Fredeman, "Emily Faithfull and the Victoria Press: an Experiment in Sociological Bibliography," *The Library*, XIX:2 (June 1974), 139-64.

²⁸ Bettina Bradbury, "The Working Class Family Economy, 1861-1881," (Ph. D diss. : Concordia University, 1984). See also *Working Families*, ch. 4-5.

1872. Journalist Blanche B. urged this group to create “a pleasant, cheer full and cheap home ... freed from bearing anything like a charitable character - an institution that would pay for itself.” In the confident voice of middle-class philanthropy, she explained that Montreal ladies had established and directed “half a dozen other homes, all of which are doing good work.” The writer recommended that women accept help from the gentlemen, but added: “it is a women’s question and ought to be dealt with by ourselves.”²⁹ The issues, arguments and news Blanche B. discussed in her columns, including art education for women, training female printers and lady lawyers, and establishing a self-supporting home for working women, mirror the activities that Henrietta would become involved in over the next decade.³⁰

Emily Faithfull toured the eastern United States and Canada in 1873 lecturing on the necessity of creating innovative solutions to address “the changed position of women in the nineteenth century.” During the winter, Faithful visited Maria Rye, Annie Macpherson and their Montreal Evangelical supporters.³¹ Searching for philanthropic work, Henrietta either attended her lectures or read about her work which was widely publicized in the Montreal press. When Faithful was asked, “What can be done for poor single women?” she suggested creating opportunities in trades like “telegraphy, photography, wood-engraving, watch-making and type-setting” and opening technical, art and design schools to women.³² This advice on women’s employment meshed neatly with Henrietta’s Christian values. Recently, her Baptist minister had reminded women of their duty

²⁹ *CINews*, 22 February 1873.

³⁰ The offices of the *CINews* were located at 10 Place D’Armes in Ebenezer Muir’s building. The Leggo Co. Lithographers’ office was a block from Henrietta’s home, 319 St. Antoine. Her uncle James Muir was one of the few Montreal businessmen to advertise in the *CINews*. Later in 1876, the *CINews* moved to Bleury Street near the first Working Women’s Reading Rooms. Many of the painters in the Society of Canadian Artists produced illustrations for *CINews* including Vogt, Fraser and Sandham. When the column began the editors requested “Our lady readers are invited to contribute to this department.” *CINews*, 22 February and 23 March 1873.

³¹ Emily Faithfull, *Three Visits to America* (New York: Fowler, Wells Co: 1885), 389.

³² *CINews*, 1 February 1873. See *7th Annual Report Women’s Protective Immigration Society of Montreal* (Montreal:1880); Barbara Roberts, “Sex, Politics, and Religion: controversies in female immigration reform work in Montreal, 1881-1911”, *Atlantis*, 6:1 (Autumn 1980), 28-38.

regarding the “social vices” of prostitution and intemperance and encouraged them to create respectable lodgings, find decent employment, and organize religious meetings for working girls.³³

The Montreal YMCA, now located in an elegant new building on Victorian Square, attracted enthusiastic young evangelicals. Just as the young men’s service set an inspiring example, their personal charm also attracted the Muir sisters who were searching for romance as well as practical advice for their projects. The YMCA’s attraction was understandable since their father had created the Association at St. Helen’s Chapel and each Muir brother subsequently served on the YMCA executive.³⁴ Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, family friends like Claxton occupied the Presidency.³⁵

A young man, active in the YMCA and bearing the famous Protestant name of Oliver Cromwell, entered Henrietta’s life in 1871. Given their similar family background, common ideas, and mutual interests, the couple’s romance rested on a solid foundation. Although their families had spent fifty years as prominent Baptists co-workers, Oliver first came to Montreal to study medicine at McGill. His widowed aunt, Sarah Plimsoll Edwards, and her family who attended First Baptist Church introduced Oliver to Henrietta.³⁶ A dashing young man from a wealthy family, Oliver easily impressed Henrietta whose intellectual interests and commitment to evangelical service he celebrated. He was also handsome, fond of expensive clothes, good literature and art. Based on his surviving correspondence he was passionate about Henrietta.

When Oliver left Canada in 1873 for post-graduate studies in Britain, his letters encouraged

³³ *Montreal Herald*, 2 November 1872. See also Kathryn Harvey, “‘To Love Honour and Obey,’ Wife-Battering in Working-Class Montreal, 1869-1879” (Master’s thesis, Université de Montreal, 1991) and “Amazons and Victims: Resisting Wife-Abuse in Working-Class Montreal, 1869-1879”, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 2 (1991), 131-47.

³⁴ *5th Annual Report Montreal YWCA and City Mission 1856* (Montreal: 1856); *Montreal Directory*, 1858 list George Barclay Muir as Secretary; Gordon, 8; *Montreal Witness*, 26 October 1859.

³⁵ Alfred Sandham, *History of the Montreal YMCA* (Montreal: D. Bentley, 1873), 22-27. *Montreal Witness*, 26 October 1859.

³⁶ The Plimsoll family were Montreal Baptists. Sarah’s mother Mrs. Joseph Plimsoll had conducted a Preparatory Classical Academy for Young Gentlemen in Montreal in the 1840’s. See *Montreal Register*, November 14, 1844.

Henrietta to follow the example of British evangelicals and begin religious work among Montreal's working women. Oliver described attending the London Metropolitan Tabernacle, listening to famous Baptist evangelists C. H. Spurgeon and Dwight L. Moody, and participating in the revival which was sweeping Edinburgh, Glasgow and London. With youthful enthusiasm he concluded: "What grand work it is telling the message to those who never hear it from any other source."³⁷ In London, Oliver spent Sundays giving medical examinations to the street children living at Annie MacPherson's Refuge. He also cared for Mrs. Rachael Merry, Macpherson sister and co-worker. Less idealistic now, he confessed, "it is easy for those who know nothing of what these brave women have to do and bear to speak of the blessedness of being engaged in such a work - they are indeed in the fullest sense yielding their bodies living sacrifices. It is a work that few are called to do and the many, never have the remotest idea of all they suffer who so work."³⁸ Neither Oliver nor Henrietta felt called to work among the poor, but they supported Macpherson's endeavors. Oliver forwarded Macpherson's letters to Henrietta for circulation among Canadian friends. He encouraged her to read Macpherson's column in *The Christian*, an evangelical weekly, as preparation for opening the Young Women's Reading Room and Library.

During the spring of 1874 as the recession hit Montreal, the sisters joined other Christian women to create the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Young Women's Reading Room and Library, two Christian philanthropies which addressed working women's problems, as evangelicals perceived them.³⁹ Their religious and middle-class approach differed sharply from an earlier self-help group, the Working Girls' Benefit Society, which originated in 1869 to provide sick members with "a weekly allowance, medical attendance and occasionally

³⁷ EG Papers, Letter Oliver Edwards to Hettie, March 1874.

³⁸ EG Papers, Letter Oliver Edwards to Hettie, March 1874.

³⁹ Wendy Mitchinson, "Aspects of Reform: Four Women's Organizations in Nineteenth-Century Canada" (Ph. D diss., Carleton University, 1977). Diana Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association in Canada 1970-1920: A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need" (Ph. D diss. : Carleton University, 1987).

burial and assistance to the unemployed to obtain “respectable situations.”⁴⁰ The influential and wealthy matrons, such as Mrs. P. D. Browne, Mrs. John MacDougall, Mrs. Peter Redpath and Mrs. Hugh McLennan, who created the YWCA overshadowed young, single women like the Muir sisters who sat on the Religious Committee. The YWCA’s mandate was to serve young women by encouraging recent arrivals to Montreal to use its boarding house, its referral service to clergymen and churches, and its reading room and library. Meeting rooms for ladies “connected with different benevolent institutions” completed the services offered at the Metcalfe Street YWCA.⁴¹

Henrietta and Amelia’s more modest project, the Young Women’s Reading Room, located near the commercial district on Bleury and Craig, had opened a month earlier. Assisted by a committee, the Muir sisters managed the Reading Room. Their father and Hugh McLennan, a wealthy grain merchant and President of the Montreal Transportation Company, rented, furnished and solicited contributions for the Reading Room. Their newspaper notice invited working women to visit the Room evenings between 6 and 9:30, explaining that Tuesday would feature a religious meeting whereas Thursday would be a social event. Women who attended could “learn various kinds of fancy work and new hymns and also have an opportunity of exchanging their books from the excellent lending library.”⁴²

William Muir, a prime initiator of this project, had become a wealthy manufacturer although his clothing business had begun to feel the effect of the 1874 Great Depression which hit the US and Canada. His firm which employed between 700 and 1000 workers, about ninety percent French Canadian women, was among the seven out of fourteen companies which had survived.⁴³ In April

⁴⁰ *Montreal Herald*, 12 March 1869. See Dianna Pederson, “Providing a Woman’s Conscience: the YWCA. Female Evangelicalism, and the Girl in the City. 1870-1930,” in *Canadian Women: A Reader*, eds. Wendy Mitchinson et al (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 194-210.

⁴¹ *Montreal Star*, 3 December 1874. *First Annual Report of the Young Women’s Christian Association Montreal* (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1875). See *Montreal Star*, 22 November 1876 for notice of Mrs. P. D. Browne’s novel, “a temperance tale of a virtuous woman.”

⁴² *Montreal Star*, 24 April 1874.

⁴³ Canada, House of Commons, *Journals*, 1874, Appendix 3. “Select Committee to Enquire into the Extent and Conditions of the Manufacturing Interests of the Dominion, Evidence of W. Muir, Montreal, Wholesale Dealer in Clothing,” 35. See Michele Payette-Daoust, “The Montreal Garment Industry, 1871-

1874, Muir told the Government Committee investigating manufacturing, “we use a good deal of machinery” and make “1,000 coats a week, besides pantaloons, vests, overalls, shirts, and things of that class.” When asked about his work force, Muir replied they were “wives and daughters of mechanics who earn enough to keep the house.” Explaining the piece work system, he added “these women sit down when their breakfast, dinner and supper is over, and make a garment, but are not exclusively employed at this work all day.”⁴⁴ Typical of a Christian philanthropist Muir felt guilty at the low wages paid to French Canadian women, a consequence of Montreal’s labour surplus. “It makes my heart ache to have the women come crying for work” Muir stated, and replied he felt labour was “too cheap.” Although he justified this situation by arguing that he could not compete if he paid higher wages, the fifty-four-year-old Muir was tired of the business. He explained: “We have, during the past twenty years, made some money, but I would quit the business if I could get the whole of my capital out of it.”⁴⁵ High unemployment, an influx of single women into the city, and William Muir’s desire to see women trained for better jobs lay behind the WAA’s creation.

Muir’s educated and “converted” daughters presented a painful contrast to the lives of women who were “seated labour” for his company.⁴⁶ As lady managers, Henrietta and Amelia belonged in the literate atmosphere of the Reading Room. In common with other nineteenth-century evangelicals, their family believed the printed word had the power to bring readers to Christ. In fact William Muir, like many Christians, believed print was more powerful than the spoken word.⁴⁷ True to his convictions, Muir conducted a literacy campaign through the Sunday School movement and built an excellent library at the Baptist Church. For over fifty years, Henrietta’s grandparents,

1901,” (Master’s thesis, McGill University, 1987); Bradbury, ch. 5.

⁴⁴ Select Committee, 36.

⁴⁵ Select Committee, 38. See Robert McIntosh, “Sweated Labour: Female Needleworkers in Industrializing Canada,” in *Canadian Women: A Reader*, 142-72.

⁴⁶ See S. M. Trofimenkoff, “One Hundred and Two Muffled Voices: Canada’s Industrial Women in the 1880s,” *Altantis*, 3, 1 (Fall 1977).

⁴⁷ Brumberg, ch. 3, 5; Hill, *The World Their Household*, 86-88.

parents, and extended family distributed Bibles to many Montreal families as members of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society. The Muirs were active in the Ladies Bible Association which distributed over five hundred and fifty free Bibles in 1874 and employed four Biblewomen to visit working-class women, hospitals and jails.⁴⁸ At the Reading Rooms, Bibles and Christian literature formed the core of the library.⁴⁹

In their campaign to demonstrate the transforming power of the Bible and religious literature, nineteenth-century evangelicals effectively employed the printing press. Not surprisingly, this period saw a rapid expansion of the evangelical press in Britain and America. From the beginning women served as writers, editors and publishers. In 1861, the Baptist phenomenon Mrs. Doremus began *Missionary Crumbs* to support her Woman's Union Missionary Society. For women of Henrietta's generation, new papers appeared yearly. *Life and Light for Heathen Women* from the Boston Congregational Women's Board of Missions in 1868 was followed by *The Heathen Women's Friend* produced by the Boston Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Two years later *Women's Work for Women*, the paper of the American Presbyterian Women's Foreign Missionary Society, appeared. These journals reprinted each others' essays, raised money for missionaries and spread news of women's work, and also opened new and interesting careers to women.⁵⁰

Henrietta and Amelia subscribed to evangelical papers from New York, London and Glasgow, and purchased many tracts and religious books. By the 1870s, this collective voice was "distinctively self-consciously feminine."⁵¹ Spreading the Christian message to young working women through religious literature became the sisters' evangelical mission. This cause both

⁴⁸ Françoise Ducrocq, "London Biblewomen and Nurses Mission, 1857-1880: Class Relations Women's Relations," in *Women and the Structure of Society: Selected Research from the Fifth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women*, eds., Barbara J. Harris and JoAnn K. McNamara, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 98 - 107.

⁴⁹ *Montreal Star*, 29 January 1874. *Montreal Herald*, 18 May 1876

⁵⁰ Hill, ch. 1.

⁵¹ Hill, 88; Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977).

furthered their commitment to witness for Christ and satisfied their growing feminine consciousness. The Reading Room experiment taught the sisters more about working women than they expected. After the discovery that the YWCA could not provide enough accommodation during the recession, the Committee decided to move to larger premises on No. 73 Bleury Street and open a boarding house. From their employment agency, begun in 1875, they soon learned that women needed training and viable alternatives to domestic service and shop work. A new name, the Working Girl's Association (later changed to Working Women's Association) and a restructured management committee signified their larger mission.⁵² The project enjoyed modest success as their 1875-76 Annual Report showed. Fees paid by the seventy young women, from outside Montreal, who boarded at the Association covered the costs of the boarding house, but the Associations' other services operate by donations from the supporting churches.⁵³

Difficulties arose at the WWA after conflict within First Baptist Church resulted in the withdrawal of eighty members. The dissidents included the Muirs and many affluent members who had all opposed the existing minister. While the new Olivet Baptist congregation eventually supported the WWA, for the next five years most of their energies and resources went into building an elegant new church.⁵⁴ Conflict among the Baptists spread to the WWA Committee. Whatever the internal politics, Henrietta and Amelia hereafter were referred to as proprietresses of the boarding house. Within several years, reorganization left Henrietta as the Director of the WWA.⁵⁵

In the project's first year, Henrietta departed to study with Wyatt Eaton who had begun teaching in 1876 at New York's Cooper Union Female School of Art and the National Academy of

⁵² EG Papers, Clipping n. d. In 1868 Susan B. Anthony founded the Working Women's Association No. 1 in New York, composed of typesetters and clerks who were employed at the offices of her paper *The Revolution*. Anthony created Working Women's Association No. 2 as a boarding house for factory girls. See Kathleen Barry, *Susan B. Anthony: A Biography of a Singular Feminist* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 210-14.

⁵³ *Montreal Star*; 27 July 1876.

⁵⁴ Gordon, 11.

⁵⁵ EG Papers, Clipping n. d.; See Mackay 1876-77.

Design.⁵⁶ Eaton's growing reputation as an outstanding portrait painter made Cooper a more logical choice for Henrietta than the new Philadelphia School of Design for Women. Her father knew and approved of Eaton, an important factor in her decision.⁵⁷ Leaving for art school was an unusual decision for Henrietta, especially since she intended to marry Oliver, now practising medicine in Montreal. But Henrietta had impressed her father with her plan to open an art studio to subsidize the WWA. Unable to advance secular ambition as a reason to study art, Henrietta needed an "honorable" motive. In later life, whenever she discussed this decision, Henrietta explained defensively that art enabled her to finance the WWA. Family and friends understood this type of dedication. "You are entitled to a place of honor among the philanthropists who grace the present age," wrote her future father-in-law. Evangelists George Mueller and C. H. Spurgeon, William Edwards explained, "trust chiefly for means to support their charitable institution to faith & Prayer." The shrewd businessman concluded that Henrietta was wiser having "added works completing the conditions of success." When Henrietta's explained that philanthropic work had exerted a positive influence on her character, Oliver's father replied, "Of course I am glad to learn that the hard work incurred has had a favorable influence on yourself in making you more docile & less rebellious of yor (sic)." Edwards delivered the usual admonishment, "Don't lose this excellent quality of heart beautiful in all but chiefly in the character of woman." According to Edwards, women were "born as you know to obey and who rules by obeying."⁵⁸ Obedience and passivity never characterized Henrietta, although she paid lip service to this ideal so fondly cherished by church patriarchs.

Rather than earn money by selling her art, a more conventional alternative for Henrietta would have been to accept the evangelical communities' financial backing. But mounting bankruptcies affected Baptist merchants like William Muir. Many had also committed their resources to building

⁵⁶ On art education see Callen, 20-49. For a contemporary discussion see Walter Smith, *Art Education* (Boston: 1873), 372.

⁵⁷ Carol Lowery, "Wyatt Eaton," *DCB*, Vol. 12, 287-89.

⁵⁸ EG Papers, Letter to Miss Muir from W. Edwards, 13 April 1876.

a new church. Henrietta claimed she did not wish to depend solely upon her father and his friends' generosity. Whether Henrietta's desire was ever more than a token gesture at independence is unclear. It seems improbable that she earned enough money from painting commissions to support the WWA. Also, William Muir loyally continued his support. Although the details of her father's financial situation are unknown, he ended his partnership with William Ewan in 1876. Family legend recounts that William Muir signed a large credit note for a friend who subsequently left for the United States leaving Muir financially ruined. Whatever the real story, Muir's wholesale clothing business joined the casualty list of business collapses. Although William and his son began again as coal merchants, financial recovery took at least five more years.⁵⁹ Such a crisis made his continued commitment to the WWA all the more extraordinary.

Leaving home to attend art school helped Henrietta establish an identity separate from her family. Like Christian author Agnes Machar, a proponent of a new ideal of womanhood, Henrietta never felt comfortable with self-denial, and the ideal of women's passivity. As a young girl she had written, "I do enjoy the prayer meeting sometimes so much. I feel so humble. It is so seldom that I feel so. My pride is my great trouble."⁶⁰ Young women of Henrietta's generation were driven by a desire to live for something worthy, to widen women's sphere and to raise women's status.⁶¹ In this quest, Henrietta was persistent but not radical. The more rebellious artist, Wyatt Eaton broke free from the constraints of his evangelical upbringing to paint romantic nudes and create exceptional portraits.⁶² Henrietta faced greater obstacles. In the 1870s, few females painted nude figures or even worked on large canvases. Limited to a predicable female medium, Henrietta created delicate

⁵⁹ *Montreal Directories*, 1880-1890.

⁶⁰ EG Papers, Diary 6 January 1864,

⁶¹ Fidelis, "The New Ideal of Womanhood," *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review* (June 1879), 650-79.

⁶² Charlotte Eaton, "A Canadian Artist Who Won Fame Abroad," *Canadian Magazine*, 10:3 (Jan 1898), 241-48 and "Wyatt Eaton, Painter," *Canadian Magazine*, 32:2 (Dec 1908), 146-52. George S. Hellman, "Wyatt Eaton," *Art World* (3 Dec 1917), 203-09. Frederic Fairchild Sherman, *American Painters of Yesterday and Today* (New York: printed privately, 1919), 39-44. Edmund Morris, *Art in Canada: the Early Painters* (Toronto: n. p., 1911).

ivory miniatures.

Other new horizons opened for Henrietta during this New York visit. While attending the New York Baptist Church, she was exposed to influential female Baptists, such as the energetic and wealthy Mrs. Thomas C. Doremus, now an elderly grandmother.⁶³ Doremus' dedication to the evangelical cause began in 1812 when her mother took her to prayer meeting. In 1835 Doremus formed the New York Women's Association to support Madame Feller's mission, a project she continued until her death in 1877. Always a pioneer, she became the President of the first woman's foreign missionary society in America in 1861. Branches sprang up in the next years in most major American cities.⁶⁴ Regarded as "a fit emblem of the heavenly life" by evangelical women, Mrs. Doremus' example haunted younger women like Henrietta. A woman of remarkable conviction and energy, Doremus was manager of "the House of Industry, the City Prison Association, the City Bible Society, the Children's Association, the Gould Memorial for Italo-Americans, the Presbyterian Home for Aged Women, the City Mission Society" and the mother of nine children plus others she adopted. Even when young female evangelicals lacked her wealth, beauty, family support or ability, they felt pressured to follow her example and strive for perfection.⁶⁵

Henrietta lived in a northern, francophone city, more conservative than New York. While studying in New York, she either traveled or had family and friends who attended the Philadelphia Exposition.⁶⁶ The Canadian Department with its Art Exhibition and the Women's Pavilion profiled new trends in decorative art. Within a few years, Henrietta and many American women would turn to china painting for pleasure and profit. At this Exposition, women's accomplishments were celebrated proudly. A "lady engineer", Miss Allison from St. Catharines Ontario, ran the steam engine which heated the Women's Pavilion. Here female-operated printing presses gave Henrietta

⁶³ EG Papers, Letter to Miss Muir from W. Edwards, 13 April 1876.

⁶⁴ Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 162-64.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Montgomery, 166.

⁶⁶ *Montreal Star*, 1 May 1876.

further ideas. Within the two years, she began the Montreal Women's Printing Office.⁶⁷

Back in Montreal refreshed from her studies and travels, Henrietta married Oliver on September 12, 1876 at the Olivet Baptist Tabernacle. Oliver, clearly a romantic and egomaniac, had selected the date of his birthday, a choice which also symbolized his desire to commence a new and a happier life. Their ceremony included a small but select group of eight witnesses: Henrietta's parents, Oliver's parents -William and Anne Edwards, sister Amelia, uncle George Muir, Baptist philanthropist T. James Claxton and the famous medical pioneer, William Osler.⁶⁸ A photograph taken just before their wedding captured Henrietta's personality and stature.⁶⁹ Wearing an elaborate satin and velvet dress, she sat at a desk reading, a fashionable and petite young woman. Carefully coiffured curls framed an attractive face. But her intense eyes, square jaw and serious expression revealed a determined, spirited woman. As this photo reflected, Henrietta planned to chart her own course even in marriage. The docile woman born to obey, that elder William Edwards idealized, seems oddly inappropriate when compared to this photograph.

On the surface Henrietta and Oliver's marriage represented a conventional union of two successful Baptist merchant families. Oliver's parents, William and Anne Edwards, were the epitome of bourgeois success. They had raised eleven children at a majestic home at Fox Point, near Clarence on the Ottawa River. William inherited land and "an extensive agency for the preservance and sale of timber and lands" from his father. Growing wealthy quickly, he retired and entered politics serving as Township Councilor, Reeve and Warden for the counties of Prescott and Russell from 1859-78. Talented and popular, Oliver's father also worked as a correspondent for the Peterborough *Examiner* which his brother edited, and contributed witty essays and poems to other magazines.⁷⁰ Anne Cameron Edwards, his Scottish-born wife, a stern Baptist and lifetime

⁶⁷ *Montreal Star*, 16 June 1876; McCarthy, *Women's Culture* ch. 2.

⁶⁸ PAQ-M, Olivet Baptist Register, 12 September 1876.

⁶⁹ This photograph is in the author's possession, a gift from the family.

⁷⁰ *Correspondence and Papers by the late William Edwards, Clarence, Ontario* (Arranged by James Edwards, Peterborough, 1882); Introduction. "Township of Clarence," *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry 1879* (Prescott and Russell, Ont: H. Beldent Co, 1881).

supporter of the temperance movement, was a strong-minded matriarch. Ironically, Anne Edwards did not fit her husband's ideal any better than did Henrietta.

Both sets of parents supported the marriage wholeheartedly. The tone of William Edwards' letter and his mild disapproval of his son indicated he felt this cosmopolitan young lady needed to tame "that boy of yours."⁷¹ His astute observation proved partially true. Oliver's restless and quarrelsome spirit would test Henrietta's patience, sense of adventure and flexibility. In fairness to Oliver, Henrietta was equally difficult. It seems, as their families realized, this handsome couple was also temperamentally well-matched.⁷² As the seventh son, Oliver grew up under his father and brothers' shadow⁷³ and never felt comfortable in the entrepreneurial atmosphere of the Edwards' home. Henrietta soon discovered that Oliver lacked his family's business acumen. In later life, the Edwards family regarded Oliver with embarrassment, but even in the 1870s he felt slightly estranged and rarely corresponded with his parents. Never hard-working, Oliver enjoyed elegant living. Ironically the unfortunate son was obliged to "make his own way". Apart from inheriting some property at Clarence, Oliver received little of his parents' wealth. In other ways Oliver was a typical Edwards for he demonstrated his father's love for science, literature and art. Like his mother, Oliver took his evangelical faith seriously. Oliver was closest to his sisters. Fortunately for Henrietta and Amelia, Oliver enjoyed strong-minded women.

Even at age twenty-six, Oliver could not afford to maintain a separate residence. The newlyweds joined the Muir family, a busy household which already included Henrietta's unmarried sisters Amelia and Ida, and her brothers George Earnest, age eleven, and William, age nineteen. One sister Eva had married in 1872. A family story remembers that Amelia refused marriage to anyone after the death of her fiancée. Ida, the youngest sister, led a more tragic life, eventually

⁷¹ EG Papers, Letter to Miss Muir from W. Edwards, 13 April 1876.

⁷² See Philippa Levine, "'So Few Prizes and So Many Blanks': Marriage and Feminism in Late Nineteenth-Century Feminism," *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (April 1989), 150-74.

⁷³ See William Cameron Edwards in Geo. MacLean, ed., *A Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography being Chiefly Men of the Time* (Toronto: Rose Publishing Co., 1888), 345 and Henry J. Morgan, *The Canadian men and women of the time: a handbook of Canadian biography* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898), 305.

entering a mental institution in 1900 where she remained until her death.⁷⁴ During these first years, the young Dr. Edwards faced stiff competition as he established a medical practice in an overcrowded profession. To enable Oliver to have an office adjoining their residence, the Muirs moved, a reflection of their willingness to assist the couple and their own financial predicament. By living together they could employ the two servants needed to maintain respectability.⁷⁵

From the beginning, Henrietta's marriage differed from her parents. For six years, she balanced the WWA with the demands of her husband, his medical practice, her pregnancies, and their young family. After three years of marriage, Henrietta gave birth on the 6 September 1878 to a daughter, Alice Millicent, named after her "beloved cousin Millie Rice". Her son William Muir followed close behind on 14 November 1879. The third child, Margaret Claxton was born later, on 24 April 1885 in Qu'Appelle Saskatchewan. Like a growing number of bourgeois women, Henrietta abandoned the nineteenth-century female ritual of using a midwife at birth. Oliver instead delivered each of their children. Departing from her grandmother and mother's example, Henrietta limited her family to three children.⁷⁶ As a result of Oliver's medical training, the couple probably practised some form of birth control. Henrietta relied heavily upon her mother and unmarried sisters for assistance in raising her young children, with domestic labour performed by servants. With such support, Henrietta experienced a smoother transition into motherhood than Montreal working-class women.⁷⁷ Even with young children, between 1876 and 1882 Henrietta expanded the

⁷⁴ Interview Patricia Roome with O. E. Gardiner, Vancouver 4 April 1991, and with Claudia Whipple, Sydney 31 August 1995.

⁷⁵ *Census*, Montreal 1881. See Daniel McCaughey, "The Overcrowding of the Profession: Ontario, 1870-1914," (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the History of Medicine, Toronto, 1981). S. E. D. Shortt, "'Before the Age of Miracles': The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of General Practise in Canada, 1890-1940," *Health, Disease and Medicine in Canadian History*, ed., Charles G. Roland (Kingston: Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine, 1984), 123-52.

⁷⁶ W. Peter Ward, "Introduction," *The Mysteries of Montreal: Memoirs of a Midwife* by Charlotte Fuhrer (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 12. Also Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of Their Bodies: Women and Their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), ch. 5.

⁷⁷ Bradbury, *Working Families*, ch. 2

WWA, opened the Montreal Women's Printing Office, published a monthly paper *Woman's Work in Canada*, maintained an art studio, and exhibited her paintings. Her aspiration to be "a new woman" set Henrietta apart from her friends and even from Amelia who demonstrated neither Henrietta's desire nor her ability to balance the various roles of Christian activist, writer, artist, wife and mother.

A developing evangelical feminism lay behind both the sisters' "woman's work" at the WWA and a new venture, a missionary society. On 27 September, 1876 just two weeks after Henrietta's marriage, the sisters helped organize the Women's Baptist Missionary Society East (Women's BMSE). Mrs. T. J. Claxton became their first President while Henrietta, Amelia, and two influential Baptist printers' wives, Mrs. Rollo Campbell and Mrs. David Bentley, served as executive members. Visiting Baptist missionaries, Reverend and Mrs. Americus Timpany, who were on a tour of eastern Canadian churches, suggested Baptists form women's organizations to support women missionaries in India. As the Timpanys explained, only females were allowed to visit Indian women in their zenanas. Because of women's importance to the family, the Baptists' Telegua's Mission had become preeminently "women's work". Spreading Christianity to Indian women in the zenanas, the Timpanys argued, would prevent further degradation of women.⁷⁸ In answer to this challenge, the Olivet Baptist ladies created a Women's Mission Circle, elected Jane Muir as President and affiliated with the Women's BMSE. Both sisters worked in this mission circle, but the busy Henrietta restricted her activities to presenting the occasional paper on Indian women. Amelia, who demonstrated a more narrow religious focus, became the Corresponding Secretary for the Women's BMSE, a position which she kept until 1885.⁷⁹

Canadian Baptist women led the way among evangelicals in supporting female missionaries, forming missionary associations and creating newspapers, even though such activism alarmed

⁷⁸ Canadian Baptist Archives McMaster (hereafter CBAM), Women's Mission Circle Olivet Baptist Church, Minute Book. See also Joan Jacobs, "Zenanas and Girlless Villages: the Ethnology of American Evangelical Women 1870-1910," *Journal of American History*, 69 (September 1983), 347-63.

⁷⁹ "Annual Report of Women's Baptist Missionary Society of Eastern Ontario and Quebec," *Baptist Year Book* (Toronto: 1885), 89.

conservative men. One eminent Baptist women's missionary leader recalled men asking: "What is to become of this woman movement in the Church?" Some insisted on attending missionary prayer meetings like the suspicious gentleman who remarked: "You never could tell what those women might take to praying for if left alone."⁸⁰ He was right of course. Baptist women sent a Maritime female missionary, Miss Minnie de Wolfe, to Burma in 1867. When Baptist men's organizations refused to support missionary teacher Miss Hannah Norris, Nova Scotian Baptist women organized the first Canadian Women's Missionary Board in 1870.⁸¹

Maritime Baptist women's success inspired Henrietta, Amelia and their mission circle to take up the cause of women in India, as well as in Canada. Evangelicalism gave women a commission from God and a sense of destiny which permitted women to become assertive and occupy male terrain.⁸² Participation in missionary work marked an important phase in Henrietta's developing feminism. As her sister had remarked:

When Mr. Timpany came to consult with some other ladies and myself about the advisability of having a Canadian Women's Baptist Missionary Society, I did everything I could to discourage him. I told him that I was sure that we could not succeed in keeping it up - that we were not like the American ladies, not nearly so clever, or capable of taking any public part like they were; that it would be difficult to get a lady who would take charge of a meeting; and as for expecting any one to *speak*, that could never be done.⁸³

Amelia's polite rhetoric should not be taken too seriously. While many women were daunted by the magnitude of foreign missionary work, Montreal Baptists enjoyed a long tradition of separate women's missionary organizations and strong female leadership. Assured of their father's blessing, young women like Amelia and Henrietta swept gracefully into leadership positions. When the Olivet Mission Circle debated the advisability of allowing gentlemen to be Honorary Members, the

⁸⁰ Montgomery, 30-31.

⁸¹ Earl C. Merrick, *These Impossible Women, 100 Years: the Story of the United Baptist Women's Missionary Union of the Maritime Provinces* (Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1970).

⁸² "Woman's Commission," *Link*, November 1878. Barbara Welter, "'She Hath Done What She Could': Protestant Women's Missionary Careers in the Nineteenth-Century America," in *Women in American Religion*, ed., Janet Wilson James (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980).

⁸³ "Address Delivered By Miss Muir of Montreal," *Link*, December 1880.

secretary dryly recorded: "The general impression seemed to be that they might pay the dollar, but not share any of the privileges of the society."⁸⁴ As Amelia explained, Christian women were hungry for dignified work of their own.

In reflecting upon men's role in building churches, Amelia lamented women's passivity and explained that women lacked "that delightful sense of being able to contribute something worth while. We can only look on and admire and sometimes wish we were in their position." When given the opportunity, the Olivet Mission Circle enthusiastically raised money for a chapel at the Baptist Cocanada India Mission. A proud Amelia wrote that finally "there is one Chapel ... that in one sense belongs to us." In encouraging other mission circles to finance a girl's school, Amelia demonstrated the feminist perspective that motivated the sisters' work at the WWA. "I cannot say that I feel the same interest in the men and boys in Telugu as I do for the women," she explained, remarking pointedly that "the gentlemen are sure to see that the boys and men are looked after, that they are educated and have the Gospel preached to them." Amelia was less confident about the women. "How our hearts go out to them in sympathy for them in their dark and barren homes."⁸⁵

Preparing essays on the lives of women in India heightened the sisters' interest in women's secondary status and deepened their commitment to women's emancipation.⁸⁶ Missionary ethnology used the paradigm of an antithetical "other" and, unlike scientific ethnology, served primarily a didactic function in showing the differences between Christians and heathens. Evangelical ethnology made a distinctive contribution with "its distinctive focus on women's status and roles."⁸⁷ The women's foreign mission crusade became the vehicle for publicizing heathen atrocities committed on women. Study groups, papers and magazines, "the light infantry of missionary

⁸⁴ CBAM, Women's Mission Circle Olivet Baptist Church, Minute Book 1 May and 2 September 1877.

⁸⁵ *Link*, December 1880. On men and churches see Westfall, ch. 5.

⁸⁶ CBMA, Olivet Baptist Minute Book, 1 October 1883; "Until every woman in the Church is contributing something toward the elevation and salvation of Telugu women our work is only partly done."

⁸⁷ Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "The Ethnological Mirror: American Evangelical Women and Their Heathen Sisters, 1870 - 1910," in *Women and the Structure of Society*, 109-10.

literature”, developed the message that Christianity emancipated “heathen” women, whereas their own religious traditions oppressed women. While the term misogyny was not used, “hatred of women was identified as a central text in a number of faiths.” Missionary circles learned that heathen women were degraded through “intellectual deprivation, domestic oppression, and sexual degradation.”⁸⁸

Although deeply influenced by her reading on Indian women, Henrietta remained more aloof from this crusade than her elder sister and instead devoted her energy to Canadian issues. Amelia served on the executive of the Women’s BMSE and wrote a regular column in the *Canadian Missionary Link*, a Toronto monthly begun on July 1, 1878 as the official organ of “the Baptist Mission Societies of Canada”.⁸⁹ In 1878, the sisters started their monthly paper, *Woman’s Work in Canada*, which advertised the Indian mission, publicized the work of Annie Macpherson, and discussed new evangelical organizations like the YWCA and WWA. Their paper’s aggressive feminist message pleased Pamela Vining Yule, a Baptist teacher at the Canadian Literary Institute and editor of *The Christian Helper*, who suggested her readers subscribe to this “excellent and vigorous journal”. Unfortunately, only one reprint of the sisters’ paper has survived.⁹⁰

Henrietta and Amelia hold a unique place among the editors of Canadian evangelical women’s papers of the late 1870s because they alone used female labour, trained women as compositors, and printed their own paper. Establishing the Montreal Women’s Print Printing Office in 1878 required strong-minded and well-connected women since the printing business was a male preserve with a strong craft tradition. Whether in Britain, the United States, or Canada typographical unions resented and resisted women’s presence. Scottish women had just begun to enter the printing trade as compositors following the 1872 strike of the Edinburgh Typographical Union.⁹¹ When Emily

⁸⁸ Brumberg, “The Ethnological Mirror,” 115.

⁸⁹ *Link*, July 1, 1878.

⁹⁰ *Agnes Harcourt, Or “For His Sake”. A Canadian Story Illustrative of the Power of a Child’s Life* (Montreal: Women’s Printing Office, 1879); *The Christian Helper. A Baptist Monthly*, II:11 (April 1879), 130; Bruce Whitefield, “Pamela Sarah Vining, DCB, Vol. 12.

⁹¹ See Sian Reynolds, *Britannica’s Typesetters: Women Compositors in Edwardian Edinburgh* (Edinburgh

Faithfull visited America, she found Miss Mary Moore, the President of the American Women's Typographical Union, engaged in a similar battle. Women's employment in the printing trades, not surprisingly, was also hotly debated in Montreal, the center of the Canadian publishing industry. As early as 1869, the Montreal Typographical Union No. 97 had debated allowing women access to skill positions in printing offices. Within twenty years, Montreal's thirty-four printing establishments would employ 774 men and 104 women.⁹² The Toronto Typographical Union demonstrated similar prejudice and exclusionary practices.⁹³

Facing such prejudice was a remarkable feat for two young women. Initially, only a few feminists like Emily Faithful and Susan B. Anthony attempted to train women printers or publish women's work. In 1864, Faithfull established the London Women's Printing Society and a paper, *Women and Work*.⁹⁴ Through reading, traveling, and association with Rye and Macpherson, Henrietta and Amelia became familiar with these experiments. The sisters had faced similar problems finding a publisher for their work and locating employment opportunities for women. When the sisters began their printing office and newspaper, they selected titles which closely resembled these British ventures. Equally important, the sisters relied on Baptist friends and the Muir family's long association with prominent Montreal printing firms, like Rollo Campbell and J. C. Becket, for assistance. They also benefited from the availability of a few trained women

University Press, 1989); J. Ramsay Macdonald, ed., *Women in the Printing Trades A Sociological Study* (London: P. S. King, 1904, reprinted New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1980).

⁹² *Montreal Gazette*, 12 January 1869. Mr. Curran spoke strongly of favoring women working in printing offices at the printer's festival. The "veteran craftsman Rollo Campbell" also spoke, recalling his previous speech in 1867 at the creation of the Montreal Typographical Union No. 97. *Montreal Gazette*, 24 December 1867 and 26 November 1872. Since women's work in the Canadian printing industry has been ignored, it is impossible to do more than sketch the parameters. For women in Montreal printing offices see *The Industries of Canada: City of Montreal Historical and Descriptive Review* (Montreal: Montreal Historical Publishing Co., 1889), 89. Less useful is George L. Parker, *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

⁹³ Christina Burr, "That Coming Curse - The Incompetent Compositress': Class and Gender Relations in the Toronto Typographical Union during the Late Nineteenth Century," *CHR*, LXXIV, 3 (1993), 344-66 and "Defending 'the Art Preservative': Class and Gender Relations in the Printing Trade Unions, 1859-1914," *Labour/Le Travail*, 31 (Spring 1993), 47-73.

⁹⁴ Fredeman, 139.

compositors, a reflection of Montreal's dominance in the publishing industry. The young English Baptist printer, D. Bentley, whose wife was an executive member of the Women's BMSE, lent his expertise to the project. Bentley was also Oliver's friend, a fellow YWCA committee member and publisher of its magazine.⁹⁵ Despite these connections, training female printers was an unusual project for the Muir sisters who shared common ground with only a few pioneers. American Julia Evelina Smith had published the first feminist Bible in 1876.⁹⁶ A Canadian Baptist magazine reported favorable on the "interesting and valuable paper", *Women's Work in Canada*. "It gleans from the whole Dominion items related to women's work for Christ and humanity, and is in itself an example of such work, being set up and printed by working girls who are being taught the printing trade." Only hinting at some of the conflicts experienced by the sisters, the paper praised them instead for "their preserving efforts under difficulties, and for the success which they have met with."⁹⁷

Henrietta's role in this new venture suggests her growing feminist consciousness. Unlike her evangelical female colleagues, her paper and printing office emphasized women as much as Christianity in their titles. Henrietta became the WWA's President, its driving spirit and the Boarding House proprietress. For six years, she provided the leadership, generated financial support, and managed the staff. By 1882 the Montreal Women's Printing Office had become job printers who offered a range of services, "bill heads, business circulars, promissory notes, receipt forms, and all kinds of business printing" such as "reports, pamphlets, programmes, cards". The Office developed substantial expertise because job printing demanded versatility. One of their clients, not surprisingly, was the Montreal Natural History Society and the Microscopic Club.⁹⁸ When Henrietta was the President, the secretary assumed daily management of the printing

⁹⁵ Lovell, 1872 and 1881. *Census*, Montreal, 1871 lists Bentley as an English Baptist printer.

⁹⁶ Madeleine B. Stern, "The First Feminist Bible: The Alderney Edition, 1876," in *Books and Book People in 19th Century America* (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1978), 183-93.

⁹⁷ *The Christian Helper*, 24 February 1881, 457.

⁹⁸ McGill University Archives, MNHS Papers.

operation. After changing secretaries yearly, Miss E. Munroe, daughter of the First Baptist Church minister, operated the printing office from 1881 to 1885.⁹⁹

Only two samples of their work have survived. One small tract titled *Scripture Catechism Intended For the Instruction of Children* carried the note “printed at the W. G. Association 73 Bleury St. in 1879”. The author, E. M. H., claimed she had worked for over twenty years in the Sunday School movement.¹⁰⁰ Another reprint from the paper, *Agnes Harcourt: or “For His Sake”*, carried Amelia Muir’s initials. This story generated “interest in the little English emigrants brought out to Canada under Christian supervision”. It profiled the life of an orphan from the London slums who was brought to a refuge where she learned about God, received domestic instruction before departing for Canada and the home of a prosperous farmer in the Canadian eastern Townships.¹⁰¹ Little Agnes, a Christian who braved the family’s hostility telling Bible stories and singing hymns to the farmer’s young son, was eventually adopted by her host family. The writer praised Agnes, the “little missionary carrying out the command of our Lord.”¹⁰² While seemingly innocent, this simple tale served a political purpose by counteracting the negative publicity which had plagued Rye and MacPherson’s efforts. By the mid 1870s, a critical report prepared by British inspector Andrew Doyle resulted in charges against Rye.¹⁰³ The Scottish evangelicals, Macpherson and her

⁹⁹ Lovell, 1881 lists Rev. A. H. Munroe as living at 340 Bleury.

¹⁰⁰ E. M. H., *Scripture Catechism Intended For the Instruction of Children*. Revised by the Author (Montreal: W. G. Association, 1879).

¹⁰¹ Amelia read Annie Macpherson’s pamphlets, see *Canadian Homes for London Wanderers* (London: Morgan Chase & Scott, 1870), *The Little London Arabs* and *The Little Matchbox-Makers* (London: printed privately, London, 1870); *Summer in Canada and Winter in London* (London: printed privately, 1872).

¹⁰² Agnes Harcourt, 71; Joy Parr, “Transplanting from Dens of Iniquity’: Theology and Child Emigration,” in *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada 1880-1920*, ed., Linda Kealey (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1979), 169-83.

¹⁰³ Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada 1869-1924* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 27-40. On Maria Rye see *Montreal Gazette*, 18 June, 23 August, 8 October 1868 and 30 October 1869. *Charges made against Miss Rye Before the Poor Law Board at Islington and her reply thereto* (London: n. p., 1874). *Further Letters furnished to the Department of Agriculture in rebuttal of Mr. Doyle’s report* (London: n. p., 1875).

sisters Louisa Birt and Rachel Macpherson Merry, enjoyed more supporters in Montreal.¹⁰⁴ Claxton who had assisted Macpherson financially, provided testimony to the positive influence Christian children had on Canadian families.¹⁰⁵ Henrietta, Amelia and the Muirs represented some of “the Canadian friends” whom Claxton organized to assist the Knowlton Home.¹⁰⁶

Whereas Amelia enjoyed writing, Henrietta devoted her time to illustrating articles and managing the WWA. Since Henrietta hired staff, worked with the members, and ably handled the finances, the more reserve Amelia could concentrate on their newspaper. Each year she also produced a dialogue for the Olivet Mission Circle’s Christmas entertainment. One piece titled “A Telugu Girl’s Story” was produced by the Montreal Women’s Printing Office, illustrated by Henrietta and sold privately.¹⁰⁷ Unlike some of their contemporaries, neither Henrietta nor Amelia made the transition from religious writing to secular journalism. Henrietta’s illustrating ability led William Lewis Fraser, a senior editor with *Scribner’s Magazine* to offer her a position, but she declined because, according to her daughter, “she was married and raising a family and her place was at home.”¹⁰⁸ Pursuing an art career represented a more viable alternative for Henrietta than accepting the magazine’s offer because the former did not overtly challenge the contradictions inherent in her evangelical upbringing. Travelling to New York and leaving her young children was not an acceptable proposition.

From 1876 onward, Henrietta kept a studio at the WWA on Bleury Street, a fashionable district which boasted artists, photographers like William Notman and newspapers such as the *Canadian Illustrated News*. During the first two years, Henrietta illustrated her newspaper and several books, but she must have become discouraged with the art market. Although the financial

¹⁰⁴ *Annual Report YWCA* (1875).

¹⁰⁵ Lowe, *God’s Answers*, 189-92.

¹⁰⁶ Lowe, 83-84.

¹⁰⁷ *Link*, January 1881, December 1883.

¹⁰⁸ National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC) Cleverdon Papers, Letter Alice M. Gardiner to Catharine Cleverdon, 1 May 1944.

recession hurt institutionalized art activities in Montreal, economic recovery eventually brought a cultural renaissance. The revitalized Art Association of Montreal (AAM) held an elaborate *Conversazione* on 15 February 1878 and, the following year, Governor General Lorne and Princess Louise opened the new Phillips Square art gallery.¹⁰⁹ Henrietta joined the Montreal Society of Decorative Arts which met in the upstairs rooms. Princess Louise, a distinguished painter and sculptor, became its patroness. The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA), the couple's next project, held its first Montreal exhibition in April 1880. Henrietta would exhibit her work at the Ottawa National Gallery, the royal couple's final contribution to Canada, when it opened on the 27 May 1882.¹¹⁰

The Muirs' many activities as art collectors, patrons and philanthropists helped cement Henrietta's place within this evolving art community. Three of her paintings were among the five hundred which the RCA selected for their second exhibition held March 1881 in Halifax.¹¹¹ The following year, she entered the annual Ontario Society of the Arts, courtesy of her former teacher John Arthur Fraser. In 1880, riding the wave of Canadian nationalism, the AAM began an annual Spring Exhibition devoted to Canadian artists. Henrietta entered flower paintings in 1881 and exhibited five works in April 1883.¹¹² During that year, Henrietta became an "honorary member" of the RCA, a dubious "artistic" honor since the position was open to "men who take an interest in Art and in the industrial progress of the country."¹¹³ Although a few women artists - Charlotte Schreiber, elected in 1880 and later Frances Richards, teacher at the new Ottawa Art School - had gained acceptance as Associates, they found the Academy did not permit them to attend meetings or

¹⁰⁹ Reid, *Our Own Country Canada*, ch 10.

¹¹⁰ *CINews*, 31 May 1879, 20 March 1880.

¹¹¹ Reid, *Our Own Country Canada*, 360-65; Evelyn de R. McMann, *Royal Canadian Academy of Arts/Academie royale des arts du Canada: Exhibitions and Members, 1880-1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 118.

¹¹² Reid, 219-22; 352-60.

¹¹³ Evelyn de R. McMann, *Montreal Museum of Fine Arts: Spring Exhibitions 1880-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988), 115.

stand for election to council.¹¹⁴ Henrietta never achieved this degree of professional acceptance. As Maria Tippet concluded, it was irrelevant whether women employed female or masculine art forms, they could not win the recognition they deserved in Canada or even in Europe.¹¹⁵

Excluded from the masculine world of the art studio, galleries and museums, prominent British and American women launched the decorative arts movement. Beginning in 1877 the New York Decorative Arts Society led a crusade consistent with the dominant ideology of separate spheres. Women were “encouraged to claim an artistic sphere of their own, one rooted in domestic imperatives and the ‘minor’ arts.” The movement spread quickly a testimony to female artists’ search for career opportunities and women’s desire for cultural authority.¹¹⁶ Henrietta succumbed to the china painting craze partially because she could earn money as a china decorator.¹¹⁷ She joined the Montreal Society for the Decorative Arts organized in May 1879 “to cultivate a taste for good and artistic work, and to assist ladies of taste and refinement to lead more independent lives than they could otherwise do.”¹¹⁸ Although Henrietta’s china paintings qualified as fine art and competed with male commercial decorators by the 1890s, such work has rarely been given artistic recognition. Masculine china decorators like John Griffiths, founder of the Western Ontario School

¹¹⁴ NAC, Royal Academy of Arts Papers, Catalogue 1881, 5 and Catalogue 1883, 23. On women in the Academy see Tippet, 19. On Francis Richards see Henry J. Morgan, *Types of Canadian women and of women who are or have been connected with Canada* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1903), 296; Sandra Gwyn, *The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 180-81.

¹¹⁵ Tippet, 201. See also R. Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981); Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982); Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference Femininity, feminism and the histories of art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988).

¹¹⁶ McCarthy, *Women's Culture*, 37. See also “The Society of Decorative Art,” *Scribner's Monthly Magazine*, 22 (September 1881), 697-712; “Crafty women and the hierarchy of the arts,” in Pollack, *Old Mistresses*, 50-81.

¹¹⁷ *CINews*, 308, “China painting has been as great a craze across the Atlantic as here: there is scarcely a city where a clever teacher can not secure pupils and sell vases, bowls and Plaques.”

¹¹⁸ *Annual Report Montreal Society of Decorative Art* (Montreal: Lovell, 1899). See also Reid, *Our Own Country Canada*, 362 who was “surprised” to find so accomplished an artist exhibiting “china painting.”

of Art, received the label artist, whereas women were labelled amateurs.¹¹⁹

Throughout these years, Henrietta's art, along her work at the WWA's and the Women's BMSE, developed her interest in women's rights. In responding to her generation's missionary impulse, Henrietta moved closer to evangelical feminism. If Christianity and civilization brought women's higher evolution in India, then certainly women's equality could be achieved in Canada. Living in Montreal continued to hold new challenges for the thirty-four-year-old activist. Preoccupied with painting, writing, publishing and managing the WWA, Henrietta was unprepared for Oliver's announcement that he wanted to "go West". With a young family and an established philanthropic career, Henrietta was quite content in Montreal. Oliver, however, was restless and unhappy in the bustling city. Feeling stifled, he left for Saskatchewan to "seek his fortune" in the spring of 1882. A new stage in Henrietta Muir's life was about to begin. When she eventually followed Oliver, her woman's commission with its Christian woman/heathen woman dichotomy would be tested in the Northwest's volatile political climate.

¹¹⁹ See Cynthia A. Brandimarte, "Somebody's Aunt and Nobody's Mother: The American China Painter and Her Work, 1870 - 1920," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 23:4 (Winter 1988), 203-24. This dichotomy is perpetuated by Canadian art historians Dennis Reid, J. Russell Harper and Elizabeth Collard, "China Decorating in Canada" in *Nineteenth Century Pottery and Porcelain* (2nd ed. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), 311-21.

III. "That very beautiful Indian curiosity": The North West Experience, 1893-1890

Henrietta eventually joined Oliver in Saskatchewan, reluctant, however, to become a pioneer and leave behind her projects with working women. Although she tried to encourage Montreal Baptist women to establish a Native mission in Saskatchewan, Henrietta never believed that God had called her to such work. Only a few hardy Anglican and Methodist evangelicals had accepted the difficult challenge of becoming missionaries among the region's Cree and Sioux. Raised in a bourgeois environment, Henrietta felt more at ease building a home and a new community in Qu'Appelle and thus doing the civilizing work a new society expected of its female pioneers.¹

When Oliver left Montreal in the spring of 1882, Henrietta's parents insisted that Henrietta and the "dear pets", Alice and Willie, stay until Oliver found employment. Growing up in a mercantile family, Henrietta was accustomed to her father's travels abroad. Everyone, it seemed, adopted a skeptical attitude to Oliver's adventures, expecting he would return home like other bourgeois travellers with wonderful stories to share and fascinating Indian curios to donate to the Natural History Museum. William Muir, a keen naturalist, even instructed Oliver to keep notes on "the aborigines" and collect specimens and curios.

Oliver and Henrietta shared Muir's intellectual enthusiasm for natural science and appreciated his talent for invention. During the couple's married years, Henrietta's father had expanded his involvement in the Montreal Natural History Society (MNHS) from Councillor to Librarian, Cabinet Keeper and Museum Curator. President J. W. Dawson referred to Muir as a "zealous curator", thanking him for demonstrating a "new illuminating lens for the microscope, which he himself had invented."² Oliver, who accompanied Muir to the meetings of the Montreal Microscopic Club, found the elder gentleman's invention useful in his medical work. The couple

¹ See Elaine Leslau Silverman, *The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier, 1880-1930* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984); Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, ed., *The Woman's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).

² *MNHS Proceedings* (1881), 4.

had further reason to thank Muir's knowledge of ethnology, geology, and archaeology when they settled in the North West. Over the years, Henrietta's father had often suggested that the couple visit the MNHS's Department of Ethnology and Archaeology, and kept them informed about recent scientific developments. The MHNS's library, developed by Muir, held an impressive collection of scientific journals and publications such as those of the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC), a Montreal institution which had explored and mapped much of the North West.³ Its eccentric founder Sir William Logan along with Sir J. W. Dawson, another eminent geologist, became regular guests at Muir's residence. Oliver and Henrietta's scientific literacy and knowledge of the North West reflected the pioneering work of these Montrealers.

George Mercer, a rising young geologist and son of J. W. Dawson, influenced the couple's views on ethnology. A member of the GCS's staff, Dawson included detailed ethnological inventories with his geological material.⁴ On the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1878, Dawson became "captivated by the beauty of the Haida totem-poles and by the intelligence and skills reflected in the construction of their villages." When McGill displayed his photographs and artifacts, Henrietta and Oliver attended the exhibition and read his *Sketches of the past and present condition of the Indians of Canada* which launched Dawson on second career as "one of Canada's foremost contributors to ethnology" and "father of Canadian anthropology."⁵ For Henrietta and Oliver, Dawson's scientific ethnology served as a counterpoint to the missionaries' evangelical ethnology. Ethnologists, like American John Wesley Powell believed, as Dawson did, in the theory of social evolution.⁶ Seen through this lens Native people were "socially inferior" and doomed to extinction.

³ "Report of the Cabinet Keeper and the Library Committee," *MHNS Proceedings* (1881), 8-14. Morris Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975).

⁴ F. J. Alcock, *A Century in the History of the Geological Survey of Canada* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1947), 46.

⁵ Suzanne Zeller and Gale Avrith-Wakeam, "George Mercer Dawson," *DCB*, Vol. 13, 259. Douglas Cole and Bradley Lockner, ed., *The Journals of George M. Dawson: British Columbia, 1875-1878* (2 Vol., Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989).

⁶ Curtis M. Hinsley, Jr., *Savages and Scientists* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), ch. V. See also Brumberg, "Zenanas and Girlless Villages."

Dawson who considered education and assimilation into white society as the moral approach to Native social evolution, opposed segregation on reserves and government paternalism.⁷ Native people were a vanishing race, Dawson believed, a view Oliver and Henrietta shared. His work inspired them to become collectors and thus preserve something of these dying cultures. Dawson's original research had also attracted international attention and earned him an appointment from the British Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1884 he was appointed director of its committee created to study the Pacific northwest coast Indians and later chaired its Canadian ethnological survey. Native artifacts should remain in Canadian museums, Dawson argued, regardless of the price they earned abroad.⁸

Henrietta understood Oliver's temptation to follow Dawson, the GSC team, and other friends to the North West. Montreal newspapers had followed the Canadian Pacific Railway saga and encouraged the city's dreams of nation building. Their friend, landscape artist Henry Sandham caught the western bug while he was working with former Montrealer William L. Fraser, now art editor of *Scribner's Magazine*.⁹ Sandham had illustrated a four-part article "the Dominion of Canada", written by Queen's Principal George Monro Grant, and travelled to California to illustrate an essay on the living conditions of the Mission Indians.¹⁰ Beyond this intimate circle of scientists and artists, other prolific writers shaped Henrietta and Oliver's perception of the North West. Montreal, the headquarters of the Canadian Pacific Railway, buzzed with news of the railway's progress and the glowing future awaiting settlers. In contrast to Henrietta, Oliver found such imperialistic propaganda irresistible. Eastern Canadian travellers, throughout the 1870s, advanced expansionist ideas arguing that the North West held the key to Canada's Empire.¹¹ Others,

⁷ Zeller and Avrith-Wake, 259.

⁸ Zeller and Avrith-Wake, 259.

⁹ Reid, *Our Own Country Canada*, 357-58.

¹⁰ Pierre B. Landry, "Henry Sandham," *DCB*, Vol. 13, 923-25.

¹¹ George Monro Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sanford Fleming's expedition through Canada in 1872* (Toronto: J. Campbell, 1873).

including the Governor General the Marquis of Lorne, celebrated the region's economic potential, explaining Canadians could "build up a nation on the British plan." The West held "the promise of Eden".¹²

As members of the Anglo-Canadian cultural and intellectual elite, Henrietta and Oliver held the view that the British Empire represented "mankind's" highest achievement.¹³ Settling the Canadian North West symbolized for them "the progress of British society and morality across the North American continent." Canada carried into the North West "the whole moral weight involved in the role of guardian of the traditions of the British Empire."¹⁴ In contrast to the Indian wars and lawlessness of the American West, Canadians envisioned a noble Christian state where British justice would bring enlightened treatment to Native people. With western settlement the Indians would cease to be a "barbarous, heathen horde". Instead, argued writer William Clint, each could become "an enfranchised citizen of the first Christian nation in the world."¹⁵ Liberals like Henrietta, Oliver and William Muir viewed the American frontier experience with its "white savagery" as irresponsible.¹⁶ Literate and well-informed, Oliver and Henrietta were probably familiar with the widely publicized saga of Sitting Bull, the Sioux leader who had fled to Canada in 1876 after the Battle of Little Big Horn.¹⁷ Canadian leaders disagreed on the best approach to the Sioux and

¹² Argyll, John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, Duke of, *The Canadian North West: a speech delivered by His Excellency the Marquis of Lorne, Governor General of Canada Winnipeg* (Ottawa: Dept. of Agriculture of Government of Canada, 1881); Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: the Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 126-27; Henry Nash Smith, *The Virgin Land: the American West as symbol and myth* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1950); Patricia Roome, "The Image of the West: Social Themes in Prairie Literature 1896 - 1929," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1975), ch. 1.

¹³ See Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

¹⁴ Owram, 126-27.

¹⁵ William Clint, *The Aborigines of Canada under the British Crown* (N. p., 1878) as quoted in Owram, 132.

¹⁶ D. R. Owram, "White Savagery: Some Canadian Reactions to American Indian Policy," (Master's thesis, Queen's University, 1972).

¹⁷ E. D. Clark, "In the North West with Sitting Bull," *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly*, IV (July 1880) 67-68. William Leggo, "Canada and her Indian Tribes," *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly*, V (August 1880), 147.

Native people in general. Some advocated a paternalism and segregation on reserves while others supported an assimilation policy. All agreed that Canada's duty was to assist native people to become civilized. For evangelicals, this involved sharing the best of white culture, beginning conversion to Christianity, and protecting Native people from the worst. To usher in this new order, Oliver and Henrietta became apostles of progress. Along with other Canadians they believed that Canada's imperial mission was to transplant civilization to the frontier.

Oliver's motivation to go West reflected elements of this heroic dream, especially since the Canadian elite's sense of mission meshed neatly with Oliver's evangelical upbringing.¹⁸ Intense competition and the financial recession had made it difficult for Oliver to succeed in Montreal. Family stories relate that Dr. Edwards, also an inventor, developed a gold cure for alcoholism but often neglected to collect his fees. He preferred to volunteer his services to various charitable organizations, like the Female Home Society and the Montreal Dispensary.¹⁹ As Oliver became dependent upon the Muirs for wealthy patients, he grew increasingly dissatisfied. Henrietta's parents did not understand Oliver's pessimism. Henrietta's mother insisted Oliver's move was unnecessary. "Remember me to Oliver and tell him we often think and talk of him," she wrote. "I can't but feel sometimes that it was a pity he left Montreal, he would have had such opportunities here. Dr. Broddie has given up his general practice and Dr. Riddie in all probability will never return." Jane explained that the Claxton's daughter Mrs. Ayer "was lamenting Oliver's absence, she did not know what doctor to have."²⁰

Sitting alone in his tent at Ft. Qu'Appelle, Oliver also had second thoughts. On 12 September 1882 he wistfully noted: "My birthday and our anniversary. How little I thought that in 6 years I should be far away in the West." The North West appealed to Oliver's sense of adventure, restlessness and romance sufficiently to compensate for loneliness. An excellent horseman, the

¹⁸ Gauvreau, ch. 5.

¹⁹ Lovell, 1879-1879. *Report of the Female Home Society, 1877* (Lovell: Montreal, 1877). Interview Roome with Oliver Earnest Gardiner, Vancouver 4 April 1991.

²⁰ EG Papers, Letter Jane Muir to Hettie, 1 October 1883.

athletic Oliver adjusted quickly to this masculine world. "I began life under canvas and so far find it an exceedingly pleasant way of life," he wrote. The excitement of the frontier pushed away further doubts. Cricket matches with the North West Mounted Police (NWMP), musical concerts and many eastern visitors kept him busy. When Dr. Dawson passed through Fort Qu'Appelle that summer, the two spent a "pleasant evening" at Oliver's tent chatting about their mutual ethnological investigations.²¹

Years later Oliver's grandchildren still believed the Doctor had moved west to become a medical missionary although Baptists did not establish Native missions for another decade. The Qu'Appelle Mission was run by the Church of England's Church Missionary Society (CMS) which had arrived in 1820, built small missions, and created the Diocese of Rupert's Land in 1849. They learned that Native, often Métis, missionaries like Henry Budd and J. A. Mace were the most successful.²² Although Oliver found evangelicals in the CMS, he did not feel called to be an apostle. Instead, he carried a letter of recommendation from the Hudson's Bay Company Commissioner, Donald A. Smith, addressed to Company personnel and the Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney. Through these valuable connections Oliver secured employment as the Treaty 4 medical officer for the next year.²³

Only a few missionaries like the Reverend John Mackay received any respect in the North West, whereas a doctor received much more prestige and money.²⁴ Oliver's basic salary of \$730.00 could always be supplemented by private practice. Besides financial considerations, language

²¹ Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC), O. C. Edwards, "Notes and Observations 1882-1885," 11 June and 12 September 1882.

²² Ian A. L. Getty, "The Failure of the Native Church Policy of the CMS in the North-West," in *Religion and Society in the Prairie West*, ed. Richard Allen (Regina: Great Plains, 1975), 19 - 34; Jean Usher, "Apostles and Aborigines: The Social Theory of the Church Missionary Society," in *Prophets, Priests, and Prodigals: Reading in Canadian Religious History, 1608 to the Present*, eds. Mark G. McGowan and David Marshall (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1992), 15-43.

²³ PABC, "Notes and Observations 1882-1885." For an explanation of Oliver's appointment see NAC, Laurier Papers, Letter Dr. O. C. Edwards to Sir W. Laurier, 14 February 1910.

²⁴ See Robert Jefferson, *Fifty Years on the Saskatchewan* (Vol. I, Battleford: Canadian North-West Historical Society Publications, 1929), 31.

problems presented obstacles for Oliver, who definitely was not a scholar like the British CMS missionaries or the Roman Catholic Oblates. Neither Oliver nor Henrietta aspired to missionary heroism or martyrdom, as did the women missionaries in India or the Anglican missionary and Bishop of the Mackenzie River Diocese, Reverend William Bombas and the Methodist pioneers John McDougall, John Maclean or Edgar Ryerson Young in Canada.²⁵ The young couple did, however, share the missionaries' assessment of the Indian as "a feeble, backward race, living in a world of ignorance, superstition and cruelty."²⁶ While critical of some aspects of white culture, they believed implicitly in the superiority of western agriculture, education, science, technology and Christianity. Henrietta and Oliver joined the missionaries and supported "the policy of the Bible and the plough."²⁷

Oliver visited each of the Treaty 4 bands during his first year with the Department. Like his Government report, Oliver's letters to Henrietta described Native leaders Piapot, Pasquah, Muscopetung, Louis O'Soup and Yellow Calf of the Qu'Appelle and Touchwood district and discussed their difficult transition to reserve life.²⁸ Oliver found poverty, starvation and illness among these bands who were "the most poorly off of all the treaty Indians."²⁹ During the autumn of 1882, Oliver covered hundreds of miles on horseback vaccinating the Indians. He discovered their problems went far beyond smallpox and measles to include consumption, scrofula and tuberculosis. Throughout his sporadic tenure as medical officer, Oliver tried unsuccessfully to address these health problems.

²⁵ See Myra Rutherdale, "Revising Colonization through Gender: The Anglican Missionary Women in the Pacific North-West and the Arctic, 1860-1945," (Paper presented to the CHA, Calgary 1993).

²⁶ Sarah Carter, "The Missionaries' Indian: The Publications of John McDougall, John Maclean and Egerton Ryerson Young," *Prairie Forum*, 9:1 (1984), 28 and "Man's Mission of Subjugation: the Publications of John Maclean, John McDougall and Egerton R. Young, Nineteenth-Century Methodist Missionaries in Western Canada" (Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1981).

²⁷ J. R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 189.

²⁸ *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report for Department of Indian Affairs, 31 December 1883, 69-74, 177.

²⁹ Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvest: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 108.

If Henrietta expected Oliver to return to Montreal after a year's leave, she was soon disappointed. Her romantic husband fell in love with "the beautiful valley of the Qu'Appelle". With a land boom underway in this rich agricultural area, Oliver confidently purchased a quarter section of land which he sold the following spring for property in Indian Head where the Indian Office relocated. To his dismay, the Department did not renew his appointment. Instead they hired Oliver on a fee for service basis, a move which forced the Doctor to develop a private practice.³⁰ According to Edwards, Dewdney favoured doctors who supported Macdonald's Conservative Government.³¹ Unlike the Liberal Oliver, they did not openly criticize government policy.

Given Henrietta's initial reluctance to leave Montreal, Oliver's decision to remain came as unwelcome news to Henrietta and her eastern family. After a year's separation, she reluctantly abandoned her Montreal home for a tent in a prairie village. Fortunately, she did not know that Oliver would soon lose his position. This setback, however, typified Oliver's career and led to a series of migrations which tested their marriage. As family legend explained: "Oliver was not a good provider".³² He displayed little of his family's talent for business or investment. If Henrietta sometimes lamented her choice she kept it to herself. Already an independent woman, Henrietta was to negotiate a partnership with her charming but improvident spouse.

During the previous year, Henrietta had participated fully in Montreal's exciting cultural life. In August 1882 the Peter Redpath Museum had opened with a gala reception for 2,000. William Muir and his family were included among the privileged and important guests invited to the opening of this "Cathedral of Science". Later, Henrietta listened to the Ladies' Educational Association lecture series on "the geology of Bible Lands."³³ Her father attended the MNHS's September

³⁰ "Notes and Observations," 22 May and 4 Nov. 1882; Sessional Papers, *Annual Report of Department of Indian Affairs to December 31, 1884*, 193.

³¹ Laurier Papers, Letter Dr. O. C. Edwards to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 14 February 1910.

³² Interview Roomie with Claudia Whipple, Sydney 10 April 1991.

³³ Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *Cathedrals of Science* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 57 and "'Stones and Bones and Skeletons': The Origins and Development of the Peter Redpath Museum," *McGill Journal of Education*, 17 (1982), 45-67.

reception for the American Association for the Advancement of Science which was meeting in Montreal. As one historian has remarked, during the early 1880s, museums and meetings were "better than a travelling circus."³⁴ Further excitement came in the spring of 1883 when the Montreal Art Association's Spring Exhibition featured Henrietta's works. Later, Henrietta packed away her elegant gowns. This would be her last gala event until Oliver tired of his western adventure.

Henrietta and her children, Alice age five and Willie four, boarded the CPR for a long two thousand mile journey. Letters made reference to "Annie", either a relative or a maid, who accompanied Henrietta.³⁵ While the railway's progress across the Saskatchewan made their journey easier, her trip did not resemble her youthful 1868 European Grand Tour when she was single and pampered by her father's money. At Ft. Qu'Appelle, Henrietta met Oliver who had spent the winter at the NWMP barracks but had arranged for his family to spend the summer in a tent. Oliver travelled to various reserves leaving Henrietta alone to explore the new environment. Her letters to Montreal complaining about the mosquitoes hordes on the prairies convinced her resourceful father to deliver a paper on the subject at the MHNS meeting!³⁶

Henrietta received her first introduction to Treaty 4 Natives when they came into Ft. Qu'Appelle seeking employment. From Oliver's letters and "curios", she had learned that Native women's moccasins featured unique designs and delicate beadwork. With Oliver as an enthusiastic guide, she learned more about Cree, Assiniboine and Sioux cultures. Later, she travelled with him to the nearby reserves and met some of the most promising farmers in the Touchwood Hills. Governor-General Lorne had presented a silver medal to the Chief of Day Star's Reserve for his model garden. Five miles from the town, on Pasquah's reserve, a home farm experiment had been established in 1879. During the winter months, band members worked for settlers in the town and

³⁴ Susan Sheets-Pyenson, "Better Than a Travelling Circus: Museums and Meetings in Montreal During the Early 1880s," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 4th ser. 20 (1982), 599-618.

³⁵ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta 2 January 1884.

³⁶ MHNS Papers, Minutes 30 April 1883.

provided timber for the police post.³⁷

Oliver also shared many tragic stories with Henrietta when he returned from his trip with Indian Agent McDonald. As Oliver vaccinated and examined “the Indians as to their general health”, he discovered widespread starvation, a consequence of the rapid extermination of prairie buffalo herds between 1879 and 1883.³⁸ Henrietta and Oliver’s romantic image of the Haida, whom Dawson had so forcefully portrayed, did not fit these starving, sick and angry Cree. Although most Government reports had deliberately denied the extent of the starvation and the food crisis, the concerned Oliver filed a more honest report. To his disappointment the Conservative Government implemented a disastrous policy of financial retrenchment in its Indian Department in 1883, ignoring the repeated native protests and alarming reports, like Oliver’s, which had stressed the situation’s seriousness.³⁹

As Henrietta’s letters to her family in Montreal dwelt on the romantic aspects of Native culture and the colourful side of frontier life, they also highlighted her absence. “The house” complained nineteen-year-old Ernie “is not the same merrie house.” Her mother Jane also lamented, “I do wish you were near us,” explaining “I so long to see your dear face and to have long talks together.”⁴⁰ Always the doting grandmother she explained, “we were amused about dear little Willie when he was punished saying his father was not Eli who did not punish his sons and they grew up to be wicked men.” Jane continued “dear little fellow trusting and loving feeling that father knew best.” More frequently, she expressed concern about Alice’s health and education.⁴¹

The adventurous Henrietta, however, enjoyed Ft. Qu’Appelle more than she had anticipated. Oliver persuaded her to stay in Saskatchewan and promised she could spend the winters in

³⁷ Carter, 108-15.

³⁸ *Sessional Papers* (1883) 191.

³⁹ Carter, 108.

⁴⁰ EG Papers. Letter Jane Muir to Hettie, 1 October 1883.

⁴¹ Letter, 1 October 1883.

Montreal. The couple built a handsome house in Indian Head, about twenty miles from the Ft. Qu'Appelle, hoping a prestigious residence and office would attract new patients as they settled in this new CPR town.⁴² In the late fall of 1884, Henrietta travelled to Montreal leaving Annie to care for her husband and children until spring. Financial constraints played a large part in Henrietta's decision to travel alone. A sense of urgency lay behind this trip since her father was seriously ill. Henrietta had remained the WWA's President hoping she could attend to business affairs during her winter visits and perhaps keep the organization alive. Without Henrietta's driving force, Amelia could not continue the paper, nor did the Women's Printing Office operate beyond 1885. Even the boarding house fell into debt.⁴³ In October 1883, Jane Muir wrote to Henrietta that "Miss Shaw tells me that Mr. J. McLennan has been to Mr. Hugh McLennan about that grocery bill and he may have been to others who are interested in your work." She added, "I thought it best to let you know. Miss Shaw is quite (exercised) concerned about his doing so and wanted me to let you know." Lacking influential fathers, these young women found it difficult to gain McLennan's confidence.⁴⁴

Besides sorting through the WWA's affairs, Henrietta gave lectures on her Saskatchewan experiences to complement the Native artifacts which she brought home. An artist's eye made her a discriminating collector. As her mother had written, "Dear Hettie accept of my thanks for that very beautiful Indian curiosity. How was it worn and what was it used for. How very clever the squaws are in bead work and in choice of colors."⁴⁵ From the women's correspondence it is difficult to know whether Jane Muir and Henrietta had absorbed the prevalent cultural stereotypes which depicted Native women as either "Indian Princess" or immoral "Squaw".⁴⁶ They could not have

⁴² EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 2 January 1884. *Indian Head: History of Indian Head and District* (Regina: History of Indian Head and District Inc., 1984), 2.

⁴³ Lovell, 1882-86. MNHS Papers, Invoices from the Montreal Women's Printing Office.

⁴⁴ EG Papers, Letter Jane Muir to Hettie 1 October 1883. Miss Shaw had been the Secretary of the Working Girl's Association for 1882-1883; Lovell, 1882.

⁴⁵ EG Papers. Letter Jane Muir to Hettie, 1 October 1883.

⁴⁶ Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian woman' in the Early settlement Era in Western Canada," *Great Plains Quarterly*, 13 (Summer 1993), 147-61; Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," in *Unequal Sisters*, ed.

been escaped to the barrage of propaganda by government officials, missionaries and the press who during the early reserve period promoted images of Aboriginal women as “dissolute, dangerous, and sinister”. As the government’s policies became increasing segregationist, Aboriginal women took the blame for reserve problems which encompassed everything from ill health, poverty, and lack of clothing to crop failures.⁴⁷ Government policy targeted Aboriginal women as key “civilizers” and attempted to restructure their domestic sphere. Assimilation focused on making women bearers of white values and white culture to their children and husbands.⁴⁸

Since the Women’s Baptist Foreign Missionary Society (East) had preached the gospel of civilizing heathen women for more than eight years, Henrietta felt Baptist women would respond favorably to Saskatchewan’s need for teachers and missionaries. In January 1884 when she addressed the Olivet Women’s Mission Circle “on the manners and customs of the North West Indians”, the secretary explained that Henrietta drew “a parallel to the Telugu”, adding that although she “did not want to distract our attention from the Telugu field still she thought something might be done to enlighten them.” Native women’s subservient status would rise, Henrietta believed, when they adopted Christianity and replaced polygamy with Christian marriages. Enlightenment and assimilation could be achieved through literacy, domestic education and Christian values.⁴⁹ She echoed the Euro-Canadian newcomers’ belief that their “cultural and moral superiority” gave them title to the North West. Henrietta and other eastern Canadians saw the hardy pioneer women, not the Aboriginal female, as the heroine in this North West settlement

Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York: Routledge, 1990), 15-21.

⁴⁷ Carter, “Categories and Terrains of Exclusion”, 148.

⁴⁸ Pamela Margaret White, “Restructuring the Domestic Sphere - Prairie Indian Women on Reserves: Image, Ideology and State Policy, 1880 - 1930,” (Ph. D diss, McGill University, 1987). See Anna Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood,” *History Workshop Journal*, 5 (1978), 9-65; Nrupur Chauduri and Margaret Strobel, *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1992).

⁴⁹ CBAM, Minute Book 14 January 1884. “Qu’Appelle Northwest Territories,” *The Baptist Visitor*, November 1893.

drama.⁵⁰

Baptist women did not welcome Henrietta's tentative suggestions for civilizing Aboriginal women. Financing the exotic Telugu Mission in India and the Grand Ligne Quebec mission stretched their limited resources. The necessary structure, the Baptist Women's Home Mission Society, was not created until 1890. Anglican and Catholic missions in the North West were already well established. Oblate Father Hugonnard's day school, begun in 1874, had evolved into the Qu'Appelle Industrial School which had just opened in 1883.⁵¹ With only a small local organization and limited resources, Montreal Baptist women could not compete.

Although Amelia accompanied Henrietta to Indian Head, both sisters returned without any encouragement to create a Baptist mission. Oliver's letter had extended a warmer personal welcome to Amelia. "You should have seen the dance put forward by Alice when I told her Aunt Min was coming back with Mama" he wrote. "I also join in the dance & give my foot a shake shake & turn myself about, & hope with all my heart that this move to northern latitude will possess nerve restoring powers to her." A photograph taken by Henrietta in the spring of 1884 captures the festive mood of her family.⁵² Alice received tutoring from the scholarly Amelia. Although a zealous Christian, Amelia was not tempted to become a teacher on a nearby reserve. Like other Canadian missionaries, the primitive conditions may have alienated this gently-bred Montreal lady.⁵³ The romance of writing about exotic India appealed to Amelia. Apparently the starving and poverty-stricken Cree near Indian Head did not since her visit did not inspire a single essay for the

⁵⁰ Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion," 159. See also Sarah Carter, "First Nations Women of Prairie Canada in the Early Reserve years, the 1870s to the 1920s: A Preliminary Inquiry," in *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom and Strength*, eds. Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk with Marie Smallface Marule, Brenda Manyfingers, and Cherly Deering (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Captured Subjects/Savage Others: Violently Engendering the New American," *Gender & History*, 5:2 (Summer 1993), 177-95.

⁵¹ *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds, to the Right Honourable the Minister of the Interior* (Ottawa: 14 March 1879).

⁵² EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 2 January 1884; Photograph NA-4035-1. See also "Letter to the Mission Circles of the Eastern Convention from Amelia Muir, Indian Head N. W. T.," *Link*, January 1884.

⁵³ See Gagan, 189-90.

Canadian Missionary Link. Amelia's column continued to feature the Baptist project in India.⁵⁴

As they settled into the town's life, Henrietta and Oliver also found their Baptist identity less meaningful. Religious differences frequently became a luxury that small frontier communities could not afford as they struggled to support a minister and to build a church. The ruling distinction in the West was often Christian or heathen, with the later category encompassing both Indian and white savages. Necessity produced flexibility in religion and church attendance.⁵⁵ In Indian Head, the family supported St. Andrew's Presbyterian, the only permanent church. The local newspaper called Henrietta "the hardest worker in the Sunday School" and lamented that she would "be sadly missed by the little ones, in whom she always took the greatest interest." Singling out her leadership ability, the editor remarked, "if every there was a picnic or any treat for the children she was always foremost in the work."⁵⁶

Henrietta felt compelled, as other frontier women did, to recreate a social network of family, friend, church and community.⁵⁷ From Montreal to the prairies, she stubbornly transported her passion for gardening, sketching these flowers for future paintings. Her "native preserves" entered in the 1884 Indian Head Agricultural Fair won first prize along with those of Mrs. Crawford.⁵⁸ The Crawfords, devoted Presbyterians, had organized and built the new church. An enterprising businessman, William Crawford owned the Indian Head General Store and acted as agent for the Indian Department. Beyond religion and business, the two families shared many common interests. Their young children became playmates and the husbands played on the Indian Head Cricket Team.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ See *Link*, June to December 1884.

⁵⁵ Dennis L. Butcher, et al., *Prairie Spirit: Perspectives on the Heritage of the United Church of Canada in the West* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).

⁵⁶ *Indian Head*, 112, 119; *Vidette*, 27 August 1885. See R. J. McDonald. "The Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan in the Nineteenth Century," *Saskatchewan History*, IV (Autumn 1951).

⁵⁷ Silverman, ch. 8.

⁵⁸ *Vidette*, 23 October 1883.

⁵⁹ *Indian Head*, 119.

Easterners like Oliver brought their elite sports and muscular Christianity along with their business schemes into the North West.⁶⁰ Major William R. Bell, a veteran of the Fenian invasions and a competitive athlete, who started the Indian Head Cricket Team, established a 23,000 acre corporate farm in 1882. The Qu'Appelle Valley Farming Company hoped to settle over two hundred and twenty-eight families. By 1883 Bell had build a bridge over the river, an elevator at the railway station as well as barracks, cottages, granaries, a blacksmith shop, a horse infirmary and stables. Although Bell's acrimonious disputes with squatters generated ill-will, they did not stop Oliver from becoming a good friend. Mrs. Bell, an accomplished hostess, often included Henrietta and Oliver at her dinners. The men's cricket game fared better than Bell's agricultural experiment which had failed by 1886.⁶¹

Unlike the Bells, Henrietta and Oliver depended upon the region's prosperity to bring success to Oliver's medical practice. But these difficult years with severe winters and drought, and stringent government economy, created a crisis for Native people. Henrietta and Oliver watched helplessly as homestead entries declined, immigration dwindled and prospects for a prosperous medical practice faded. Between 1883-1885 seventeen doctors competed for Treaty 4 work. Oliver's share declined, a casualty of his sympathy for Native grievances and naive criticism of the Macdonald Government. Anger at the federal government was widespread throughout the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan districts. Among Treaty 4 Indians it "centered on the concerns of Piapot", a Cree leader whose followers had refused to select a reserve until 1881. When Piapot selected a Cypress Hills reserve, like Big Bear, he hoped to create an Indian confederacy. Instead, his people were denied rations unless they returned to the Qu'Appelle region and occupied a small reserve near Indian Head. As the Cree moved back and forth between the Cypress Hills and Indian Head, the officials isolated dissenters. A tragic fate complete with accidents, illness, and death awaited

⁶⁰ Morris Mott, "The British Protestant Pioneers and the Establishment of Manly Sports in Manitoba," *Journal of Sport History*, 7:3 (Winter 1980), 25-26 and "One Solution to the Urban Crisis: Manly Sports And Winnipeggers, 1890-1914," *Urban History Review*, 22:2 (Oct. 1983), 57-70.

⁶¹ E. C. Morgan, "The Bell Farm," in *Essays on Saskatchewan History*, ed. D. H. Bocking (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979), 45-63.

Piapot's group.⁶²

The Assiniboine agency, which opened south of Indian Head near the village of Sintaluta, included the three adjacent reserves and the surviving people of Chief Takes a Coat, Long Lodge and Piapot.⁶³ For the next few years, this area became Dr. Edwards' exclusive territory. In the spring of 1884 Chiefs Piapot, Yellow Calf and Long Lodge, representing Cree, Saulteaux and Assiniboine, gathered with seven hundred followers for a Thirst Dance on Pasqaw's Reserve and demanded a council with Commissioner Dewdney.⁶⁴ When Dr. Edwards had visited these Indians in February, he reported that "Jack's people" were suffering from "land scurvy" which he wrote was "due entirely to the exclusive use of salt food." Responding to the general alarm of the white settlers, the Indian Department sent Dr. Edwards in May to investigate the Indian complaints. Although Assistant Commission Hayter Reed maintained Native grievances were unfounded, Dr. Edwards' "strongly-worded report" condemned the government policy and upheld their grievances. "The only proper treatment of this disease whether on land or sea" explained Oliver, "is fresh food and vegetables and unless this policy is pursued in the case of these Indians the disease will spread."⁶⁵ Dr. Edwards could barely concealed his dismay at the "the death toll" of forty-two Crees and thirty-three Assiniboines which he felt "out of 873 souls is a very large proportion". He informed Agent McDonald that:

Long Lodge refused to receive any Government medicine. His words were 'I want no Government medicine. What I want is medicine that walks. Send 3 oxen to be killed and give fresh meat to my people and they will get better' ... The death toll now numbers since the snow fell ... and the number will increase unless a radical change is made in the matter of food. I would recommend that, first, fresh meat be supplied them as an absolute requirement in arresting the disease also that in addition potatoes be given them to eat and a quality of rice be kept at each agency ... many of those who have died this winter have die from absolute

⁶² David Lee, "Piapot: Man and Myth," *Prairie Forum*, 17: 2 (Fall 1992) 251-62. Carter, *Lost Harvest*, 122.

⁶³ L. L. Dobbin, *A History of the Assiniboine Indian Reserve, Sintaluta, Saskatchewan: 1877-1940* (Regina: Legislative Library, Archives Division, 1963).

⁶⁴ John Tobias, "Payipwat," *DCB*, Vol. 13, 815-18. Kenneth Tyler, "Paskwaw," *DCB*, Vol. 11, 674-75.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Bob Beal and Rod Macleod, *Prairie Fire: the 1885 North West Rebellion* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1984), 88-89.

starvation ... It is useless to depend on supplying them with ammunition alone ... the ducks and chickens are very scarce this years.⁶⁶

Long Lodge died before summer arrived. Even Dewdney who conducted his own tour agreed with Oliver. Although the Department partially implemented Edwards' recommendations, the Doctor made enemies in Regina with his blunt criticism.⁶⁷

During visits to the Assiniboine Reserve, Oliver and Henrietta added to their growing collection of Native artifacts. The destitute and starving Assiniboine accepted clothes, food, tools and money as payment for these artifacts. The industrious Montrealers collected a fascinating assortment of items including everything from a beaded moosehide needle case and pouch, a buffalo horn head dress, a set of shaved and polished buffalo horns to a variety of catlinite pipe bowls and stems.⁶⁸ On Carry the Kettle Reserve, the couple met Hongeeyeesa, an artist whose drawing they encouraged. Over the years they collected twenty-two drawings, subsequently called ledger art, which chronicled early reserve life and demonstrate the impact of western materials and Euro-Canadian perceptions on Native people.⁶⁹ Hongeeyeesa portrayed an Assiniboine buffalo hunt, a dog feast, a love scene, a river steamer, and a "parade before going on a war path." Although Henrietta and Oliver took photographs of Native leaders and ceremonial events, they placed more value on these unique drawings.⁷⁰ They believed these artifacts held importance as a record of a dying culture.

By the fall of 1884, Henrietta was pregnant with her third child, often ill and rarely able to

⁶⁶ NAC, RG 10, Volume 3745, File 29506-4, Part 1, 13 May 1884 Dr. O. C. Edwards to Col. MacDonald.

⁶⁷ Beal and Macleod, 86.

⁶⁸ See *Buffalo "These Beast on ye Barren Ground"* (Catalogue Ring House Gallery Exhibition, 21 June to October 6, 1885).

⁶⁹ Valerie Robertson, "Plains Ledger Art: The Documentation of a Way of Life Through the Nineteenth-Century Pictorial Account of an Unknown Assiniboine Artist," *Prairie Forum*, 17: 2 (Fall 1992) 263-74. Howard D. Rodee, "The Stylistic Development of Plains Indian Paintings and its Relationship to Ledger drawings," *Plains Anthropologist*, 10 (Nov. 1956), 218-32.

⁷⁰ In January 1994 Glenbow mounted an exhibition of the forty-four drawings. Guest curator Valerie Roberston's research identified the artist. See *Reclaiming History: Ledger Drawings by the Assiniboine Artist Hongeeyeesa* (Calgary: Glenbow, 1993).

accompany Oliver on these trips. Rather than spend the winter months confined indoors by the infamous North West blizzards, she and the children left in December for Montreal. They escaped the worst winter on record, an option not available to the starving Cree. Oliver followed later, making this his first visit in three years. Concerned about William's health, the couple lengthened their visit. Indeed her father's health continued to deteriorate until his death in July.⁷¹ Henrietta and Oliver again had many opportunities to share stories of the North West with their family, but on this visit neither lobbied for northwest missions. Their behavior scarcely differed from that of other bourgeois travellers returning home from abroad. Oliver, William Muir and four specimens - a badger, a white pelican, a tawny marmot and a turkey buzzard - attended the MNHS February meeting. After delivering a lecture on the habits of these animals, Oliver and Muir presented them to the Society. For both men it was their last association with the MNHS although not the end of Oliver's collecting.⁷² North West politics and the Indian situation dominated the couple's discussions with their family and friends. William Muir, still a staunch Liberal, listened with sympathy as Oliver condemned Dewdney's inhumane and parsimonious Indian policy. They agreed that Macdonald and Dewdney personified the Conservative Administration's mismanagement of the North West. Oliver explained he had given medical counsel to former Liberal Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie, a devout Baptist, when he visited Indian Head in 1884.⁷³ Both families preferred Mackenzie, especially Oliver who was involved in the North West Liberal Party. Privately, Oliver dreamed that his financial situation might permit him to enter federal politics as a representative for Assiniboine.⁷⁴

The federal government's pervasive influence in Territorial politics produced a "spirit of partisanship" and a reputation for the "virulence of political animosities". The Macdonald Govern-

⁷¹ *Vidette*, 25 December 1884. William Muir died 6 July 1885 at the age of sixty-seven.

⁷² MNHS Papers, Minutes 2 February 1885.

⁷³ William Buckingham and Hon. Geo. W. Ross, *The Honourable Alexander Mackenzie: His Life and Time* (Toronto: Rose Publishing Co., 1892), 608.

⁷⁴ Laurier Papers, Letter Dr. O. C. Edwards to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 14 February 1910.

ment dispensed its patronage to loyal Conservatives through the Lieutenant Governor who enjoyed extensive power. Vocal criticism of such autocratic government came naturally to such well-educated and influential settlers as the Edwards. Ontario and Quebec arrivals “had a lively interest in politics,” explained Nicholas Flood Davin, the talented editor of the *Regina Leader* in a speech before the Old Guard Club on 20 January 1885. “Were they”, he asked, “a select immigration- the flower of the old pioneers of Canada - to remain ‘disestablished and disendowed’ and outside the pale of the Constitution?”⁷⁵ Although a dissident Conservative, Davin articulated aspects of Oliver and Henrietta’s political agenda. Their paths would cross again in Ottawa where as an MP he proposed a Private Member’s bill calling for votes for women.⁷⁶

Returning West on 7 March 1885, Henrietta and Oliver quickly discovered Métis and Cree discontent had escalated. Within ten days, the Métis had set up a provisional government and occupied Batoche, about two hundred miles north of Indian Head. NWMP Inspector Crozier’s defeat at Fort Carleton on 26 March and the subsequent actions of angry Crees from Poundmaker, Little Pine and Big Bear’s bands alarmed eastern Canadians. Over the next six weeks, thousands of troops arrived at the Qu’Appelle immigration sheds. Dr. Edwards joined the Qu’Appelle Valley Volunteers, received a commission to attend the wounded soldiers and moved to Qu’Appelle where he remained until the end of July.

Assessing Henrietta and Oliver’s reaction to the Métis and Indian grievances or the Rebellion is difficult without the benefit of reading their correspondence to their Montreal family. Their descendants, however, claim that neither Henrietta nor Oliver shared the general fear of a Cree rebellion around Indian Head. After the 2 April uprising at Frog Lake and the murder of nine people, North West residents grew more anxious. Local stories still speak of the panic produced when “Indians gathering at Katepwe ready to march on Indian Head while all the able-bodied men

⁷⁵ Quoted in Lewis Herbert Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North West Territories 1870-97* (2nd edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 104.

⁷⁶ Catherine Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (2nd edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 110-11.

were in the army or on the transport.” One merchant “slept on the counter of his store with his gun at his side while his family slept upstairs.” Apparently Major Bell, a significant employer of Indian labourers, received the credit for dispersing this group.⁷⁷ The shrewd Dewdney exploited this minor protest. Using the uprising to destroy Piapot’s credibility and his movement for treaty revisions, Dewdney established a major military base next to Piapot’s Reserve and discouraged any dissident Cree from joining the northern rebels.⁷⁸

Unfortunately for the Edwards family, the North-West Rebellion did not give Oliver’s medical career a significant boost. Teams of influential medical staff soon arrived displacing local doctors like Oliver. The Surgeon General, Dr. Bergin led the Hospital Corps assisted by Dr. Rodderick, an excellent Montreal surgeon and acquaintance of Oliver and Henrietta. Eventually, they established a permanent hospital camp at Winnipeg, four field hospitals, a field ambulance and a hospital car to attend wounded soldiers.⁷⁹ Nurses played a role as well with a few earning a name for themselves. Mrs. Kate Miller operated the Saskatoon field hospital assisted by Toronto nurses from “the Sisterhood of St. John.” According to the *Montreal Witness*, the wounded men regarded Miller “as another Florence Nightingale.”⁸⁰ Plenty of opportunities existed for exceptional doctors to make their reputation. A recent arrival, Dr. Maurice Seymour, another McGill graduate who was appointed surgeon of the 95th Battalion, received the North West Rebellion Medal for distinguished service. Between 1885 and 1904 Seymour built a successful Ft. Qu’Appelle medical practice which included regular visits to the Qu’Appelle Industrial School and the Qu’Appelle area reserves. Although competent, Dr. Edwards found it impossible to compete with this surgeon, later known as

⁷⁷ *Indian Head*, 5; *Pages From the Past: Essays on Saskatchewan History*, 45-63.

⁷⁸ Tobias, “Payipwat,” 871; Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*.

⁷⁹ *Daily Intelligence*, 15 April 1885, quoted in Nick and Helma Mika, compilers, *The Riel Rebellion 1885* (Belleville: Mika Silk Screening Lt., 1872), 63. See also *The Medical and surgical history of the Canadian North-West Rebellion: as told by members of the hospital staff corps* (Montreal: J. Lovell, 1886).

⁸⁰ *The Witness*, 11 July 1885 quoted in Mika, 171.

“a leading authority on public health”.⁸¹

Henrietta’s advancing pregnancy kept her close to home during these weeks. Their second daughter Margaret surprised the couple by arriving early on 24 April 1885 during the Battle of Cut Knife Creek. Alice, age seven at the time, later recalled that:

My father was away at Qu’Appelle Station serving with the troops & the telegram that my mother sent to him calling him home was delayed. She was alone in the house with a young maid servant only & kept looking to the west for some sign of my father & finally went upstairs to bed to prepare as well as she could for the event. But then she heard the sound of the clip clop of my father’s high stepping horse coming across the prairie & he got there just in time to wash up & look after her. The baby was very small but survived and grew to be a lively child with blue eyes & curly red hair & was her father’s pet & delight.⁸²

Oliver returned to Qu’Appelle leaving Henrietta with a premature baby and two young children. These were unusual times for women in Indian Head. Neighbours like Mrs. Crawford gave Henrietta some assistance, but she relied on her “young maid servant.” Alice failed to explain that this servant was a Dakota named Patience who came from the Standing Buffalo Reserve at Jumping Creek near Qu’Appelle Lakes, a long day’s drive north of Indian Head.⁸³ Since Major Bell employed “Sioux labourers” on his farm, Patience could have worked in Mrs. Bell’s house or been one of the first graduates of the Qu’Appelle Industrial School.⁸⁴ During the Rebellion Henrietta and Oliver depended upon Patience’s loyalty, although Cree and Métis messengers had pressured the area’s Sioux to rebel. Those living on White Cap’s Band Reserve north of Qu’Appelle did join the uprising.⁸⁵ Indian agents, however, often reported that the Sioux enjoyed an excellent reputation as “good workers” and commanded high wages from the residents. Oliver agreed with this assessment.

⁸¹ “Maurice M. Seymour, M. D.,” *History of the Province of Saskatchewan* (Regina: 1921), 448-50.

⁸² EG Papers, Handwritten notes by Alice Edwards Gardiner, nd.

⁸³ Peter Douglas Elias, *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest: Lessons for Survival* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), ch. 6; James H. Howard, *The Canadian Sioux: Studies in the Anthropology of North American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

⁸⁴ Jacqueline Judith Kennedy, “Qu’Appelle Industrial School: ‘White Rites for the Old North-West’” (Master’s thesis, Institute for Canadian Studies, Carleton, 1970).

⁸⁵ Elias, 172-73.

His own romantic view of the Dakota, “the remnant of the once mighty Sioux nation” was based upon visits in 1882 and 1883. He later recounted to Alice his favorable impression of their ceremonial dances, especially “the bragging dance.”⁸⁶

The Rebellion tested Oliver’s Reform politics as it did those of his Liberal friends, North West councillor J. H. Ross and Amedee Forget, the Council’s clerk. While Oliver had criticized the government’s policy, he did not support armed rebellion. Not as successful as many doctors, Oliver still profited financially from his military employment, but then condemned the Government during Riel’s trial.⁸⁷ The Reform editor of the Qu’Appelle *Vidette*, a friend of Oliver’s, expressed many Liberals’ dilemma in a satirical poem, “A Nor’-Wester’s Oration on Louis Riel”, which claimed that steady employment rescued settlers like Henrietta and Oliver from financial disaster.⁸⁸

The significant family landmarks of Margaret’s birth and William Muir’s death overshadowed these political events for Henrietta. At the end of June her younger sister, Eva Craig, came to visit the new baby. On Dominion Day, Henrietta assisted with the annual Children’s Picnic while Oliver’s Qu’Appelle Cricket Team played a farewell match against members of the 91st Battalion. Later, as the town said good-bye to the troops and the doctors stationed in Qu’Appelle, Henrietta and Eva learned of their father’s death on July 5th. They also returned to Montreal to attend his funeral and close this chapter of their lives. Since Henrietta’s father had been her mentor for so many years, his death made Montreal less attractive and Saskatchewan more appealing.⁸⁹ Henrietta returned willingly to Qu’Appelle, a growing village with a promising future. The town boasted influential eastern Canadians residents: Frank Osler, a lawyer and brother to Oliver’s McGill mentor, George Bulyea, a Liberal and the future Lt. Governor of Alberta, and the Empreys, a well-known Montreal merchant family. All became Oliver’s patients as did the prominent British

⁸⁶ EG Papers. Letter Oliver Edwards to Alice, 25 July 1898.

⁸⁷ See Beal and Macleod, 118. Carter, 140-41.

⁸⁸ See André N. Lalonde, “The North-West Rebellion and Its Effects on Settlers and Settlement in the Canadian West,” *Saskatchewan History*, 23:3 (1974), 100-01.

⁸⁹ *Vidette*, 25 June, 2 and 9 July 1885.

immigrants, Leslie Gordon and R. Dundas Strong. Qu'Appelle, the center of the Anglican Diocese, boasted the presence of Bishop Anson, the son of the wealthy English Earl of Lichfield, who was supervising the construction of St. Peter's Cathedral Church and St. John's College near the town.⁹⁰

"Everyone regrets this loss to our little town," lamented the newspaper editor in Indian Head. He observed that, "Dr. Edwards was popular with all."⁹¹ As Qu'Appelle was the closest village to Indian Head travelling west on the railway, Oliver kept his former patients and his cricket partners. Henrietta visited the Crawfords and the Bells often. In their new location the couple quickly became leading citizens lending their support to the church, the school, temperance politics, community organizations as well as sporting and cultural events. Over the next five years, the Edwards family and the village of Qu'Appelle grew together.

Oliver's Qu'Appelle practice prospered, although his work on the Assiniboine Reserve steadily decreased until he depended totally on private practice. It angered Oliver because in his view less competent men had secured employment with the Indian Department. After the Rebellion, spirited competition for the few medical positions on Treaty 4 Reserves created bitterness. When requesting appointment on the Crooked Lake and Assiniboine Reserves, Dr. Henry Dodds, Regina's Assistant NWMP surgeon explained: "I would not make this offer but private practice here is incompetent to support myself and family."⁹² In contrast to Dr. Edwards, Dodds was willing to court Department officials' favour. Following a 1887 visit to the Crooked Lakes Reserve, Dodds filed a glowing report which praised "the officials on the reserves, whom he found to be remarkably intelligent, earnest, painstaking, judicious, and energetic."⁹³

⁹⁰ *Qu'Appelle Footprints to Progress* (Qu'Appelle, Sask: Qu'Appelle Historical Society, 1980), 146. See Lucy H. Murray, "St. John's College, Qu'Appelle 1885-1894," *Saskatchewan History*, XI (Winter 1958).

⁹¹ *Vidette*, 27 August 1885.

⁹² NAC, RG 10 Volume 3786, File 41953, Part 0. Personnel file of Henry Dodd M. D. re application for medical officer Crooked lake and Assiniboine Agencies 1887. Letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from Henry Dodd, 13 August 1887.

⁹³ Carter, 135.

Henrietta and Oliver disapproved of employees like Dodds who fathered a child with a Native woman while working as a doctor on the Crooked Lakes Reserve. Such behavior was not unique. In 1886 Anglican missionary Samuel Trivett alleged government officials in western Canada took sexual liberties with Aboriginal women, lived with them and then abandoned their children on the Reserves.⁹⁴ Ironically the Muscopetung Agency where Dodds worked denied reports of immorality. "In justice to the employees of this agency, I would state," explained the agent J. B. Lasch "that not a single case of immorality has come under my notice." The federal Liberal MP, Alexander Cameron who was not so easily fooled, hammered away in the House of Commons at the NWMP's revealing record on venereal disease.⁹⁵

Henrietta and Oliver's stern moral code condemned such clandestine liaisons and even questioned mixed marriages, such as that of Lakota Mary Blackmoon to NWMP Thomas Aspdin, later an Indian Head agent. Meeting the couple ten years later, Oliver labelled Mary as "... a pure blooded Sioux Squaw, a large built woman with a fine intelligent face, that peculiar reticence and self control so characteristic of the genuine Indian. A face that would attract an artist and yet she has suffered symptoms pointing towards the possible beginning of Phthisis." He explained to his wife that, "they have children, all girls, the eldest is 14 years. Strange to say she does not show in the slightest degree anything of the Indian features. If it were not know it would never be suspect that this girl Alice had had a full-blooded Indian woman as a mother."⁹⁶ Oliver implied that Alice, a seemingly white girl, is a little more fortunate than her Indian mother.⁹⁷

Whatever Oliver's ambivalence about the Sioux, Patience accompanied the family to Qu'Appelle and worked for them even though she had a family of her own nearby. Henrietta supervised her domestic education, gave cooking lessons and taught English phrases as preparation

⁹⁴ Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion," 152.

⁹⁵ Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion," 150-51.

⁹⁶ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 3 August 1898.

⁹⁷ See Sherry Smith, "Beyond Princess and Squaw: Army Officer's Perceptions of Indian Women," in *The Woman's West*, 63-75.

for the day Patience would establish her own Christian home. Patience became a “nanny” for the baby Pearl and kept house for Henrietta. Unfortunately our picture of their relationship is very one-sided. All that remains is a letter Oliver wrote to Henrietta when he was working at the Regina Industrial School in 1898. Patience, her husband and five children had arrived one morning at his doorstep having “journeyed all the way from Saskatoon to see you thinking you were here with me” explained Oliver, adding their former nanny “was disappointed”.⁹⁸

Patience’s remarks, as translated by her eldest son who spoke English, revealed the domestic training which the Edwards had emphasized. After ten years, Oliver was impressed that: “she remembered Pearl’s name and it was amusing to hear her come out with it in the midst of some Sioux.” Henrietta taught Patience middle-class manners just as she had done with her Montreal servants. “I asked her if she could say ‘Good morning Mrs. Edwards’”, Oliver explained adding “how she doubled up and laughed and how she explained it all to the other women.” He continued in the same paternalistic manner chronicling the family’s success.

Her eldest daughter is a good looking young squaw about 14 ... they got the package of clothes you sent them from Ottawa - they have 30 cattle and garden stuff. I asked her if she remembered how to make the plum pudding - then you ought to have seen her laugh and tell the others - oh yes she could make and had made it and taught her daughter how to make it. I told her I expected to go down and eat a pudding just like we had at Qu’Appelle.⁹⁹

Cross cultural understanding seemed as foreign to Oliver as it was for most Canadians. Oliver’s letter concluded with the patronizing remark, “poor simple children of the prairie how pleased they seemed to be to see me again.” During these North West years, the gulf between white and Native widened as Henrietta and Oliver always met Native people, especially women, in unequal situations. Individual acts of charity, benevolent philanthropy, and employment characterized their approach to Native people.

To met their spiritual and social needs, the Edwards visited each of the three Protestant churches. With Annie and George Bulyea, they attended Baptist services until the Baptist minister

⁹⁸ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 27 June 1898.

⁹⁹ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 27 June 1898.

left town, then switched to the Methodist Church which catered to their preference for Reform politics and debate. Simultaneously, they worshipped at St. Peter's Anglican Church which suited their preference for literate and articulate ministers. Much to her own surprise, Henrietta grew fond of the Church of England's service even though she never agreed with their position on infant baptism.¹⁰⁰ Lonely in the new town, Henrietta joined the Anglican Ladies' Aid selling "fancy work" and taking sewing orders just as she had done in Montreal. The local community attended their December 1886 social, an amusing event which featured Dr. O. C. Edwards in a farce titled "Freezing a mother-in-law". His capable wife led the refreshment committee.¹⁰¹

Frontier conditions encouraged a more ecumenical spirit and challenged the narrow denominational focus which had characterized the Edwards' eastern upbringing. Qu'Appelle citizens who gathered "to pray for the unity of Christians", heard Bishop Anson - a High Churchman- ask if "three ministers of religion, to minister to the small population of this district was not a waste of money and energy, when if Christians were united one could be able to do all the work quite as efficiently."¹⁰² The opportunity for Christian cooperation and women's activism came during the North West Territorial battle over temperance and prohibition, although its leaders were the Methodist ministers and their wives, not the Anglican Bishop. Henrietta's temperance activism began when the North-West Territorial Council abandoned prohibition and issued licenses for the manufacture of beer and wine in 1883. The resulting debate on liquor policy "caused the sharpest of all divisions of opinion in the North-West on a local issue."¹⁰³ Qu'Appelle, the home of three temperance organizations, very quickly became the headquarters for the Assiniboine district. In 1886 George and Annie Bulyea joined *Progress* editor, James Weidman, and his wife in organizing

¹⁰⁰ Interview Roome with Whipple, Sydney 10 April 1991; *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 23 April 1886.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in *Qu'Appelle: Footprints to Progress*, 147-48.

¹⁰² *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 19 April 1888. See T. D. Powell, "The Church of England in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle and Saskatchewan: their Establishment, Expansion and Response of Immigration 1874-1914," (Master's thesis, University of Regina, 1980).

¹⁰³ Lewis, *The Struggle for Responsible Government*, 119.

a Qu'Appelle chapter of the Royal Templars of Temperance. The North-West Prohibitory Alliance followed in the next year. Letitia Youmans, the Dominion President of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) addressed a Qu'Appelle audience during her 1886 western tour. Mrs. A. Andrews, the wife of a Methodist missionary and temperance worker, returned to Qu'Appelle the following year and organized a union. Before leaving she delivered a rousing lecture on "the Woman's crusade in Ohio and the present work of the society."¹⁰⁴

Henrietta became President of the Qu'Appelle WCTU, elected at the founding meeting chaired by Dr. Edwards. Other male temperance leaders were more suspicious and wary of this "woman's crusade". The *Progress* eventually weakened and gave substantial coverage to the WCTU, presenting Frances Willard's view on suffrage, marriage, women's equality and women's employment.¹⁰⁵ Henrietta embraced the WCTU woman's crusade, happy to be again advancing women's concerns. Although she established a children's Band of Hope, the WCTU regular Friday meetings focused on pioneer women's concerns about childbirth and their family's health. The skillful Henrietta even demonstrated "the preparation of poultices and the art of bandages".¹⁰⁶ Soon the Qu'Appelle Union joined the Royal Templars at public temperance meetings, prepared petitions for the North-West Territory Council, and sent delegates to the Northwest Prohibitory Alliance's 1888 Regina Conference. Henrietta received a lesson on the importance of woman's suffrage when watching the Territorial Council cancel married women's dower rights but accept liquor licensing.¹⁰⁷

After the formation of the WCTU, Henrietta and seven prominent women with "an advisory

¹⁰⁴ Letitia Youmans, *Campaign Echoes* (Toronto: Wm. Briggs, 1893), 299-300. *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 12 February 1886, 10 March 1887. See also M. A. McGovern, "The Women's Christian Temperance Movement in Saskatchewan 1886-1930: A Regional Perspective on the International White Ribbon Movement," (Master's thesis, University of Regina, 1977), ch. 4.

¹⁰⁵ *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 11 August, 9 September 1887 and 11 May 1888.

¹⁰⁶ *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 29 March and 17 May 1888.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas, *The Struggle for Responsible Government*.

committee of gentlemen” established a cottage hospital for maternity cases.¹⁰⁸ The need for community services encouraged the women’s activism. The Qu’Appelle Reading Room, a project spearheaded by Oliver and George Bulyea, also included Henrietta and Annie as part of a “supplementary committee of ladies”. Anxious that town residents spent their leisure profitably, the room developed a library of fifty volumes with subscriptions to leading Canadian, English and Scottish newspapers. While only vaguely reminiscent of her Bleury Street Reading Room, Henrietta wanted this humble Room to be an “excellent place to spend an evening.”¹⁰⁹ As Christian women, Henrietta and her friends were anxious to keep men from drinking. Her involvement in these two modest projects foreshadowed the “civilizing” work that pioneer women in western Canada would undertake over the next twenty years. Making a community on the prairies became women’s work although Henrietta was not alone in being a reluctant pioneer. Most of her friends, like Maritimer Annie Bulyea, had followed their husbands West under protest. Now they sought to overcome their loneliness for sisters, mothers and eastern friends by creating a vibrant social life in these pioneer communities.¹¹⁰

Qu’Appelle was “remarkable for the energy of its inhabitants in the pursuit of pleasure as well as business” boasted the *Progress*. Prospective settlers could enjoy “an excellent brass and instrumental band, Masonic Lodge, a cricket club, a toboggan club, and a skating rink, and during the autumn and winter months frequent assemblies are held at which dancing as well as music is enjoyed.” Henrietta and Oliver became two of its most enthusiastic citizens. Their families had initiated them into elite sports clubs.¹¹¹ Riding, skating and tobogganing had filled Henrietta’s

¹⁰⁸ *Qu’Appelle Progress*, 19 October and 9, 23 November 1888.

¹⁰⁹ *Qu’Appelle Progress*, 2 and 9 November 1888.

¹¹⁰ Silverman, ch. 10.

¹¹¹ *Qu’Appelle Progress*, 8 March 1889. See Alan Metcalfe, “The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation in Montreal, 1840-1895,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 21 (1978), 144-66; Gerald Redmond, *The Sporting Scots of Nineteenth-Century Canada* (London: Associated University Press, 1982); Don Morrow, “Montreal: the Cradle of Organized Sport,” in *A Concise History of Sport in Canada*, ed. Don Morrow et al (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1-22.

childhood with happy memories. In December 1886, Oliver became President of the Qu'Appelle Toboggan Club and supervised the construction of their toboggan slide. Sliding down the platform on the prairies recalled for Henrietta and Oliver earlier good times at the Montreal toboggan run.¹¹²

As a youth, Henrietta wore elaborate costumes to gala evening parties at the Victoria Skating Club, but now she dressed her children for a much humbler masquerade carnival at the Qu'Appelle Skating Rink. Although participation in sports depended less on social class than in Montreal, gender distinctions did not disappear. Alice played on the Qu'Appelle Girls' Baseball team, but only men could join the Qu'Appelle Curling Club. For Oliver, the English gentlemen's sport of cricket opened many professional doors. He served the Qu'Appelle Cricket Club faithfully as President and Vice President. Community celebrations centered on this sport whether it was the annual 24 May or 1 July Cricket Match with the Indian Head team. Henrietta and the other "cricket wives" organized a "grand concert in aid of the Cricket Club" and prepared a gala ball for the finale of the cricket match between Qu'Appelle and Winnipeg.¹¹³ Alice, William and Margaret became competitive amateur athletes when they returned to eastern Canada.

Despite these good times, the family left Qu'Appelle in the spring of 1890 for Ottawa rather than send Alice and William away to boarding school. The couple's fathers had left enough property and money to re-establish an eastern life. While their move solved the education dilemma, it disrupted Oliver's medical career. He had finally established a prosperous practice in Qu'Appelle, moved his "fine house" from Indian Head, and just been elected to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the North-West Territories. Oliver subsequently explained that exhaustion and health problems brought on by hot summers help persuaded him to leave. Henrietta's desire to return to eastern Canada played an important role in their decision, as did the death of Qu'Appelle friend Leslie Gordon. Further misfortune plagued their departure. The sudden death of

¹¹² *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 2 December 1886, 24 February and 31 March 1887. For descriptions of skating parties and tobogganing see Lady Dufferin, *My Canadian Journal 1872-1878*, edited and annotated by Gladys Chantler Walker (Don Mills: Longmans, 1969).

¹¹³ *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 24 May 1889 and 21 May 1890.

Crown prosecutor R. Dundas Strong forced the town to cancel Henrietta and Oliver's farewell reception.¹¹⁴

Henrietta, now forty years of age, had acquired a new maturity living far from her family. This western interlude shaped her feminism. By weakening the pull of evangelical organizations, living in Saskatchewan had prepared Henrietta for participation in the blossoming eastern Canadian women's movement. Although Montreal and the Muirs had provided the foundation for her political education, the North West developed her passion for politics. By 1890, she had become more interested in working for women's suffrage than in lobbying for Native missions.

¹¹⁴ *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 18, 25 April and 2 May 1890.

IV. An Evangelical Among Ottawa Friends, 1890-1897

Henrietta's evangelical feminism blossomed in the 1890s.¹ Although she preferred Montreal, Henrietta discovered many kindred spirits among Ottawa's evangelical women who welcomed her into their organizations.² By 1890 these pioneers had already spent a decade building the Canadian suffrage movement.³ Within three years Henrietta had joined the executives of ten women's organizations. Reflecting on the good times spent in the company of many friends, her 1897 YWCA President's report concluded: "We are all workers together in His vineyard" and used a Biblical metaphor to convey her belief that "the delight of serving Him is known only to His servants, for the joy of service and the privilege of helpfulness are His choicest gifts."⁴

Ottawa, a growing city of 37,368, presented Henrietta with many opportunities to realize her mission to serve women and thus serve God. Her Montreal upbringing served her well by providing some familiarity with life in a divided community. French Canadian Catholics peopled Ottawa's lower town and nearby Hull while the Anglo-Protestant elite dominated the upper town, as in Montreal. Over 2,500 men were employed seasonally in the lumber industry creating a labour force reminiscent of the Montreal harbour. As a result of this large migrant, male population many social problems arose. Taverns, prostitution and violence characterized their world.⁵ Often poorly paid,

¹ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1976), ch. 1, 2; Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 18, presents Henrietta as a Montreal suffragist whose apprenticeship came the Montreal Women's Club in 1900.

² See Sharon Anne Cook, "'A Helping Hand and Shelter': Anglo-Protestant Social Service Agencies in Ottawa," (Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1987) and "'Continued and Persevering Combat': The Ontario Women's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelism and Social Reform 1874-1916," (Ph. D diss., Carleton University, 1990).

³ Catherine L. Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (2nd edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), ch. 2.

⁴ *The Ottawa Young Women's Christian Association 6th Annual Report (1897-98)*, 5, hereafter *Report Ottawa YWCA*.

⁵ John H. Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1986), ch. 3. On Montreal see Andrée Levesque, "Le Bordel: Milieu de Travail Contrôlé," *Labour/le travail*, 20 (Fall 1987), 13-22; Peter

the labourers at Chaudière Mills went on strike in 1891, a testimony to persistent class and social conflict.⁶ Placed amid this rough lumbering community, the government and civil service created an absurd dichotomy. At Government House previous Governors General had built a glittering vice regal society which grew "more splendid and arrogant" in the 1890s.⁷

As Henrietta discovered, glittering splendor and poverty characterized women's experience in Ottawa just as it had in Montreal during the 1870s. Ottawa had a large work force of single women, mostly from rural areas.⁸ By 1890 they were employed as domestics, shop girls and clerks in the civil service. Single women outnumbered men creating few prospects for establishing a stable family. Like the transient lumber workers, single women faced poverty especially when depression hit the lumber industry in 1893. These working-class women presented a painful contrast to the society ladies and political wives who held court at the Russell or appeared in Amaryllis's society column.⁹

Working-class destitution spurred Ottawa Christian philanthropists, primarily lumber barons, to provide the financial backing for the organizations which their wives and daughters created and managed. A concern for status, evangelical zeal, a growing "maternal feminism" as well as a distaste for "society" motivated many of these women.¹⁰ The Edwards name introduced Henrietta to Protestant philanthropists such as the Bronsons, Blackburns, Wrights and Keefers. Erskine Henry Bronson, a representative of this elite, was a wealthy lumber baron, MPP for Ottawa and

de Lottinville, "Joe Beef of Montreal: Working-class Culture and the Tavern," *Labour/le travail*, 8:9 (Autumn/Spring 1981-82), 9-40.

⁶ Edward McKenna, "Unorganized Labour versus Management: the Strike at the Chaudiere Mills, 1891," *Histoire Sociale/ Social History*, 10 (November 1972).

⁷ Sandra Gwyn, *The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Laurier* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 228.

⁸ Cook, "A Helping Hand and Shelter", 7-8.

⁹ Gwyn, ch. 17.

¹⁰ Cook, "A Helping Hand and Shelter," 20-28. See also Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 19-22.

Minister without Portfolio in the Mowat Government. Ella Bronson, his wife, who was involved with the Protestant Orphan's Home when Henrietta met her in 1891, served on the boards of many philanthropic organizations although she never attended Ottawa society functions.¹¹

Henrietta received a much cooler reception from Oliver's wealthy family who were prominent in Ottawa businesses, politics and society. William Cameron, the eldest and the richest, owned extensive sawmill operations in Ottawa and nearby Rockland. Like his father, W. C. had become the township reeve, justice of the peace, MP, Senator and the Liberal Party's major financial backer.¹² Already a powerful millionaire with diversified investments, W. C. served on the boards of banks, insurance companies, and industrial enterprises. Oliver's next two brothers, John Cameron, a partner with W. C., and Charles Fraser, a dry goods merchant, were also wealthy entrepreneurs. The family expected that Oliver, the only professional, would become a distinguished doctor. Instead, after a fifteen year career, Oliver could barely afford to buy a house and begin a new practice. Fortunately he had inherited a large farm "Pine Camp" overlooking the Ottawa River near Clarence, twenty miles from Ottawa, but his brothers' prosperity made his failure painfully obvious.

Ottawa presented the Edwards family with different challenges from the village of Qu'Appelle. William, now 11 years old, found the studies more difficult at his father's old school the Ottawa Collegiate Institute. Ten-year-old Alice who had always attended school with her brother, went alone to Miss A. Harmon's Private School. Margaret, age 6, remained at home with Henrietta and Annie Greer, a young Irish-Canadian servant, but she missed Patience, her Sioux nanny. Henrietta had expected Oliver would require her nursing expertise in his office adjoining their house, just as he had in his busy Qu'Appelle practice.¹³ She soon discovered that paying

¹¹ Peter Gillis, "E. H. Bronson and Corporate Capitalism: A Study in Canadian Business Thought and Action 1880," (Master's thesis, Queen's, 1975) and "Henry Franklin Bronson," *DCB*, Vol. 11, 112-13.

¹² "William Cameron Edwards," in *Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography being Chiefly Men of the Time*, ed. George MacLean Rose (Toronto: Rose Publishing, 1888), 345; EG Papers, "Life Story of Senator," Newspaper Clipping, nd.

¹³ *A History of the Ottawa Collegiate Institute 1843-1903* (Ottawa : Mortimer 1904); *Census*, Ottawa 1891, Victoria Ward; *Ottawa Directory*, 1890-91, 115; *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 30 April 1898, hereafter

patients were scarce, an ominous warning of the fierce competition which plagued Ottawa doctors throughout the 1890s.¹⁴

Settling into the religious community was much easier than creating a prosperous medical business. First Baptist Church, the home of Oliver's family, welcomed the couple and their children who were baptized and accepted for church membership, William on the same Sunday as his cousin Kemp.¹⁵ Church work helped Henrietta distinguish herself from her sisters-in-law, society women who neither taught Sunday School nor volunteered as Henrietta did at the East End and Hull Baptist Missions. They did attend the Women's Foreign Mission Circle but Henrietta surpassed them, becoming its President in 1895, and also creating a Baptist Home Mission Society circle in 1893.¹⁶ Henrietta's quest for further avenues of Christian service, during her first year in Ottawa, led her to three evangelical women's organizations: the Home for Friendless Women (HFW), the YWCA and the WCTU.¹⁷

Bertha Wright, the HFW's founder, had captured Henrietta's attention through her newsletter *The Friend of the Friendless*. After only five months in Ottawa, Henrietta followed the Muir family tradition and joined the HFW's Management Board. Dr. Edwards also volunteered his services to the Home and sought patients from Board members who were the wives and daughter of important Ottawa leaders. Except for Lady Agnes Macdonald, most members - Mary Blackburn, Annie Keefer, Mary B. Falding and Henrietta Falconer - had male relatives who provided the Home with legal assistance and financial support, so Oliver's assistance was not unusual.¹⁸ Wright's

Ottawa Journal.

¹⁴ John F. McDonald, "An Examination of the Forces Affecting the Location Decisions of Physicians in Ottawa: 1875-1915," (Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1983).

¹⁵ CBAM, Ottawa First Baptist Church, Minute Book 1891 to 1900, 6 January 1892 and 5 April 1893.

¹⁶ CBAM, Ottawa First Baptist Church, Minute Book, 3 December 1890; *Annual Report of the First Baptist Church Ending 31 December 1896*.

¹⁷ For the American origins see Carroll Smith Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 206-10; Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York 1822-1871* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 148-50.

¹⁸ *4th Annual Report Home For Friendless Women* (1891), 5, hereafter *HFW Report*.

career exemplified the importance of evangelical commitment in early social work.¹⁹ Bertha, the eldest of twelve, had been raised by her wealthy uncle and aunt, Joseph and Hannah Bertha Currier, educated at the Ottawa Ladies College, and attended St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.²⁰ In 1885 the educated, single and ambitious Wright experienced a call from God to devote her talents to spreading the Christian message to Ottawa's young working women.²¹ She joined the youth chapter of the WCTU, led its Evangelistic Department and supervised "a staggering number of projects", such as a night school for working girls.²² Her Bible class, composed of young working women whom she had "converted," organized a "Home" for women leaving the Carleton County Jail. Over six hundred 'destitute' women used this Home during its first three years of operation. No longer a struggling mission, in January 1891 the HFW became an incorporated charity with a Board of Management and government assistance to support a new facility with a modern steam laundry.²³

At the Home, Henrietta encountered destitute non-Native women for the first time in her sheltered life. Seeing poverty, disease and alcoholism in young pregnant women offended Henrietta's bourgeois sensibilities just as the experience strengthened her feminism. Such work also distanced Henrietta from fashionable Ottawa society where membership in the exclusive Ottawa Wanderers Snow Shoe Club carried more status. Conservative Christians also expressed "disfavor and suspicion" at the HFW because they believed it was "an institution for the encouragement of vice."²⁴ Board members needed to be as independent-minded as Henrietta to persevere against such

¹⁹ Cook, "A Helping Hand and Shelter," ch. 4. For Britain see Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of their social work in the Victorian Era* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962).

²⁰ Cook, "A Helping Hand", 73. See Donald Swainson, Joseph Merrill Currier," *DCB*, Vol. 11, 229-30.

²¹ B. H. W., *Lights and Shades of Mission Work: Leaves From a Worker's Note Book. Being Reminiscences of Seven Years Service at the Capital, 1885 - 1892* (Ottawa: Free Press Printing, 1892), 1, 9-11.

²² Cook, "A Helping Hand and Shelter," 73.

²³ Ottawa YWCA Archives, Minute Book 1888-1891 of the Y. W. C. T. Union, 12 September 1890 and 2 January 1891.

²⁴ *HFW Report* (1891), 1. See *Lights and Shades of Mission Work*, ch III.

criticism. A shared evangelical feminism carried these women into new arenas of public speaking, political meetings, suffrage activity, and lobbying. Having been raised a Muir and scornful of society women, Henrietta belonged among this parallel elite.

From the beginning Henrietta's evangelical views and feminist perspective created tensions for her as they did for other HFW Board members. To silence Christian critics the Board advertised that the "friendless and the fallen" must show "a desire to forsake a life of sin". As evangelicals they shared a "living" theology premised on the belief that every effort should be "made to lead each inmate to a knowledge of her lost condition and to trust in the finished work of Christ for salvation."²⁵ The women reported, however, that the "friendless", predominantly "Protestant" Irish working-class women brought to the Home by a WCTU Biblewoman, successfully resisted conversion despite Christian influence, prayer meetings and religious services. Strict terms were made for maternity cases who had to sign a year residency contract, accept all responsibility for infants and agreed to take their children when discharged. All second requests for admission were refused.²⁶

For this reason, Ottawa women influenced by feminism believed their city needed a Maternity Hospital even through the HFW's Board officially stated it "heartily disapproves of any arrangement or institution which does not seek the salvation of these fallen ones". Likewise it refused to relieve "the patients of the care of their offspring," arguing that this made "it easy for them to escape the full penalty of wrong-doing."²⁷ Based upon such rhetoric historians have argued Wright failed to show any solidarity with female clients.²⁸ Such judgment is rather harsh given that elsewhere Wright wondered whether "the friendless" should carry all the blame for their destitution.

²⁵ *HFW Report* (1891), 2. See Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 202-10 for a discussion of this "living" theology.

²⁶ *HFW Report* (1891).

²⁷ *HFW Report* (1891), 2.

²⁸ Cook, "A Helping Hand and Shelter," 92-93 argued "at no stage did Bertha demonstrate any feelings of solidarity with her sister-clients. These women's problems sprung in her mind from moral failing not from society injustice to all women."

Using a phrase typical among rescue workers, Wright declared that “friendless” women were “motherless girls who have been more sinned against than sinful”.²⁹ Although evangelist Dwight Moody proclaimed at First Baptist, “sin is personal”, Henrietta chose to believe society shared responsibility for these problems also. More liberal and feminist than Wright, Henrietta supported the Maternity Hospital. Although rescue work led her to develop a critique of male sexuality, the double standard and Canadian seduction laws,³⁰ it did not produce a spiritual crisis. Like most Canadian evangelicals, Henrietta never separated personal religion and social life.

Inspired by General Booth’s London mission, Christian workers had launched “aggressive evangelistic work” in working-class neighborhoods and among Hull’s Catholic French-speaking residences. Henrietta taught Sunday School at the Cathcart and Anglesea Square Missions and visited women at the County Jail and at the hospital.³¹ Her contribution, while significant, did not match the efforts of the “lady evangelists” who faced violent protest from angry crowds.³² Henrietta did not sit on the executive of the Gospel Mission Union, an “evangelical and unsectarian” association created and led by Wright. Remembering her work with the Montreal YWCA, Henrietta instead joined the Young Women’s Christian Institute (YWCI), established by Wright in 1889, and assisted Wright in converting the YWCI into a Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA).³³

Inspired by the Toronto YWCA’s success, Bertha Wright, Henrietta and several others developed plans in the fall of 1892 for “extended and aggressive work” in Ottawa. They believed

²⁹ Wright, 41.

³⁰ See National Council of Women of Canada, *Women Workers of Canada. Being a Report of the Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Meeting and Conference of the National Council of Women, Montreal May 1896* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1896), 324, hereafter *NCWC Report*.

³¹ *Lights and Shades of Mission Work*, ch. V; *Ottawa Journal*, 1 December 1892 notes that “Mrs. Dr. Edwards delivered a very interesting and instructive address to the young people in the Eastern Methodist church last night on the subject of missions.”

³² *Lights and Shades of Mission Work*, 77-95; *Ottawa Journal*, 16 May, 10 October 1891 and 19 November 1892.

³³ *Lights and Shades of Mission Work*, 96-97.

“self-supporting young women should have a home where love and sympathy greet them,” where they could be “mothered and shielded from temptation”.³⁴ As the recently elected Vice-President, Henrietta worked on the prestigious Finance and Building Committee.³⁵ Chairman T. C. Keefer was a prominent engineer, railway promoter and the father of the “fearless” lady evangelist Mary Falding.³⁶ Mrs. H. F. Bronson served as Honorary President guaranteeing the support of the Bronson Company and the timber elite. Henrietta’s brother-in-law, C.F. Edwards, a dry goods merchant who employed female workers, contributed handsomely. The YWCA committee raised \$14,569 within eighteen months, purchased property and built an elegant facility.³⁷ Henrietta supervised the Furnishing Committee in preparation for the opening of the new facility in October 1894. Throughout the next years, her YWCA work grew in importance.³⁸

A third organization, the WCTU also provided Henrietta with a home and welcomed her energetic leadership. After the small Qu’Appelle WCTU, Henrietta found Ottawa’s enthusiasm for suffrage, temperance politics and “women’s emancipation” exciting. Between 1880 and 1890 this aggressive organization had provided ambitious women with leadership opportunities. Addie Chisholm, Roberta Tilton and Amelia Yeomans organized the Ontario WCTU in 1881, launched the *Woman’s Journal* in 1885, registered single female property owners to vote in Ottawa’s municipal elections, and that same year petitioned the Ontario legislature to grant all women the

³⁴ Ottawa YWCA Papers. “The Story of the Ottawa Young Women’s Association,”; *Lights and Shades of Mission Work*, ch. IV; *Ottawa Journal*, 17 September 1892. See Wendy Mitchinson, “Aspect of Reform: Four Women’s Organizations in Nineteenth Century Canada,” (Ph. D diss., Carleton University, 1977); Diana Pederson, “Providing a Woman’s Conscience; the YWCA, Female Evangelicalism, and the Girl in the City, 1870-1930,” in *Canadian Women: A Reader*, ed. Wendy Mitchinson et al (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 194-210 and “A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and Nation Need,” (Ph. D diss., Carleton University, 1987).

³⁵ YWCA Minute Book 1892-1895, 4 October 1892. *Ottawa Journal*, 5 October 1892.

³⁶ See T. C. Keefer, *Philosophy of Railroads and other essays*, ed. H. V. Nelles (Toronto 1972).

³⁷ The Story of the Ottawa YWCA,” 47; *Ottawa YWCA Report* (1892-93); *Woman’s Journal*, 13 September 1891.

³⁸ YWCA Minutes, 20 January, 3 March 1893. *Ottawa YWCA Report* (1894-95), 8-9. *Ottawa Journal*, 1 September 1894.

municipal and provincial franchise.³⁹ The Ottawa chapter has just voted in March 1891 that “equal Rights will now be a subject of discussion, and all information concerning it will be faithfully and prayerfully considered.”⁴⁰

While some historians have incorrectly dismissed the WCTU as merely a haven for prudish and conservative temperance fanatics, closer analysis has shown that the aggressive Dominion Executive were the leaders of the Canadian suffrage movement.⁴¹ Henrietta’s “friends” were the vanguard dragging many reluctant WCTU members slowly along. In 1891 the Dominion WCTU Convention officially endorsed “woman’s franchise” and encouraged cooperation with the new Dominion Women’s Enfranchisement Association (DWEA).⁴² Throughout the campaigns of the 1890s, the heyday of Ontario’s suffrage petitions, these pioneers inspired younger women like Henrietta to become active suffragists.⁴³ Their suffrage petition to the House of Commons and the Senate bluntly stated that “the test of sex in citizenship is a gross injustice to half the people, and a

³⁹ *Woman’s Journal*, January, December 1885 and December 1886. The editor Mary MacKay Scott became the President of the YWCA after Henrietta. Addie Chisholm, *Why and How: a Handbook for the Use of W. C. T. Unions in Canada* (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1884); Cleverdon, 21-24. See also Cook, “Continued and Persevering Combat.”

⁴⁰ *Woman’s Journal*, March 1890.

⁴¹ Carol Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred the Ideas of English Canadian Suffragists* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 26-27. For a critique of Bacchi’s assessment of temperance suffragists see Ernest Forbes, “The Ideas of Carol Bacchi and the Suffragists of Halifax: a Review Essay,” *Altantis*, 10: 2 (Spring 1985), 119-26. Mary McDonnell was a founding member of the Toronto Women’s Literary Society, the DWEA, was the Toronto WCTU and the Dominion WCTU. In the 1890s, the Newfoundland WCTU initiated and led the suffragist movement. See Margot Iris Dudley, “‘The Radius of Her Influence for Good’: the Rise and Triumph of the Women’s Suffrage Movement in Newfoundland 1909-1925,” in *Pursuing Equality: Historical Perspectives on Women in Newfoundland and Labour*, ed. Linda Kealey (St. John’s: Memorial University, 1993), 14-65; Margot Iris Dudley, *Where Once Our Mothers Stood We Stand: Women’s Suffrage in Newfoundland 1890-1925* (Charlottetown: Gynergy Books, 1993), ch. 1.

⁴² S. G. E. McKee, *Jubilee History of the Ontario Women’s Christian Temperance Union 1877-1927* (Whitby: C. A. Goodfellow & Son, nd), 38; Cleverdon, 22-27. In February 1889, several WCTU suffrage leaders formed the DWEA. Mrs. Annie Parker, the Superintendent of Franchise Department for the Dominion WCTU, was the Vice-President of the DWEA while Mrs. Jacob Spence and Mrs. F. S. Spence served on the executive committee. See *Constitution and By-Laws of the Women’s Enfranchisement Association of Canada* (Toronto: Blizzard & Company Printers, 1889).

⁴³ See E. R. Forbes, “Battles in Another War: Edith Archibald and the Halifax Feminist Movement,” in *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes* (Fredericton, N. B. Acadiensis Press, 1989), 67-89.

direct violation of the principles of Representation by Population.” Inspired by Augusta Stowe Gullen’s 1892 election as Toronto school trustee, the *Women’s Journal* asked readers “why not Ottawa”. Although too self-conscious to stand for election herself, Henrietta supported the campaign.⁴⁴

Henrietta’s feminism evolved from her exposure to Ottawa WCTU leaders. With a strong commitment to women’s emancipation, their agenda included everything from gaining political equality, legislative changes, moral and dress reform to achieving women’s entrance into the professions. In 1892 the Superintendent for the Department of Legislation, Franchise and Petitions told members that: “Mr. Balfour’s Bill allowing the Law Society to admit women to the study and practice of law passed by a majority of one.” Lawyers were “very jealous of any invasion of their fights by the fair sex” Mrs. H. Rockwell dryly observed. With confidence she predicted: “it is the thin edge of the wedge, however, and they may as well make up their minds to submit to the inevitable.” WCTUers knew the feminist Rockwell as editor of the *Canada Citizen*, a prohibitionist paper, and a “powerful writer on Woman’s Suffrage.”⁴⁵

Living in Ottawa and working in the women’s movement accelerated Henrietta’s political education faster than if she had returned to Montreal. From 1885-1898 the federal government retained control of the federal franchise.⁴⁶ Henrietta joined in the annual WCTU women’s deputation to the federal government. She met early Ontario suffragists like WCTUer Mary McDonnell, a founding member of the Toronto Women’s Literary Society and the DWEA. McDonnell presented Prime Minister Abbott with the WCTU suffrage petition when Ottawa hosted the Dominion WCTU Conference in May 1892.⁴⁷ Henrietta joined the “delegation of Ottawa ladies” to present

⁴⁴ *Woman’s Journal*, March and December 1891.

⁴⁵ *Ontario WCTU Report* (1892), 45; *Woman’s Journal*, July/August 1893; Bacchi, 26 overlooked Rockwell and focused on Sarah Curzon who wrote a column in the *Canadian Citizen*. Bacchi commented that Curzon revealed “an early link between temperance and woman suffrage.”

⁴⁶ See Cleverdon, 111 for a discussion. of the Federal Franchise Act of 1898 which gave the provinces control over the dominion franchise.

⁴⁷ Cleverdon, 24, for the Ottawa DWEA chapter begun in 1893. See also Mary Beacock Fryer, *Emily Stowe: Doctor and Suffragist* (Toronto: Hannah Institute and Dundurn Press, 1990).

the petition signed by 18,000 women. Between 1891 and 1896 the WCTU was responsible for fourteen of eighteen petitions sent to the federal government.⁴⁸ On 3 May 1895 Henrietta and Ottawa WCTUers watched Conservative MP Nicholas Flood Davin eloquently plea before the House of Commons for women's enfranchisement. The results was the vote of 105 opposed and 47 in favor. Ironically Liberal Prime Minister Laurier, a personal friend of Oliver and Henrietta, relieved the federal government of any responsibly in enfranchising women by restoring control of the electoral lists to the provinces in 1896. Suffragists like Henrietta were now forced to organize by province. Laurier's actions inhibited the development of a powerful national suffrage association.⁴⁹

Henrietta threw herself almost as eagerly into the prohibition plebiscite campaign organized by the Ontario Branch of the Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic. In the fall of 1893 she joined the Ottawa United Temperance Association (OUTA) as a WCTU representative and, with Bertha Wright, prepared pamphlets for eligible women voters, led the canvassing team and distributed literature.⁵⁰ Men's alcoholism, Wright explained, hurt women also. "Too long," she cried "have we tried to hide our eyes from an oppressed and suffering womanhood. Too long have we closed our ears to the wail of anguish and woe which rise over from hell upon earth." Raised as a proper Victorian lady, Wright's used euphemisms to link alcohol abuse with violence to women. While Henrietta agreed with her analysis of women's victimization, she disagreed with Wright's proposed solutions.⁵¹ Ever the evangelist, Wright spoke an older language of moral reform whereas Henrietta reflected Oliver's scientific perspective. "Intemperance used to

⁴⁸ *Woman's Journal*, May 1892; Cleverdon, 25-27.

⁴⁹ Cleverdon, 110-11; *Woman's Journal*, 9 May and 6 June 1895.

⁵⁰ *Ottawa Journal*, 16-17 September, 6 October, 8 and 22 November 1893. Malcolm G. Decarie, "The Prohibition Movement in Ontario 1894-1916," (Ph. D diss., Queen's University, 1972), 49-85 for the general campaign; however his treatment of the WCTU is sketchy, judgmental and overlooks WCTU records.

⁵¹ *Ottawa Journal*, 5 December 1894. When Bertha Wright married Professor Carr-Harris of Kingston she selected William Muir Edwards as one of her ushers. *Ottawa Journal*, 6 June 1896.

be looked upon as a question of right or wrong," she remarked, "now many look upon it as a disease."⁵²

When Henrietta became the Superintendent of the WCTU's Department of Health and Heredity in 1893, her doctor husband's belief in treating alcoholics with "a gold cure" had also permeated her thinking. She encouraged the WCTU to sponsor a lecture on Dr. Leslie Keeley's Gold Cure and support his Ottawa Institute which operated for a short time.⁵³ While Dr. Edwards also advertised his own cure, unlike the shrewd American businessman who grew wealthy through selling his secret formula, Edwards proudly outlined his treatment in a medical journal.⁵⁴ The WCTU refused to fund Keeley but voted to pay "\$130 for the cure of inebriated under care of Dr. O. C. Edwards".⁵⁵ Access to Oliver's work benefited Henrietta. In 1895 she presented a paper on "Treatment of women given to inebriety and the undue use of drugs" to the NCWC.⁵⁶

Through WCTU work, Henrietta campaigned relentlessly for temperance, suffrage and "equal political rights". As Superintendent of the Ottawa WCTU's Scientific Temperance Department, she joined other executive members when the Dominion Alliance met with Prime Minister Abbott in 1894 to request prohibition legislation. Henrietta led a WCTU deputation to City Council requesting saloon closures and actively campaigned in 1896 for a temperance alderman. The WCTU's aggressive tactics intimidated many men and produced hostility. "Against their Hubbies:

⁵² *NCWC Report* (1894), 139, 209.

⁵³ *Ottawa Journal*, 22 March, 17 - 24 April and 28 June 1893. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, "Adventures in Maritime Quackery: the Leslie E. Keeley Gold Cure Institute of Fredericton, N. B.," *Acadiensis*, 109-130.

⁵⁴ Oliver C. Edwards, "Gold A Specific for Inebriety", *Canadian Medical Record*, 24 (1895-6). See also Cheryl L. Krasnick, "Because There is Pain: Alcoholism, Temperance and the Victorian Physician", *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, (Spring 1985).

⁵⁵ *Ottawa Journal*, 16 October 1895.

⁵⁶ *NCWC Report* (1895). Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, "'Oh Lord, Pour a cordial in her wounded heart': The Alcoholic Woman in Victorian and Edwardian Canada," (Paper delivered to the Canadian Historical Society, Kingston 1991). Author Agnes Maule Machar shared Henrietta and Oliver Edwards' view that alcoholism was a hereditary disease. For Machar's sympathetic portrayal of a woman alcoholic "Celia Travers", abandoned by her clerical husband, see *Roland Graeme Knight* (Ottawa: W. Drysdale, 1892).

Some of the Ladies of this WCTU raise the flag of independence” proclaimed one headline.⁵⁷ Despite a backlash Henrietta shared the WCTU’s optimism. “Nine years have seen a wonderful advance,” wrote Mary MacKay Scott “all along the line of progress in Christian temperance and woman’s emancipation.”⁵⁸

Evangelical feminists in the WCTU, Henrietta discovered, had pioneered support for Native missions and female missionaries. Ottawa President Roberta Tilton, who served with Henrietta on the Ottawa LCW Executive, had led Ottawa’s Anglican churchwomen to create the Woman’s Auxiliary (WA) to the Missionary Society of the Canadian Church of England in 1885.⁵⁹ Under Tilton’s leadership, the St. George’s WA supported a lady missionary to the Blackfoot Mission in Alberta, and Henrietta often helped them prepare bales of clothes for the Reserve. In 1890 the Toronto Diocese’s WA sent two women on a Northwest mission tour. As a result of the efforts of Toronto journalist Emily Willoughby Cummings, who later became Henrietta’s close friend in the NCWC, eastern WA’s pledged support for six “lady missionaries”. The Huron WA sponsored a woman missionary on the Blood Reserve, Henrietta’s future home.⁶⁰

Despite Henrietta’s prodding, Baptist women left the field of Indian missions to Anglican women. Hoping to influence her Baptist colleagues, Henrietta sat as a board member on the new Women’s Baptist Home Missionary Society of Eastern Ontario and Quebec (Women’s BUMS) from 1893-1902. Lizzie J. Parsons, member of First Baptist Church and editor of *The Baptist Visitor*, helped Henrietta encourage their Home Mission Circle to contribute “something” to Native missions. Although the Society’s focus remained evangelical work among Quebec and Ottawa Valley Catholics in 1895, Henrietta and Lizzie Parsons persuaded their circle to support Indian

⁵⁷ *Ottawa Journal*, 22 December, 6 April, 20 October 1896 and 11 March 1897.

⁵⁸ *Woman’s Journal*, September 1893.

⁵⁹ Roberta Tilton became its second President 1902-08, served on the Ottawa LCW and the NCWC. Emily Willoughby Cummings, *Our Story* (Toronto: Garden City Press, 1928), ch. III. See also Wendy Mitchinson, “Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Toward Independence,” *Atlantis*, 2(2) Part II (Spring 1977), 57-75.

⁶⁰ Henry J. Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women* (Toronto: 1912), 67. Cummings, 30-31.

Missions.⁶¹ Like the Anglican women, the first Baptist Circle prepared bales of clothing, some of which were sent to Patience, Henrietta's former servant, in St. Albert Saskatchewan.⁶² Worried that their resources would not extend to support a female missionary in the West, Baptist women concentrated on supporting the Grande Ligne Mission.

The expense of missionary endeavors whether among Quebec Catholics, western Canada's Native women, or Ottawa's young working women forced evangelical women to cooperate rather than compete. As strong friendships developed, women from many different Protestant churches often felt more comfortable in evangelical organizations like the WCTU and the YWCA than they did in their home churches. Henrietta joined the women -Mrs. Falding, Keefer and Tilton- who helped St. George's Anglican Church become an important center for evangelical feminism. The clergyman's wife, Mrs. J. M. Snowdon, served with Henrietta as VP of the YWCA. Every afternoon during the annual YWCA January Week of Prayer, women gathered in St. George's lecture hall for a "course of Bible Readings". Although still a member of First Baptist, Henrietta taught a Bible class at St. George's.⁶³ Working closely with Christian women in Ottawa as in Qu'Appelle did not alter Henrietta's Baptist allegiances since evangelical feminism was the common denominator.

Although her family's problems were well hidden and even now remain difficult to fully analyze, Henrietta's exciting public life in Ottawa helped compensate for an unhappy personal life. Given the absence of personal correspondence for these years, the impact of her mother's October 1896 death is difficult to assess.⁶⁴ The few surviving photographs show the Edwards family as

⁶¹ CBAM, Ottawa First Women's Home Mission Society Minutes (1893-1900), 10 January 1895; "Historical and Annual Report of Women's Baptist Home Missionary Society of Eastern Ontario and Quebec," *Baptist Yearbook 1900* (Toronto: the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1900), 128-30.

⁶² Peter Douglas Elias, *The Dakota of the Canadian Northwest: Lessons for Survival* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), ch. 10.

⁶³ *Woman's Journal*, January 1891. The class of 1896 presented Henrietta with a silver cup in appreciation of her teaching. It is now part of the private collection of her grandson, O. E. Gardiner.

⁶⁴ After the Edwards family moved west in 1903, Henrietta's children and grandchildren gradually lost touch with the Montreal Méairs. I have not been able to trace any of these descendants.

respectably bourgeois, elegantly dressed and proudly posing for the camera at Topley's studio.⁶⁵ The reality of genteel poverty and growing indebtedness remained carefully hidden from camera and friends. In 1893 Oliver purchased a second home across the street from the new YWCA and incurred a crippling debt.⁶⁶ The couple also decided to improve their Ottawa River property, "Pine Camp," the family summer home. Here William, Alice, and Margaret joined with their wealthy Edwards cousins, for riding, rowing, swimming and fishing excursions. Keeping such a life-style in town and in the country severely taxed the family's meager budget.

Associating with wealthy philanthropists and living under the shadow of Oliver's successful brothers placed tremendous strain on the couple. Far from wealthy, the Edwards lived beyond their income. Such indebtedness was not unusual during the recession years from 1893-1896. To supplement Oliver's income, Henrietta began painting and teaching art, fortunate that Ottawa as the Canadian capital had an active artistic community. Between 1879 and 1882 the town created three important institutions: the Ottawa Art Association, the Royal Academy and the Ottawa Art School. At the 1892 Royal Canadian Academy Exhibition Henrietta entered and sold three paintings.⁶⁷ She also helped launch the Ottawa Decorative Arts Society whose aim was to "spread a knowledge of this art and give employment to Art Decorators."⁶⁸ Henrietta served as the Corresponding Secretary and worked at the Society's rooms using the kiln, teaching china painting and exhibiting her work.⁶⁹ The Society and its Exchange helped "distressed ladies" taking orders for "decorative work as well as church embroidery".⁷⁰ Henrietta confined her work to "art", selling

⁶⁵ EG Papers, Photographic Collection.

⁶⁶ *Ottawa Directories*, 1893-4, 1894-5.

⁶⁷ Evelyn de R. McMann, *Royal Canadian Academy of Arts/ academie royale des arts du Canada; Exhibitions and Members 1880-1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 115. On the art school see *Ottawa Free Press*, 2 January 1891; *Ottawa Journal*, 11 May 1895.

⁶⁸ "Decorative Art Society," *1st Annual Report of the Ottawa Local Council of Women* (Ottawa: Thorburn, 1895), 39, hereafter *Ottawa LCW Report*.

⁶⁹ *Ottawa Journal*, 10 June 1897. "Decorative Arts Society," *Ottawa LCW Report* (1898), 18-19.

⁷⁰ *Ottawa Journal*, 11 May 1895.

paintings and teaching at her studio, young ladies such as Evelyn Douglas, the daughter of a WCTU and YWCA activist. Henrietta's son, who often watched Evelyn sitting during painting lessons, decided he wanted to marry her, a dream which he fulfilled in 1903.⁷¹

Always conscious about status, Henrietta did not publicize the importance of her artistic income although she was proud of her work, especially when she won a commission to create a china set for the Canadian Pavilion at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.⁷² Her project featured a soup tureen and twelve bowls celebrating Ottawa's four seasons. Each bowl contained a painting of an oyster shell- to represent the Maritimes - with a detailed landscape scene, from either the Ottawa Valley with its winter sports or the city's toboggan run tucked neatly inside. On the bowl's rim Henrietta positioned a delicate network of shells, seaweed, and grasses. Scenes of the Parliament buildings enclosed in half oyster shells graced the sides of the tureen.⁷³ The Chicago set ironically does not feature any prairie scenes, although Henrietta painted prairie wild flowers on other china sets. A lover of nature like her father, Henrietta required solitude to paint and to relax. Her art provided balance for an otherwise energetic, gregarious and ambitious woman. Family stories remember she painted until late in the evening needing very little sleep. Indeed Henrietta required boundless energy and good health to juggle the responsibilities of her family, art and women's organizations.

Although the Edwards budget had prohibited Henrietta from visiting Chicago, her life changed as a result of the National Council of Women launched at the World's Fair on May 22, 1893.⁷⁴ Its first President Ishbel Gordon, wife of Lord Aberdeen, the new Canadian Governor General, brought her enthusiasm for organizing a women's council to Ottawa. On a wintry January day in

⁷¹ Interview Roome with Joyce Scully, Ottawa 4 June 1990.

⁷² *Ottawa Journal*, 20 September 1892. The evidence suggest she also designed the cover of a special edition of the *Woman's Journal* prepared for Chicago. See *Ottawa Journal*, 11 March 1893.

⁷³ Glenbow Museum owns the soup tureen and two bowls. Family members have the six other bowls.

⁷⁴ NAC, NCWC Papers, Minute Book of NCWC, 22 May 1893; Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women* (Chicago: Academy, 1892), ch. XX.

1894, Henrietta attended Lady Aberdeen's organizational meeting and heard the viceregal lady explain: "we do not wish to confine ourselves to religious work, we want all work ... the advancement of women, the scope allowed them has been great; we must needs organize ourselves." Aware of the many obstacles to be overcome, she challenged: "it is for you to consider will all unite in truly representative work and strive to make it a success." This message appealed to the ambitious Henrietta as it did to the other evangelical feminists who helped Ishbel form the Ottawa LCW.⁷⁵

Lady Aberdeen's presence in Ottawa and her leadership of the NCWC became a watershed for Henrietta and the Canadian women who joined a secular movement for the first time.⁷⁶ An evangelical Victorian liberal, much like Henrietta, Aberdeen insisted that the NCWC be non-sectarian and non-partisan and become "the Parliament of Women." Through her speeches and her actions, Lady Aberdeen encouraged the "feminine middle-class to consider its sisterhood with the less fortunate." Her impact on the Canadian woman's movement was both positive and negative. On the one hand Lady Aberdeen provided "a respectable model of ecumenicalism, internationalist and feminist in a nation where these things were too often in short supply." Yet to achieve this "splendid vision" she suppressed the American feminist influences, especially through the WCTU, and hindered the demand for greater democracy within the NCWC.⁷⁷

Henrietta was immediately inspired by the elegant Lady Aberdeen, although that aristocrat was not impressed with Henrietta, whose successful election as Ottawa's LCW treasurer upset her plans. In contrast to Lady Aberdeen's candidate, Henrietta was "not so well-known, not so practical & is rather aggressively Evangelical for a post which will bring her much in contact with

⁷⁵ *Ottawa Journal*, 17 January 1894. Rosa L. Shaw, *Proud Heritage: A History of the National Council of Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1959); Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women*; Naomi Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of NCWC 1893-1993* (Ottawa: Carleton Press, 1993).

⁷⁶ Marjorie Pentland, *A Bonnie Fechter. The Life of Ishbel Marjoriebanks Gordon* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1954); Doris French, *Ishbel and the Empire. A Biography of Lady Aberdeen* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988). Joanna Dean, "Lady Aberdeen's Vision for Canadian Women: A Study of Evangelism, Liberalism and the Woman Question," (Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1989).

⁷⁷ Strong-Boag, 140-43.

the R. C.'s."⁷⁸ Ishbel Gordon knew of Henrietta's mission work and role in the HFW, YWCA and WCTU. In particular she disliked the WCTU, militant temperance suffragists and offensive American democracy. Despite her liberalism, Lady Aberdeen remained an aristocratic snob. Henrietta's friends, Vice-President Ella Bronson and Corresponding Secretary Roberta Tilton, another aggressive evangelical, did not, however, doubt her ability.⁷⁹ Ishbel initially resisted their conclusion. During one YWCA visit, Lady Aberdeen found Henrietta "v (sic) full of the Building Scheme" and Bertha Wright, "a sweet looking girl full to go." She concluded that "it is the day of small things with them as yet."⁸⁰

Ishbel soon learned that she had underestimated Henrietta. Despite her evangelical perspective, Henrietta proved willing to accommodate Catholic women on the Ottawa LCW. When the Archbishop vetoed Catholic women's groups request to affiliate, Henrietta introduced a motion which allowed for individual representation.⁸¹ The NCWC voted to open meetings with silent prayer as a further accommodation to non-Protestant women. Henrietta accepted this decision showing flexibility and "practical Christianity". Other prominent WCTU suffragists - Ottawa's Bertha Wright and Amelia Gordon, Halifax's Edith Archibald and London's Harriet Boomer - opposed silent prayer.⁸² However, Henrietta did not lose their friendship over her more moderate position and she understood their privileging of the evangelical position.

Lady Aberdeen's personality, political skills, and Council vision seduced Henrietta profoundly, influencing her more than any other individual except her father. According to Oliver, Henrietta quickly became one of "her Canadian woman lovers." Later, he wrote to Henrietta, "I

⁷⁸ John T. Saywell, ed., *The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen 1893-1898* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1960), 16 January 1894.

⁷⁹ *Ottawa LCW Report* (1895), 3.

⁸⁰ Aberdeen, *Canadian Journal*, 6 January 1894.

⁸¹ NAC, Ottawa LCW Papers, Minutes, 26 February 1894.

⁸² NAC, Ottawa LCW Papers, Minutes, 26 February 1894. See Forbes, "Battles in Another War". On the London LCW, see Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women*, 78.

know how highly & justly you esteem her".⁸³ Few women came as close to Henrietta's ideal of a Christian feminist as Ishbel. As Henrietta searched to resolve the tensions in being an evangelical Baptist from a Liberal family and also a supporter of secular and non-partisan women's organization, she drew inspiration from Lady Aberdeen's example. When her Ottawa Baptist co-workers abandoned support for the LCW in 1898, Henrietta increased her NCWC commitment, thus electing a different future for herself as a feminist and liberal Baptist.

In the Maternity Hospital battle, Henrietta joined forces with Ella Bronson, the Committee's President, and an executive member of the LCW. Bertha Wright feared the Hospital's acceptance of "unfortunate" women would ruin HFW's plans for a new building. Christian women, she argued, should not allow "this class" to have even temporary shelter "without reformatory effort ... it simply means a serious moral evil."⁸⁴ Ella and Henrietta, who both disagreed, received Lord and Lady Aberdeen's assistance in showing that every other Canadian city provided a tax-supported Maternity Hospital. Lady Aberdeen confided to her journal her distaste for the HFW and Wright's work. "She is a real good earnest girl but narrow & does not like to be interfered with," concluded the more sophisticated Ishbel, adding "an air of squalor & closeness pervaded the establishment."⁸⁵ Much to Lady Aberdeen's delight the hospital opened in June 1895. "It was a great triumph" she noted "to open it without debt, for there was much prejudice against it."⁸⁶ Henrietta became a trustee and Dr. Edwards was appointed as an attending physician. They represented a new wave of more feminist and professional social workers.⁸⁷ Ella Bronson remained as head of the Hospital for the next thirty years, and organized the Associated Charities with Henrietta's assistance. Wright

⁸³ EG Papers, Letter My dear Wife, 20 October 1899, Letter Ishbel Gordon to Mrs. Gardiner January 7, 1932.

⁸⁴ *Ottawa Journal*, 19 February 1894, 17 January, 10, 15 and 20 February 1894.

⁸⁵ Saywell, *The Canadian Journal*, 1 March and 3 January 1894.

⁸⁶ *Canadian Journal*, 7 June 1895.

⁸⁷ *Ottawa Journal*, 4 March, 15 May, 8 June and 11 November 1895. For Mrs. E. H. Bronson see Morgan, 41. See also Valverde, ch. 7.

left Ottawa philanthropic circles for marriage and motherhood.⁸⁸

Henrietta and Lady Aberdeen met regularly at LCW and NCWC executive meetings and annual conferences. Ishbel, reversing her original opinion of Henrietta, now expressed admiration for her “vital personality” and respect for her sound judgment, aptitude for work and commitment to women. During her three years as Treasurer, Henrietta’s activities extended beyond financial matters. The Ottawa LCW President, Lady Ritchie appointed Henrietta to various sub-committees and requested she act as Ottawa’s representative at the Montreal NCWC 1896 Conference. Henrietta embraced most of the LCW initiatives such as those to appoint a police matron, organize an Associated Charities, raise funds for a Public Library, and commence manual training in schools.⁸⁹ The Library project interested Henrietta the most. She prepared a petition to city council and helped organize a special “Woman’s Issue” of the *Ottawa Evening Journal* in aid of the public library. Despite the Free Library Committee’s efforts, citizens voted against the increased taxes necessary for the library.⁹⁰

Henrietta’s NCWC commitment increased through service on two important sub-committees, the “Hours of Work for Women and Children in Factories” and “Laws for the Protection of Women and Children”. Neither Lady Ritchie, Lady Aberdeen nor Henrietta expected this work would lead to a career as the Law Committee’s Convener. Her baptism began slowly as part of the NCWC’s campaign to improve working conditions for Ontario and Quebec female factory employees. Council stressed the necessity for the appointment of a female factory inspector to enforce the 1884 Ontario and 1885 Quebec Factories Act and lobbied for better legislative protection. In anticipation of new legislation, the NCWC organized local councils to investigate working women’s conditions and prepare recommendations.⁹¹ Although Henrietta’s committee studied

⁸⁸ *Ottawa Journal*, 19 January and 15 March 1897.

⁸⁹ Ottawa LCW Papers, Minutes, 19 May, 24 November, 2 and 9 February 1895.

⁹⁰ *Ottawa LCW Report* (1895), 46-49; Ottawa LCW Papers, Minutes, 11 May 1895; *Ottawa Journal*, 13 April, 23 and 30 December 1895.

⁹¹ See Eric Tucker, “Making the Workplace ‘Safe’ in Capitalism: The Enforcement of Factory Legislation in Nineteenth Century Ontario,” *Labour/Le travail* (Spring 1988), 45-86.

conditions for Ottawa shop girls, they found few female factory workers. She did not classify her brother-in-law's dry goods company as a "factory", nor considered his terms of employment as "sweating" although the press debated this point.⁹²

When the sub-committee delivered its report to the 1896 Montreal meeting, a heated debate followed. Women's remarks clearly illustrated the dilemma which conflicting issues of class and sex raised for feminists. While some advocated equality, others sought protection of working women, or as historian Cleverdon explained "chivalry and justice."⁹³ Convener Lady Julia Drummond's recommendations did not satisfy either the London Council or the Kingston Council led by Agnes Maule Machar, a campaigner for protective labour legislation for women. Both wanted the NCWC to petition the Ontario Legislature to extend the terms of the Factory Act to include small businesses with fewer than five employees. While Council members supported this request, further recommendation for a nine-hour day for working women proved contentious. McGill professor Carrie Matilda Derrick and the Committee's Convener, Lady Julia Drummond argued that restrictive legislation weakened working women's competitive position. They advocated instead that women should fight for fair labor conditions. The Kingston group disagreed, arguing that women, unlike men did not have a strong bargaining position in the labour market. They believed women's relative weakness prevented them from achieving concessions.⁹⁴ This difficult debate was never satisfactorily resolved. Henrietta concluded that the nine-hour resolution asked Council to "decide between the physical deterioration of the mothers of our nation on the one hand or their starvation on the other." On behalf of the Ottawa Council, she requested more time to

⁹² Ottawa LCW Papers, Minutes, 8 June, 8 November and 14 December 1895.

⁹³ See Patricia Roome, "Embracing the Janus Face: the Historiography of the Canadian Suffrage Movement," (Unpublished Paper, Simon Fraser University, 1989) and "'Beware of the Suffragist': Class and Sexual Politics in the Historiography of the British Suffrage Movement," (Unpublished paper, Simon Fraser University, 1989).

⁹⁴ See Wayne Roberts, *Honest Womanhood: Feminism, Femininity and Class Consciousness Among Toronto Working Women 1893-1914* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1976); Mary Lynn Stewart, *Women, Work and the French State: Labour Protection & Social Patriarchy. 1879-1919* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

consider the question.⁹⁵ Her action supported Drummond and Derrick's argument for equality over Kingston's desire for protection. On economic questions Henrietta's liberal perspective and class bias overrode her feminism, whereas on sexual and moral questions she supported an interventionist approach and reflected a feminist consciousness.

Henrietta expressed her views on sexual politics during the NCWC's discussion about their legislative petition to raise the age of consent. Drawing her examples from experience with British immigrant girls, Henrietta cautioned:

the age of consent is a new thing to most of us; do not turn away from it because it is disagreeable. There is a tendency to put it aside as a distressing subject not to be looked at, by those who love the beautiful side of life. It was this question, however which first brought me onto a platform, and has made me speak, though there are many who would prefer that I should stay at home. But we who have worked know of the dreadful things which are done and which have to be combated. Only recently a girl was brought into our Home by a farmer. She had had a hard life in the Old Country; and was happy and contented at the farm because the man was kind to her; he was her best friend, and when he took her best from her, she gave her consent because of his goodness, not knowing what it meant. She cried bitterly when he left her at the Home. A year after, the same man brought another girl. The same story! He was protected and he knew it; and there were two girls ruined, and two babies paupers in the world of course.⁹⁶

Because public-speaking challenged notions of femininity in the 1890s, women with a sense of mission fared better than society women. Henrietta's speech encouraged women to become aware of sexual politics. NCWC suffragists' anger, only partially masked by a polite veneer, often erupted in discussions reflecting their distrust of male power and consciousness of women's sexual vulnerability. Although their criticism was couched in the language of moral outrage, the respectable voice for Victorian women, these women did not trust men where women's sexuality was involved. Many NCWC's commented that Canadian men perpetuated the double standard by demonstrating indifference to the plight of young pregnant girls. As one commented "women are responsible for this work; no one else will do it."⁹⁷

⁹⁵ See Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice* (Toronto: Osgood Society, 1991), ch. 9.

⁹⁶ National Council of Canada, *Women Workers of Canada* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1896), 324.

⁹⁷ *NCWC Report* (1896), 324-25.

A common theme, older women's responsibility for "our sisters without any mother's care," permeated their discussion.⁹⁸ Henrietta and her co-workers who distrusted men's power believed that young working women were sexually vulnerable. Although quick to condemn sexual encounters outside of marriage, Henrietta also hated the double standard which placed full responsibility for sexuality and pregnancy upon women's shoulders. Along with her NCWC colleagues she believed women had a mission to prevent women's victimization. On this sub-committee she advocated intervention and legislative protection for young women, reflecting a feminist understanding of the issue of sexual politics. The NCWC participated in the WCTU's campaign to raise the age of consent. Seduction, which had been once handled as a private civil matter between the injured father and the errant suitor, became a criminal offense in the 1886 Charlton Seduction Act. This coincided with the rapid movement of young single women into the cities. This legislation made anyone "guilty of an indictable offense who seduces and has illicit connection with any girl of previously chaste character of or above fourteen and under sixteen."⁹⁹ Lady Aberdeen and the NCWC successfully petitioned the Minister of Justice to raise the age to eighteen. However, he adamantly refused to delete the words "of previously chaste character" or give protection to all women workers including those in domestic employment.¹⁰⁰

Lady Drummond and Halifax suffragist Edith Archibald joined Henrietta to denounce the underlying male fears of blackmail, arguing instead that it was the girls who had tremendous difficulty proving chaste character to the court's satisfaction and substantiating "any accusation, even in the matter of trying to secure support for the child." After listening to the hostile debate in Parliament, Lady Drummond cautioned women must "have patience in this cause, a cause which is

⁹⁸ *NCWC Report* (1896), 325. See Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario 1880-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁹⁹ Quoted in *NCWC Report* (1896), 320; Backhouse, 74. On the campaign see Graham Parker, "The Legal Regulation of Sexual Activity and The Protection of Females," *Osgood Hall Law Journal*, 21 (1983), 187-210; John McLaren, "Chasing the Social Evil: Moral Fervor and the Evolution of Canada's Prostitution Laws, 1867-1917," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 1:1 (1986), 125-60; Karen Dubinsky, "Maidenly Girls or Strumpets? Prosecutions for Seduction in Ontario 1880-1929," *CHA*, June 1989.

¹⁰⁰ *NCWC Report* (1896), 312-17.

especially a woman's cause." She also confessed experiencing anger and frustration.¹⁰¹ More militant than Drummond, Henrietta favoured publishing the names of prostitutes' clients to warn innocent young women against associating with these individuals. The WCTU advanced this proposal frequently just as their campaigns to provide women with protection from rape, seduction, prostitution and white slavery highlighted the importance of the vote.¹⁰² Council women also made the same connection. "The unequal status of men and women is directly or indirectly the cause of three-quarters of the social evil," Emily Murphy wrote in 1897, adding "the fact that women have not the franchise is also one cause of their poor wages."¹⁰³

Rather than organize a trade union as socialist feminists advocated, the Christian Henrietta saw her YWCA work as the only route to improving young women's lives.¹⁰⁴ In her capacity as Vice-President and President she proudly advertised the YWCA's Christian atmosphere, first-class boarding facilities, cooking school and self-improvement classes to young women. The Executive Board hoped such services would assist females in making a successful transition to the city. Through evangelistic work they also wanted to train a new generation of Christian workers. These goals were feminist not socialist. Although poverty was deplored, class differences were accepted as natural.¹⁰⁵ Henrietta, a popular administrator, defended the Association's policy when critics suggested the YWCA had become "a fashionable boarding house" catering to ladies with comfortable salaries. In a newspaper release Henrietta explained that higher priced rooms helped liquidate the building debt and subsidize the free classes for residents. She fully endorsed the Board's decision that the YWCA be a home for working women whose fees paid for the operation. Although a "guest chamber" was reserved for strangers needing temporary accommodation, the

¹⁰¹ *NCWC Report* (1896), 317.

¹⁰² Backhouse, 237.

¹⁰³ Mrs. Arthur Murphy, "Woman's Work for Woman," *NCWC Report* (1897), 182-86.

¹⁰⁴ For a different view see Alice Chown, *The Stairway* (1921, reprint with an introduction by Diana Chown, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). See also Valverde, 155-58.

¹⁰⁵ See Pederson, "A Woman's Conscience."

YWCA accepted only sixty-five boarders and referred other women to respectable boarding houses. "Even were the meals less expensive," asserted their angry critic, table boarders with their "rustle of silks and satins are not conducive to a working girl's appetite." The Executive stood firmly behind their intention not to "pauperize respectable, independent, self-supporting young women by offering board at a lower rate than could be secured in other homes."¹⁰⁶

Henrietta and the YWCA's executive catered to "the new woman" by advocating dress reform, athletic exercise and continuing education. Their Physical Culture Department offered winter classes in "Calisthenics Drill, with dumbbells, clubs and marching exercises" and free exercise classes designed especially for members working "in sedentary occupations." During the winter of 1896, Dr. Edwards taught physiology and anatomy while Henrietta gave lectures on "the first principles of true art" for public school teachers.¹⁰⁷ The Executive's attempts to address "the servant-mistress problem" through the YWCA's employment agency paralleled those of other bourgeois women. Better training would raise domestic servants' status, they argued, and women employers could be encouraged to treat their female servants fairly. When Ottawa's School of Cookery failed to attract domestics, the Executive sadly concluded that young women had "evidently decided that cookery is neither a service nor an art" and their mistresses feared that "if diplomas were secured they would demand higher wages." After the School became associated with the Normal School, graduates used their diploma to secure teaching positions. The YWCA responded with a campaign to add cooking to the school curriculum.¹⁰⁸

Mothering young women at the YWCA demonstrated Henrietta's maternal feminism whereas her WCTU suffrage work reflected a different tradition of women's equality. Henrietta outlined her position best during a joint WCTU and DWEA session at the 1894 NCWC Conference.

I do not see why women should not vote and be placed upon an equal footing with her brother man in this respect. Those of us who say that we should not want the privilege of voting

¹⁰⁶ *Ottawa Journal*, 29 November, 5, 8 December 1894 and 10 April 1895.

¹⁰⁷ *Annual Report Ottawa YWCA* (1896-97), 18.

¹⁰⁸ *Annual Report Ottawa YWCA* (1897-98), 19.

remind me of the women of India who do not want education, and seem to take a pride in the insufficiency of the power they have. We have got to approach the women and ask them to claim this right to the franchise and then to vote with womanliness. I do not see how voting is going to corrupt or unsex her. Those of us who have good husbands will resent such an idea. A man and his wife can go to the poll and vote, and the good man can have additional power by the vote of his wife.¹⁰⁹

A shrewd politician, Henrietta spoke directly to the prevalent fear that suffragists might become “an army against the men.” She argued “good men” - such as Oliver, her father and the male friends of temperance and suffrage- needed to be distinguished from all the others. “It is rather to assist man than to oppose him that we want to vote”, she explained, aware that few women openly supported suffrage. Henrietta believed women would be converted to suffrage by witty and rational appeals rather than antagonistic speeches.¹¹⁰

Always the politician, Henrietta calmed conservative women’s fears by supporting an Ottawa LCW resolution giving the National Executive a veto, providing two thirds of its members agreed. This move prevented suffrage resolutions advanced by member societies from appearing on the NCWC agenda. Henrietta shared Lady Aberdeen’s view on the Council’s mission and the importance of building consensus. “Perhaps the very women who believe in it most would not consider it opportune for it to come up before the Council,” she explained. Prepared to be patient, she did not, however, expect to wait fifteen years for the NCWC to endorse suffrage.¹¹¹ Expecting - much quicker results, Henrietta worked within the WCTU and DWEA and educated Council members, gradually winning new recruits. A tireless worker in these years, she presented papers on the election of school trustees and provincial and municipal voting rights.

Her essay, “The Duty of Canadian Women in Regard to the Voting Privileges Already Accorded Them,” challenged women attending the 1897 Halifax NCWC Conference to exercise the municipal franchise. Appealing to liberal democrats, she called for “No taxation without representation”. Most NCWCers agreed that “to take a woman’s money in the shape of taxes by

¹⁰⁹ *NCWC Report* (1894), 204-05.

¹¹⁰ *NCWC Report* (1894), 206; *Ottawa Journal*, 3 and 29 October 1894.

¹¹¹ *NCWC Report* (1896), 178-79.

force of law, and not give her the right to say who is to spend it for her, is so unjust." Henrietta ridiculed legislation which silenced women who raised children while on educational matters gave spinsters, "grandmothers" and men a voice.¹¹² Her final argument which addressed women's status and "her separate identity" used the language of an evangelical feminist, a different but complementary voice from the "maternal feminism" espoused by less religious Council members.

As civilization, education and above all, the teachings of Christ advanced, this primal idea of women has changed, and step by step good men have taught woman the responsibilities placed upon her by God, that she must think and act for herself. In the liberty now accorded to women mistakes in many directions are to be expected and much careful study is needed to guide aright this divine idea that women have a separate and individual existence - that only voluntarily can she be rightly united in common interests and representation by man. Our responsibilities therefore can only be defined by divine limitations.¹¹³

Speaking to conservatives, Henrietta emphasized that women's new liberty was God-ordained. Employing evolutionary concepts she argued that God had taken "woman from the dust and humiliation in which she had lain for centuries and exalted her". With absolute confidence she expressed her conviction that women should "seek the liberty with which He has made us free, that in that atmosphere we may grow into the stature of perfect womanhood."¹¹⁴

This powerful appeal to spiritual authority as the source of women's emancipation reflected Henrietta's liberal Baptist upbringing and the Montreal evangelical community's debates on women's equality. Since it was God's will, how could male mortals object, she challenged.¹¹⁵ Accepting a WCTU position as Dominion Superintendent of Equal Franchise and Christian Citizenship in 1898, left Henrietta in an excellent position to influence religious women.¹¹⁶ Not surprisingly she found evangelicals more supportive than society ladies. The Baptist Women's Convention, a decade earlier than the NCWC, gave unanimously endorsed the WCTU suffrage

¹¹² *NCWC Report* (1897), 174-75.

¹¹³ *NCWC Report* (1896), 178-79.

¹¹⁴ For the theological context see Gauvreau, ch. 5.

¹¹⁵ *NCWC Report* (1897), 176-77.

¹¹⁶ *Woman's Journal*, 31 August 1898.

campaign. "We believe it to be the hand of the Master that men and women alike should fulfill the duties of citizenship," asserted their resolution.¹¹⁷ Henrietta also demonstrated remarkable faith in education as well as a certain pragmatism. She believed women would exercise their franchise opportunities once they understood their rights and responsibilities. Although earlier speeches spoke of religion, equality and women's individual rights, her essay "The Political Position of Canadian Women" in the NCWC's 1900 Paris Exposition handbook, used the popular maternalist imagery to support the suffrage cause. "The woman is queen in her home and reigns there, but unfortunately the laws she makes reach no further than her domain." Henrietta went on to assert "if her laws, written or unwritten, are to be enforced outside, she must come into the political world as well - and she has come." Women, she explained, wanted more than the limited municipal franchise and were prepared for battle. Like many suffragist of her day, Henrietta did not reconcile the arguments for women's equality with those based on women's special nature. She employed both perspectives, depending on the audience and the organization.¹¹⁸

Given Henrietta's suffrage activism, it is ironic that her daughter Alice told historian Catherine Cleverdon, "I don't know that I can be much help to you in giving you news of my mother's activities about the woman's suffrage movement. In fact," Alice continued, "she was not very active about the suffrage, though a great part of her life was devoted to efforts to better the lot of women." Cleverdon accepted Alice's erroneous verdict on Henrietta's activities and place her far from the center of the suffrage debate. During most of these Ottawa years, Alice lived in Montreal with the Muirs and attended the Montreal Girls High School. While proud of her mother's YWCA Presidency, she was often oblivious to her mother's more controversial activities. "While my mother of course thought women should have the vote she deplored some of the methods used towards that end," explained Alice.¹¹⁹ In confusing Canadian suffragists with British suffragettes,

¹¹⁷ *Woman's Journal*, 31 August 1898. Edith Archibald took over the position as Superintendent of Franchise in 1900. When she later resigned, Henrietta accepted the position. *Woman's Journal*, 1 and 15 January 1901. On the Baptist Women's Convention, see *Woman's Journal*, 15 June, 1899.

¹¹⁸ See Forbes, "The Ideas of Carol Bacchi and the Suffragists of Halifax."

¹¹⁹ NAC, Cleverdon Papers, Letter Alice Gardiner to Catharine Cleverdon, 20 April 1944.

Alice underestimated her mother's leadership of the 1890s Ontario suffrage campaign.

Acquiring political power mattered to Henrietta and other suffragists who aspired to be foremothers of a great nation. Lady Aberdeen and the NCWC's "splendid vision" spoke to Canadian club women's sense of nationalism.¹²⁰ Within this organization, evangelical feminists like Henrietta worked to create a Christian culture where spiritual values superseded material ones. The metaphor of servants in God's vineyard, which appeared frequently in their speeches, expressed their perception of themselves as Christian workers, planting and harvesting for "the Master".¹²¹ Participating in the NCWC involved compromise for the evangelicals, but the more feminist-minded like Henrietta negotiated the challenges successfully. They saw the NCWC as an instrument for achieving women's goals and building a Christian nation. Since women's emancipation was God-ordained, evangelical-inspired organizations like the WCTU, YWCA and the NCWC received spiritual blessing as well.

If the Edwards family had remained in Ottawa, Henrietta's career may have taken a different direction. Her YWCA presidency could have continued beyond 1896-8. She might have also become the President of the Ottawa LCW. Success at these executive offices would have fulfilled her ambition, but it may not have furthered her feminism. Ironically, Oliver's frequent moves forced Henrietta to broaden her horizons. She never enjoyed the security of one residence and a fixed group of female friends. Although driven by her twin passions of Christian service and women's emancipation, marriage to Oliver forced her to change and be more flexible. Despite her attempts to supplement Oliver's income, Henrietta remained financially dependent. Consciousness of this position had an impact on her feminism.

For many reasons, some personal, others circumstantial, Oliver's medical practice had not prospered. Ottawa faced serious overcrowding and bitter territorial battles. After a six year struggle, Dr. Edwards realized that his Ottawa medical practice could not support his growing

¹²⁰ Griffith, *The Splendid Vision*, ch. 1.

¹²¹ See Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), ch. 12 for a discussion of secular discourse replacing sacred.

family satisfactorily. To repay their accumulated debt and to finance his children's education Oliver decided he needed a steady and larger income. Determined to send Will to McGill University, Oliver searched for a government position. After the Liberal victory in the 1896 federal election, his party connections and friendship with Northwest Liberals eventually secured him a position as medical officer with the Indian Affairs Department. Henrietta said good-bye in April to eighteen-year old Will who was engaged for summer survey work in the North West. When she and Oliver bid farewell in August 1897, they both anticipated a five-year separation.¹²²

¹²² EG Papers, Letter Oliver Edwards to Henrietta, 14 October 1897.

V. "My Dear Wife": Negotiating Family and Faith From Montreal to Alberta, 1898-1904

Seven years passed before the Edwards family were reunited. Negotiating both family and faith made these challenging times for Henrietta. After Ontario's exciting suffrage activism, she found the Quebec women's movement frustrating. In the aftermath of the national debate on the Manitoba School Act, Catholic nationalism in Quebec collided severely with Montreal Protestant imperialism which became especially virulent during the Boer War years.¹ Despite these problems, anglophone and francophone suffragists attempted to work together in the Montreal LCW over the next decade. When Henrietta left for Alberta however, Lady's Aberdeen's dream of a nonsectarian women's movement was slowly dying in Quebec.² In Alberta, the "spirit of the West" was decidedly ecumenical. That women's activism flourished served as an enticement to Henrietta, who dreaded living on an isolated Native Reserve.

Henrietta returned to her Montreal family in October 1897. Alice had attended the excellent Montreal High School for Girls and lived with Henrietta's mother, her sisters and youngest brother.³ In 1896 Jane Muir's death and Ernie's marriage left the middle-aged and unmarried sisters in limbo. They had depended on their father and brothers for financial support. Amelia earned a partial living by teaching music but Ida, who would shortly enter the asylum, had never

¹ Mason Wade, *The French Canadians 1760-1967* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), ch. 9; Carmen Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War: 1899-1902* (Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, 1993).

² Le Collectif Clio, *L'Histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles* (Montreal: Quinze, 1982); Catherine L. Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage in Canada* (2nd edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), ch. 7.; Yoland Pinard, "Le féminisme à Montréal au commencement du XXe siècle, 1893-1920," (Thèse de M. A., Québec à Montréal, 1976) and "Les débuts du mouvement des femmes à Montréal," in *Travailleuses et féministes: Les femmes dans la société québécoise*, ed. Marie Lavign and Yoland Pinard (Montreal: Borela Express, 1983).

³ Margaret Gillett, *We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1981), 46-49. The school was a pioneer in women's higher education. In 1884 graduates like Octavia Ritchie successfully petitioned for women's entrance to McGill.

worked outside their home. Despite a pension from their parents' estate the sisters were genteel paupers. With Oliver's financial support Henrietta hoped they could live together comfortably. Only with Henrietta's careful management could they maintain bourgeois respectability. Each spring their household vacated their rented lodgings for "Pine Camp", the Edwards summer home. Every fall they returned to Montreal and searched for new accommodation.

"Your letters echo the praises" of our "estate" on the Ottawa River, wrote a forlorn Oliver from his hotel room in dusty Regina. "What pleasant memories the children will have of their home," he explained, and added "notwithstanding the various roofs that shelter them - there is one they can count upon as their own." Agreeing with Henrietta he concluded, "how funny as you say that that self same cottage should be an object of admiration to the moneyed men of the great lumber firms."⁴ Rather than repay Oliver's debts, Henrietta used her inheritance to purchase additional property next to Pine Camp. The thrifty Henrietta managed, thanks to her large garden and an overworked maid, to entertain many guests. Letters with of stories about family yacht parties, picnics, outdoor teas, and sketching and collecting expeditions tantalized the lonely Oliver marooned on the hot and dusty prairies.⁵

Although Henrietta tried to sell their Ottawa properties, keep both homes rented, pay outstanding bills and cover new expenses, their financial situation seemed hopeless. Oliver lamented that he was "always trying to fill some bottomless hole." A few days later he explained "I wish I had more work. I seem to render so little for the money that is paid me. It is certainly a jolly happy life and that nightmare of crushing worry is banished."⁶ But his gratitude for steady employment turned sour as Christmas approached. "These north west winters are something to be shunned" he complained to his wife adding "I never want to finish my days up here." In an accusing tone Oliver complained "you know how I used to hate it." Unfortunately the Doctor never

⁴ EG Papers, Letters Oliver to Henrietta, 10, 17 June and 5 August 1898.

⁵ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 5 August 1898.

⁶ EG Papers, Letters Oliver to Henrietta, 5 and 7 November 1897.

returned home for more than a yearly visit. Commonsense prevailed over self-pity as another letter explained. "It is very kind of our friends to miss me but I never want to see those days of weary waiting as I experienced in Ottawa."⁷ Blizzards, isolation and loneliness were preferable to debt, unemployment, and anxiety.

Oliver's modest salary barely covered the cost of educating their children. Given Henrietta's feminism, it is ironic that their oldest daughter received the least opportunities. Alice who served as President of the Montreal Girl's High School Society⁸ registered as a partial student in the Donalds Ladies Classes at McGill in 1898. When Oliver decided they could not afford to educate three children Alice did not return to complete her B.A degree.⁹ Instead she managed the household for her busy mother and played on the Montreal Ladies Hockey Team, claiming that sports and horses were more exciting than studies. Despite her father's decision, Alice adored Oliver, naming her son after him. In turn, Oliver called Alice affectionately "Puss" and welcomed her newsy letters. "Ask your mother about the taxes on our Clarence property," requested a concerned Oliver. "Did she pay them in the summer or does she know anything about it? Then please give me her answer."¹⁰ Henrietta's hurriedly-written letters often ignored her husband's requests, especially those about money, whereas Alice could be courted on to reply promptly.

Although Alice taught Sunday School at Olivet Baptist Church, she demonstrated neither her mother's ambition nor her feminist zeal. Her childhood had been very different from her mother's. Oliver's Christian faith was never all consuming, nor were stirring revival sermons a feature of Alice's religious upbringing. Raised in the North West but influenced during adolescence by affluent Montreal school friends, Alice became a popular, beautiful and sophisticated debutante. In her struggle for acceptance among her rich cousins, money, clothes and manners mattered, so did

⁷ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 20 December 1897.

⁸ The Edwards family photo album is part of the private collection of Oliver E. Gardiner.

⁹ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 17 June 1898.

¹⁰ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Alice, 1 January 1902.

the society duties that her more privileged, evangelical mother scorned. When Lady Aberdeen invited Alice in 1898 to join other young women in her May Court Club, the young woman felt honoured. At Government House on the eve of May Day, Alice participated in the election of a Queen and twelve councillors and listened to Lady Aberdeen's address. Ishbel presented Ruskin's ideal woman to the assembled young "maidens" and challenged them to learn about "his conception of the mission of women as queens in their homes, queens in society, queens in their influence in all conditions of life".¹¹

In contrast to Alice, William and Margaret resembled Henrietta and grandfather Muir. William was rebellious, energetic, ambitious and as handsome as Oliver. Proud of his successful mother, he shared a warm relationship with her. On a Saskatchewan Sunday, the eighteen-year old confided to his diary: "Feeling pretty homesick - wish someone had asked me to dinner. People who have homes should always ... invite young men who are away from home, especially on Sunday. My I would like to see Mother, but it can't be."¹² Sundays at the Edwards residence involved food, music, visitors and conversation as well as spiritual contemplation. For Will and many other Canadians, Sundays epitomized family.¹³

Father and son maintained a rocky relationship. William resented Oliver's failure to become a prominent doctor. Oliver, a ready critic, while proud of his son, also complained about him to Henrietta; she favoured Will. "I suppose you have managed somehow or other to go to Montreal and your blessed boy is back to you and entered as an undergraduate at my old University," he wrote.¹⁴ Will finished near the top of his class in civil engineering that year despite a serious illness. Oliver congratulated him and urged him to work harder, but Will took offense with his "fault

¹¹ EG Papers, "Maidens". On the club see Doris French, *Ishbel and the Empire: A Biography of Lady Aberdeen* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988), 252-53.

¹² EG Papers, Diary of W. Muir Edwards, Sunday 23 May 1897.

¹³ Margaret Conrad, "'Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home': Time and Place in Canadian Women's History," in *Not Just Pin Money; Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia*, eds. Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro (Victoria: Camosun College Press, 1984), 1-17.

¹⁴ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 14 October 1897.

finding". Oliver complained over the miles that "far from saying a word to censure the boy I desire to do the very opposite. However as we seem never to hit it off," concluded a petulant Oliver "perhaps in the future it will be best for me to say nothing at all then I can't be unjustly blamed."¹⁵

William, a gifted athlete, joined the McGill Track Team and won international competitions as a cross-country runner. Unlike his father, Will graduated with distinction, winning the British Association Metal in Engineering.¹⁶ A proud Oliver purchased an expensive gold watch for his son's twenty-first birthday. For graduation he added a gold chain and locket with Alice and Henrietta's photo enclosed.¹⁷ Next Will earned a Master of Science in Engineering becoming a promising young scientist. By 1907 he was Assistant Professor in Civil and Municipal Engineering at McGill, one of Canada's leading centers for scientific education.¹⁸ In the end, Oliver felt Will's success justified his years of sacrifice.

The youngest daughter, Margaret, had fiery red hair and a temper just like her mother. Family letters speak about "Pearl's self-confidence" which at times became "bossy meddling".¹⁹ At twelve, she entered the Baptist French boarding school at Grande Ligne forty miles south of Montreal and received an excellent bilingual Christian education. When Oliver protested against financing further studies, a long distance battle transpired. Finally Oliver acceded to Pearl and Henrietta's wishes for advanced education. "As usual you are right," wrote a weary Oliver to his wife. "I told her as much ... in answer to one of her usual decided expressions of opinion ... Pearl seems to know her own mind pretty decidedly."²⁰ Independent Pearl, Oliver's favorite, chose nurses' training at Ottawa's

¹⁵ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 12 September 1899.

¹⁶ Henry J. Morgan, *The Canadian men and women of the time* (2nd edition, Toronto: William Briggs 1912), 367. *Ottawa Journal*, 30 April 1898.

¹⁷ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Alice, 13 October 1901.

¹⁸ B. Sinclair, N. R. Ball and J. O. Petersen, eds., *Let Us Be Honest and Modest: Technology and Society in Canadian History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1974), ch. 7, 8; Trevor H. Levere and Richard A. Jarrell, eds. *A Curious Field-Book Science and Society in Canadian History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1974).

¹⁹ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 17 August 1899.

²⁰ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 2 January 1901.

General Hospital hoping to work with her father. She boarded with the Douglas family under the watchful eye of Annie Porter Douglas, a former Montrealer and strict Methodist who had worked with Henrietta in the YWCA and the WCTU. Pearl soon found a beau, whom she later married in 1910, Alexander Stewart a surveying partner of Will's. In the meantime, the formidable Mrs. Douglas chaperoned the "rebellious" couple appropriately. Romance tied the two families together when their eldest daughter Evelyn married William in Montreal in 1903.²¹

Despite a busy schedule and extensive commitments, Henrietta maintained an amiable relationship with her children. Her passions for women's advancement complemented her duties as mother and wife partially because she maintained a spiritual perspective. "Motherhood is one of the greatest of God's gifts," she wrote and explained that "a mother is a co-worker with God in a way that no man can ever be, in the building of a temple for a human soul, a soul that is immortal for it is the breath of God."²² Henrietta stressed woman's partnership with God. Such convictions marked Henrietta as a child of the Victorian era and increasingly separated her from the growing materialism of industrial Canada.²³

Unlike the women who accompanied their husbands West, leaving their older children behind to be educated, Henrietta placed her children's needs before her husband's. For seven years she enjoyed being the matriarch. Oliver supported the family but his "dear wife" made all the decisions. Explaining Oliver's absence to her wealthy friends was a challenge for Henrietta, since few sophisticated Montrealers were impressed by his government position in the North West. The pragmatic Henrietta preferred having an absentee husband to the other possibilities such as being a destitute widow or a spinster like her sisters. Besides, the handsome Oliver had a private side which his wife, her sisters and his daughters loved. A window opens on this private life thanks to Oliver's

²¹ Interview Roome with Scully, Ottawa, 4 June 1990.

²² Mrs. O. C. Edwards, "Looking Back on Life," *Canadian Home Journal*, May 1931; NAC, Cleverdon Papers, Letter Alice Edwards to Catharine Cleverdon, 20 April 1944.

²³ Marianna Valverde, "'When the Mother of the Race is Free': Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism," in *Gender Conflicts*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

correspondence which Henrietta and Alice carefully preserved. Unfortunately, because Henrietta's return letters did not survive, the picture is constructed by Oliver speaking always to "My dear wife".²⁴ His personality, his view of Henrietta and his opinions on friends and family are easy to see. Her feelings, her reactions to Oliver or her private thoughts requires a careful reading of Oliver's letters. It is easy to see that Oliver loved and admired Henrietta. She returned his affection although not with the same devotion. Indeed she demonstrated enlightened self-interest and impatience with Oliver's many predicaments.

On Henrietta's birthday, Oliver wondered if "it is possible to add a drop to a cup that is always full" and lectured "just hold yourself and don't fly into atoms, you are so surcharged with esprit de vie. What a woman!"²⁵ After twenty years of marriage, he still wrote: "how I would like to give you an old fashioned tumble and squeeze. My fingers just itch for a touch of your soft undulations." In the postscript he confided, "you came to me in a dream two nights ago. I should not object in the least in repeating in reality what took place in the dream."²⁶ When Henrietta suggested Oliver keep a diary he exploded: "preserve us what an idea!!" explaining "a diary from Regina is equivalent to a diary from a snowdrift ... a burden to write and an equal burden to read." Hearing Henrietta's words of protest, he firmly answered, "no you must just take my letters as they come and be thankful. Once a week is as often as I will write."²⁷ Oliver missed Henrietta, his family and cosmopolitan society. "I continue to find my companionship in books - going to bed alone is dreary work and then if I dream about you as I did two nights ago the melancholy fact is so significant." He frequently wrote to Henrietta before retiring. "I should like to salute you in a

²⁴ Several explanations are possible. Oliver never maintained permanent residence during his years in the northwest. Although his frequent moves may have forced to him to travel light, he was devoted to his family. It is more likely that he kept their letters. When he died prematurely in 1915, his letters took on greater significance for the family. At that time Henrietta may have discarded her own correspondence.

²⁵ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 17 December 1897.

²⁶ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 8 November 1897.

²⁷ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 4 February 1898.

proper way tonight," he remarked in 1898.²⁸ Whatever Henrietta's response, Oliver's continual sexual allusions indicate that his advances were not unwelcome by his wife. Nor was their marriage passionless as Victorian mythology suggests.

On their twenty-third anniversary in 1899 Oliver, alone as usual, reflected back to the September afternoon when the couple "began that double existence which has proved such a happy one - how quickly the time has passed."²⁹ His reference reflected Henrietta's protest that marriage in Canada legally and politically submerged a woman's individuality. She believed a husband had too much power over family members. While outwardly conventional, their marriage deviated from the Victorian pattern of paternal dominance. When Henrietta listened to Oliver's lectures, she had her own ideas, plans and interests which she pursued with or without his blessing. Although Oliver never managed to support the family adequately, Henrietta remained financially dependent. Over the years they created a working partnership which satisfied their contrasting emotional and intellectual needs. Together they faced their chronic financial problems, family demands and middle age.³⁰

Both were avid readers. Oliver discussed his new books and commented on Henrietta's reading. "In the Harpers I sent you is a marked article on Psychology by a Dr. - please read it - it will interest you."³¹ On another occasion he explained, "I have been greatly pleased with ... The Twentieth Century Testament. It is in language of the present day." He added, "I am sure you will like it & to young people especially it should prove attractive."³² Elsewhere Oliver was cautious and paternalistic.

I have read Marie Caselle's Master Christian ... a strong book and less extravagant than in some of the other proceeding books - a terrific indictment against the Christian Church of

²⁸ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 29 January 1898.

²⁹ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 12 September 1899.

³⁰ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 12 September 1899.

³¹ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 7 April 1899.

³² EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 11 August 1899.

today & the R. C. branch of it in particular ... you would follow it with interest but I think it is a volume more for matured people to read than for the young.³³

Whether Henrietta read the books her husband recommended is difficult to say. The restless Oliver drifted from one church to another searching for a more liberal Christianity.

His "dear wife" settled easily into Olivet Baptist. Her sister Amelia served as a deaconess, Sunday School teacher and Mission Band President. Henrietta also taught in their Sunday School where her brother William was the Superintendent and Librarian. After a fifteen year absence, Henrietta was reunited with Olivetti's evangelical women activists, among them her relatives and childhood friends.³⁴ Mrs. T. J. Claxton had remained the President of the BWMSE, while the prominent educator Mary Cramp, the Treasurer of the Montreal Ladies Grande Ligne Association, represented Olivet on the YWCA's Finance Committee. Amelia, Nannie Green and Ethel Ayer served on the YWCA's Religious Committee convened by Mrs. E. K. Green, another wealthy Baptist.³⁵ Two other Baptist women served as the WCTU Hochelaga County's Recording and Corresponding Secretaries.³⁶

Every Sunday Henrietta listened to Reverend Ebenezer William Dadson's sermons on "practical Christianity." During their North West residence, Henrietta and Oliver had subscribed to the *Canadian Baptist*, then edited by Dadson. "Calvinist and conservative in his theology" and "aggressively evangelical", Dadson championed political equality, freedom of conscience, justice in personal relations and "individual and collective responsibilities instead of rights."³⁷ Foreshadowing

³³ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 2 January 1901.

³⁴ CBAM, Olivet Baptist Church Sunday School Minute Book, January 11, 1884 to March 8 1903.

³⁵ NAC, *Annual Report Montreal YWCA* (1899), 9, 18, 47. Mary Cramp was the youngest daughter of Dr. J. M. Cramp, former Baptist President of Acadia University, and sister of Isabella Cramp Muir, one of Henrietta's aunts. In 1909 Mary Cramp and Maude C. Edgar founded an exclusive girl's school in Montreal called Miss Cramp and Miss Edgar's. See Margaret W. Westley, *Remembrance of Grandeur: The Anglo-Protestant Elite of Montreal* (Montreal: Libre Expressions, 1990), ch. 2; Mary Cramp and Maude C. Edgar, *Eternal Youth: addresses to girls, 1913-1930* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1931).

³⁶ *Report of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the WCTU of the Province of Quebec* (Montreal: Witness Publishing Co., 1898), 116, hereafter *Quebec WCTU Report*.

³⁷ John S. Moir, "Ebenezer William Dadson," *DCB*, Vol. 12, 224-25.

the social gospel movement of the next decade, he argued against laissez-faire capitalism and for the application of Sermon on the Mount's principles. Dadson had made the *Canadian Baptist* "an avowed vehicle for social gospel ideas" by 1899.³⁸ Reverend Dadson supported workers' right to unionize and strike, prohibition, protective legislation for women and children, municipal reform and other progressive causes. He also strongly advocated the "evangelization of French-Canadians."³⁹

Henrietta's work in temperance, suffrage and reform circles received Dadson's blessing as well as that of his successor Reverend J. L. Gilmour, another social gospeller. In 1902 Olivet moved into a new church. Gilmour's special mission sermons were placed in the Church's cornerstone, a testimony to their Baptist commitment to evangelism and social action.⁴⁰ Another liberal evangelical, M.F. McCutcheon became pastor of the new Westmount Baptist Church founded by William Muir, Henrietta's brother, and other former Olivet members.⁴¹ Although congregations in Ontario favoured conservative ministers, Montreal Baptists continued their tradition of Christian liberalism.⁴²

Fin de siècle Montreal, more than other Canadian cities, demonstrated the abuses of industrial capitalism. As the urban reformer Herbert Brown Ames documented, poverty divided residents in the "City Below the Hill" from the middle class and wealthy citizens in the "City Above the Hill".⁴³

³⁸ John S. Moir, "The Canadian Baptist and the Gospel Movement, 1879-1914," in *Baptists in Canada: Search for Identity Amid Diversity*, ed. Jarold K. Zeman (Burlington, Ont: G. R. Welsh Co., 1980), 151.

³⁹ Moir, "Dadson," 225; Graveau, *The Evangelical Century*, ch. 5.

⁴⁰ CBAM, Olivet Documents from Cornerstone 1902-1903.

⁴¹ Rev. J. A. Gordon, *History of the First Baptist Church of Montreal 1820-1906* (Montreal: n. p., 1906).

⁴² See George Rawlyk, *Champions of the Truth: Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists* (Burlington, Ont: G. R. Welsh Co., 1990); Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 15.

⁴³ Herbert Brown Ames, *The City Below the Hill* (1897, reprint with an introduction by P. W. Rutherford; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972); Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: the Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974); Jean De Bonville, *Jean-Baptiste Gagnepetit: Les Travailleurs Montréalais à la fine du XX^e Siècle* (Montreal: Les Editions de l'Aurore, 1975). See also P. Rutherford, *Saving the Canadian City: the first phase, 1880-1920* (Toronto,

Evangelicals like Henrietta, Ames and his wife attended the American Presbyterian Church, a neighbor to the Baptists. Mrs. H. B. Ames also served as a Director of the Montreal YWCA while Ames was the only male patron of Montreal's LCW.⁴⁴ Ames' study of Montreal's working-class neighborhoods, published by the *Montreal Star* in 1896, had called evangelicals' attention to the impact of rapid industrialization on the working class. Like American reformers, Ames believed that the city would be a healthier place if governments addressed the problems of sanitation, overcrowding and disease. Ames argued that business should provide leadership in building workers decent affordable housing and parks. Although paternalistic, Ames was not racist. He insisted that Anglo-Saxon superiority was a myth. Instead he argued slum conditions were "defined by environment, not ethnicity."⁴⁵ Female philanthropists like Henrietta who lived amid the upper city's affluence supported Ames' reform agenda. He demonstrated that mortality rates in the working-class areas were higher than in any other North American city in the 1890s, an alarming statistic since Henrietta's neighbours enjoyed outstanding health and wealth.⁴⁶ Over fifty per cent of the richest men in Canada live in "the Golden Square Mile".⁴⁷

Through grandfather Ebenezer, father William, brother William and numerous wealthy relatives, Henrietta claimed a position in this elite group. Oliver's career failure and financial difficulties, however, meant Henrietta struggled constantly to maintain respectability. Only through feminist and Christian reform activities could the impoverished Henrietta find common ground with wealthy Montrealers. Numerous prominent Montrealers, Lady Julia Drummond, President of the Montreal LCW, Mrs. Robert Reid, Vice-President Montreal LCW and President of Montreal

University of Toronto Press, 1974) and "Tomorrow's Metropolis: the Urban Reform Movement in Canada 1880-1920," Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers*, 1971.

⁴⁴ *Montreal LCW Report* (1900).

⁴⁵ Rutherford, "Introduction," *City Below the Hill*, xv.

⁴⁶ Copp, ch 1. Westley, *Remembrance of Grandeur: the Anglo-Protestant Elite of Montreal*.

⁴⁷ Françoise Remillard and Brian Merrett, *Mansions of the Golden Square Mile: Montreal 1859-1930* (Montreal: Meridan Press, 1987); Douglas MacKay, *The Square Mile: Merchant Princes of Montreal* (Toronto: 1987); Westley, *Remembrance of Grandeur*

Women's Club, and Mary Cowan McDougall, President of the Montreal YWCA, National YWCA President and NCWC Vice President, shared Henrietta's feminism and zealous Christianity. These women had impressive mansions, servants, large country homes and most importantly, wealthy and powerful husbands. G. A. Drummond was a Liberal Senator and President of the Bank of Montreal, Robert Reid was a wealthy railway promoter, and John McDougall, an iron merchant and financier.⁴⁸

Such influential women monopolized the YWCA executive leaving Henrietta the choice of a humble position on the Religious Committee. Twenty years after founding the YWCA, evangelical feminists Mary MacDougall, Mrs. J. Stevenson, Mrs. J. MacIntosh and Mrs. N.B. Corse still dominated the executive.⁴⁹ Mary McDougall, also the National YWCA President, praised the "many celebrated and earnest workers in the Master's vineyard." Her speech, which could easily have been written by Henrietta, explained:

that we have met the inevitable discouragement and drawbacks was only to be expected, but we should be poor soldiers were we to let these human hindrances effect the aim of our Young Women's Christian Association, which is to lead young women to Christ, and while our progress may have been temporarily checked, we have gathered fresh courage, and go forward with the assurance that work done in His Name will never fail to accomplish much good.⁵⁰

Under McDougall's leadership, the Montreal YWCA had diversified to meet the needs of young women who came as strangers to Montreal. Henrietta led Friday evening services, taught Bible classes, organized the annual January Week of Prayer and conducted Sunday afternoon services at the Women's Jail.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women*; Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1976), 153-54. Michele Brassard and Jean Hamelin, "Sir George Alexander Drummond," *DCB*, Vol. 13, 283-84; Robert Cuff, "Sir Robert Gillespie Reid," *DCB*, Vol. 13, 859-62; Janice Harvey, "Mary McDougall Cowans," *DCB*, Vol. 12, 226-27.

⁴⁹ *Montreal YWCA Reports* (1875, 1897).

⁵⁰ "President's Opening Remarks," *YWCA Second Biennial Report* (1896), 17. See D. Pedersen, "Providing A Woman's Conscience" in *Canadian Women: A Reader*, eds. Wendy Mitchinson et al. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 194-210.

⁵¹ *YWCA Second Biennial Report* (1896), 33.

These Montreal years mark the end of Henrietta direct involvement with moral reform work among “friendless women,” whether poor, pregnant, single, alcoholic or delinquent. As part of an evangelical women’s team she pressed for prison reform and criticized the Sisters of the Good Shepherd’s management of Protestant women prisoners.⁵² Despite anglophone Protestants’ protest, the treatment of women inmates remained dependent on their religious affiliation. The progressive Andrew Mercer Ontario Reformatory for Females offered all women opportunities for work. Montreal did not. Influenced by British and American reformers, women lobbied for “accommodation sufficient to admit of modern methods of reform.”⁵³ A deputation to the Quebec Liberal Cabinet petitioned for a new jail in 1900. Their less ambitious demands included the appointment of a third matron, the classification of prisoners and their accommodation according to offense, compulsory employment, an isolation cell, and space for outdoor exercise. None of these changes were implemented. As late as 1950 the Jail still had not provided employment, exercise space, or classification for Protestant women prisoners.⁵⁴

Elizabeth Fry, the English Quaker, was Henrietta’s inspiration for “moral reform among criminals”. Henrietta accepted Fry’s four principles: “Religious Instruction; Classification; Employment; Separation.” Henrietta’s paper on “Jail Reform”, presented to the 1901 NCWC Convention, surveyed Fry’s importance and outlined the development of female prisons in Europe, America and Canada. Less humanitarian than Fry and hopelessly uninformed, Henrietta asserted: “our Jails of to-day are too comfortable and are not in any sense, except that of confinement, a place of punishment, and as place of imprisonment they do not act as a deterrent to the habitual

⁵² “Report of the Montreal LCW,” *NCWC Report* (1901), iv-v; D. Owen Carrigan, *Crime and Punishment in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), ch. 10.

⁵³ “Report on Goal Work”, *Montreal Report LCW* (1901), 9-10. Carolyn Strange, “The Criminal and Fallen of their Sex’: The Establishment of Canada’s First Women’s Prison, 1874-1901,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, Vol. I (1985), 79-92 and “The Velvet Glove: Maternalistic Reform at the Andrew Mercer Ontario Reformatory for Females, 1874-1927,” (Master’s thesis, University of Ottawa, 1983); Estelle B. Freedman, *Their Sisters’ Keepers: Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981).

⁵⁴ NAC, Montreal LCW Papers, Carrie Derrick, “An Historical Sketch 1893-1910. Protestant Women’s Jail 1949-1964 File, clipping “Fullum Street Jail,” *The Standard*, 4 February 1950.

criminal". Henrietta also echoed standard bourgeois prejudices. "A short sentence is looked upon by many criminals during the winter season as an unmixed blessing, giving them a place of retreat where their bodies can recuperate and go out refreshed and strengthened for further evil." Sounding more like a Calvinist and conservative, Henrietta asserted prisons should punish the sinner before working for moral reform.⁵⁵

Henrietta articulated the views of many Canadian reformers although a few advocated a more secular approach as did the well-known American settlement worker, Jane Addams.⁵⁶ Investigating and collecting statistics for unemployment, poverty and petty crime was not Henrietta forte, although she occasionally advanced progressive ideas. "If all the women committed for vagrancy, insanity and drunkenness were taken out of our prisons and placed in more suitable institutions" she argued, "one female prison would be all that is required." Henrietta criticized the Ontario Industrial Refuge because "the work taught the girls ... is too purely domestic." Instead she proposed teaching a trade so women could be self-supporting. At the same time her Christian program rested on the dichotomy of sinner and saved, good and evil woman. While prepared to see women receive training, leading women to Christ remained her goal whether at the Jail or through the YWCA.

The Montreal Central WCTU, an established group active since 1883, welcomed Henrietta's enthusiasm for prohibition and suffrage campaigns since their progress had been slow. By 1898, the Hochelaga County local had spearheaded the organization of seventeen WCTU's in the Montreal region but held back on petitioning the Quebec government. In 1892 the Dominion WCTU Franchise Superintendent had pushed the Quebec WCTU into presenting the province's first suffrage petition. While eyeing Ontario's activism, the Quebec executive concluded they should proceed more slowly, realizing many Quebec WCTU women were initially "bitterly

⁵⁵ "Jail Reform," *NCWC Report* (1901),86.

⁵⁶ See Marianna Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), ch. 6.

opposed.”⁵⁷ Other obstacles arose. Whereas Ontario women found male allies among Protestant clergyman and politicians in the Legislature, in contrast Quebec WCTUers faced a hostile and conservative French Catholic audience. Instead of decreasing opposition, Quebec suffragists experienced increased hostility.⁵⁸

Henrietta’s Ottawa experience in the WCTU and NCWC served her well. Firmly established in Ontario suffrage circles, she attended the October 1897 Dominion WCTU Conference in Toronto where her “brisk and brief” franchise report “evoked quite a discussion.”⁵⁹ Pleased with her work, the executive appointed Henrietta Dominion Superintendent of Franchise. Back in Quebec, she became the Hochelaga County’s Superintendent of Franchise fitting their call for a “zealous Superintendent”. Henrietta met Maria G. Craig, another eager worker and Quebec Superintendent of the WCTU’s Department of Health and Heredity, who was destined to join Henrietta in the Alberta temperance and suffrage movement.⁶⁰ In the meantime, anxious to educate women about their political rights, Harriet Boomer, a leader in the London WCTU and LCW, and Henrietta formed a NCWC committee to study provincial legislation regarding the election of school trustees.⁶¹ A confusing situation existed in Quebec. Whereas unmarried women ratepayers living in rural districts had received the franchise in 1892, the same rights were not granted to Montreal women until 1901.⁶² Relying upon Henrietta’s research, the Montreal LCW urged that women be appointed to the Protestant Board of School Commissioners, arguing that the law permitted any voter to be appointed. In response the Quebec legislature changed the 1900 School Board Act, placing the word male in front of “person”. Despite WCTU and LCW petitions the

⁵⁷ *Quebec WCTU Report* (1891), 60-61; Cleverdon, 217-21.

⁵⁸ S. M. Trofimenkoff, “Henri Bourassa and the ‘Woman Question’,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 10:4 (November 1975), 3-11.

⁵⁹ *Ottawa Journal*, 23 October 1897,

⁶⁰ *Quebec WCTU Report* (1899), 53-57.

⁶¹ *NCWC Report* (1898).

⁶² *Quebec WCTU Report* (1899), 64-65

changes remained in effect until 1942.⁶³ When Montreal's City Council moved to cancel single women's voting rights in 1903, the WCTU and the Montreal LCW fought back effectively, thankful for prestigious francophone women's support.⁶⁴

Such setbacks increased Henrietta's resolve to battle harder and educate women to demand legal and political equality. "Her devotion and work for the cause of human justice" is remarkable, explained Ontario suffragist Dr. Augusta Stowe Gullen, who introduced Henrietta to the DWEA in 1899.⁶⁵ Suffrage agitation took place even when Henrietta joined the exclusive Montreal Women's Club. President Mrs. Robert Reid, mother of an early McGill graduate Helen R. Y. Reid, was a firm suffragist. When Henrietta became the 3rd Director of the Social Science Department, she arranged sensible lectures on education, business and women's employment but ended 1899 with a rousing session on "the effect of Woman Suffrage in the Province of Quebec."⁶⁶

More than any single organization, the NCWC captured Henrietta's loyalty even though it was often cumbersome and conservative. Still enamored with Lord and Lady Aberdeen, Henrietta eagerly attending the farewell Ottawa reception in 1898. That summer during their western tour the royal couple had visited Dr. Edwards and introduced him to the new Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) Superintendent, Miss MacLeod. Olive mused to his wife that the Aberdeens had "tried to do good to the Canadians," but concluded "people resent having good done for them - what they want is to be amused." He continued:

the poor dear large hearted Countess - how she has labored at her Woman's Council & V.O. nurses schemes. The first a year from now will have vanished into thin air & the second will enjoy an existence very much behind what Her Ex (sic) anticipated. It has not been heartily endorsed anywhere as far as I can understand."⁶⁷

⁶³ Cleverdon, 218; Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Report of the Committee on Laws for the Better Protection of Women and Children," *NCWC Report* (1901), 167, hereafter Law Committee Report.

⁶⁴ See *Le Collectif Clio, L'Historie des femmes au Quebec*, ch. 6.

⁶⁵ *NCWC Report* (1899), 309.

⁶⁶ "Club Program," Montreal Women's Club, 1900-1901.

⁶⁷ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 5 August 1898.

While the optimistic Henrietta dreamed and worked for change, the pessimistic Oliver watched and criticized. This attitude partially explains his lacklustre medical career.

Ignoring Oliver's dire predictions, Henrietta threw herself into the LCW, a powerful and unique voice for Montreal women, where anglophone and francophone suffragists and philanthropists worked together for the first time.⁶⁸ The "female parliamentarians" on the LCW executive included the cream of Montreal activists. President Lady Julia Drummond, McGill Professor of Botany Carrie Derrick, Montreal Women's Club president Mrs. Robert Reid, and YWCA president Mrs. John McDougall had formed an alliance with leading francophone women from Quebec's professional and Liberal families. Despite clerical hostility these Quebec women persevered. Marie Gérin-Lajoie, the wife of a prominent lawyer and entrepreneur, was also daughter of Sir Alexandre Lacoste, a Senator and Quebec Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench. Her mother, Lady Lacoste, had initially served as Vice-President. Another Vice-President Josephine Marchand-Dandurand edited a woman's paper *Le Coin du Feu*. Her husband Raoul was a Liberal Senator and a wealthy capitalist.⁶⁹ One of Madame Dandurand's close friends was feminist journalist, Robertine Berry, who wrote a weekly columns for *La Patrie* under the pen name of Françoise.⁷⁰ Rosaire Thibaudeau, the President of Notre-Dame Hospital served as the LCW and NCWC Vice-Presidents of LCW. Her powerful husband was an owner of the Montreal Cotton Company.⁷¹

These wealthy and literate francophone women, none of whom Henrietta had met prior to 1896, challenged her Protestant perspective. Living in eastern Canada from 1890 to 1903 exposed her to a more sophisticated feminism. Dandurand and Gérin-Lajoie especially influenced her views on legal rights, Catholic education and women's rights. As a result Henrietta questioned her

⁶⁸ Yoland Pinard, "Les Débuts Du Mouvement Des Femmes," in *Les Femmes Dans La Societé Quebecois*, eds. Marie Lavign et Yoland Pinard (Montreal: Editions Du Borel Express, 1977), 62-87.

⁶⁹ See Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women*, 151-54.

⁷⁰ Anne Carrier, "Robertine Barry", *DCB*, Vol. 13, 42-44.

⁷¹ Pinard, "Les Débuts Du Mouvement," 69.

culture's Protestant fanaticism and discovered these women's anti-clericalism. Marie Gérin-Lajoie espoused "le féminisme chrétien", similar in many respects to her own, although Gérin-Lajoie's mentor was the French Catholic feminist Marie Margueret.⁷² Given the division between religious women and lay women in Quebec, francophone feminists faced a more difficult task than Henrietta's Protestant friends. As Christian feminists they appealed both to democratic arguments on justice and to the message of Christian salvation to defend women's rights. Because females, they argued, were central to the Church's mission of charity, lay and religious women should work in partnership. Seeking legitimacy for women's religious rights ironically united francophone and anglophone suffragists on the LCW.⁷³

Marie Gérin-Lajoie's interests coincided closely with Henrietta's. Both feminists saw legislative solutions as the answer to women's inequality. Gérin-Lajoie chaired the MLCW's legislative committee which "se penche sur la question de l'incapacité légale qui définit le statut juridique des femmes mariées dans la province et étudie des moyens d'action à entreprendre en ce domaine." As historian Pinard explains: "Ceci présage les grandes batailles juridiques du 20e siècle."⁷⁴ In 1902 Gérin-Lajoie published *Le Traité de Droit Usuel*. Her friend, Sister St. Anaclet, the Superior General of the Congregation of Notre Dame requested she teach law to their older students. Henrietta worked closely with Gérin-Lajoie on a number of projects, such as the fight to retain the municipal vote for widows and unmarried women.⁷⁵

Following Lady Drummond's resignation, the NCWC Executive appointed Henrietta as the Convener of the Committee on Laws for the Better Protection of Women and Children (Law Committee) at the 1899 Hamilton Convention. She also convened an NCWC sub-Committee

⁷² Pinard, "Les Débuts Du Mouvement," 81-85.

⁷³ Marta Danylewycz, "Changing Relationships: Nuns and Feminists in Montreal, 1890-1925," in *The Neglected Majority*, eds. Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 126 and *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

⁷⁴ Pinard, "Les Débuts Du Mouvement," 81.

⁷⁵ Danylewycz, "The Changing Relationship," 133.

organized to compile the "Careers and Profession" section of Paris Exposition handbook published in 1900. While Gérin-Lajoie wrote on Quebec women's legal position, Henrietta prepared the only suffrage paper. The Federal Government had given the NCWC money to finance this project. Madame Gérin-Lajoie did not need money but Henrietta did. She received \$25.00 for her essay on "The Political Position of Women in Canada", \$20.00 for her inventory of Canadian women's careers and professions, and a generous allowance for her expenses incurred through research and attending meetings.⁷⁶

Despite financial handicaps, Henrietta's prestige grew as she worked with other influential women like McGill Professor Carrie Derrick, the author of the essay on careers for women. "Without aggression, without any noisy obtrusiveness," explained Derrick "a few Canadian women by deep thought, by clear vision, or by honest service have prepared the way for those who will follow, and have proved the right of all to work as they are able."⁷⁷ Henrietta's complementary survey documented women's entrance into the male world of work. She dismissed the view that this development injured men, observing that work which women had done formerly, "sewing, spinning, weaving, butter and cheese-making have been taken away from them, and it has been necessary for them to occupy themselves in some other way." Clara Brett Martin's campaign for women to study and practice law in Ontario drew favorable praise from both Derrick and Edwards. Her "great patience and determination", Henrietta argued, were the necessary assets to "overcome the prejudices of those who were averse to women taking up the study of law with a view to becoming lawyers."⁷⁸

Henrietta, who had also "taken up the study of law" as the NCWC's Law Committee Convener, had dreamed about becoming a lawyer.⁷⁹ Marriage and middle age forced her, just as it

⁷⁶ NAC, NCWC Papers,

⁷⁷ Miss Carrie M. Derrick, "Professions Open to Women," *Women of Canada*, 62.

⁷⁸ *Women of Canada*, 70, 90. Constance Backhouse, "To Open the Way for Others of my Sex: Clara Brett Martin's Career as Canada's First Woman Lawyer," *Canadian Journal of Women and Law*, 1 (1985) and *Petticoats and Prejudice* (Toronto: Osgood Society and Women's Press, 1991), ch. 10.

⁷⁹ NAC, Cleverdon Papers, Letter Alice to Catharine Cleverdon.

did Gérin-Lajoie, into an unpaid career as a legal expert on women's issues for the NCWC. At fifty years of age with a capricious husband, Henrietta could not afford the luxury of being a professional volunteer. She seems to have accepted her fate, realizing she had been born too early to personally benefit from the professional opportunities opening up to women. Like many ambitious Canadian women, she channeled her talent into the NCWC where her position as the Convener of the Law Committee gave her ex-officio membership on the Executive. By 1901 she was appointed to the International Council of Women's Committee on Laws Concerning Domestic Relations. While never able to finance a European trip, she launched a campaign to change the Committee's name and expand its mandate.⁸⁰ Under her leadership, the NCWC's Law Committee became a model for other countries.

During her first year as Law Convener, Henrietta worked for two additional revisions to the seduction section of the Canadian Criminal Code. She wrote to MP John Charlton expressing the NCWC's appreciation of his amendment to raise the age of consent to eighteen and their concern over the retention of the objectionable clause "to girls of previously chaste character". Henrietta firmly believed that even young girls who were not chaste deserved protection from seduction by mature men. "The pleas that a full grown man needs indulgence for his inability to resist the wiles of a depraved child of fourteen is one that to the feminine mind borders on ridiculous," wrote a resolute Henrietta.⁸¹ An amendment passed in 1901 conceded that, "the burden of proof of previous unchastity on the part of the girl or woman ... shall be upon the accused."⁸² Clerks in shops and stores received protection against employers' "seduction", but domestic servants were excluded, even though the Committee had argued that sexual abuse was highest in private homes. Over the next years the Law Committee documented their case and again requested the law cover domestic

⁸⁰ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1902), 65.

⁸¹ Letter to John Charlton from Henrietta M. Edwards, 27 March 1900 in *Law Committee Report, NCWC Report* (1900), 184-85.

⁸² "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1901), 163.

servants. This second petition was also rejected.⁸³

Anxious to advance women's legal equality and her own prestige, Henrietta began building a personal empire on the Law Committee. The Executive agreed that the Committee's "duties be extended", a move which allowed Henrietta to "gather information as to all efforts made by Local Councils (or societies affiliated with them) to aid and protect women and children."⁸⁴ Wider provincial representation gave Henrietta a network of fifteen feminists who reported any developments. At least six of the women were prominent suffragists: Dr. Stowe Gullen (Toronto), Agnes Machar (Kingston), Mrs. Edith Archibald (Halifax), Mrs. J. Murray (Brandon), Mrs. Nellie McClung (Winnipeg), Madame Gérin-Lajoie (Montreal) and Mrs. Robert Reid (Montreal).⁸⁵ Henrietta's 1900 Report shows the extent of her committee's mandate. She credited Ontario as the "banner Province in its care of women and children", commenting favorably on its Act Regulating Maternity Boarding Houses, and noted that the Quebec legislature had finally amended their Industrial Establishment Act to extend inspection to "smaller business concerns where so many women are engaged. In the Maritimes educational concerns dominated women's petitions. Prince Edward Island LCW petitions produced a Truancy Act while New Brunswick pushed its Legislature to consider compulsory education. From the West, Brandon supplied information on its rescue and preventive work with women and children.⁸⁶ For the next two years her reports featured Ontario. Agnes Machar, an industrious feminist, prepared an excellent summary of the Kingston LCW's work for children.⁸⁷ Henrietta's 1902 report discussed the Ontario WCTU suffrage petition to the provincial legislature. The Montreal LCW successfully campaigned against a bill to prevent

⁸³ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1902), 163; *NCWC Report* (1903), 95.

⁸⁴ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1900), 186.

⁸⁵ Ernest Forbes, "Battles in Another War: Edith Archibald and the Halifax Feminist Movement," *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the Twentieth Century Maritimes* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989), 67-90.

⁸⁶ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1900), 186.

⁸⁷ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1901), 161.

female stenographers from securing employment with the Quebec Supreme Court.⁸⁸

Henrietta's personal attention focused on legal discrimination against women in marriage, particularly in matters of property, abuse by husbands and divorce. Western LCW's decried the absence of dower protection for married women in the North West and requested support for Manitoba's petition to amend the Married Women's Property Act. Nova Scotia requested the NCWC's support for an amendment to the present law regarding non-support of a wife and family. Legislation governing marriage separation struck Henrietta as most "unjust" to women. "No woman in Quebec can get a separation from her husband, no matter how dissolute he may be, unless he keeps a mistress in the same house with her; while a man for one act of unfaithfulness on his wife's part can secure a separation." Henrietta's report stated frankly: "your Committee thinks that the law should be equally open to the woman." Advocating legal equality for men and women was one matter, but making divorce easier was another story. "The sacredness of the marriage tie cannot be too carefully guarded", she warned the NCWC. "The breaking of this bond is destructive to the home life of a nation."⁸⁹

Despite Henrietta's aggressive leadership, WCTU petitions far surpassed those of the NCWC and its affiliated LCWs. The Quebec WCTU launched a successful campaign throughout 1902-03 in their provincial legislature against a proposed amendment to allow Montreal's City Council the right to "regulate vice." "Those who are familiar with the long eighteen years struggle in England against State regulation of vice and with Mrs. Butler's brave fight against the Contagious Disease Act," Henrietta explained "will understand the importance of this amendment."⁹⁰ The cumbersome NCWC reacted more slowly but Henrietta persevered. When she moved to Alberta in 1904, her leadership of the Law Committee leadership remained intact. Her art career was to end.

During the 1890s, Henrietta had received commissions for portrait miniatures from wealthy

⁸⁸ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1903), 94.

⁸⁹ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1902), 66 and *NCWC Report* (1903), 98.

⁹⁰ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1903), 94. See Jay Cassel, *The Secret Plague: Venereal Disease in Canada 1838-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

and influential Canadians like Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Sir Donald Smith, Dr. T. G. Rodderick, Mrs. Gerald Fitzgerald and the Ottawa Edwards brothers. Her miniatures of Laurier and Smith, displayed in Rosenthal's jewelry store, were "greatly admired". The Royal Canadian Academy's 1899 and 1900 exhibitions included Henrietta's case of ivory and porcelain miniatures.⁹¹ Miniature painting enjoyed a long history in both Europe and North America until the advent of photography with its cheaper and faster portraits. Ironically just as Henrietta started painting miniatures men were leaving for photography which promised greater commercial opportunity. British women continued painting, encouraged by the 1894 creation of the Royal Miniaturist Society which preserved the art form. However, in Canada miniature painting for profit became increasingly difficult after 1900.⁹² The NCWC's survey listed only seven female miniature painters including Henrietta as working in Canada. Although Henrietta "spoke briefly on miniature painting as being especially suited for women" at the 1899 WAA Conference, she complained to Oliver about her struggle to supplement their income. "Have you given up the studio?" asked Oliver observing that "the miniature work does not seem to grow - shall we say that Montreal taste is not sufficiently cultivated. If you cannot cover the room expense why keep it on?"⁹³

Henrietta's renewed artistic activity coincided with the return of her mentor, Wyatt Eaton, to Canada. His clients were Canada's elite, Principal William Dawson, Lord Strathcona, Sir William van Horne and R. B. Angus. Lady Aberdeen commissioned him to paint her children's portraits.⁹⁴ To Henrietta's relief, since the Edwards' financial situation had not improved, Eaton promoted his former student's work. Despite artistic talents, however, Henrietta did not seek a leadership

⁹¹ *Ottawa Journal*, 24 June 1897. Royal Academy of Arts Catalogue, 20. Evelyn de R. McMann, *Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

⁹² Daphne Foskett, *British Portrait Miniatures: A History* (London, Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1963), ch. XX. Graham Reynolds, *English Portrait Miniatures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), ch. 16. *Portrait Miniature in the R. O. M.* (Toronto: 1981).

⁹³ "Sectional Conference of the Women's Art Association of Canada," *NCWC Report* (1899), 306. EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 20 October 1899.

⁹⁴ George S. Hellman, "Wyatt Eaton," *The Art World*, December 1917, 206.

position in the Toronto-dominated WAA. A busy woman, she selected projects which captured her interest, attended Ottawa and Montreal branch meetings and occasionally represented President Mary Dignam at Ottawa NCWC executive meetings.⁹⁵ Henrietta joined WAA President Miss Philips, and artists Robert Harris and William Brymner on the Montreal LCW's sub-committee "to inquire into the desirability of establishing a public school of design in Montreal." They decided that Schools of Design and Decorative Arts needed to be located in large manufacturing cities with fine museums. Montreal could not compete with existing American and British schools, they concluded.⁹⁶ Henrietta supported Canadian handicrafts and local industries, as did the women from the Decorative Arts Society and the Montreal LCW.⁹⁷

Henrietta and Oliver owned an impressive collection of Native work, accumulated long before the Decorative Arts Society created the Canadian Handicraft Society in 1911.⁹⁸ Ample opportunity existed for Oliver to trade, photograph and observe Native peoples especially when he became medical officer for the Treaty Number 8 Commission. During the spring and summer of 1900 he vaccinated Native people from Fort St. John on the Peace River to Fort Resolution on Great Slave Lake.⁹⁹ Oliver's photographic collection and Northern journal together provide a fascinating documentary of his travels.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately Oliver did not capitalize on his opportunities, allowing personal conflict with Commissioner J. A. Macrae to consume his energy.

According to Oliver, Macrae was "a double dyed conservative - a fullsome flattering toddy to

⁹⁵ See Tippet, 41-2; Marie Elwood, "The State Dinner Service of Canada, 1898," *National Museum of Man Material History Bulletin*, (Spring 1979).

⁹⁶ NAC, NCWC Papers, Minute Book, 8 May 1899. Montreal Local Council of Women Papers, *Montreal LCW Report* (1899), 13.

⁹⁷ *Montreal LCW Report* (1901), 12.

⁹⁸ M. Allen Hulbert, *Sketch of the Activities of the Canadian Handicraft Guild and the Dawn of the Handicraft Movement in the Dominion* (Montreal: n. p., 1929).

⁹⁹ Canada, *Sessional Papers 1901*, "Report of Commissioner for Treaty No 8,"; René Fumoleau, *As Long As This Land Shall Last* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973).

¹⁰⁰ EG Papers, Box 1, File 11 and 12; Journal re. Fort Resolution 1900.

all above him and an abject tyrant to all below." Macrae "left discord and hard feelings everywhere behind him by his arrogant and unfair treatment of the poor people."¹⁰¹ When Oliver returned to Regina, he complained to his brother W.C. Edwards, now a Liberal Senator. Macrae learned about Oliver's letter and retaliated by sending Senator Edwards "a lying slanderous report" which asserted that Oliver "who had been a life long abstainer, had become addicted to liquor- and worst of it all was that my brother believed it for a long time." Relations with his brother had never been close. Oliver only restored his reputation through "sworn affidavits" from Lt. Governor A.M. Forget, James Ross and Walter Scott. To his wife's consternation, Oliver reported that new doctors had taken over his responsibilities for the Regina Industrial School and the Muscopetung and Assiniboine Agencies.¹⁰² Without "any settled work", with an angry brother and Ottawa enemies, Oliver accepted a second northern assignment with the Treaty 8 Commission in March 1901.¹⁰³ This trip was gruelling but otherwise uneventful.

When the unemployed Oliver returned to Montreal that fall, he requested that Henrietta intercede with Deputy Minister Stuart. Oliver later reported that Henrietta asked Stuart, and "what reason have you for not giving Dr. Edwards his old position - have you any fault to find with his work?" Stuart answered "none whatsoever - it was for political reasons and for that alone - the men who replaced him were influential men and we could not displace them."¹⁰⁴ To placate Henrietta, Stuart promised Dr. Edwards steady employment as medical officer on the Blood and Peigan Reserves. While the Edwards preferred Regina, Oliver felt "a great relief to have a secure position." His salary of \$1,800 placed him among the best paid of the Indian Affairs doctors reflecting the responsibilities involved.¹⁰⁵ However, this posting required more medical skill, health

¹⁰¹ NAC, Laurier Papers, O. C. Edwards to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 14 February 1910.

¹⁰² Letter Edwards to Laurier. See also D. J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton and Canadian Indian Administration 1896-1905," *Prairie Forum*, 12:2 (1977), 127-51.

¹⁰³ Canada, *Sessional Papers* (1902), 201-02.

¹⁰⁴ Letter Edwards to Laurier.

¹⁰⁵ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, December 1901. Canada, *Sessional Papers* (1904), 170.

and patience than Oliver possessed as an prematurely aging and tired fifty-one year old veteran.

One doctor to serve two sprawling reservations was scandalous. The Blood reserve, the largest in Canada, stretched south for forty miles from the Oldman River outside of Lethbridge to Cardston near the American border. The western side followed the Belly River and the eastern the St. Mary River. The Reserve was approximately half the size of Holland. Besides the 1,700 Blood Indians, Dr. Edwards was Medical Officer for the Peigans whose rambling reserve lay north of Macleod. The vastness of these reserves coupled with the twin dangers of winter blizzards and spring floods made this position suitable for two young doctors.¹⁰⁶ But Oliver accepted the work and prepared, as he pessimistically told Alice, to “go west and south to a hole in a hill side called Macleod”¹⁰⁷.

Oliver toured the Reserve and, to his wife’s dismay, reported many serious problems. Dr. François Xavier Girard, an aging alcoholic, had left a legacy of mediocrity. Negative publicity surrounding the Blood’s high death rate had forced the federal government to build the first North American Native hospital in 1893.¹⁰⁸ Located at the Roman Catholic Mission near the Upper Agency, across the Belly River from Standoff, the hospital was staffed by the Grey Nuns of Nicolet who had come to Alberta at the request of Oblate missionaries Fathers Lacombe and Legal.¹⁰⁹ Deaths from tuberculosis and measles had continued to rise. Significantly, the day Oliver arrived, he and another doctor performed seven operations on children suffering from scrofula. One doctor, a few nurses and a small, poorly-equipped hospital could not contain an epidemic.¹¹⁰

Since this would be a permanent posting, and the last before Oliver’s retirement, Henrietta

¹⁰⁶ Canada, *Sessional Papers* (1903), “Report of the Indian Agent for the Blood Reserve,” 149-51.

¹⁰⁷ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Alice Edwards, 13 October 1901.

¹⁰⁸ Hugh Dempsey, “A Visit to the Blood Reserve in 1891,” *Kainai News*, December 1, 1972.

¹⁰⁹ *Macleod Gazette*, 6, 14 July and 11 August 1893. On the Grey Nuns see Soeur M. -Carmen René s. g. m., *Soeurs Grises Nicolétaines* (Trois Rivières: Éditions du Bien Public, 1948), 177-88; Guy Lacombe, *Religieux et religieuses* (Edmonton: Duval, 1993), 30-31.

¹¹⁰ Grey Nuns, Province of St. Albert Archives (hereafter GNA), *Chroniques d’Hôpital Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs*, Vol. I, juillet 1893 à décembre 1932, 18 octobre 1901, 42-43.

relied on his weekly letters for news of the Native culture, the Reserve community and the surrounding countryside. The doctor first occupied a room above the small cottage hospital at St. Paul's Mission. Located on "Omahksene" or Big Island in the Belly River and facing the Lower Agency, St. Paul's had been established in 1886 by Reverend Samuel Trivett and his wife to educate and Christianize Native children.¹¹¹ Eight staff members served under the Reverend Arthur Owens, the Principal. The mission resembled a small village with its ten white-washed buildings including a church, school, boys' and girls' home, mission home, and store. Dr. Edwards and a nurse cared for the fifty Native boys and girls registered at the residential school.¹¹²

Over the years Oliver had become increasingly critical of the residential school experiment. He complained bitterly to Henrietta and later explained to Prime Minister Laurier that

a system of education fitted for the Anglo-Saxon in the end of the 19th century has been attempted with a people just slightly removed from savages and the thing is absurd. From a sanitary standpoint the plan of housing up Indians is all wrong. The tendency of the Indian is to consumption ... These little people were brought up to live in teepees from the earliest spring to the latest autumn and to take these same children and house them in a big building is most detrimental to their health.¹¹³

Containing an epidemic seemed impossible to Oliver. Like the Regina Industrial School, the Blood Reserve Mission schools showed a high mortality rate. The unhappy Doctor found many sick Blood and Peigan children in the four residential schools: two Anglican missions, St. Paul's and Victoria on the Peigan Reserve, and two Catholics missions, Immaculate Conception Boarding School at the Lower Agency and Sacred Heart Boarding School on the Peigan Reserve.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Alice Edwards, 1 January, 1902. See also David John Carter, *Samuel Trivett, Missionary with the Bloods* (Calgary: Glenbow, 1974); Hugh A. Dempsey, *The Gentle Persuader: a Biography of James Gladstone, Indian Senator* (Saskatoon: Western Prairie Producer, 1986), ch. 2. Mike Mountain Horse, *My People the Bloods* (Calgary: Glenbow, 1986), ch. 2 and 3.

¹¹² Diocese of Calgary, *Report on Indian Missions 1902* (Toronto: Oxford Press, 1903), 8-9, 16-17; Ian Getty, "The Failure of the Native Church Policy of the Christian Missionary Society in the North-West," *Religion and Society in the Prairie West* (Regina: Great Plains, 1974) and "The Church Missionary Society among the Blackfoot Indians of Southern Alberta 1880-1895," (Master's thesis: University of Calgary, 1970).

¹¹³ Quoted in "Dr. and Mrs. O. C. Edwards: Pioneer Collectors" *Friends* (The Friends of the University of Alberta Museum Newsletter) Spring 1985.

¹¹⁴ Canada, *Sessional Papers* (1906), Department of Indian Affairs, "Reports on Boarding and Industrial

Henrietta and her daughters welcomed Oliver's news that the Indian Agent James Wilson and his family were cultured Scottish Presbyterians. Each Sunday the Doctor went for dinner, remained overnight and departed next morning for a fourteen mile trip to the Hospital.¹¹⁵ Most holidays were spent at the Wilson's, except for Oliver's first Christmas. Fighting the symptoms of diphtheria he remained alone at St. Paul's lamenting the loss of "the customary grand dinner". The Wilson's invitation for New Year's dinner promised to recreate a Montreal family atmosphere with good food, games of crib and girls playing duets. Mrs. Wilson "has a splendid touch in playing the lively Scotch music and I love to hear her play," he explained to Henrietta. "You never saw people kinder ... and it is a capital thing for me that I have such a home."¹¹⁶ During the six years of lonely exile Oliver searched for someone to fill his wife's place, especially on Sundays and holiday occasions. His letters repeat the same motif of the Christian home with music, dinner, family, urbane conversation and relaxation. He found the Wilson home "a perfect oasis - I am always made so welcome and Mr. Wilson is the very essence of healthful fun and kindness. He dearly loves a joke and is so considerate for everybody that he is beloved by all who serve under him or brought in contact with him." Hoping to soften Henrietta's fears of isolation Oliver explained, "if we live at the Reserve it is a splendid thing to have a family like theirs beside us."¹¹⁷

Oliver's letters also explained to the Montrealers how different "the Kainai" were from the Saskatchewan Cree, Assiniboine and Sioux. The Bloods enjoyed a reputation of being a proud, arrogant and aggressive people who had remained fiercely independent even during the difficult years of 1881-1901 believing they were "the cream of creation".¹¹⁸ Agent Wilson had tried to

Schools", 392-95.

¹¹⁵ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 1 January 1902; *Macleod Gazette*, 21 March 1902. See Hugh A. Dempsey, *Red Crow: Warrior Chief* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980), 200-01 and *Charcoal's World* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978).

¹¹⁶ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 1 January 1902.

¹¹⁷ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 19 Dec. 1902.

¹¹⁸ Dempsey, *Red Crow*, 219.

suppress their annual Sun Dance, a “pagan ritual” he believed hindered their progress, but their aging Chief Red Crow successfully thwarted all attempts to interfere with native religion. In the summer of 1900 the Bloods held the largest celebration in six years, symbolizing Wilson had lost the Sun Dance war. Wilson’s critics felt he was unable to “grasp the problems created by the collision of two alien cultures.” Dr. Edwards did not prove any more understanding of the Bloods during his tenure as medical officer.¹¹⁹

Oliver, a gifted storyteller, entertained and horrified Henrietta with tales of chinooks, blizzards, winds and floods - all aspect of the Alberta foothills country which she would soon experience. The “incessant rains” and serious flooding of the region’s creeks and rivers, painted a depressing picture for his family, who were comfortably enjoying Pine Camp in 1902. That spring, Oliver and the nurse were stranded on the second floor of the hospital when the island, the mission and the main floor were under water. A British woman had arrived by buggy through the flooded area so Oliver could deliver her baby. All bridges were washed out and Oliver added, “Mr. Wilson has interviewed the Indians and the oldest inhabitant never remembers seeing the water rise as it did on May 20th.”¹²⁰

As the letters explained, Oliver often covered two hundred miles on horseback during a busy week touring the four missions on the Blood and Peigan Reserves. The usually critical doctor commented favourably on the missionary work of Reverend Hayes and his wife at Victoria mission. “The Indians who have apprehended the truth are most zealous in talking to others and so the work spreads,” observed Oliver, adding that, “it would be a great blessing if a man of the same language qualification and simplicity of spirit was working among the Bloods- Mr. Owens has a kind of service but it is through an interpreter and the general testimony is that trying to reach the mind in that way is a failure - the man who succeeds must be a man who speaks fluently.”¹²¹ Visiting the

¹¹⁹ Dempsey, *Red Crow*, ch 19.

¹²⁰ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 4 and 6 July 1902.

¹²¹ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 6 July 1902.

Hospital at the upper Reserve brought the luxury of more civilized society at the Cochrane Ranche. Its elegant house overlooked the Belly River at Standoff on the Reserve's western boundary. A family photograph shows Oliver, James Wilson and Mrs. Cochrane enjoying themselves on the verandah after touring her "amazing garden". Oliver's brother WIC. Edwards, who owned a stock farm and knew Senator Matthew Cochrane, supplied "Scotch short horns" to their Alberta ranch in 1903. The genteel Cochrane Ranche with its gardens reminded Oliver of eastern Canada and his family vacationing on the Ottawa River.¹²²

After two years of frontier life, Oliver rented a small house in Macleod in preparation for the arrival of Henrietta, Alice and Margaret. They planned to visit Quebec City, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Regina before arriving in Macleod for Christmas 1902. Henrietta's favorite brother died "accidentally" while cleaning his gun on 11 November, leaving his widow a bankrupt business. When Henrietta and the girls decided to postpone their trip, poor Oliver settled down to another lonely winter. He took these setbacks philosophically, remarking to his wife, "it is a good thing for a man to know a little simple cooking" and explaining that finding affordable domestic servants was difficult.¹²³

Henrietta remained in Montreal for another year assisting Ernie's widow and helping her sisters make new living arrangements.¹²⁴ Their father's money which helped William Muir become a wealthy entrepreneur also left a legacy of family bitterness. Amelia and Ida refused to live in William's ostentatious Westmount mansion.¹²⁵ Henrietta, now fifty-three, loathed abandoning Montreal for Alberta. Oliver's reports of Reserve life made her appreciate Montreal's sophisticated shops, the city's excitement, her "work" and her many friends and family. "May you be helped in

¹²² *Macleod Gazette*, 11 July 1903; Jacques Ferland, "Matthew Henry Cochrane," *DCB*, Vol. 13, 202-03. This photograph album is in Oliver E. Gardiner's collection.

¹²³ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 19 December 1902.

¹²⁴ Interview Roome with Whipple, Sydney B. C. March 24, 1991.

¹²⁵ *Montreal Star*, 24 June 1936. Westmount Public Library Collection, W. D. Lighthall, *Historical Sketch of Westmount* (Unpublished manuscript, 1900).

the work you are now trying to do and when you are quite ready (and not before)", wrote an understanding Oliver, "come and we will try and have a home again."¹²⁶

Spring 1903 found the Edwards daughters finally travelling West, but Henrietta remained to attend the Toronto NCWC Convention.¹²⁷ A gloomy and impatient Oliver missed meeting the girls' train which arrived while he doing emergency medical service in the Crows Nest Pass where a serious slide had buried the town of Frank. "As I saw the awful affects of the accident I was thankful that Will had turned his back on mining and chosen hydraulic work," commented Oliver. His bourgeois prejudice rang loudly as he pronounced "the working element of a mining town is most degraded and repulsive." Exhausted by the disaster, Oliver also complained about Henrietta's many delays and impatiently remarked "surely you will be free to come soon."¹²⁸ Eventually Henrietta boarded the Canadian Pacific Railway for her second Western adventure. She observed the crowded trains, bustling new settlers, ethnic diversity and booming frontier towns of the new West. Some of the problems which she had observed in the 1880s still confronted pioneer women who remained community builders, not citizens. Within her first year, Henrietta mounted a campaign for dower rights, homesteading privileges and suffrage through the WCTU and the NCWC.

Macleod, Henrietta's initial destination, was a dusty, dirty but colorful North West Mounted Police town of one thousand residents. It was situated on the Oldman River in the heart of the romantic cattle ranching country, but in 1903 the era of the big ranches was drawing to a close. The *Macleod Gazette* proclaimed settlers were "pouring into the district", creating prosperous grain farms. Promotional literature named Macleod "the Railway Hub of Southern Alberta" and promised settlers a thriving community "where Nature is making a Big City."¹²⁹ The Edwards

¹²⁶ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 19 December 1902.

¹²⁷ NCWC Papers, Volume 6, Executive Minutes 1900-1903.

¹²⁸ EG Papers, Letter Oliver to Henrietta, 2 May 1903.

¹²⁹ *Macleod Alberta Where Nature is making a Big City* (Macleod : Bryon May Co., 1912); *Macleod Gazette*, 18 April 1902.

family was not destined to settle here for long.

When Oliver could not find suitable accommodation for his family in the crowded town, he petitioned the Indian Affairs Department who agreed to build a residence at the Agency. While awaiting the completion of their home, Henrietta, Alice and Margaret travelled with Dr. Edwards to visit the Reserve. In good weather the Lower Agency, located twelve miles south and east of Macleod, was a pleasant two hour drive. During the journey Henrietta observed the Rocky Mountains in the distance, the beautiful ranching country to the west, and to the east “kainaisksahkoiyi” the land of the proud Bloods. At the Lower Agency she toured the unremarkable collection of buildings. Besides the agent’s house and stable, there were the clerk and issuer’s cottages, office buildings, a blacksmith and carpenter’s shop, ration and supply houses, and slaughter houses. By the standard of this frontier community, Dr. Edwards’ proposed new residence represented deluxe accommodation.¹³⁰

The resignation of Agent James Wilson who left to become manager of the nearby Cochrane Ranche altered the dynamics on the Reserve.¹³¹ The new agent, Robert Nathaniel Wilson, no relation to the former, was a longtime resident. He worked for the NWMP, operated a Standoff trading post from 1884-1896, and served as Indian agent on Peigan Reserve for the previous seven years.¹³² A man with little formal education, an aptitude for business, and a reputation for being aloof and difficult, R. N. Wilson was Oliver’s last choice for a friend. Both clashed immediately. Neither was prepared to respect the other’s authority. Agent R. N. Wilson expected to manage all Reserve affairs, but Oliver reported directly to the Indian Affairs Office, earned more money than the agent, and expected to be treated as an equal. Within a year their power struggle had degenerated into constant warfare. With retirement in sight, Oliver fought tenaciously to maintain this position.

¹³⁰ Dempsey, “A Visit to the Blood Reserve in 1891,” 11.

¹³¹ Interview Roome with Hugh A. Dempsey, Calgary, March 18, 1994.

¹³² GAL, R. N. Wilson clipping file (1863-1944); Philip H. Godsell, ed., “Introduction and Biographical Sketch R. N. Wilson,” *R. N. Wilson Papers*, Vol. I (1958), i-v. See also Dempsey, *The Gentle Persuader*, 20.

Henrietta also saw no alternative but to remain. Although she had survived frequent moves, family separation and lost opportunity in Oliver's quest for financial security, living on the Blood Reserve presented her greatest challenge. On the other hand, "the spirit of the West" offered new opportunities to the keen Henrietta. Ever the evangelical-Christian, she viewed new problems as obstacles a Christian must surmount in carrying out God's plan for their life. Even from this isolated foothills home she resolved, as she had on so many other occasions, to follow this vision and build an Alberta women's movement.

VI. A Woman of Two Worlds: On the Blood Reserve, 1904-1909

Henrietta made these Alberta years even more productive and exciting, exceeding even her family's expectations.¹ In public she became Mrs. O. C. Edwards, the crusading politician, experienced organizer, legal expert and noted western "leading lady": in private she was "Otter Woman" to the Bloods and grandmother to Alice and Muir's children.² Neither of these private faces defined her as clearly as her public images. As an evangelical feminist, Henrietta's personal mission necessitated building a middle-class women's movement to press for political and legal reforms and women's advancement, not addressing Native women's problems, a separate project to which God had called other women. Living on the Reserve was a necessity because of Oliver's career problems, not a choice for either Henrietta or Oliver. Both would both have preferred a Regina posting. Because Henrietta's evangelical feminism did not include an awareness of racism, she became a "cultural missionary" and a "maternal imperialist" more than a "feminist ally". As a colonizer, she expected Native women to welcome colonization even though most resisted such cultural imperialism.³

During the winter of 1904 Henrietta, Alice and Margaret moved to the Agency, glad to leave dusty Macleod but apprehensive about the new Agent and the isolated Reserve. The resourceful Henrietta had been warmly welcomed by the WCTU, the only women's group in Macleod, but she

¹ Barbara J. Nicholson, "Feminism in the Prairie Provinces to 1916," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1974); Catherine Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), ch. 4.

² *NCWC Report* (1921), 192. According the Hugh Dempsey, the Bloods had a series of names that they gave to white women such as Eagle Woman. These names did not carry any particular significance. Interview Roome with Dempsey, March 9, 1994.

³ See Barbara N. Ramusack, "Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13;4 (1990) 309-21. Also Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and Colonized* (revised ed. London: Souvenir, 1974); Viron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992); Antionette M. Burton, "The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and the Indian Woman, 1865-1915," in *Western Women and Imperialism Complicity and Resistance*, eds. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1992).

received a chilly reception at the Agency from her British neighbours, Lilia Wilson and Alice Hillier, both former Anglican missionaries and longtime residents.⁴ Tensions between Doctor Edwards and Agent Wilson had already affected everyone in this small community. Fresh from Montreal, the elegant Edwards women remained aloof from the Agency staff, contemptuous of their rougher manners and frontier habits. On Sundays, however, these three families crossed the river to attend service and pray together at St. Paul's Mission.⁵ Despite their mutual attendance at the Anglican church, the Wilsons regarded the Edwards family as intruders. The agent grew just as resentful of Henrietta's feminism, Liberal connections, and national prominence as he was of Oliver's salary, medical expertise and independence. Wilson's NWMP friends, Conservative ranching buddies, and their wives were more critical of Henrietta. They pitied "poor Dr. Edwards" for having a wife who meddled in politics and did not remain at home caring for him. Agent Wilson attempted to make both of their lives so unpleasant that Oliver would leave his post with Henrietta happy to follow.⁶

Free with his criticism, Wilson sent a barrage of complaints to the Indian Commissioner. First, he considered Dr. Edwards' new home an unnecessary expense when new office buildings were a more urgent priority. Next he objected to the doctor's salary and private practice, especially resentful that hard-drinking ranchers paid extravagant fees for Dr. Edwards' gold cure. By displaying such open hostility, Wilson created problems for everyone. The surprised agent received an unexpected medical bill after Oliver treated his family for typhoid fever. Wilson immediately

⁴ *Macleod Gazette*, 12 September, 24 October 1902 and 1 October 1905. Lilia Hillier, the daughter of English missionaries who had taught at St. Paul's mission in the 1880s, married R. N. Wilson. Alice Stanfield, another English missionary teacher at St. Paul's, worked with Dr. Edwards before she married Lilia's brother Edwin in 1903. They followed the Wilsons to the Agency where Hillier began a long career as a farm instructor, from 1905-1921. *Fort Macleod-Our Colourful Past: A History of the Town of Fort Macleod* (Fort Macleod: Fort Macleod History Committee, 1977), 289.

⁵ University of Calgary Anglican Archives, Diocese of Calgary, Blood Reserve. St. Paul's Parish Records, Service Register 1910-1929.

⁶ Interview Room with Margaret Gardiner, Vancouver 4 April 1991. See Sheilagh Jameson, "Women in the Southern Alberta Ranch Community, 1881-1914," in *Western Canada Studies Conference Papers* (1976), 63-78. David Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

complained to the Assistant Commissioner, arguing that such a well-paid and pampered doctor should "medically attend his fellow workers and their families as well as the Indians." McKenna's curt reprimand stated that staff members did not receive free medical care and warned the Agent against making insubstantial allegations about Dr. Edwards' private practice taking precedence over his Indian duties.⁷

Accustomed to cosmopolitan Montreal, Henrietta and her daughters felt stifled by the petty politics and unpleasant atmosphere in this tiny community. Even trivial problems, without goodwill or cooperation, produced endless conflict. Agent Wilson's accusation that Henrietta and Oliver stole an Indian cow outraged the family enough that Dr. Edwards requested McKenna's intervention. Finally, a very frustrated Commissioner informed Wilson: "I have been unable to discover in the correspondence adequate reason for such a controversy" and added "I am not surprised at Dr. Edwards being irritated by the tone of the letters which I have before me."⁸ Wilson's excuse that he had "acted in a friendly manner" neither fooled nor placated Oliver.⁹

Over the next seven years constant feuding created an ugly environment for everyone. The Agent disregarded the Doctor's lengthy experience with frontier medicine: the outspoken and stubborn doctor refused to accept Wilson's extensive knowledge of Blackfoot. As the Doctor's wife, Henrietta was expected to handle minor medical problems during Oliver's absence. Grandchildren remember many Native visitors at her back door seeking assistance. Oliver's work had never been separate from his family affairs. Henrietta had always shielded Oliver and fought his battles. Now she reacted angrily as Wilson systematically attacked Oliver's reputation. Despite his wife's loyalty, Oliver grew discouraged, felt defeated, and aged quickly. Faced with such an unhappy husband, Henrietta sought every opportunity to leave the Reserve.

As an outsider, Dr. Edwards never won the Blood elders' confidence, whereas the veteran

⁷ NAC, RG10, Vol. 1722, R. N. Wilson to Indian Commission, 19 January 1905; J. McKenna to R. N. Wilson, 3, 13 and 25 February 1905.

⁸ NAC, RG10, Vol. 1722, J. McKenna to R. N. Wilson, 11 April 1905.

⁹ NAC, RG10, Vol. 1722, O. C. Edwards to R. N. Wilson, 1 April 1905.

agent with twenty years of experience as NWMP, trader and Indian agent already had extensive Native contacts. In contrast to the Anglican missionaries, R. N. Wilson spoke Blackfoot and tolerated Native spiritual rituals. Wilson had been influenced by the American Indian agency staff, scholars and travellers who visited the Blackfoot Nation in Montana and Alberta, photographed their ceremonies and studied their culture.¹⁰ Men like Walter McClintock, E. S. Curtis and George Bird Grinnell believed Aboriginal peoples were doomed to extinction. They regarded the Blackfeet, especially, as symbols of the “romance and freedom” of the old West.¹¹ Grinnell encouraged Wilson to conduct ethnological investigations, keep detailed notes and contribute scientific articles to eastern publications.¹² Now an amateur ethnologist, Wilson also operated a lucrative trading business selling Native artifacts to the Chicago Field Museum.¹³

Wilson’s Native expertise irritated Henrietta and Oliver who considered themselves “experts”. When visiting dignitaries admired the handsome Cree and Assiniboine collection belonging to the Edwards’, the agent grew envious. A sense of nationalism lay behind the couple’s criticism of Agent Wilson for selling this Native heritage to American museums. Regardless of these fine distinctions, Henrietta and Oliver were equally exploitative in acquiring Native artifacts in exchange for food.¹⁴ Henrietta admired Native women’s craftsmanship, especially their beadwork, moccasins and animal skin clothing. Soon their Reserve home overflowed with native work. According to her granddaughter, their house had:

¹⁰ See William E. Farr, “‘So That’s What It Was Like’: The Blackfeet and Their Photographers,” *The Reservation Blackfeet 1882-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 187-93.

¹¹ See Walter McClintock, *The Old North Trail: Life, Legends and Religion of the Blackfoot Indians* (1910, reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1968), ch. XXVII.

¹² GAI, Philip Godsell, ed., “Introduction,” *R. N. Wilson Papers*, Vol. 1 (1958), iv. See R. N. Wilson “Sacrificial Rites of the Blackfoot,” *Canadian Anthropological Society* 3 series, Vol. 3: 2.

¹³ “Introduction,” *R. N. Wilson Papers*, ii-iv. See Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: the Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), ch 7.

¹⁴ “Valuable Indian Collection Purchased by the University of Alberta,” *University of Alberta: Press Bulletin*, April 2, 1920, Vol. 20. University of Alberta Archives, O. C. Edwards Collection, Letter Henrietta Muir Edwards to Dr. Allen, 11 October 1919.

a big sun parlor and the walls of that sun parlour were hung with all these Indian things. There were bags with quill embroidery on them and ... she had lots of things in boxes. When the Duke and Duchess ... came the Indians dressed up in clothing from the collection because they didn't have their own ceremonial robes any more. My grandmother frequently lent the stuff out. Then the Indians would bring it back to her.¹⁵

A privileged Montrealer, Henrietta did not see the irony in possessing Native ceremonial dress, nor did other Euro-Canadians living on the Reserve. Owning a valuable and fascinating collection gave the Edwards' status. Although Henrietta occasionally painted landscapes, collecting became her passion.

Like other Agency women, Henrietta employed Blood women such as Julia Iron Pipe who posed in ceremonial dress for her photograph in 1904.¹⁶ Among the women of this conservative British ranching community, Henrietta stood out as a more flexible and benevolent employer. Mary Inderwick wrote: "I have tried to make use of a squaw who is the nominal wife of a white man near us to do the washing but had to give it up." After finding her fine linen ruined, Inderwick hired "a dignified coloured lady in Pincher Creek" who did not require either training or supervision. The evangelical Henrietta preferred to coach Blood women, as she had Patience twenty years earlier. Blood servants like Julia and Quiota worked faithfully and cheaply for over ten years. Grandchildren recalled their fascination with both women, especially the "fierce looking" Quiota.¹⁷ English visitors, however, disapproved of Henrietta's treatment of Native "servants". Following a wedding party her guests "washed dishes while those savages slept."¹⁸

In later years, Henrietta employed young "Christian" Bloods trained by her friend Miss Jennie Wells, a talented and elderly Ottawa missionary sponsored by Harriet Boomer and the Huron WA.

¹⁵ Quoted in "Dr. and Mrs. O. C. Edwards: Pioneer Collectors," *Buffalo "These Beast on ye Barren Ground, Exhibition Catalogue*, Ring House Gallery, June 21 - October 6, 1985.

¹⁶ GAI, Edwards-Gardiner Photographic Collection. Julia Iron Pipe's son graduated from St. Paul's and later work as a farm instructor on the Reserve. Her daughter earned a reputation as the "easy" woman on the Reserve.

¹⁷ Interview Roomie with Whipple, Calgary, 3 September 1995.

¹⁸ EG Papers, Letter Barbara Gardiner to Miss Statham, 26 January 1907. See Mary E. Inderwick, "A Lady and her Ranch," in *The Best from Alberta History*, ed. Hugh Dempsey (Saskatoon: Historical Society of Alberta, 1981), 70.

Over the years, Henrietta and Jennie became effective “cultural missionaries” whose efforts slowly undermined Native culture by encouraging acceptance of evangelical Christian values. Successful Blood students, like Rose Healy, became known on the Reserve as “Miss Wells’s girls” long after the missionary retired. Beverly Hungry Wolf recalled the missionary’s impact on her Grandmother AnadaAki:

Miss Wells wanted her young students to learn how to become ladies in the proper British style of the day. She taught them fancy ways of cooking, dressing, and wearing their hair. She got them into habits like dainty tea drinking, careful table setting, and wearing brooches to close up the fronts of their blouses. She taught them not only about agriculture but also about flower gardens and surrounding their homes with rows of bushes. They even picked up her British accent. These student became known as “Miss Wells’s girls,” and practically all of them became successful wives in charge of progressive farm households among the Blood people.

Speaking about Jennie Wells’ remarkable legacy, Hungry Wolf continued: “Even in her old age my grandma liked nothing better than a brooch for a present, or tea and cookies for a snack.”¹⁹

Henrietta fully approved of her friend’s program to civilize the Blood women.²⁰ As her earlier relationship with Patience demonstrated, benevolence, education, and renaming were important symbols of colonial power.²¹

The elderly Wells, had been a Reserve resident since 1897, and had recently appropriated an abandoned church to teach Native girls to be self-supporting by sewing. Even the usually truculent Wilson praised her work.²² Other Blood historians have also paid tribute to Wells as “something of a miracle worker.” Hugh Dempsey recalls that she taught Lucy Gladstone, the sister of the first Indian Senator James Gladstone, and Janie Healy who became Gladstone’s wife and Dempsey’s mother-in-law. Legend holds that Wells “became utterly devoted to the girls in her charge and they

¹⁹ Beverly Hungry Wolf, *The Ways of My Grandmothers* (New York: Quill, 1982), 21-22.

²⁰ See Diocese of Calgary, *Report of Indian Missions for 1903* (Toronto: Oxford Press, 1904), 608.

²¹ See Myra Rutherford, “Revising Colonization Through Gender: Anglican Missionary Women in The Pacific North-West and the Arctic, 1860-1945,” (Unpublished Paper Presented to the CHA, Calgary 1993), 26. See also Hungry Wolf, 19-20 for a discussion of AnadaAki her six different names.

²² NAC, RG10, Vol. 1544. Letter R. N. Wilson to Assistant Secretary S. Stuart 10 October 1904.

in turn adored her.”²³ These Native women recreated the homes, clothing and social graces of the “white community”. Other Anglican missionaries were not nearly as well-loved or successful. In 1904 young rebellious girls set fire to their dormitory at St. Paul’s. To frighten other students, Agent Wilson had three girls arrested, charged with arson, tried, and found guilty.²⁴

Like Jennie Wells, Henrietta welcomed Christian marriages among St. Paul’s graduates. When Joe Mounted Horse and Lizzie Acres, ex-pupils of St. Paul’s Home, were married in 1904, Lizzie wore a white lace wedding dress, carried a bouquet of flowers and looked like a proper Euro-Canadian lady. For their wedding photograph, re-printed in the Diocese of Calgary’s *Report on Indian Missions*, the couple posed for the camera looking very “white”. Joe wore the compulsory white shirt, vest, jacket and pants of a gentleman.²⁵ Although Henrietta and the missionaries disapproved of traditional marriages involving very young women to older men, such arrangements remained common as Beverly Hungry Wolf’s oral history documents. Brown Woman’s parents, for example, gave their seven year-old daughter in marriage to William Wadsworth, an eighteen-year-old who had just graduated from the boarding school. Instead of western dress “Brown Woman”, now called Annie Wadsworth, “wore a buckskin dress. My leggings were beaded, and I wore a fancy blanket with a safety pin in the front.”²⁶ Henrietta favoured the mission-educated Christian Bloods over Native women who still “wore the blanket”. Despite the age difference Annie Wadsworth, now an elderly grandmother, recalled “he treated her very well throughout their long life together, and she is proud of their accomplishments at farming, and such traditional roles as the keeping of a medicine pipe.”²⁷

²³ Hugh Dempsey, *The Gentle Persuader: A Biography of James Gladstone Indian Senator* (Saskatoon: Western Prairie Producer, 1986), 20.

²⁴ NAC, RG10, Vol. 1544, R. N. Wilson to Mr. Gale, 7 December 1904; R. N. Wilson to Indian Commissioner, 9 December 1904, 23 January 1905. See Jean Barman, “Separate and Unequal: the Indian and White Girls at All Hallow School, 1884-1920,” in *Rethinking Canada: the Promise of Women’s History*, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1991), 11-27.

²⁵ Diocese of Calgary, *Report of Indian Missions for 1904* (Toronto: Oxford Press, 1905), 4.

²⁶ Hungry Wolf, 29.

²⁷ Hungry Wolf, 28.

Henrietta remained steadfast in her belief that Christianity could elevate Native women just as it had “white” women. Reverend John Maclean, an early Blood missionary, wrote that “Christianity has destroyed the hideous immorality of the camps, and introduced a noble standard in the life and person of Christ.” He believed that mission work “suppressed many of the tribal laws which were injurious to the best interest of the people.” Evangelicals like Henrietta argued that the gospel message could liberate Native women from hard labour and sexual oppression. “Civilization without the Gospel changes the position power and intelligence of Indian manhood, but to a very great degree the division of labour, as it touches womanhood, is slightly affected,” argued Maclean who believed Christianity was woman’s emancipator. Without Christian values “the morality of the camps is very materially injured, indeed, is almost totally destroyed.”²⁸

Ignoring Native women’s spiritual power within their own communities, the missionaries, Henrietta and “white” women living on the Reserve pitied what they perceived to be the more difficult life of Native women, especially when compared to their husbands. This interpretation helped Euro-Canadian women exaggerate their importance as positive role models. Charlotte Selina Bompas, wife of Anglican Bishop of the Mackenzie River Diocese, became, it was said, the “heroine of the north.”²⁹ Henrietta also exaggerated her own significance and superiority.³⁰ Her granddaughter remembers that Henrietta “was all mixed up with the Indians.” She believed education and the Christian faith would best equip women for the twentieth century. Although childlike and dependent, Blood women were also, Henrietta argued, unique individuals whose impressive culture was being destroyed. Such ambivalence complete with romanticism and paternalism characterized the attitude of the Reserve’s non-Native elite.

²⁸ John MacLean, *The Indians: Their Manners and Customs* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1889; Coles Reprint 1970), 290.

²⁹ S. A. Archer, comp., *Heroine of the North Pacific; Memoirs of Charlotte Selina Bompas (1830-1917)* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929).

³⁰ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992); Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Henrietta's voice is absent in the existing correspondence and public debate over the Sun Dance. In contrast the vocal Ontario Huron Women's Auxiliary, led Henrietta's friend Harriet Boomer, urged the Department of Indian Affairs to ban the dances because they encouraged immorality.³¹ Stories circulated that Christian Bloods asked the missionaries to keep their daughters in school during the Sun Dance because they feared they would be raped.³² Henrietta's silence was unusual given her opposition to the Bloods' sexual customs. Much later she publicly expressed concern over prostitution among Blood women. A recent arrival to southern Alberta, Henrietta selected her campaigns carefully, showing greater interest in building a western women's movement, establishing her reputation as an activist, and devoting her energy to winning dower and suffrage rights for white pioneer women. Knowing her life's work lay elsewhere, Henrietta did not personally champion Native women.

The intrepid R. N. Wilson refused to interfere with the Bloods' religious practices especially the Sun Dance. "The religious dances of the Indians form part of their system of worship and perfect freedom in such matters has long been the proud boast of Britons," complained Wilson to the Indian Commissioner as he ridiculed the missionaries' and officials' hypocrisy. "The Indian social dances cannot consistently be interfered with while we ourselves indulge in the past-time," he argued. "I am, therefore not prepared to advise the Department to suppress any of the Indian dances."³³ To the more critical and suspicious missionaries, the Sun Dances encouraged sexual encounters like those some NCWP members had established with young Blood women periodically after their arrival in the 1880s at Ft. Macleod.³⁴

³¹ *Letter Leaflet*, XII:1 (Nov. 1900), 21.

³² See J. R. Miller, "Owen Glendower, Hotspur, and Canadian Indian Policy," in *Sweet Promise: A Reader on Indian White Relations in Canada*, ed. J. R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 330-33.

³³ NAC. RG10, Vol 1544, R. N. Wilson to Indian Commissioner, 16 August 1904. On the controversy of suppressing native religion see Keith Regular, "Red Backs, White burden: A Study of Indian And White Relations in Southern Alberta," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1985), 151-62. Some religious leaders like Methodist missionary Reverend John McDougall on the Stoney Reserve also opposed interference.

³⁴ See S. W. Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies,"

Although the cultural practices surrounding health also reflected spirituality, Wilson expected Dr. Edwards to intervene with “civilized” western medicine. Regardless of Native women’s hostility at such encroachment, especially during childbirth, Wilson ordered Edwards to visit every home to extend his services. The reluctant Oliver had decided that vaccinating Native people against western diseases was a much easier assignment than attending to their overall health. Cultural differences and conflict proved to be formidable obstacles. As problems grew more complex, Oliver’s earlier zeal died. At fifty-six, he wanted to deliver competent service and enjoy his family, friends and leisure. A firm believer in scientific medicine, Henrietta supported Oliver, the Grey nuns, and the Anglican female missionaries. Not until the 1920s would a nurse be employed to visit each home and teach western medicine to Native women.³⁵

The younger, ambitious agent demanded Dr. Edwards visit every home in an effort to establish preventive medicine, an assignment that few Indian Department doctors were prepared to accept for a salary of \$1800. Ultimately Wilson became more committed to his personal feud with Oliver than improving Native health services. Dr. Edwards argued that he and his busy staff were taxed to the limit, and instead proposed the Bloods should come to the hospital where the nuns could assist the doctor and the Oblate fathers could interpret. As a white male Oliver found it difficult to gain Native women’s cooperation when visiting their homes. To complicate gender problems, Oliver did not speak Blackfoot, although he had earlier learned some Cree, and the truculent agent refused to provide an interpreter. Instead Wilson encouraged his Native contacts to spy on the doctor hoping they could discover some negligence which would result in Oliver’s dismissal.³⁶

Despite these problems, a determined Henrietta carved out a niche for herself on the Reserve, making friends among the Protestant missionaries and allies from the Catholic missionaries and

Prairie Forum, 10:1 (Spring 1985), 105-27. Sarah Carter, “Categories and Terrains of Exclusion,” *Great Plains Quarterly*, 13 (Summer 1993), 147-61.

³⁵ Glenbow Archives, see Jane Megarry Papers.

³⁶ NAC, RG 10, Vol. 1722, Blood Agency Letterbook 1903-1904; R. N. Wilson to Dr. O. C. Edwards, 8 January 1905.

Christian Bloods. Along with her daughters and later her grandchildren, Henrietta accompanied Oliver on his medical visits. Each week Dr. Edwards travelled south to the Roman Catholic Mission at Standoff, spent a day at the Hospital seeing patients and consulting with the staff, the Sisters of Charity of the Grey Nuns. Father Le Vern, the Oblate Principal of the Immaculate Conception Boarding School until 1908, took Dr. Edwards to examine their thirty Native pupils. Henrietta acted like Lady Bountiful distributing clothes and reading to the Native school children. Over the years, an excellent relationship developed among the Oblate priests, the Grey Nuns, Dr. Edwards and his family. In disputes between the agent and the Doctor, the Sisters always supported "cher docteur Edwards".³⁷

Over the next twelve years, the Edwards' lives became closely interwoven with those of the British staff at St. Paul's Mission. Henrietta visited Miss Wells when Oliver made his weekly visits to inspect the pupils at St. Paul's Boarding School, run by Rev. G. E. Gale and his staff of ten.³⁸ At the Mission's cottage hospital Dr. Edwards coached nurse Kathleen Underwood. She managed the school hospital and taught school before and after her marriage to Reverend Samuel Middleton. The latter became Principal of St. Paul's in 1910. The tiny chapel which hosted services in Blackfoot and English attracted the Edwards household. They attended the English Sunday afternoon service popular with the agency staff and surrounding ranching families. Soon the Middletons became close friends of the Edwards family. Both Alice and Margaret would be married at St. Paul's Mission.³⁹

Alice and Margaret, attractive and sophisticated Montreal debutantes, were great assets in breaking into the elite ranching community surrounding the Reserve. Nineteen-year-old Margaret eventually returned to Ottawa to study nursing, but Alice stayed. She enjoyed being the center of

³⁷ GNA, *Chroniques d' Hôpital Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs*, 14 mars 1904, 22 septembre 1906, 2 novembre 1908. On the Mission see Raymond Joseph Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and Métis 1845-1945* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995).

³⁸ U of C Anglican Archives, *Report on Indian Missions* (Toronto: Oxford, 1905).

³⁹ U of C Anglican Archives, Calgary Diocese Records, St. Paul's Service Register 1910- 1926.

attention with the young ranchers who called at the Reserve. They invited her to fox hunts on their ranches and escorted her to fancy balls in Macleod.⁴⁰ Later, she married Claude Gardiner, a rancher from a distinguished English family, who had immigrated in 1894 and now owned “a spread” at Olsen Creek near the Peigan Reserve. Soon the Edwards women enjoyed the companionship of his friends, his mother and sister who lived in Macleod.⁴¹

In the fall of 1904, following a difficult first year, Henrietta eagerly escaped to the Winnipeg NCWC’s Convention. Over the previous winter she had prepared a pamphlet showing the impact of Canadian laws on women. As the Law Convener, Henrietta had followed the issue of dower restoration in Manitoba. Following a petition in 1901 the Government amended the Married Women’s Property Act but denied the women’s request for dower rights. As an Alberta resident, Henrietta took a strong personal interest in building this campaign.⁴² Although a widow’s right to a one-third interest in the marital property was a standard provision in British and eastern Canadian law, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories had abolished dower rights to simplify land transfers and prevent encumbrances on the transfer of title.

Ontario women, who moved west assuming the same dower rights applied to their western homesteads, discovered that their dower rights had been cancelled, and married women were ineligible for homestead grants. Despite a booming agricultural frontier, married women could not acquire private property or benefit financially along with their husbands, a situation which Henrietta found deplorable. With her knowledge of Canadian legislation, her eastern experience, and her executive positions, Henrietta became one of the movement’s leaders. Due to her insistence,

⁴⁰ See D. H. Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier 1874-1924* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

⁴¹ Hugh A. Dempsey, ed., *Letters from an English Rancher* (Calgary: Glenbow, 1988), v-xi.

⁴² Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Report* (1902), 66 and *NCWC Report* (1906), 64. See also Margaret E. McCallum, “Prairie Women and the Struggle for Dower Law, 1905-1920,” *Prairie Forum*, 18:1 (Spring 1993); Catherine Cavanaugh, “The Women’s Movement in Alberta as Seen through the Campaign for Dower Rights,” (Master’s thesis, University of Alberta, 1986) and “The Limitations of the Pioneering Partnership: the Alberta Campaign for Homestead Dower, 1909-1925,” *CHR*, LXXIV: 2 (1993), 198-225.

the NCWC eventually supported a petition to the Federal Government to extend homesteading rights to women, a move which increased the western movement's prestige and linked Henrietta to the active Winnipeg suffrage community.⁴³

After being appointed the NWT Vice-President in 1904, Henrietta led the NCWC's western expansion, a project that required a zealous and determined organizer. The first Edmonton and Calgary local councils established by Lady Aberdeen in 1895 had collapsed after a few years.⁴⁴ Even the existing Regina LCW seemed destined to failure despite the efforts of its president, Annie Bulyea, Henrietta's friend from the Qu'Appelle WCTU days. While staying as her guest at Government House, Henrietta used her enthusiasm, NCWC experience and her knowledge of western women's grievances to rejuvenate this LCW. Her success confirmed the Executive's confidence in her ability to lead the Council's western expansion.⁴⁵

A friendly competitor, the WCTU, launched its movement among the many eastern Canadian women who moved into the NWT.⁴⁶ A Quebec veteran, Maria Craig, became the NWT Superintendent following her move to Alberta in 1903. An amazing organizer, Craig set the territorial WCTU movement on fire, soon becoming the first NWT President. During a nine-week tour in 1904, she visited twenty-two towns, held fifty-one meetings, organized five new locals and travelled over 2,368 miles - a feat Henrietta could only admire longingly. Returning from the Council convention, Henrietta and Annie Bulyea attended the first WCTU convention held in Calgary. Both women were experienced temperance campaigners with over twenty years of experience to their

⁴³ Susan Jackel, "First Days, Fighting Days: Prairie Presswomen and Suffrage Activism 1906-1916," in *First Days. Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History*, ed. Mary Kinnear (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987), 53-75.

⁴⁴ See Marjorie Norris, *A Leaven of Ladies: A History of the Calgary Local Council of Women* (Calgary: Detselig, 1995), ch. 1.

⁴⁵ *Macleod Gazette*, 7 October 1904.

⁴⁶ See Nancy Sheehan, "Temperance, the WCTU, and Education in Alberta, 1905-1930," (Ph. D diss., University of Alberta, 1980) and "The WCTU on the Prairies, 1886-1930: An Alberta-Saskatchewan Comparison," *Prairie Forum*, 6:1 (Spring 1981); Robert McLean, "A Most Effectual Remedy - Temperance and Prohibition in Alberta, 1874-1915," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1969).

credit. Annie Bulyea the Regina WCTU's President became the first NWT Vice-President. Henrietta already held the position of Dominion WCTU Superintendent of Equal Franchise and Christian Citizenship and was elected Superintendent of Franchise.⁴⁷

Over the next years Henrietta's WCTU contribution, while significant, paled beside Craig's. In eastern Canada, Henrietta had never been a single-minded temperance worker, nor were the WCTU leaders who shared her commitment to women's emancipation. Alberta was different. During the next years achieving prohibition dominated the WCTU's agenda. Eventually Henrietta decreased her WCTU work as the Alberta Councils became firmly established. At this first WCTU convention, however, Henrietta delivered a stirring lecture on the NWT laws relating to women and children and outlined suffrage campaign plans. She contacted twenty-one unions, but found none had begun suffrage petitions. After her eastern experience Henrietta found the western WCTU's apathy discouraging. Confined to bed with a knee injury, she missed the 1905 Red Deer Convention but half-heartedly recommitted to leading the fledgling group.⁴⁸

The creation of the Province of Alberta rekindled Henrietta's suffrage enthusiasm, especially since Annie Bulyea's husband became the Lieutenant Governor, and A. C. Rutherford, another Baptist and a Liberal, emerged as the first Premier. Since both men were evangelicals, Henrietta requested "advanced Legislation as regards Woman's Rights in property, a measure of Woman's Suffrage, and the recognition of a mother's parental rights and the raising of the age of consent."⁴⁹ But no easy victory awaited her in this new province. After ten years of petitions, endless letters and numerous delegations, the "friendly" Liberal Government graciously granted some of the women's demands.

For a short time, Henrietta naively believed a common vision and personal connections with

⁴⁷ GAL, WCTU Papers, *Report of the First Convention of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of the North-West Territories* (Calgary, 5, 6 October 1904) 4, 11, 13, hereafter *Alberta WCTU Report*.

⁴⁸ *Albert WCTU Report* (1905), 48-49.

⁴⁹ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Report of the Department of Equal Franchise and Christian Citizenship," *Alberta WCTU Report* (1905), 48-49.

the Bulyea and Rutherford families would ensure women's demands were placed on the political agenda.⁵⁰ Installed as chatelaine of Government House until 1915, Annie became an influential hostess assisting the women's cause. Forgotten in most accounts of the Alberta women's movement, she was an important and well-connected ally who willingly advanced the women's agenda within the Liberal Government for over a decade. The Bulyeas attended Edmonton's influential Strathcona Baptist Church along with Premier Rutherford, an Ottawa Valley Scot, McGill University law graduate, and friend of Senator W.C. Edwards.⁵¹

Wasting no time Henrietta circulated a WCTU petition requesting implementation of Ontario's dower legislation, a demand which she presented to the April 1906 legislature. She learned the Government had already "passed an act similar to the ordinances of the North-West Territories relating to ownership and succession of property, which excluded dower." When Henrietta and Annie Bulyea interviewed the Premier, he promised the Assembly would be "favourable to better legislation" and urged the WCTU to return with a new petition in 1907.⁵² Such tactics launched Henrietta and the WCTU on the campaign trail for women's property rights. Despite the Liberal Government's verbal support, an easy victory eluded the women petitioners. Even these sympathetic allies resisted giving women a share of men's property during the settlement era. The issue of property rights for married women became a persistent demand which politicized Alberta women and encouraged many to join the movement over the next decades.⁵³

⁵⁰ GAI, George and Annie Bulyea Clipping File. G. H. V. Bulyea remained a personal friend of Oliver and Henrietta after their Qu'Appelle years. The former New Brunswick teacher and principal became a successful businessman in Qu'Appelle where he resided from 1883-1897. A Baptist and an ardent temperance organizer, he was also a Liberal MLA from 1898-1905 and member of the NWT Executive Council.

⁵¹ Senator Edwards introduced A. C. to his wife Mattie Birkett, niece of a prominent Ottawa Liberal MP. See D. R. Babcock, *A Gentleman of Strathcona: Alexander Cameron Rutherford* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1989), ch. 1. See also L. G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), ch. 1.

⁵² Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Report of Franchise and Christian Citizenship," *Alberta WCTU Report* (1906), 59-61; *Edmonton Bulletin*, 5 April 1906.

⁵³ Cavanaugh, "The Woman's Movement in Alberta." Cavanaugh argues the movement began in 1909, but she was unaware of the early leadership role played by Henrietta and the WCTU between 1905 and 1909.

The first dower petition advanced a cautious position using the “popular” language of maternal feminism. Pioneer women, it declared, had shared equally in Alberta’s “settlement and development” performing valuable service in their “essential” role as homemakers. Women should not be denied the opportunity of “acquiring property or accumulating capital” Henrietta asserted. She complained that a woman “who undertakes the duties of wife and mother” could expect “no provision or compensation” from the provincial laws.⁵⁴ Alberta newspapers published the WCTU petition along with Henrietta’s letter which explained that a husband could “will away his wife’s home, leaving her in her old age totally unprovided for.” Henrietta reasoned that “no good man in his sane mind would do this, but laws are not made for the good, but for the evil, to prevent wrong and injustice.” This is the evangelical feminist voice insisting that the state be a Christian one.⁵⁵ Through these campaigns for dower, suffrage and citizenship rights, Henrietta built a reputation as a moderate crusader. “One wishes that one’s husbands and brothers had had the same confidence in us as the Finnishmen have in their women and in framing the new constitutions of Alberta and Saskatchewan had given us the honorable position of citizens”, lamented Henrietta. “It is not that we want ‘our rights’ merely because they are our rights,” she explained “but we want the right to vote because we think with that we can do our work as wives and mothers much better.” Although Henrietta believed in women’s equal rights, the language of maternal feminism disarmed male and female opposition.⁵⁶

At the 1907 WCTU Convention Henrietta’s paper, “Franchise for Women”, increased her public profile. “Mrs. (Dr.) Edwards is thoroughly alive to this work,” explained the President to the delegates who unanimously endorsed her suffrage resolution. Henrietta made headlines in the Edmonton newspapers overshadowing even Maria Craig’s address.⁵⁷ Women needed “the force of

⁵⁴ GAL, WCTU papers, File 31 “Petition for Dower Legislation. ”

⁵⁵ *Macleod Gazette*, 15 March 1906.

⁵⁶ *Alberta WCTU Report* (1906), 60.

⁵⁷ *Alberta WCTU Report* (1907), 23, 42.

voting” and organization to bring about reforms, she argued. Reflecting wearily on her fifteen years of suffrage activism, Henrietta complained: “we women have too much to do with our home duties to be running around with petitions trying to exert an influence on voters in order to induce them to make or amend laws that will protect our children when they leave the shelter of our homes.”

Women’s handicap angered the ambitious Henrietta who wrote “there is no way open to us. Year after year we have to go over the same ground spending time and energy that might be saved if we had the influence of a vote.”⁵⁸

Another decade of organizing, presenting petitions, and attending meetings elapsed before Alberta passed the 1916 Women’s Franchise Act and the 1917 Alberta Dower Act. The Liberal Government forced Alberta women to earn each of these “privileges”. Delays, broken promises and polite refusals punctuated women’s early efforts just as they had in the East. Premier Rutherford shelved the second WCTU dower petition, again promising to introduce legislation next session.⁵⁹ Turning to tactics universally employed by Canadian suffragists, Henrietta encouraged WCTU locals to demand the municipal franchise as a starting point for political action. By 1907 the Edmonton WCTU had won an amendment to their city charter granting the franchise to married women property owners. These small steps would “ultimately have an influence on the federal franchise, for the strong objection among some men against granting the vote to women is the idea that it would destroy domestic virtues,” argued Henrietta. She correctly predicted that the rapid growth of western towns and the arrival of ambitious British and eastern Canadian women would build pressure on government to extend the municipal franchise.⁶⁰

Isolation, illness, and financial problems kept Henrietta from attending many NCWC meetings. Only through her annual reports and papers, like the one submitted to the 1906 Hamilton Convention, could Henrietta ensure her voice was heard. “The Dangers of Luxury in Modern

⁵⁸ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 7 October 1907.

⁵⁹ “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Report* (1908), 104.

⁶⁰ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Report of Equal Suffrage and Christian Citizenship,” *Alberta WCTU Report* (1908), 63.

Life" spoke of her isolation, her evangelical feminism and the Council's goals. "Tonight I look eastward across the miles of prairies to the scenes of former activities" wrote Henrietta. Painting a romantic picture of her view to the West she watched "the glorious Rockies, permanent in contour but never the same, now glistening soft and rosy in the pale pinks and blues of early morning, now dark and sombre as a fixed dome". Sounding more like a rancher's wife, she avoided mentioning the Blood Reserve or Native women, a picture Henrietta did not consider glamorous. Indeed, few Council women would have been interested in that story. Even evangelical women found missionary work on Native reserves depressing and unromantic.⁶¹

Henrietta's paper displayed an eclectic combination of poetry and Christian values. It portrayed her as an optimist who felt that "all evil is but good carried to excess" and luxury thus overindulgence. Echoing an old fear of the love of finery as being the downfall for respectable women she proclaimed, "Canadians sin more in the matter of dress than we do in the matter of food, spending far more than the right proportion of our income on dress."⁶² Henrietta explained that women of all classes dressed beyond the limits of their budget. In her opinion "our increased prosperity" brought on the more serious sin of selfishness. She reminded her readers of Lord Aberdeen's first Canadian speech, "I wish to be among you as one who serves." This message captured her own idealism. Henrietta told her readers that his words "have been a constant inspiration to me ever since. They were not mere words, a fine turned sentiment, but a living purpose which found further expression by both him and our beloved Hon. President in their daily life among us."⁶³

Finally able to travel to Vancouver in July 1907, Henrietta attended the NCWC Convention and presented her papers. "Peace and Arbitration" encouraged Council to support the international

⁶¹ See Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 10; Henrietta Muir Edwards, "The Dangers of Luxury," *NCWC Report* (1906), 80-85.

⁶² See Mariana Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and Fallen Women in Nineteenth Century Discourse," *Victorian Studies*, 32:2 (Winter 1989) 168-88; *NCWC Report* (1906), 83.

⁶³ *NCWC Report* (1906), 80-85.

movement and attacked the argument that “women cannot carry a gun, and therefore cannot have a ballot.” The evangelical Henrietta declared war was “the remnant of the savage in civilized man” and expressed the dominant view that a woman “must not carry a gun, God forbid, but she can and ought to carry a flag, a flag of peace.”⁶⁴ Such evolutionary views firmly established “white” woman as the civilizer in Henrietta’s mind. At the Executive’s request, she presented papers titled “How Bills Become Law in the Canadian Parliament” and a “Synopsis of Dower laws of all the Provinces.”⁶⁵ In the absence of the Citizenship Convener Dr. Augusta Stowe Gullen, Henrietta delivered the report on municipal and provincial franchise work.⁶⁶

Henrietta and Stowe Gullen, both avid suffragists, had worked together in the DWEA for a decade. When the DWEA became the Canadian Suffrage Association (CSA) in 1907, Henrietta maintained her membership and attended the CSA’s sectional meeting in Vancouver.⁶⁷ Despite the growing popularity of maternal feminism, the DWEA and the CSA staunchly advocated the more militant equal rights feminism. Dr. Stowe Gullen, who proposed the NCWC appoint a Standing Committee on Political Equality, argued “the inferiority of women is essentially implied when women have no vote”. As Montrealer Dr. Ritchie explained, suffrage was “a part of democracy - why omit half the population simply on account of sex?” She did not care if “women would vote just as men do” because “an active share in politics would raise interest.”⁶⁸ Henrietta moved carefully among Christian temperance workers, conservative Council women and radical suffragists. By avoiding controversy she maintained the trust of the NCWC executive and the CSA. When Stowe Gullen’s 1911 resignation made way for Flora Dennison’s presidency, Henrietta remained active as the CSA’s Alberta Vice-President.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ *NCWC Report* (1907), 41-45.

⁶⁵ *NCWC Report* (1907), 59-64.

⁶⁶ “Report on the Committee on Citizenship,” *NCWC Report* (1907), 51-52.

⁶⁷ *NCWC Report* (1907), 5. On the CSA see Cleverdon, 27-30

⁶⁸ *NCWC Report* (1906), 68-70.

⁶⁹ Deborah Gorham, “Flora MacDonald Denison: Canadian Feminist,” in *A Not Unreasonable Claim*, ed.

In Vancouver the CSA requested that NCWC support "equal pay for equal labour, irrespective of sex." The women argued that "every avenue and avocation be open to both sexes alike" and "disabilities imposed by society against women should be removed." The CSA challenged Christian women to "read quietly the hallowed words referring to the kingdom of God, where there shall be neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond nor free."⁷⁰ Their report also discussed the Toronto visit of English radical suffragette, Mrs. Wells, and supported the activities of the Women's Social and Political Union. As usual Henrietta returned home to a much quieter suffrage scene, but reconnecting with the national and international suffrage movement always rekindled her enthusiasm.⁷¹

These Vancouver meetings further cemented Henrietta's growing reputation in Western Canada. "The most attractive woman of a bright and attractive group," proclaimed one admiring journalist who added that "Mrs. Edwards owns a certain magnetism that belongs altogether to character. Common sense, humor, executive ability, with a large measure of enthusiasm - these, backed by a vitalized spiritual faith, form a personality that draws all hesitant or graver natures to her."⁷² Always charming, Henrietta could socialize easily even with women who subscribed to very different views. An artful negotiator, she employed these skills to lead to the Alberta's Council movement.

A new phase had begun for Henrietta's family also. In 1907 Alice, now twenty-nine, married Claude Gardiner at St. Paul's Mission in a fierce January blizzard during the worst winter either Native people or old-time ranchers could remember. Claude's sister's letters provide a rare glimpse into Henrietta's domestic life on the Reserve. When Barbara Gardiner and her mother arrived on the evening before the wedding, they discovered to their amazement that "Mrs. Edwards' dress

Linda Kealey (Toronto: Women's Press, 1979), 47-70.

⁷⁰ *NCWC Report* (1907), 79-80.

⁷¹ "Report of the Canadian Suffrage Association," *NCWC Report* (1907), xix-xx.

⁷² *Toronto News*, 21 March 1909. Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter PAA), Edmonton Local Council of Women Papers, newspaper clipping in Minute Book 1908 - 1915, 82, hereafter ELCW Papers.

bodice was only half made so she sat up till 3 and got up at 5 in the morning." Henrietta's fondness for procrastination and ability to work under pressure was legendary with her family.⁷³ To these upper-class Englishwomen, Henrietta seemed "a most marvellous woman" who "always is the same, cheerful and calm and capable, whatever she is going through." St. Paul's small wooden chapel, Reverend Gale's Anglican service and the Native girls' choir presented a humble contrast to the elegant Montreal weddings which Henrietta had attended. Henrietta's optimism and adaptability were valuable assets on this frontier. Unusual and challenging situations were the norm whether it was the best man delayed by the fierce blizzard, the bridegroom falling on the ice or "the parson" forgotten at church by the Edwards.

Formal occasions like Alice and Claude's wedding underscored the different worlds of eastern and western Canada. In circumstances which unsettled other eastern families, Henrietta and Oliver, both confident pioneers, created an informal and characteristically western party. According to Barbara, "Mrs. Edwards did not put her hat on again as the Doctor didn't think it becoming." Their party included a luncheon, dance and 9:30 supper. "We chatted from table to table and everyone had good appetites," observed Barbara. She expressed surprise that "though it was a teatotal wedding there was no lack of gaiety." Henrietta missed the presence of Muir, Margaret, and her sisters, but she demonstrated good humor by having "all her family's photographs set up in the room as she said 'to attend the reception'". With the blizzard raging outside, makeshift sleeping arrangements were hastily organized for the bride and groom and other guests.⁷⁴

In the morning, Alice and Claude travelled to the "Wineglass Ranche" leaving Henrietta and Oliver to contemplate the lonely months ahead. Amelia accepted Henrietta's invitation to come West and rejoin the Edwards household. In the meantime, Alice's weekly letters eased her loneliness and Oliver's fortnightly visits to the Peigan Reserve provided opportunities for visiting Alice. Following her Vancouver visit, Henrietta attended the October 1907 Edmonton WCTU

⁷³ EG Papers, Letter Barbara Gardiner to Miss Statham, 27 January 1907.

⁷⁴ EG Papers, Letter Barbara Gardiner to Miss Statham, 28 January 1907.

Convention hoping to organize an LCW. Alice's advancing pregnancy persuaded her to shorten the visit. On the 22 November that year Alice gave birth to Henrietta's first grandchild, Claudia Margaret, whom Dr. Edwards proudly delivered just before leaving for eastern Canada.

Oliver travelled alone to attend the Edwards' family reunion in Clarence held on the occasion of their mother's 90th birthday, leaving Henrietta behind to complete her Council projects, assist with the new baby and prepare for Amelia's arrival.⁷⁵ Henrietta did complete a draft of *The Legal Status of Women*. Just as Amelia had done so many times before, she again willingly shouldered some of "Hettie's" family responsibilities. Although the grandchildren felt Amelia suffered behind the "spinster" image, she seemed as independent as Henrietta. Rather than stay in Montreal with her brother, Amelia choose a new life on the Reserve with Hettie, Oliver and Alice, her favorite niece. For the next twenty-five years the Muir sisters would live together to their mutual benefit. A gifted musician, Amelia easily acquired students from the isolated ranches bordering on the Reserve and donated her musical talents to the Anglican Mission. Within a month Henrietta felt comfortable leaving everyone in her elder sister's capable hands. In February 1908 Henrietta boarded the train on a business trip just as she had in Montreal during the late 1890s.

This time her destination was Edmonton, Alberta's capital and fastest growing city, and the comfortable home of Oliver's cousin, Colonel Elihu Burritt Edwards. He had arrived from Ontario with his wife Harriet Frances and their children Helen and Herbert in 1906.⁷⁶ The Colonel, "a Reformer and a Baptist" like all of Oliver's family, had just established a law firm.⁷⁷ Harriet had joined Annie Bulyea and other members of the First Baptist Church in organizing the first Edmonton YWCA in 1907. Cousin Frances, another evangelical feminist, always encouraged

⁷⁵ Anne Cameron Edwards was a formidable matriarch, the mother of ten children. She lived for another seven years, died in 1914 and was buried in the family cemetery at Clarence.

⁷⁶ J. G. MacGregor, *Edmonton: A History* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1967), 13, notes that in 1907 and 1908 Edmonton's population grew by about 30% each year. See also John F. Gilpin, *Edmonton: Gateway to the North* (Edmonton: Windsor Publications, 1984).

⁷⁷ Henry J. Morgan, *The Canadian men and women of the time* (revised edition, Toronto: William Briggs, 1912). E. B. Edwards was the son of James Edwards, a younger brother of Oliver's father.

Henrietta to visit, stay for dinner and attend the Baptist Church. This time she discussed her legal manuscript with the Colonel.⁷⁸ After the Reserve Henrietta basked in the elegance, comfort and attention she received as Annie Bulyea's guest at Government House.⁷⁹ Bulyea's afternoon tea given in Henrietta's honour attracted influential women who volunteered to publicize the LCW organizational meeting. Henrietta spoke at "a fine reception" given in her honor by the Edmonton and Strathcona WCTU's. Henrietta modestly explained to the NCWC Secretary Emily Cummings that "the warmth and enthusiasm of their welcome on Wednesday was a surprise." Now an accomplished speaker, Henrietta won over her audience explaining "in her own clear and charming manner the objects and accomplishments of the National Council of Women."⁸⁰ Later Henrietta wrote to Emily, "it would have cheered your heart if you could have seen the earnest, eager way in which the council idea was received."⁸¹

Edmonton's first LCW executive reflected the strength of women's organization, especially the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) which had grown rapidly after 1906. The Beaver House Chapter's Regent, Esther Saunders, became the first LCW President. Two other executive members joined the LCW, Vice President Ferris and Treasurer Hyndman.⁸² Mrs. R. W. Cautley, who had recently organized the Mistanusk IODE, was the LCW Secretary and the first President of the Edmonton Branch of the Canadian Women's Press Club (CWPC). With a voracious appetite for organizing, Edmonton club women held multiple memberships. Esther

⁷⁸ "Young Women's Christian Association," *Club Women's Records Edmonton* (Edmonton: Edmonton Branch of the Canadian Women's Press Club, 1916), 25-26.

⁷⁹ An Edmonton LCW organized by Lady Aberdeen had struggled to survive in 1895. Six "federated societies" had been members: the WCTU, the King's Daughters, the Presbyterian Ladies Aid, The Methodist Ladies Aid, and two Catholic women represented the Sisters of the Faithful Companion of Jesus and the St. Albert Convent of the Sisters of Charity. Edith Bellamy was the only woman involved in both LCWs. *NCWC Report* (1895), 29.

⁸⁰ ELCW Papers, Minutes 21 February 1906.

⁸¹ ELCW Papers; Newspaper clipping of letter 2 March 1908, copy printed in *Toronto News*, 21 March 1908.

⁸² "Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire," *Club Women's Records Edmonton*, 54-60; *NCWC Report* (1906), xxxv.

Saunders and Mrs. W. D. Ferris were president and vice-president of the Woman's Hospital Aid Society.⁸³

Henrietta returned home to revise her booklet for a spring publication deadline. "The aim of this pamphlet is to interest Canadian women in the laws that control their affairs" announced the preface "and to give them a general idea of their legal position." But Henrietta cautioned that "a woman desiring to have her interest legally guarded should consult a qualified lawyer." Despite its awkward title, the *Legal Status of Canadian Women As Shown by Extracts from Dominion and Provincial Laws Relating to Marriage, Property, Dower, Divorce, Descent of Land, Franchise, Crime and Other Subjects* presented a concise sixty-one page outline of women's legal status. Edwards explained the Maritime, Quebec and Ontario dower legislation and noted tersely that in Alberta and Saskatchewan: "Dower and Tenancy by courtesy abolished in 1887".⁸⁴ Chapter X titled "Franchise" offered no surprises. "Canadian women have no federal or provincial privileges" she explained and devoted space to the complex local franchise situation. "In municipal affairs in all the provinces widows and spinsters who are ratepayers have the same voting privileges as men, but are not eligible to municipal office. In some provinces, municipal voting privilege has been extended to married women."⁸⁵ Elsewhere Henrietta outlined the laws on rape, abortion, seduction and abduction. She concluded that "the law differentiates between man and woman, sometimes in her favor, sometimes against her." With this casual observation Henrietta introduced the central contradiction in liberal feminism. While she devoted her life to removing the law's negative discrimination against women, neither her generation nor the next one could reconcile the conflict between their request for equal rights and their defense of protection and affirmative action for women.⁸⁶

⁸³ "Edmonton Branch of the Canadian Women's Press Club," *Club Women's Record Edmonton*, 88-91.

⁸⁴ Henrietta Muir Edwards, *The Legal Status of Canadian Women* (Ottawa: n. p., 1908).

⁸⁵ Edwards, *The Legal Status*, 51.

⁸⁶ Edwards, "Preface," *The Legal Status of Canadian Women*.

Inspired by Henrietta's handbook, the Edmonton LCW organized a Law Committee in September 1908 led by keen suffragists and able politicians. Their first project was a dower campaign. After only six months in Edmonton, Emily Murphy, already a popular journalist and writer, became the Convener. Her community work had been limited to raising funds for a VON Hospital in Swan River, Manitoba. In Edmonton Murphy joined the new CWPC and the Women's Hospital Aid Society, later becoming its president.⁸⁷ Although separated by a distance of over three hundred miles, Emily and Henrietta jointly challenged the Government to act on the promises it had repeatedly made in response to the three WCTU petitions. The first year the Edmonton Law Committee lobbied hard to create "sympathy and support of a bill giving a woman a share in her husband's estate" and sought NCWC approval for a formal petition. During the 1909 winter legislature session, the Committee launched an aggressive attack.⁸⁸

In an ironic twist of fate, historians have ignored Henrietta's pioneering and organizational work and given Murphy sole credit for the dower campaign. Such an erroneous interpretation disregards the alliance Henrietta carefully constructed among the WCTU, the Edmonton LCW and its Law Committee. Emily Murphy's biographer uncritically accepted Murphy's own assessment. "Janey Canuck" was, however, an excellent publicist who cleverly dramatized her own role to the exclusion of her co-workers. Without the LCW's support Murphy would never have achieved sufficient credibility and influence with the Liberal Government.⁸⁹ Emily Murphy, a woman of outstanding ability and driving ambition, would eventually surpass Henrietta in fame. Although the two women never developed an intimate friendship, their names became linked for future generations as the "Famous Five." Distance, age, education, and family backgrounds stood between them. Emily hailed from a staunch Conservative, Irish Protestant Ontario family. As the wife of an

⁸⁷ Byrne Hope Sanders, *Emily Murphy, Crusader* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945), part 2, ch. 1 and 2.

⁸⁸ ELCW Papers, Minute Book, 19 November 1908 and 7 January 1909. The LCW's first project undertook was a City Crèche with a women's employment office. The Council created two other Standing Committees on Public Health and on Employment.

⁸⁹ Sanders gives Emily Murphy credit for initiating the movement for dower legislation and ignores the groundwork and leadership role of Henrietta and the Law Committee of the Edmonton LCW.

Anglican clergyman who later became an entrepreneur and real estate developer, Emily enjoyed financial security. Henrietta's junior by sixteen years, Emily had spent only five years working in women's organizations as compared to Henrietta's thirty year record. More comfortable as a writer, the impatient Emily Murphy found women's organizations too cumbersome. She remained Convener of Laws from 1908-1912 but resigned her position as the LCW's 1st Vice-President after the first year, concluding her pen could accomplish more for women than this organization.⁹⁰

Henrietta's Edmonton ties were further strengthened when McGill's Professor Dr. Henry Marshall Tory, the founding President of the University of Alberta, hired his star pupil and teaching colleague, William Muir Edwards as Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Civil Engineering.⁹¹ In September 1908 Muir moved to the University and introduced his mother to Dr. Tory, a "militant Liberal." Delighted with Muir's move to Alberta, Henrietta soon relied on him. During his short life, this talented son would provide his mother with more opportunities than had her husband. The University's early years reflected the dominance of successful Alberta Liberals. Premier A. C. Rutherford considered the University his personal project. He selected President Dr. Tory, served on Senate from 1911-1927 and contributed both his time and finances for the next thirty years. At this first convocation Dr. Tory conferred the honorary degree Doctor of Laws on three prominent Liberals: Lt. Governor G. H. V. Bulyea, Premier A. C. Rutherford and Chief Justice A. L. Sifton - the next Premier. The University Chancellor was former Calgary Liberal leader Charles A. Stuart, now an Alberta Supreme Court judge, who would later become Henrietta's friend, legal adviser and political ally. The Senate included some of Oliver's friends such as Macleod physician Dr. Kennedy. Its secretary, a young Calgarian, Harold Riley, became an important contact for Henrietta as well.⁹²

⁹⁰ See Anita L. Penner, "Emily Murphy and the Attempt to Alter the Status of Canadian Women 1910-1931," (Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1979).

⁹¹ E. A. Corbett, *Henry Marshall Tory, Beloved Canadian* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1954).

⁹² Walter H. Johns, *A History of the University of Alberta 1908-1969* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1981), ch. 2.

Dr. Muir Edwards and his wife Evelyn built friendships with influential Liberals like Premier Rutherford, whose son Cecil became Muir's pupil in 1908. When staying in Edmonton, Henrietta joined Muir and Evelyn for the annual Founder's Day Tea, a May tradition at the Rutherford house. Henrietta enjoyed the benefits of Muir's position and made valuable new contacts. Within four years, two wives of U of A men, Mrs. C.A. Stuart and Maude Riley, would help Henrietta launch the Calgary LCW. For several months each year during the next decade Henrietta stayed at her son's comfortable University Campus home, becoming an affectionate grandmother to their first baby, Douglas Oliver, and later arrivals Muriel and Joyce. Evelyn, a popular hostess who joined many women's groups, had organized the university Keomi chapter of the IODE with Annie F. Tory. As the first regent, Evelyn asked Henrietta's advice on a name. "Keomi" was a Blood word meaning "far off", which Henrietta felt captured Edmonton's remoteness from eastern Canada. Even more isolated, Henrietta relied on Evelyn and Muir's weekly letters for news about the LCW, the University and the Government.⁹³

Despite being well-connected, letters were Henrietta's only communication with women's organizations. Oliver's salary barely covered their living expenses and made travelling expenses a chronic worry. Henrietta wrote to Emily Cummings requesting Council consider "defraying the travelling expenses" of Vice-Presidents who were organizing LCW's.⁹⁴ Council's acceptance of her plan offered a partial solution, but Henrietta still missed the 1908 Ottawa NCWC Annual Meeting and the Regina WCTU Convention. She was not alone in these difficulties. Other Western Canadian women like the British Columbia Vice- President Mrs. Lilla Day, an active and ambitious organizer from Victoria, also found travelling expenses a hardship. Day complained that being a provincial Vice-President was like being a Minister without Portfolio and campaigned

⁹³ Thyra Bishop, "Keomi Chapter," *Club Women's Records Edmonton*, 60-61. Annie Frost Tory was born in the eastern townships of Quebec, educated in Montreal and worked as a teacher before she married Dr. Tory in 1893.

⁹⁴ NCWC Papers, Vol. 17, "Report of Corresponding Secretary to Executive Committee," Montreal, 28 April 1908; Vol. 20 "Recording Secretary's Minutes of Annual Meetings," 1 July 1909, 65, for a debate on whether the NCWC or the LCW should pay the expenses.

unsuccessfully for the creation of a cheaper Provincial organization.⁹⁵

Henrietta, a national committee convener, enjoyed greater prestige within the NCWC Executive than Day. Living on the edge of the Belly River, fifteen miles from the nearest railway station, did not hinder Henrietta's appointment to committees. She joined the NCWC's Committee of Arrangements convened to organize the ICW Quinquennial Congress planned for Toronto from June 16-30, 1909. Henrietta also accepted the position as convener of the Congress's Committee on Laws Concerning Women and Children, the most political of the nine committees. Two prominent eastern feminists, Dr. Augusta Stowe Gullen and Madame Gérin-Lajoie, served on Henrietta's Committee.⁹⁶ Preparing for the Congress, organizing the Law Sessions, and negotiating the controversial debate on suffrage filled Henrietta's lonely hours on the Reserve throughout the fall of 1908 and winter of 1909. Another honour followed. In the NCWC elections for sixteen delegates to Congress, Henrietta received the second largest number of votes, next to the President, Lady Edgar.⁹⁷ Despite four years in the West, a determined Henrietta had maintained her popularity, her high profile and a foot in two different worlds.

At the 1909 Congress, Henrietta again became the Easterner politician Lady Aberdeen knew so well. The debate on suffrage now assumed center stage. The ICW, reflecting the position of European and American Councils, requested sessions devoted to international suffrage movement and the CSA demanded that the topic be given a central position. Lady Aberdeen opened the debate with a "Suffrage" address at Convocation Hall at the University of Toronto on June 21. The main

⁹⁵ NAC, International Council of Women Papers Vol. 33, file 490, hereafter ICW Papers. Both parties took their dispute to Lady Aberdeen. See Letter Emily Cummings to Lady Aberdeen, 24 March 1908; Letter Lilla Day to Lady Aberdeen, 21 March 1908 and 3 August 1909; Letter Lady Aberdeen to Lilla Day, 17 August 1909.

⁹⁶ International Council of Women, *Handbook of the Quinquennial Meetings June 16th to 30th, 1909 Toronto, Canada*, 60-61. The other Congress Committees were: Art and Music, Education, Health and Physical Training, Industrial, Literature, Philanthropy, Professions and Careers for Women and Social work and Moral Reform.

⁹⁷ *NCWC Report (1909)*, 4. *ICW Handbook*, 63. The ten elected in order of ballots cast were: Lady Edgar, Mrs. O. C. Edwards, Lady Taylor, Mrs. Day, Mrs. Thomson, Mrs. Boomer, Miss Derrick, Mrs. Torington, Mrs. McEwan and Mrs. Dennis. The substitutes were: Dr. Gullen, Dr. Ritchie-England, Mrs. Short, Mrs. Waycott, Miss Fitzgibbon and Mrs. Frost.

suffrage debate occurred when Henrietta's Law Committee examined "Parliamentary and Municipal Enfranchisement of Women" on 24 June.⁹⁸ Henrietta chaired several sessions which featured suffrage activists from nine countries discussing the movement's obstacles, strategies and progress. Henrietta had relied heavily on eastern Canadians like Stowe Gullen to contact key suffrage speakers. Leading American suffragists, Dr. Anna Shaw and Rachel Foster Avery, opened the discussion followed by British speakers, Christal Macmillan and E. C. Harvey, and finally various European and Australian speakers. Dr. Stowe Gullen concluded with a rousing address on Canadian efforts.⁹⁹ Following the 1909 London Convention of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, these sessions captured "the enthusiasm which is awakening the whole world on the question of votes for women," and reflected the "unprecedented activity" in Canada.¹⁰⁰

A busy Henrietta chaired four additional full-day sessions, each devoted to emerging legal questions, issues which would occupy her political energies in the women's movement until her death. The first session debated the "Treatment of Juvenile Offenders Against the Law" featuring as the key speaker Mrs. Bowen, the Chair of the American NAWC's Juvenile Court Committee. Canadian J. Kelso who presented the new Canadian Juvenile Delinquent Bill joined a panel of Irish, Dutch and German women. On Monday, Henrietta chaired a session on "Parental Legal Rights of Married Women" and later summarized the proceedings for the larger audience. Tuesday's session, "Legal Rights of a Married Woman in Her Husband's Property", featured Washington attorney Miss Gillett and the first Canadian woman lawyer, Clara Brett Martin. The concluding session focused on "Marriage Laws and Divorce" in various countries.¹⁰¹

Expecting to return home soon, Henrietta basked in this intellectual stimulation, conversation

⁹⁸ *ICW Handbook*, 18-19.

⁹⁹ *ICW Handbook*, 47. The other speakers were: Frau Marie Stritt, Germany; Froken Gina Krog, Norway; Dr. P. H. Alexandra Skoglund, Sweden; Mrs. Henry Dobson, Tasmania; Mrs. Baker, Victoria; and Miss Gilan, Belgium.

¹⁰⁰ "Report of the Canadian Suffrage Association," *NCWC Report* (1909), xxiii-xxiv.

¹⁰¹ *ICW Handbook*, 48.

and debate. She enjoyed the limelight, the social life and the gala receptions, especially the grand closing ceremony which the NCWC hosted at the Ontario Parliament Buildings on 30 June. Earlier that day, Henrietta had conducted the morning devotions and advanced resolutions at the final meeting. Now, grateful for the new contacts and information, she bid farewell to Lady Aberdeen and many new friends. Henrietta returned alone to the Blood Reserve and a conservative community which had not even bothered to note her attendance at the Congress in the daily newspapers. In contrast the international delegates left on a much publicized western Canadian tour, stopping in Edmonton as guests of the LCW, visiting Vancouver and touring Banff and Calgary.¹⁰²

Ignoring her community's silence, Henrietta remembered the Quinquennial and continued her campaign. In September, she wrote to Attorney General Cross requesting changes to the Municipal Act to grant the franchise to married women with property. The October WCTU Convention approved a franchise petition which Henrietta had prepared and circulated.¹⁰³ As Henrietta celebrated Christmas on the Reserve, she looked back to six eventful years and forward to new legislative initiatives. These years had not changed her conviction that she was serving God, doing his work and fulfilling her calling. The Henrietta who attended St. Paul Mission's Christmas service was still a Montreal evangelical Baptist. The next five years, however, would create a Westerner and challenge the strength of her evangelical faith.

¹⁰² *Edmonton Bulletin*, 9 July 1909.

¹⁰³ *Alberta WCTU Report* (1909), 48-51.

VII. A Woman's West: Political Success and Personal Tragedy, 1910-1915

The last west is the woman's west ... Nowhere else may women find the perfect conditions under which to work out a destiny in accord with modern ideals. The whole virgin western world is theirs to conquer and to claim, with no obstacles of tradition or convention. It is a free field broad enough to be the drilling ground of their vastest armies, great enough to demand their strongest vitality, their keenest intellect, and their highest ideals.¹

The new Calgary Women's Press Club in proclaiming their city "the Gateway to the Women's West" heralded the arrival of a youthful women's movement, well-organized and confident enough to overshadow veterans like Henrietta. When reflecting back on these exciting pre-war years the darling of the new forces, Nellie McClung, affectionately and a trifle patronizingly christened Henrietta as "the mother of women's suffrage." Henrietta's public speeches reflected the mythic power of "the spirit of the West" and often echoed the prevalent assumptions that noble pioneer women only needed to make requests of male legislators and like Cinderella their wishes would be granted.² In private, she was often more cynical. Riding the wave of political success proved easier for Henrietta than coping with the personal tragedy which consumed her energy and prevented her from basking in the political limelight.³

In 1910, unaware that her family's fortunes would change drastically, Henrietta saw nothing more troubling on the horizon than a crowded political agenda. Achieving dower legislation still topped her list, franchise and temperance legislation came second, electing women to political office

¹ *Calgary, the Gateway to the Women's West*, 12 June 1913 (Special Edition *Western Standard Illustrated Weekly*). See also Eliane Silverman, *The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier 1880-1930* (Montreal : Eden Press, 1984).

² See Patricia Roome, "Social Themes in Prairie Literature," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1975), ch. 1 for an analysis of frontier mythology; Elizabeth B. Mitchell, *In Western Canada Before the War: Impressions of Early Twentieth Century Prairie Communities* (1915, reprint with an introduction by Susan Jackel, Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1981), ch. 5. For suffrage historians who have repeated this theme see Catherine Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (2nd edition, Toronto: University of Toronto, 1974), 66-67. For the best critique see Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson eds., *The Women's West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).

³ This helps explain why accounts of the suffrage movement ignore Henrietta's importance. See Cleverdon, 66-67.

and organizing new councils followed close behind. Expanding her Law Committee and lobbying for new legislation demanded time also. At sixty-one Henrietta enjoyed good health and expected to devote herself to this political work. Always short of money, she relied on her yearly pilgrimages to Edmonton to the mid-winter Legislative session to accomplish her goals.

During her January 1910 visit, Henrietta's public-speaking and networking activities proved more productive than lobbying the Government. She spoke to WCTU women on "recent scientific investigations on the injurious effects of alcohol", lending the prestige of "modern" research to the evangelical arguments of the past. Similarly, her LCW lecture, "Old Duties in New Places" or "Women on Municipal Boards", encouraged political involvement to bring "a woman's conscience" and presence to the campaign to elect women trustees to the School Board.⁴ Daughter-in-law Evelyn introduced Henrietta to activists in the Alberta Women's Association (AWA), a new group devoted to women's university education which helped Henrietta launch the Strathcona LCW.⁵ The first President was Eleanor Broadus, an English scholar who was also the wife of suffrage activist, Professor Dr. Alexander Broadus.⁶

The Liberal Government introduced a disappointing Married Woman's Relief Act which they withdrew after stormy protests from the Edmonton LCW and leaders like Henrietta.⁷ Emily Murphy's letter reprimanded the Government for pretending to meet women's demand to restore dower rights with legislation that granted widows the meagre privilege of applying for relief to the

⁴ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Report of Franchise and Christian Citizenship," *Alberta WCTU Report* (1910), 66-67.

⁵ *NCWC Report* (1911), xxiii; *Strathcona Plainsdealer*, 29 January 1909 and 12 April 1910; "Alberta Women's Association Edmonton Branch," *Club Women's Records Edmonton* (Edmonton: Edmonton Branch of the Canadian Women's Press Club, 1916), 34-35. Mattie Rutherford, the Premier's wife, was the Hon. Vice President of the Association. By WWI the Association had organized branches in Red Deer and Calgary.

⁶ *The Gateway*, 1919, 50-51, 54-55; Walter H. Johns, *A History of the University of Alberta 1908-1960* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1981), 18-19.

⁷ *Alberta WCTU Report* (1910), 66-67. See Catherine Cavanaugh, "The Women's Movement in Alberta as Seen through the Campaign for Dower Rights," (Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1985).

courts.⁸ Negotiations between Council women and the Government ended abruptly when the Alberta Great Waterways Scandal rocked the Legislature and toppled the Rutherford cabinet. By May the Liberals had a new leader, former Chief Justice Arthur Sifton. With gloomy resignation Henrietta advised the WCTU locals that “much of the work will have to be done over again.”⁹ In the “real” west, railways, bonds, scandal and profits - the traditional grease of politics - took precedence over women’s demands for justice and equality.¹⁰

Ignoring the political hurdles, the eternally optimistic Henrietta focused on the growing strength of the Edmonton women’s movement. She pronounced the city’s LCW “one of the most influential and active in the Dominion.” Echoing the western booster mentality, she told eastern colleagues “perhaps I am prejudiced in favour of the West, but ...” In defense of her bias she explained, “I think it would be impossible anywhere to gather a more enthusiastic, intelligent, eager company of women” who reflected “the energy and optimism of this great country.”¹¹ The usually pragmatic and realistic Henrietta caught the infectious mood and dreamed about the “mythic” west, where optimism, ambition, nationalism and Christian principles conquered all, indeed where Christian women received property rights and full citizenship. By 1910 the frontier mythology had become the ruling orthodoxy. To express doubts in public would have alienated Henrietta from the women’s movement.

Drawing on the Bible’s cultural authority Henrietta, Emily and the LCW compared their quest for property with that of the Old Testament daughters of Zelophehad who appealed to Moses for land. They quoted the prophet’s words to the Hebrew men that “Thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father’s brethren.” Although Moses granted Hebrew

⁸ City of Edmonton Archives, Emily Murphy Papers (EM Papers), Letter Emily Murphy to the Chairman of the Legal Bills Committee, February 1910.

⁹ *Alberta WCTU Report* (1910), 67.

¹⁰ See L. G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), ch. 4; Howard Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1990), ch. 6.

¹¹ *NCWC Report* (1911).

women their request in the "Promised Land", the Liberals disregarded women's forceful arguments in the new West.¹² In 1911 they passed the Married Women's Relief Act and forced Alberta women to accept less property protection than Ontario women enjoyed.¹³ Disappointed but not disillusioned, Henrietta reasoned that at least the act conceded that a widow may have a legitimate claim "in granting her the privilege of applying for relief."¹⁴ Emily was forced to be gracious, given the failure of her bill to give women equal property rights, tabled by Conservative MLA R. B. Bennett.¹⁵ "A distinct gain" concluded Murphy and "a basis for further concessions and amendments now that the principles we have advocated have, at least, been partially substantiated."¹⁶

Taking a different strategy, Henrietta strongly urged the NCWC "to secure homesteading privileges for women". On the booming frontier - the promised land - access to property and wealth were central political issues. Unhappy with the NCWC's conservatism, Henrietta informed members of the consequences of women's inability to profit from the rapid expansion of the agricultural frontier. "Why should thousands of acres of land be given away to foreigners and Canadian-born women refused the privilege of entry?" asked Henrietta expressing the nativist sentiments which surged through the women's movement.¹⁷ She mocked the argument that farming

¹² *Edmonton Bulletin*, 1 February 1913. See also Alice L. Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: a feminist perspective* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1988), 58-62.

¹³ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1911), 31.

¹⁴ Henrietta Muir Edwards, *Legal Status of Women in Alberta* (Edmonton: Department of Extension, University of Alberta, 1917), 31. For a discussion of Murphy, Edwards and the legislation see Anita L. Penner, "Emily Murphy and the Attempt to Alter the Status of Canadian Women, 1910-1931," (Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1979), 45-47

¹⁵ Bryne Hope Saunders, *Emily Murphy Crusader* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945), 122-23; Catharine Cavanaugh, "The Limitations of the Pioneering Partnership: the Alberta Campaign for Homestead Dower," *CHR*, LXXXIV: 2 (1993), 210. Both advanced the view of Murphy acting alone. As Murphy's Report to the LCW indicated, she was Convener of the Law Committee. Murphy appeared as their representative along with Henrietta and other Council women, all well connected Liberals, whose influence assisted the lobbying immeasurably.

¹⁶ PAA, ELCW Papers, "Report of Committee for the Better Protection of Women and Children, January 1911."

¹⁷ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1910), 62; Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982); Carol Bacchi, "Race Regeneration and Social Purity: a Study of the Social Attitudes of Canada's English-speaking Suffragists," *Histoire*

was too physically demanding, suggesting eastern ladies learn about Georgia Binnie Clark's homesteading experience.¹⁸ Council women needed to understand that:

the hardship is on the wife of the homesteader, the married woman, who, in addition to the duties of housekeeping, and all the risks and strain on her constitution of child-bearing, must work for the hired men employed on the land to which she has no legal claim. The Western Provinces have striven in vain for dower. I am convinced that we shall not get it, because it would interfere with the present excellent transfer of land Act. If, as it is stated, this would be injurious to the Provinces, then give to women the right to acquire property of their own by homesteading, as men do.¹⁹

But male legislators opposed giving married women an opportunity to gain economic independence. Despite rosy rhetoric, patriarchal defense of masculine property and wealth remained more impervious to women's weapons in the West than elsewhere.²⁰

The NCWC responded with official, but hardly enthusiastic, support to the homestead petition spearheaded by Isabel Beaton Graham, a Winnipeg journalist and member of the Manitoba Political Equality League. The 1911 Fort William Convention passed a resolution of support and encouraged other LCWs to circulate petitions. No one was surprised when Emily Murphy and the Edmonton Law Committee produced the most ambitious effort. By 1913 Henrietta could report that the NCWC had joined Graham's women's delegation to the Federal Government.²¹ Like the homestead petition, Henrietta's plans to expand the Alberta Council movement received only mild Executive support. Despite an exploding club movement, Edmonton's success was not repeated in Calgary until 1913. When other smaller towns expressed interests, Henrietta complained that "the distances are so great that I cannot afford the expense of visiting them." More than a little critical

sociale/Social History, 11:22 (November 1977); Mariana Valverde, "When the Mother of the Race is Free': Race Reproduction and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism," in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 15-21.

¹⁸ Georgina Binnie-Clark, *Wheat and Women* (1914, reprint with an introduction by Susan Jackel, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

¹⁹ *NCWC Report* (1910), 62.

²⁰ Cavanaugh, "The Limitation of the Pioneering Partnership," 198-225.

²¹ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1913), 57.

she wrote: "other national women's societies are pushing their organizations all through the West. I cannot but feel that the Council needs a more aggressive policy."²² Innovation and aggression were not characteristic of the cumbersome NCWC which had only officially endorsed women's enfranchisement in July 1910 at Halifax, following a resolution introduced by Dr. Margaret Gordon and the CSA, the later having campaigned as the DWEA since 1893. Henrietta wisely refused to use her own limited funds for organizing.²³

Even if she had been tempted to travel, her meagre savings were used to finance her youngest daughter's wedding. Margaret Claxton, now twenty-five, married Alexander George Stewart, a Dominion land surveyor at St. Paul's Mission on 19 October 1910. This wedding which was more elaborate than sister Alice's, reflected the family's importance in the ranching community and Henrietta's stature as an Alberta personality. A longer guest list and more formal style predominated. Margaret wore an elaborate white wedding dress made by Henrietta and Alice's daughter Claudia was the flower-girl. Even the Catholic Grey nuns visited and presented Margaret with "un beau gâteau".²⁴

Another important family occasion followed in November when Alice gave birth to a son, Oliver Earnest, who was delivered by his grandfather and given his name. Alice and her children remained under Dr. Edward's watchful eye on the Reserve until Christmas. When the family returned to Olsen Creek, Alice hired a governess for her children and, along with her husband, employed Native workers from the nearby Peigan Reserve. Running their extensive "Ranche" kept the young couple too busy for frequent visits to the Edwards'. Unlike her mother, Alice enjoyed society life and joined other ranching women at teas, balls, races and polo games. Such pastimes framed her world more than women's politics.²⁵

²² *NCWC Report* (1910), 23.

²³ *NCWC Report* (1910). See Cleverdon, 32-33; Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women*.

²⁴ *Macleod Advertiser*, 20 October 1910; U of C Anglican Archives, Anglican Diocese of Calgary Papers (hereafter ADC Papers), St. Paul's Parish Records, Box 66, file 13; *Chroniques d' Hôpital Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs*, 11 avril, 15 & 17 octobre 1910.

²⁵ See Norma J. Milton, "Essential Servants: Immigrant Domestic on the Canadian Prairies, 1885-1930,"

Henrietta and Oliver made plans for retirement in Macleod now that all their children resided in Alberta. During the winter of 1911 they purchased property, took out a mortgage for \$4,800 and found tenants to rent their future home.²⁶ When the Department reduced Oliver's medical responsibilities to the Blood Reserve, paying the mortgage and managing on a smaller salary produced a fresh financial crisis for the couple.²⁷ Hoping to reverse this decision, Oliver appealed to Sir Wilfrid Laurier who took his case in hand. The Department explained that doctors living in new towns near the Peigan Reserve could respond faster to emergencies. Given Dr. Edwards' poor health and advancing years the Department decided to lighten his duties. Laurier reminded Oliver of his complaints about long distances and difficult travelling conditions. "I am sorry for this, but as you know we are all getting old and unfortunately we have to take the consequences."²⁸ Oliver, however, worried about the impact salary reduction would have on his retirement pension or "superannuation".²⁹

Oliver should have retired in 1910. Along with his Native patients, he was in poor health. As his health deteriorated, so did his interest in Native health and medicine in general. Endless charges of incompetence plagued the Doctor's last years. Wilson's petty harassment now became serious allegations worthy of an investigation. The Agent complained that none of the fifteen people who died in January and February had visited the hospital or Dr. Edwards. Although the Reserve was "a large community of unhealthy people", the doctor, "often discouraged calls upon his professional service when they entail personal inconvenience" Wilson complained. When ordered to make a visit, "he would arrive at the sick bed in such a bad temper and be so rough with the patients that

in *The Women's West*; also Emma Curtin, "Daughters of Empire: British Gentlewomen in Alberta 1880-1914," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1990).

²⁶ South Alberta Land Registration District, Certificate of Title, No. 297, 3 July 1911.

²⁷ NAC, RG10, Vol. 1543, J. D. McLean to O. C. Edwards, 4 February 1910.

²⁸ NAC, Laurier Papers, MG 28, O. C. Edwards to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 14 February 1910; Wilfrid Laurier to Doctor Edwards, 24 February 1910; Memorandum for Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 22 February 1910.

²⁹ Laurier Papers, O. C. Edwards to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 28 March 1910; Wilfrid Laurier to Doctor Edwards 7 April 1910.

they regretted having sent for him and resolved to not do it again.”³⁰ Eventually, Wilson grew tired of these unresolved conflicts and resigned in 1911. “I tried for several years to get this branch of the Reserve work put into satisfactory shape, with the only result that the Ottawa and Winnipeg offices were bombarded with communication from Dr. Edwards and his wife of such nature and frequency as to show that a state of disgraceful friction existed”, he wrote. The Department needed to find an easier position for Oliver and send a younger doctor, preferably not a Liberal appointment, Wilson dryly asserted. His parting words damned the Department and Dr. Edwards: “the Bloods, for the most part get sick, grow worse and die entirely without medical aid.” Wilson alleged that the Doctor, now old and ill, lacked the Bloods’ confidence.³¹ The new agent, William Julius Hyde, tried to develop workable solutions but the Doctor refused to cooperate. As Hyde explained Dr. Edwards “has been in poor health lately and I have strongly urged on him the necessity of applying for as long a leave as the Department would grant.”³²

The family needed Oliver’s salary and the generous benefits- a house, stable, garden, rations, horses, carriages and livestock - for as long as the Doctor could work. With the rapid settlement of the surrounding ranching district, Dr. Edwards could have retired to private practice if his health had been better. Moving into Macleod would have meant stiff competition from the pioneer Dr. Kennedy who had developed a respected medical practice. Oliver saw no other alternative but to “soldier on.” Henrietta continued her previous approach of shielding Oliver from adverse criticism. Whatever her private doubts about his work, she was determined to preserve his reputation and her own status as wife of “a respectable and distinguished” pioneer doctor. The family encouraged and believed the story that Dr. Edwards was persecuted by respective “evil” Indian agents who

³⁰ RG 10, Vol. 1540, R. N. Wilson to O. C. Edwards, 24 June 1907; O. C. Edwards to R. N. Wilson, 3 July 1907. See also O. C. Edwards to J. D. McLean, Secretary of Indian Department, 27 July 1908; J. D. McLean to R. N. Wilson, 11 August 1908.

³¹ RG 10 Vol. 1540, J. D. McLean to R. N. Wilson, 27 October 1910; Medical Report O. C. Edwards to R. N. Wilson, 8 March 1911; R. N. Wilson to J. D. McLean, Secretary of Indian Affairs, 3 April 1911.

³² RG 10 Vol. 1540, W. Julius Hyde to the Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, 8 July 1911; J. MacLean to W. J. Hyde, 25 July 1911.

destroyed his will to work and hastened his death.³³

Work, travel, and her children helped alleviate some of the stress for Henrietta. In May 1911, Margaret spent a "delightful" five months on the Reserve. Over the summer she worked with Henrietta in her large garden, chatted as she milked the cows and gathered the eggs and accompanied her parents on driving excursions. Sundays afternoons the family attended the Mission service listening to the new Principal Reverend Samuel Middleton's sermons and attending the social hour and afternoon tea prepared by Mrs. Middleton. That summer Henrietta, Margaret, and Oliver spent Saturday afternoons at the Mission's tennis tournaments and attended its annual 1 July Picnic and Sports Day.³⁴ With Middleton's appointment St. Paul's entered into a more prosperous era. Since Oliver had arrived the school had been under attack along with other Anglican Mission schools for their inability to stop tuberculosis among their pupils. Six headmasters had preceded Middleton. Severe shortages of finances had prevented much needed upgrading until the Medical Superintendent Dr. Bryce finally condemned the boys' institution in 1907.³⁵ Given his earlier opposition to industrial schools, Dr. Edwards found this work very depressing. Although not soon enough to benefit Oliver, during the next forty-two years, the Middletons placed the Mission on a solid foundation. Bishop Middleton's strongest assets were his energy, leadership ability and educational vision. He learned to speak Blackfoot fluently and gained the Bloods' confidence and acceptance, something Oliver never attempted.³⁶ Chief Mountain, as the

³³ Interview Roome with Whipple, Sydney 2 April 1991 and with Gardiner, Vancouver 4 April 1991.

³⁴ Sophie Allison Middleton, "The Middleton Family," in *Fort Macleod - Our Colorful Past*, 369.

³⁵ ADC Papers, Box 68, Synod Office Records, Indian Missions, "Report on Indian Missions and Schools 1908,"; Maurice H. Lewis, "The Anglican Church and Its Mission Schools Dispute," *Alberta Historical Review*, 14:4 (Autumn 1966), 7-11.

³⁶ See Brian M. Owens and Claude M. Roberta, *A Guide to the Archives of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Provinces of Alberta-Saskatchewan* (The Missionary Oblates: Grandin Province, Edmonton, 1989), 87-88, 111. Father Jean Louis Le Vern, Principal at the Blood Catholic Mission for all of his life, learned Blackfoot, produced a dictionary and grammar book in Blackfoot in 1901, and wrote his sermons in Blackfoot. Likewise Father Leon Doucet, Oblate priest in the area from 1876 - 1910, at the Brochet Mission on the Peigan Reserve 1898-1910, wrote on Blackfoot vocabulary and grammar. Oliver worked closely with both of these priests and if he had been inclined could have requested instruction in Blackfoot. Instead he relied on the Oblates to translate for him at the hospital and with patients in their schools.

Bloods named him, rebuilt the old log structures and started an Indian Cadet Corps, the first in western Canada. His wife Katharine became the school nurse. According to her daughter, Dr. Edwards taught "my mother how to adapt her nursing techniques to the frontier conditions of the mission."³⁷

Although Claude and Alice attended Christ Church in Macleod, Henrietta and Oliver stayed at St. Paul's for over eleven years. The Baptist Henrietta learned to love the Anglican service and appreciate dedicated missionaries like Middleton. Because the Church Missionary Society attracted evangelicals who shared Henrietta and Oliver's commitment to conversion and their vision of Christian service, Henrietta's spiritual beliefs remained unaffected throughout these years. The Edwards maintained their earlier pattern of daily family devotions. Through prayer and Bible study they sought spiritual guidance for daily living. Visitors and family members were automatically included in their devotions. Family, friends and colleagues often remarked that Henrietta's faith provided the anchor for her work and the key to her optimism.³⁸

Although her children, especially Margaret, were not evangelicals, they were a tightly-knit family. Before Margaret departed, she visited the Wineglass Ranche and celebrated Alice's birthday. "I think the monotony of the Reserve life and the long absence of Alex was telling on her health," Henrietta confided in her weekly letter. "I did hate to have her leave me and was lonesome for her before I left town. We have had such delightful companionship this summer." Isolation and monotony weighed heavily even on the optimistic Henrietta. She also pined for Montreal, her eastern family and old friends. When sending Alice one of her paintings, Henrietta commented, "I thought the picture would also recall Grandmama Muir's house. Dear Grandmama how proud she would have been of your children." Letting her thoughts stray to an earlier September, Henrietta explained, "your birthday always brings back to me the first years of your life when you were the

³⁷ Roberta J. Forsberg, *Chief Mountain: The Story of Cannon Middleton* (Whittier, Calif. : n. p. 1964). *Albertan*, 8 July 1949. *Fort Macleod-Our Colourful Past*, 371.

³⁸ Interview Roome with Whipple, Calgary, 31 August 1995.

baby of the family, the idolized baby of Grandmama & Grandpapa and the Aunties.”³⁹ Henrietta’s family life was as important as her political work.

These were hallmark years for Alberta women. Receiving the municipal franchise in November 1911 energized their movement, although as Henrietta prepared her WCTU report she lamented the members’ apathy. Only ten locals out of seventy-seven in Alberta and Saskatchewan responded to the municipal franchise petition Henrietta circulated and three reported working on the franchise. “If it were not for the encouraging outlook for woman suffrage in other countries, one might be discouraged,” Henrietta told the Convention. Despite “a decided increase in public opinion in favour of the enfranchisement of women”, she cautioned, “before we see results an immense amount of education work must be done.”⁴⁰ Education, political lobbying and organizing were Mrs. O. C. Edwards’ strength. She requested the WCTU executive sponsor a delegation “to urge the claims of married women who pay taxes for the municipal suffrage, and in this way follow up our petition work of two years ago” adding “a personal interview with the Premier, Attorney General and members of the Government is much more effective than official letters.”⁴¹ The Executive, however, ignored her counsel and concentrated instead on winning two local option campaigns. In any case, the Sifton Government extended the municipal franchise to “all women on the same qualification as required for men”, meaning property owners.⁴² With this move, the suffrage campaign entered a more organized phase. Henrietta focused her attention on organizing urban club women now that local politics were open to women’s participation.

The club woman’s world and women’s politics changed rapidly in these years. Rising Canadian nationalism prompted the creation of the Edmonton Woman’s Canadian Club led by

³⁹ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta Muir Edwards to Alice Gardiner, 29 August 1911. Interview Roomer with Oliver E. Gardiner, Vancouver 4 April 1991. The Peigan’s name for Claude Gardiner was Spitah.

⁴⁰ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Report of the Franchise and Christian Citizenship,” *Alberta WCTU Report* (1911), 84-85.

⁴¹ *Alberta WCTU Report* (1911), 84-85.

⁴² Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Report* (1912), 84.

President Emily Murphy. During the winter of 1912 the Legislature's amendment to Edmonton's city charter allowed women to be elected as school trustees. Bessie Nichols, an Alberta College teacher, whose campaign was run by Council women became Edmonton's first woman school trustee.⁴³ Edmonton and Strathcona councils had just amalgamated, creating a large Edmonton LCW with thirty-one affiliated societies. Evelyn Edwards who was elected as the Treasurer kept Henrietta in touch with these changes. Due to an unexpected illness during the winter of 1912, Henrietta postponed plans for organizing Red Deer and Calgary Councils. She met briefly with the Premier and the Attorney General about a "Shops Act" and amendments to the Married Women's Relief Act.⁴⁴

Henrietta's illness lasted for several months, delayed her 1912 Law Report, and aroused concern from friends like Emily Cummings. Poor health also prevented Henrietta from updating her legal pamphlet for publication by the ICW. Lady Aberdeen wrote to Cummings that she "greatly regretted" this omission noting Henrietta's dependability. "I thought that Mrs. Edwards would be sure to bring her good paper up to date."⁴⁵ The previous year Henrietta had sent an essay about "labour legislation in Canada as it affects women and children" to the IWC. Despite her isolation, Council women expected Henrietta, always a willing work horse, to send regular reports, letters and papers with information on Alberta.⁴⁶ Following the 1909 Quinquennial, Henrietta could not afford to attend the next five NCWC conventions held thousands of miles away in Halifax, Fort William, London, Montreal and Toronto. Instead she wrote hundreds of letters requesting reports from each Council's Convener of Laws, information from lawyers and copies of bills and legislation from governments. Her Law Committee championed most of the issues raised during the 1909 Convention. Their 1911 Report, for example, included a memorandum regarding equal

⁴³ *Edmonton Journal*, 14 February 1912; *Edmonton Bulletin*, 17 and 19 February 1912.

⁴⁴ *NCWC Report* (1912), 37. The nature of her illness is unknown.

⁴⁵ NAC, ICW Papers, MG 28, I 245, Vol. 33, file 488, Letter to My Dear Emily from Ishbel Aberdeen, 2 May 1912.

⁴⁶ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1911), 34.

guardianship of children and an interim report on prisoners' earnings based on research into American state legislation.⁴⁷ "The primary right to the custody under 10 or 12 years of age should be vested in the mother," the Committee argued, adding "an infringement of which should constitute a criminal offense." Henrietta and her committee believed women should have custody of their children and prisoners' wives should have access to their husbands' earnings.⁴⁸

The influential Ottawa Edwards family made Henrietta's work as Law Convener easier. Oliver's nephew W. Stuart Edwards joined the Department of Justice's legal staff in 1910, became Secretary of the Department in 1913, Assistant Deputy Minister of Justice in 1915 and Deputy Minister of Justice by 1923. Ironically during the "Persons Case", W. Stuart Edwards served as the solicitor for the Attorney-General of Canada, while his Aunt Henrietta used N. W. Rowell and an Ottawa law firm.⁴⁹ Beside reflecting on her influential connections, Henrietta's Law Reports demonstrate her extensive knowledge and voracious reading. She managed to keep accurate files on any legal question relevant to women. With the NCWC's successful campaign to have Angelina Napolitano's death sentence commuted to life imprisonment for the murder of her abusive husband, Henrietta suggested a full investigation of the issue. Sounding like a contemporary feminist, she wrote, "the appalling extent of wife-beating in Canada calls for immediately action of the National Council." When Henrietta went on to explain that her "numerous newspaper clippings on this subject reads more like a record of some brutal and savage tribe than a true account of incidents in a highly civilized country,"⁵⁰ she revealed her evangelical feminist perspective. In sharp contrast to

⁴⁷ "Report on Prisoner's Earnings," *NCWC Report* (1911), 38-41.

⁴⁸ "Memorandum by A. K. F. Lefroy," *NCWC Report* (1911), 35-37.

⁴⁹ *Ottawa Journal*, 4 September 1944. In the Supreme Court of Canada in the Matter of a Reference as to the Meaning of the Word "Persons" in Section 24 of the British North America Act Petitioner's Factum (Toronto: Printers Guild, 1928).

⁵⁰ *NCWC Report* (1911), 34. See Karen Dubinsky and Franca Iacovetta, "Murder, Womanly Virtue and Motherhood: the Case of Angelina Napolitano," *CHR*, 72:4 (December 1991), 505-31; Terry Chapman, "Women, Sex and Marriage in Western Canada 1890-1920," *Alberta History*, 33: 4 (Autumn 1985), 1-12; "'Till Death Do Us Part': Wife Beating in Alberta, 1905-1920," *Alberta History*, 36:4 (Autumn 1988), 13-22.

later radical feminists, Henrietta believed evangelical Christianity held the secret to abolishing such “savage” masculine behavior and transforming patriarchy.⁵¹

Henrietta’s faith in Christian liberalism, the law and the West prevailed despite alarming newspaper reports of sexual abuse, prostitution, corruption and crime.⁵² Few Alberta female activists questioned the cultural wisdom that the prairie frontier, still a man’s world, was “democracy’s grass roots”.⁵³ This utopian vision, which western women nurtured, gave additional force to the reform movement in Western Canada. If booze, brothels, and sin could be defeated, then it would happen first in the West where, historians have argued, the problems were just as severe. In 1911 single, transient men drastically outnumbered single women 17,331 to 8,989 in Calgary, a booming city where prostitution flourished.⁵⁴ Women’s clubs, not prostitution, represented the promise of a “civilized” women’s west. Their dramatic growth during the settlement boom overwhelmed the earlier women’s groups and older leaders. Between 1908-1913 new arrivals from eastern Canada, the United States and Britain established familiar organizations throughout Alberta.⁵⁵

The Muir sisters finally had a choice of women’s organizations. Amelia became Honorary President of the Macleod Music Club and also joined the Fortnightly Club, a literary circle whose motto “let every woman be occupied in the highest way of which her nature is capable” suited the elder sister perfectly.⁵⁶ The Club limited its membership to twenty “serious” women, arranged a

⁵¹ See James G. Snell, “The White Life for Two: The Defense of Marriage and Sexual Morality in Canada 1890-1914,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 16: 31 (May 1983).

⁵² Terry Chapman, “Sex Crimes in Western Canada 1880-1920,” (Ph. D diss. : University of Alberta, 1984).

⁵³ Cleverdon, 46.

⁵⁴ See James H. Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), 23 and *Booze: the Impact of Whiskey on the Prairie West* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1972); Deborah Neilson. “‘The Social Evil’: Prostitution in Vancouver, 1900-1920,” in *In Her Own Right*, eds. Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess (Victoria: Camosun Press, 1980), 205-28.

⁵⁵ Silverman, ch. 8.

⁵⁶ *Macleod Spectator*, 7 May 1912; *Macleod Advertiser*, 15 May 1913.

yearly program of readings and lectures, and ordered books from McGill University. In November 1912 they hosted a debate on "Women's Suffrage". No longer ignored Henrietta spoke to the Club on "International Peace" and "The Legal Status of Women in Canada."⁵⁷ Service organizations, like the Ontario Women's Institute which eastern women organized in Macleod in 1912, appealed to Henrietta more than society clubs. While a director for the WI, Henrietta made valuable contacts among farm women and raised her own profile among town women.⁵⁸ The *Macleod Advertiser* now paid tribute to Mrs. O. C. Edwards as "one of the best platform speakers in Western Canada." Henceforth the newspaper advertised her work informing readers about her October 25th address to the prestigious Calgary Women's Canadian Club. "Mrs. Edwards will be influential in organizing a local council of women," they remarked. Quite a story lay behind this Council's evolution.⁵⁹

Between 1901 and 1911, while Henrietta was isolated on the Blood Reserve, Calgary had expanded rapidly. The frontier town of 4,398 became a city of 43,704 and an important regional centre for southern and central Alberta's ranching, agriculture and transportation industries.⁶⁰ From this "sandstone city" enough optimism flowed to create the legendary Calgary Stampede in 1912. A booster mentality and rampant real estate speculation made the city an entrepreneur's delight, especially during the 1911-1912 boom. American immigration into southern Alberta after 1905 also left its mark. Mount Royal, an elite residential neighborhood, was nicknamed "American Hill". Although a city of significant class contrasts, Calgary lacked Edmonton's cultural diversity.

⁵⁷ *Ft. Macleod - Our Colourful Past*, part I, 71-72; *Macleod Advertiser*, 28 November 1912; *Macleod Spectator*, 12 April 1913.

⁵⁸ *Macleod Advertiser*, 25 July 1912. See Shelly Bosetti, "The Rural Women's University, Women's Institutes in Alberta, 1909-1940," (M. Ed thesis, University of Alberta, 1983); Catherine Cole and Anne Milovic, "Education, Community Service, and Social Life: The Alberta Women's Institutes and Rural Families, 1909-1945," in *Standing on New Ground*, eds. Catherine A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 19-30.

⁵⁹ *Macleod Advertiser*, 10 and 17 October 1912; *Calgary Albertan*, 23 October 1912.

⁶⁰ See A. W. Rasporich and H. C. Klassen eds., *Frontier Calgary: Town City and Region 1875-1914* (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart, 1975); Max Foran, *Calgary: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1978) ch. 2; Hugh Dempsey, *Spirit of the West: a History of Calgary* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1992).

In 1911 its non Anglo-Saxons numbered "less than 15 per cent of the population."⁶¹ Reflecting this class and cultural identity, club women advertised Calgary as "the Gateway to the Women's West" and confidently demanded their share of the limelight. Henrietta's life would have been very different if she had lived in Calgary amid the exciting growth of women's organizations. Within a decade Calgary boasted thirty-five women's groups as compared to Macleod's four.⁶² Prestigious new secular organizations, like the Women's Canadian Club (WCC), Calgary Women's Press Club (CWPC) the Consumer's League, the Alberta Women's Association (AWA) and the American Women's Club, vied for members with the older WCTU, YWCA and church women's auxiliaries. When Henrietta finally succeeded in launching a Calgary LCW, groups representing over 2,500 women affiliated.

Few women could remember the 1896 Calgary Council founded by Lady Aberdeen, nor were they as enthusiastic as Henrietta about a second Council.⁶³ Influential and experienced American Women's Club leaders believed that a Woman's Civic League was a better organization for municipal politics. Henrietta's friends and Council supporters, Beatrice Stuart and Maude Riley, stalled the creation of a rival organization hoping Henrietta's forceful speeches would sway the majority towards creating an LCW.⁶⁴ WCTU officers Annie Langford and Emily Kerby, who had registered women for a liquor bylaw vote, knew Henrietta from previous suffrage and dower petitions.⁶⁵ Although these women were not wedded to the Council ideal, Emily Murphy, Henrietta,

⁶¹ Foran, 88-89.

⁶² Kathleen Oliver, "Splendid Circles: Women's Clubs in Calgary 1910-1939," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1992); Sheila Johnson, "'Giving Freely of Her Time and Energy': Calgary Public Women 1910- 1930," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1987).

⁶³ Marjorie Norris, *A Leaven of Ladies* (Calgary: Detselig, 1995), ch. 1.

⁶⁴ *Calgary Albertan*, 10, 13 and 17 September 1912.

⁶⁵ *Calgary Herald*, 6 and 7 March 1912. Annie Langford was the widow of Methodist minister Rev. F. Langford and the daughter of Rev. Dr. John Burwash, the brother of Chancellor Burwash of Victoria University. Emily Spencer Kerby's, father Rev. James Spencer, was also a Methodist professor at Victoria College and the editor of *Christian Guardian*. Emily Burwash was a teacher and principal of a large public school in Paris, Ontario before her marriage to George W. Kerby. In 1903 they moved to Calgary where Mrs. Kerby, an ardent feminist, founded many women's organizations.

and Beatrice Stuart publicized the Council's dower campaign in Calgary. Each speaker reminded women that the Council facilitated not just local but also provincial and federal networking.⁶⁶

Beatrice Stuart, Henrietta's most powerful ally, had arrived as a young Ontario bride in 1901 and enjoyed a solid reputation as a pioneer clubwomen with charter membership in the YWCA, Anti-Tuberculosis League, Women's Literary Club and WCC. When visiting Calgary, Henrietta always stayed with the Stuarts who introduced her to influential Liberals, women leaders, and Christian activists. Charles Stuart, the Alberta Supreme Court Chief Justice, was a former partner in the Calgary law partner of Sifton, Short and Stuart, and now a personal friend of Premier Sifton. An evangelical Christian like Henrietta, Beatrice taught Sunday School at Knox Presbyterian Church, and organized and taught classes at the Chinese Mission. As the WCC's founding president, Beatrice convinced officers like Vice President Annie Langford to back the Council, an important coup, since the WCC was Calgary's largest and most influential women's club.⁶⁷

Despite the prominence of American women, patriotic Canadian voices dominated the debate. The woman's editor of the *Calgary Albertan* wrote a series of flattering articles featuring Henrietta and the NCWC.⁶⁸ Henrietta's speech appealed to Canadian and American factions and Conservative and Liberal Party sympathizers to work cooperatively. Sounding like Lady Aberdeen twenty years earlier, Henrietta explained Council must exclude "all subjects of party politics which are open to controversy." The press declared Henrietta "a logical and forceful speaker" and "one of the cleverest, most progressive women in Alberta".⁶⁹ She won an important convert when the influential American, Alice Jamieson, widow of a former Calgary Mayor and a member of the rival Women's Civic Committee, accepted the interim Presidency. Pro-council lobbying continued with Beatrice's "Open Letter to Women Voter's" which explained that suffrage activism and political

⁶⁶ *Calgary Herald*, 15 and 22 April 1912.

⁶⁷ On Beatrice Stuart see *Calgary Albertan*, April 6, 1949; *Calgary Herald*, June 17, 1933.

⁶⁸ *Calgary Albertan*, 5, 21, 22 and 25 October 1912.

⁶⁹ *Calgary News-Telegram*, 26 October 1912.

reform would be best advanced by forming an LCW. Like the Edmonton LCW, Calgary women could gain an amendment to the City Charter, argued Stuart, and elect a woman school trustee in the upcoming December election. When Dr. Amelia Yeomans, the longtime suffragist who had retired in Calgary, addressed the WCC on "Women's Suffrage", she stressed the importance of networking with the Edmonton LCW. Henrietta and Beatrice's strategy worked. A Council was firmly established with the rebel Women's Civic League, led by the Mrs. Newhall and the American Women's Club as members.⁷⁰

Henrietta proudly announced to the eastern NCWC that the Calgary LCW "began its lively existence" by making "itself felt as a force for good in the community."⁷¹ Not everyone agreed, especially when Council women took on City alderman over prostitution and the South Coulee brothels. Controlling prostitution had become a major public issue in Calgary. After a 1911 murder in the red light district of Nose Creek, the NWMP raided nine houses, reputed to be "the biggest raid in the province's history." The trial of a couple convicted of procuring a sixteen-year-old girl for prostitution, resulted in Police Chief Mackie's resignation.⁷² His replacement, Chief Cuddy, made a concerted attempt to "clean up" the district by arresting fifty-two women in October 1912. At the LCW's December political forum for women, leaders like Emily Kerby questioned prospective candidates, demanded newspapers publish the names of the prostitutes' customers, and argued men should receive jail sentences just like the prostitutes. Despite harassment at the polling booths, women voters helped elect the Civic Reform alderman who had promised action.⁷³

Calgary women and male reformers were not unique in their preoccupation with "the social evil." In Britain and Canada groups rallied for the "suppression of the white slave traffic."⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Calgary Albertan*, 28 and 29 October 1912; 6, 8, 16 and 19 November 1912.

⁷¹ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1912), 59.

⁷² Gray, *Red Lights*, 174-175. Judith Bedford, "Prostitution in Calgary 1905-1914," *Alberta History*, 29:2 (Spring 1981), 1-11.

⁷³ *Calgary Albertan*, 7, 9 and 10 December 1912.

⁷⁴ See Reverend J. G. Shearer, "The Canadian Crusade," in *War on the White Slave Traffic*, ed. Earnest Bell (1911, reprint, Toronto: Coles, 1980). For an analysis see John McLaren, "White Slavers: The

Although Henrietta had been caught up in the first moral outcry of the late 1880's and early 1890's when this "second wave of white slave panic" swept Canadian reformers, she seemed more pre-occupied with franchise and property issues. After a decade on the Reserve, Henrietta had lost touch with urban problems. Nor could she attend the 1912 NCWC Convention which created a Committee on Equal Moral Standards and Traffic in Women, following an address by the British head of the international white-slavery committee. In this crusade Christian leaders like Reverend Shearer blamed the Chinese and Japanese for owning most of the "dens of vice". They employed the powerful Biblical imagery of the whore of Babylon as a metaphor for the fallen city.⁷⁵ Although such racism went unchallenged by Canadian women, blatant sexist interpretations of the Bible did not. For over twenty years Henrietta and the NCWC had blamed men more than women for prostitution. As in 1893 the NCWC now argued:

... we have constructed this social evil as a female proposition; and our criminality has been the persecution of the woman, while permitting the easy escape of the man ... Some of us think the social evil is a masculine proposition; certainly we shall never accomplish much until we lay upon the man the heavier end of this burden of guilt.⁷⁶

Their contemporaries, and historians, in a race to brand the women as prudes and moral police, have often overlooked this persistent anti-male critique, argued most forcefully by evangelical feminists. The Calgary WCTU created a furor in 1914 within the LCW by daring to suggest that men found guilty of incest or molesting children should be punished by castration, a view Henrietta heartily endorsed.⁷⁷

Reform of Canada's Prostitution Laws and Patterns of Enforcement, 1900 - 1920," *Criminal Justice History*, 8 (1987), 53-119; Janice Newton, "From Wage Slave to White Slave: the Prostitution Controversy and the early Canadian Left," in *Beyond the Vote; Canadian Women and Politics*, eds. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1891), 217-236. Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

⁷⁵ See Carolyn Strange, "From Modern Babylon to a City upon a Hill: the Toronto Social Survey Commission of 1915 and the Search for Sexual Order in the City," in *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario's History*, eds. Roger Hall, William Westfall and Laurel Sefton MacDowell (Toronto, Dundurn Press, 1988), 255-77. Also Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Earthly Delights: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁷⁶ *NCWC Report* (1913), 59.

⁷⁷ Norris, 82-83; *Calgary New-Telegram*, 14 April 1914.

When the 1912 NCWC Women's Platform directed its LCW to consider measures for the "suppression of white slave traffic," Edmonton created a committee of "Equal Moral Standard and Prevention of Traffic in Women." Its convener was Mrs. Fortune whose husband led the Alberta Temperance and Moral Reform League.⁷⁸ Alberta women like their eastern colleagues were worried about the rising numbers of single women living in urban centers and angry about what they perceived was an increase in prostitution, rape, and abuse of young girls.⁷⁹ As Henrietta explained, a bill had been introduced in the House of Commons recommending amendments like Britain's 1911 "Criminal Law Amendment Act, known as the White Slave Act." Disillusionment with both the courts and the police's differential handling of the "social evil" fuelled demands for women as police officers and judges. Toronto established Canada's first Woman's Police Court in February 1913. The Sifton Liberals appointed LCW President Mrs. R. R. Jamieson as the first woman magistrate of a juvenile court in December 1913.⁸⁰

Although the LCW's other political interests were closer to Henrietta's familiar agenda, Calgary's "social evil" and temperance became twin obsessions for most women. The Calgary LCW's successful petition, like that in Edmonton, resulted in Annie Foot, a retired school teacher, became Calgary's first female school trustee in December 1913.⁸¹ Calgary's Law Convener, Maude Riley, accompanied Henrietta to Edmonton to request the Premier amend the Married Women's Property Act.⁸² An activist with the Children's Aid Society, Raleigh's interests coincided with those of the NCWC Law Committee which just recommended the Federal Government create

⁷⁸ *NCWC Report* (1913), 59.

⁷⁹ See Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario 1880-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Susan Johnston, "Twice Slain: Female Sex-Trade Workers and Suicide in British Columbia, 1907-1920," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (Calgary:1994), 147-66.

⁸⁰ *NCWC Report* (1913), 56; *Calgary Albertan*, 10 December 1913, 19 and 31 January 1914.

⁸¹ *Calgary Albertan*, 9, 18, 20 and 30 January 1913.

⁸² *NCWC Report* (1913), 13.

a Child Welfare Bureau "under the care of a specialist in child welfare."⁸³ In 1913, however, these issues took second place to suffrage activism.

To Henrietta's surprise, an Alberta suffrage movement had finally emerged.⁸⁴ For once she was not at the center and so she missed many of the international speakers. But the Calgary LCW executive, all ardent suffragists, gave suffrage speakers from the United States and England a hearty welcome. Barbara Wily, "an Eminent Suffragette" gave a rousing address to the Calgary WCTU. This inspired Margaret Lewis, a former member of the British Women's Political and Social Union, to organize a Woman's Suffrage Society (WAS) which joined the LCW. It soon sponsored lectures featuring speakers like Madame Sandal, a Norwegian suffragist, and Ethel Stewart, a English suffragist and Nobel Peace Prize nominee.⁸⁵ Calgary women held a mass meeting to pressure the Liberals to enfranchise women as an election promise, but a cautious Premier Sifton refused to made any commitments.⁸⁶

Henrietta discovered that the Government feared the growing farm movement's power not the women's movement. Throughout February and March, Premier Sifton entertained Henrietta and the Edmonton and Calgary LCW, listened politely to their requests for dower amendments and the provincial vote but gave the United Farmers of Alberta (UFO) his attention.⁸⁷ Founded in 1909, the UFO lobbied on behalf of its 7,190 members for American democratic innovation, such as initiative, referendum, and recall. Following the January 1913 UFO Convention Sifting's Government passed the Direct Legislation Act, a measure which sanctioned referendums and

⁸³ *NCWC Report* (1913), 59; Elise A. Corbet, "'A Do-Gooder, Not a Suffragette,' A. Maude Riley," in *Citymakers: Calgaryans After the Frontier*, eds. Max Foran and Sheilagh (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1987), 209-24.

⁸⁴ Barbara Nicholson, "Feminism in Western Canada," (Master's thesis: University of Calgary, 1975); Paul Voisey, "The Votes for Woman's Movement," *Alberta History*, 23: 3 (Summer 1975), 10-23; Faye Reinberg Holt, "Women's Suffrage in Alberta," *Alberta History*, 38: 2 (Autumn 1991), 25-31.

⁸⁵ *Calgary Albertan*, 12, 14, 18, 23 January, 21 February, 7 and 8 March 1913.

⁸⁶ *Calgary Albertan* 2, 7, 8, 10, 14 and 15 April 1913.

⁸⁷ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Report* (1912), 59.

limited legislative initiative by constituents. Thanks to the farmers' support the Liberals were easily re-elected. The government's responsiveness galvanized farmers, women and reformers to pressure for temperance and suffrage.⁸⁸

In southern Alberta the Conservative Party remained more popular, especially in Macleod, a ranching, CPR and NWMP town. Oliver's partisan Liberal support won him few friends. In January 1913 agent Hyde, a rancher and staunch Conservative, complained about the high death rate among the Bloods, Dr. Edwards' superficial exams, and his reluctance to attend "to persons in the last stages of consumption". Trying to be fair, Hyde explained that he had investigated "a great many complaints against the doctor which are groundless." Hyde attributed Oliver's unpopularity to Agent Wilson's influence on Native leaders and explained "prejudice on the part of the Indian as the Indian like his white brother gives a dog a bad name and hangs him." The Department should send an inspector to interview all the Indians to "get at the root" of the problem, Hyde concluded.⁸⁹

An investigation never transpired, but Hyde and Oliver locked horns over admission of "old people with incurable diseases" to the Blood Hospital and the creation of a maternity ward. Neither Dr. Edwards nor the Grey Nuns wanted to admit elderly persons or pregnant women since their hospital was small, the staff overworked, and the facilities crowded with patients suffering from infectious diseases. Instead, they had requested that the Department build a small cottage for the elderly, and create a new maternity facility. Hyde attempted to overrule Dr. Edwards' decision and force the sisters to admit any patient he authorized. When the Doctor opposed such interference, Hyde appealed unsuccessfully to Bishop Emile Legal in St. Albert. He refused to discipline the sisters, supported Dr. Edwards, and criticized the Department for refusing to upgrade the inadequate Hospital.⁹⁰ Bishop Legal only halfheartedly defended Dr. Edwards to the Secretary of Indian Affairs explaining that the Lethbridge Doctor Newburn, a "surgeon of wide repute" enjoyed

⁸⁸ Thomas, 136-7.

⁸⁹ RG 10, Vol. 1540, W. J. Hyde to Frank Pedley, Deputy Minister of the Interior, 15 November 1911; W. J. Hyde to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, 15 January 1913.

⁹⁰ RG 10, Vol. 1540, Bishop Emile Legal to the Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, 9 January 1913.

a “well deserved fame as a practitioner of exceptional skill”. The Bishop felt it was neither “surprising that Doctor Edwards would suffer” nor unusual that the Bloods “would like to resort, at times to the more famous surgeon.”⁹¹ Hyde’s angry reply stated: “I am in a much better position to judge than your Lordship as regards how the Doctor performs his duties.” But the Department severely reprimanded Hyde for dragging the Bishop into the controversy and suggested the Agent resign.⁹²

As the death of Mrs. Young Pine in February 1913 revealed, cultural differences and frontier conditions compounded the already significant problems of conflicting authority. After three days of labour, Young Pine’s husband brought Dr. Edwards to visit with an interpreter and his wife. The Doctor later explained that he “gave her medicine to hurry matters up”, went to the Farm Instructor’s home six miles away to spend the night and requested to be called when necessary. Next morning on his way to visit, a messenger met him and said the baby was born dead but the mother was fine. Facing a stormy winter day, Oliver decided to visit his Hospital patients, spend the night with the Oblate father and return in the morning to see the woman. When travelling next day to visit Mrs. Young Pine, he was intercepted by a messenger who said “the woman was dead and buried.”⁹³ Hyde felt Oliver was guilty of negligence whereas Oliver argued that he had been misled by the family and his interpreters who had said the woman was well and his assistance not required.

While the subsequent correspondence is missing to verify the reports, Agent Hyde resigned effective September 1913. Dr. Edwards remained despite growing incompetence and ill health. Neither the cause of death nor the question of Oliver’s negligence was ever officially resolved, but the Department clearly sided with its longtime employee, Dr. Edwards. Pregnancy and maternity cases remained an unresolved problem on the Reserve.⁹⁴ Henrietta, who knew about the controversy, took

⁹¹ Bishop Emile Legal to the Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, 1 January 1913.

⁹² RG 10, Vol. 1540, W. J. Hyde to the Right Rev. Bishop of St. Albert, 21 January 1913. J. MacLean to W. J. Hyde, 1 Feb. 1913.

⁹³ RG 10, Vol. 1540, W. J. Hyde to J. MacLean, 13 March 1913.

⁹⁴ *Macleod Spectator*, 27 April and 19 August 1913.

Oliver's side despite evidence confirming his negligence and questionable behavior. Everyone hoped the Doctor would soon retire, especially his wife who wanted to see the end of their Reserve sojourn with its endless problems.

Instead a more serious family problem intervened. Since Henrietta expected to be in Edmonton for several months as Margaret was pregnant, grandchildren Claudia and Oliver visited Henrietta in July to observe the last big Blood Sun Dance - seventy teepees and one hundred and fifty tents - an event which lasted all summer and remained a prominent childhood memory.⁹⁵ By the time Henrietta left for Edmonton in August, Margaret was ill and confined to bed. Before Margaret's condition worsened, Henrietta had hoped to lead the Calgary LCW delegation, attending the Legislature's September session.⁹⁶ Margaret died giving birth on 6 October. Henrietta's future changed with family affairs taking precedence over political campaigns. With Evelyn and Muir's assistance, Henrietta cared for the infant, arranged the funeral and comforted the family. Oliver, grief-stricken at the loss of his favorite child, blamed himself for allowing Margaret to remain in Edmonton when she could have come to the Reserve hospital like Alice. Until his death, Oliver remained convinced that Margaret's Edmonton doctor was negligent. Although there is no evidence that either Oliver or Henrietta drew a parallel between Margaret's death and Mrs. Young Pine's, in hindsight the irony is clear.⁹⁷

Following the funeral, Henrietta and Oliver returned to Macleod with Margaret's baby, Graeme, whom they had agreed to raise. Muir and Evelyn already had three small children, Alice and Claude ran a busy ranch and also had two small children, and more importantly, the family had always relied on Henrietta. Alexander Stewart agreed to pay Henrietta for Graeme's care and thus lighten the financial burden. During the next months Henrietta became very attached to her "darling baby", whose care helped her cope with Margaret's death. She had, however, no time to maintain

⁹⁵ Interview Roome with Oliver E. Gardiner, Vancouver 4 April 1991.

⁹⁶ *Calgary Albertan*, 13 and 15 October 1913.

⁹⁷ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta Muir Edwards to Alice Gardiner 2 October 1913; Interview Roome with Claudia Whipple, Sydney 2 April 1991.

her previous involvement with the women's suffrage and prohibition campaigns.

The first casualty was Henrietta's WCTU commitments. She had not submitted a 1912 Franchise Report nor attended the 1913 September Convention. In her absence, President Louisa McKinney launched a franchise petition campaign led by Emily Kerby who took over as Superintendent of Franchise, a position that Henrietta had held for nine years.⁹⁸ McKinney had moved with her husband to Claresholm, founded a WCTU local in 1903, and become prominent in the Alberta WCTU first as the Superintendent of the Department of Evangelistic Work, then Recording Secretary, and finally President in 1908. In these years McKinney stressed temperance education and local option campaigns over the franchise and dower campaigns which Henrietta spearheaded. After seeing temperance forces grow and success a possibility, McKinney finally emphasized women's suffrage.⁹⁹

Confined to her Reserve home with baby Graeme, Henrietta watched the Calgary LCW and the Edmonton Equal Franchise League petition the Legislature on the 9 October 1914. Emily Kerby and Annie Langford, executive members of the WCTU and the LCW, had decided, like Henrietta, that the Calgary LCW would lead a more effective campaign than the WCTU. In Edmonton the LCW's role was eclipsed by the Equal Franchise League (EFL) formed in 1913. The President, Classics Professor W. H. Alexander was a friend of Muir whose letters to Henrietta outlined the League's public meetings and "house-to house canvas". The League affiliated with the LCW, sending Mrs. Avery Smith, also a WCTUer, as their delegate. Because suffrage leaders held membership in a variety of women's organization networking became easy.¹⁰⁰

Still grieving over Margaret's death, neither Henrietta nor Oliver took an active role in the

⁹⁸ *Alberta WCTU Report* (1911).

⁹⁹ GAI, WCTU Papers, Minute Book Alberta 1913, 11, 12, 19, 25; "President's Address," *Alberta WCTU Report* (1913), 44. GAI, Louisa McKinney File; Nancy M. Sheehan, "Achieving Personhood: Louisa McKinney and the WCTU in Alberta, 1905-1930," *Women As Persons Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women*, November 9-11, 1979, Edmonton (Fall 1980), 105-07.

¹⁰⁰ "Edmonton Equal Franchise League," *Club Women's Records Edmonton*, 19-20.

prohibition movement. They were never as single-minded on this issue as President McKinney, famous for her impassioned speeches. Henrietta, who believed alcohol was more a disease than a moral problem, never exhibited the crusading spirit that enlivened McKinney's and McClung's speeches. Her preference for political education over political activism made legal questions and the Council Movement her first choice. Attending the Anglican Church and living on the Reserve also placed the Edwards outside the mainstream of the social gospel movement. They were not among the two hundred delegates, predominately Methodist and Presbyterians, who came to Calgary in February 1914 under the auspices of the Alberta Temperance and Moral Reform League. Inspired by the UFA's 1914 Convention resolution in support of prohibition and women's suffrage, the League decided the *Direct Legislation Act* could be used to achieve prohibition. Over the next months, League canvassers collected enough signatures to propose their *Liquor Act* in October.¹⁰¹

Women canvassers collected signatures for women's suffrage and prohibition. At the League Convention, McKinney explained the LCW would cover the cities, the WCTU the towns and the UFA the rural areas. Between May and September the Calgary LCW's Franchise Committee circulated petitions. At the outbreak of war on 4 September, however, Calgary women formed a Central Committee of Women's Patriotic Service and the LCW contemplated working for the Red Cross rather than the suffrage campaign. President Alexander insisted that the Calgary LCW finish collecting signatures and participate in the delegation to the Legislature.¹⁰²

In October, a fifteen person delegation from the Edmonton EFL and the Calgary LCW presented Premier Sifton with a suffrage petition, signed by over twelve thousand persons representing forty-four societies. They requested the Government delete the word "male" before "person" in the Alberta Election Act. Despite his pro-suffrage sympathies, Premier Sifton argued

¹⁰¹ Robert Irwin MacLean, "A 'Most Effectual Remedy': Temperance and Prohibition in Alberta 1875-1915," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1969), 97. *United Farmers of Alberta 6th Annual Report* (1914), 48, 70, hereafter *UFA Report*.

¹⁰² Although the Calgary LCW Minutes for the years 1913-1919 have been lost, the suffrage campaign was closely followed by the press. See *Calgary Albertan*, 21 February, 12 and 16 May, 9 June, 15 and 17 July, 24 and 25 September 1914; Nicholson, "Feminism in the Prairie Provinces to 1916," ch. 4.

the Government need further evidence that rural women supported suffrage.¹⁰³ When the League reformers presented their petition for a Prohibitory Liquor Act three days later, the Liberals immediately promised a referendum for July 1915.¹⁰⁴

Henrietta kept a low profile through all this excitement and, for the first time since 1905, missed a Legislature session. The Calgary LCW delegation led by Alice Jamieson, Emily Kerby and Annie Langford did not include Henrietta. During the first year after Margaret's death, Henrietta rarely travelled outside of the Macleod area or accepted speaking engagements. Her June Lethbridge visit, which resulted in the creation of a LCW, was an exception. Already active in politics, Lethbridge women had secured the city charter amendment giving them "women suffrage on equal terms with men". The election of Esther M. Jones as city clerk was "the first appointment of a women to this office in a Canadian city," Henrietta proudly noted.¹⁰⁵

By 1915 Henrietta's patient work had finally bore fruit. The Alberta Council now boasted a membership of over six thousand women. In February Henrietta represented Council women on the second suffrage delegation with Calgary and Edmonton LCW presidents, Mrs. R. R. Jamieson and Eleanor Broadus, completing the triad.¹⁰⁶ This delegation sought an amendment enabling women to vote in the July prohibition referendum and also planned an overwhelming demonstration of support. Professor Alexander and Nellie McClung, who had moved to Edmonton in the fall of 1914 and joined the EFL, had visited numerous women's organizations, identified supporters and received the UFA's endorsement.¹⁰⁷ In January 1915 the UFA Convention had resolved to "demand a plebiscite upon the question of equal suffrage for women." They also agreed to petition the Government "to pass some measure setting forth legal share to every married women in the division

¹⁰³ *Calgary Albertan*, 10 and 12 October 1914; Cleverdon, 69.

¹⁰⁴ Maclean, 99-110.

¹⁰⁵ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Report of the Provincial Vice-President for Alberta," *NCWC Report* (1914), 16. Augusta Stowe-Gullen, "Report of the Committee on Citizenship," *NCWC Report* (1914), 35.

¹⁰⁶ *Macleod Spectator*, 25 February 1915; *Calgary Albertan*, 1 March 1915.

¹⁰⁷ See Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis, *Firing the Heather* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1993), ch. 6.

of the estate; also be it enacted, that no deed or mortgage be legal without the wife's signature".¹⁰⁸ At the convention farm women created the UFWA as an auxiliary of the UFA. Members listened eagerly to Dr. Alexander and Nellie McClung's suffrage speeches and agreed to be represented on the February delegation.¹⁰⁹

While Henrietta would eventually lead over fifteen annual delegations before her death, this occasion remained her most memorable one. Taking her place amid twelve prominent female speakers, Henrietta argued that sex discrimination in politics was the last "bar to citizenship" and concluded this had persisted long after the removal of "color, race and religion". Given the Native situation, she could not have seriously thought race was no longer an issue.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless she argued that women had spent too long "interned with criminals and imbeciles" and asserted "the law that defined women as incapable should be forever removed from the statute books." Agreeing with Henrietta, Professor Alexander stressed that "women were born citizens". In this era of democracy "one sex should not be privileged as against another." Echoing liberal values, she explained: "the embattled armies of the allies ... were standing for the only form of civilization in which the rights of women were possible."¹¹¹ McClung eclipsed other speakers with her wit and eloquence "Our plea is not for mercy, but for justice, I ask no boon, no favor, no privilege. I am just asking for plain, old-fashioned, unfrilled justice. A man considers himself honest if he pays his debts the first time he gets the bill. This is the second time you have got it," she argued. But Premier Sifton again waffled and promised that "the matter would come before the legislature at its next sitting early next year."¹¹² Unwilling to accept this, McClung and Murphy interviewed the Premier, demanding that he immediately place equal suffrage before the House. Sifton refused the

¹⁰⁸ *UFA Report* (1915), 39.

¹⁰⁹ *UFA Report* (1915), 62. *Calgary Albertan*, March 1 1915. See Leslie Robinson, "Agrarian Reformers: Women and the Farm Movement 1909-1925," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1979).

¹¹⁰ Discrimination also existed against Japanese and Chinese until after WW II.

¹¹¹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 27 February 1915.

¹¹² *Edmonton Bulletin*, 27 February 1915.

advice of these “very determined women.”¹¹³

Henrietta and Annie Bulyea lobbied the Premier and Cabinet on additional issues: an age limit for the marriage of minors, an amendment to the Married Women’s Relief Act and a Shop and Factory Act. While Sifton promised legislation on the first two, he refused to consider the last. True to his promise the Government passed an amendment giving “a wife a right to register a caveat against her husband’s property owned as a homestead.”¹¹⁴ Henrietta felt that Premier who listened “with the greatest courtesy” favoured equal franchise but feared opposition in the Legislature. “The Premier told me afterwards,” Henrietta explained to the NCWC, “he had expected to meet about twenty ladies but when he entered the Council Chamber he was surprised to find over 800 present.” She predicted that “Alberta will be the Premier Province to grant parliamentary franchise to women in Canada.”¹¹⁵

For the second time in two years, personal tragedy forced Henrietta to cancel her public engagements. She was in Red Deer where Amelia’s telegram arrived with news of Oliver’s critical condition.¹¹⁶ Henrietta arrived home in time to bid farewell to her “beloved” husband who died on Easter morning. As the *Macleod Spectator* explained, Dr. Edwards had known about the “enlargement of the glands behind the lung” for several years but family and friends did not appreciate the seriousness of his illness. Oliver probably knew better since he had consulted Dr. McKidd in Calgary and obtained an extended leave of absence from the Department just before he died. Oliver’s funeral service was held at Macleod’s Anglican Church, but he had requested to be buried beside Margaret in Edmonton.¹¹⁷ For Oliver’s tombstone, Henrietta selected the powerful Biblical verse: “He is not here He is Risen”, the words of Martha to disciples looking for Jesus’s

¹¹³ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 4 March 1915.

¹¹⁴ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Report* (1915), 259.

¹¹⁵ *NCWC Report* (1915), 259.

¹¹⁶ *Calgary Albertan*, 20 March 1915; “Report of the Vice-President of Alberta,” *NCWC Report* (1915), 186-87.

¹¹⁷ “Well Known Pioneer has Passed Away,” *Macleod Spectator*, 8 April 1915.

body. Henrietta had been the faithful Martha. Oliver's death and ascendancy to heaven at Easter bore comparison, in her mind at least, with Christ's resurrection. The evangelical Henrietta had no doubt that Oliver was in heaven enjoying God's presence. The second phrase which Henrietta selected appeared on her grandfather and father's tombstones "He Served His Day and Generation" connected Oliver to their earlier eastern life. It also expressed her evangelical conviction that Oliver in his own way had led a life of service. With these inscriptions Henrietta paid Oliver her highest tribute.

Because of Oliver's faith, chronic illness and advancing years, Henrietta accepted his death more peacefully than she had her daughter's. As she later explained, "I was sitting alone in the dining room at the Reserve watching the dawn come in and trying to think of all the wonders that Oliver was seeing, trying to comfort myself with the thought of his liberation from the body and freedom of spirit - but the years have been long." Her letter criticizes the Presbyterian Minister's "jumble of a sermon" which portrayed death as a "dark valley." Henrietta wrote, "That is not how you and I view death is it dear sister. Death is now God's angel to open the door for us to enter into fuller life and freedom."¹¹⁸ With such a confident spiritual vision, Henrietta could devote her attention to the future rather than dwell on the past. Tributes to Oliver helped Henrietta make peace with his death. Former Ontario Premier, Sir Oliver Mowat praised Oliver as "a perfect Christian gentleman," an opinion shared by his wife and the nuns. "Notre cher Dr. Edwards vienna de mourner! ... Quoique protestant, avec quelle délicatesse il a toujours agi avec les soeurs! Toutes celles qui l'ont connu, ont pu apprecier ses excellentes qualités. C'est certainement une perte pour notre hôpital," lamented the sisters.¹¹⁹ Henrietta explained to Alice that she had received hundreds of letters praising Oliver. "The only ones that have not expressed admiration of his character are those from his own brothers and sister and they never did appreciate him," she added loyally. "He was a different type from their standard."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Amelia Muir, 8 April 1917.

¹¹⁹ Chroniques d' Hôpital Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs, 8 avril 1915.

¹²⁰ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 16 June 1915.

Henrietta, Amelia and Graeme did not move into Macleod until fall. As Henrietta explained to Alice, after a decade on the Reserve, moving was a major undertaking. "I have half of my Indian work packed and catalogued."¹²¹ After years on the reserve, Henrietta's most important legacy was as a collector of Native artifacts. Her time was spent packaging, cataloguing, and then eventually selling the collection to support herself, a testimony of her place as a colonizer. While artifacts of the past needed to be preserved, on a daily basis she and Oliver had struggled to bring Native people into the twentieth century, a world of Protestant Christianity, industrial development, and consumer capitalism whose language was English. From her perspective life on the Reserve had been difficult. Over the last decade she had been a reluctant resident, an interloper who seized every opportunity to leave. Only financial necessity and her marriage to Oliver had persuaded Henrietta to stay after the excitement of Montreal and Ottawa. For eleven years she had struggled to lead the Alberta women's movement, often taking second place to urban feminists like Emily Murphy.

Throughout these years, however, she had played some role, -although it is difficult to judge how much- in Native women's lives, meeting them as patients, domestics, pupils and Christians. While Henrietta was interested in their culture and spent many hours with Native women, however she left organized missionary work to her friends, Miss Wells and Mrs. Middleton, content to follow their lead. Henrietta's energy and organizational talents were always directed outside the reserve to the middle-class women's movement. Doing this work fulfilled God's plan for her life and brought Henrietta fame and pleasure. In the absence of personal correspondence, it is difficult to evaluate her lukewarm response to Native women's plight. Although the more sensitive missionaries in Africa and Asia questioned their own notions of western superiority as a result of living among indigenous people, Henrietta probably did not. A few British women became "feminist allies" of indigenous women, but race and class prejudices seriously constrained Henrietta's feminism.¹²²

¹²¹ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 16 June 1915.

¹²² Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1991), 52. See also Nancy L. Paxton, "Feminism under the Raj: Resistance and Complicity in the Writings of Flora Annie Steel and Annie Besant," *Women's Studies International*

Now a widow and a grandmother, Henrietta made plans for her future. "It is probable that we will lose our darling baby from our home in the near future as his father is engaged to be married," she explained to Emily Cummings, adding characteristically "but we must not go to meet trouble."¹²³ Expecting her life to be lonely without Oliver, Margaret, or her grandson Graeme, Henrietta resolved to devote herself to Council work. "Two years ago I had almost completed my revision of the Legal Status of Women in Canada when the sudden death of my daughter and the subsequent care of her little son prevented me giving any more time to the work." She predicted that "after December I expect to be quite free and able to devote myself to Council work so will be able to revise the law to 1916."¹²⁴ Although her previous sixty-six years had been full, the next era when most people retired to their rocking chairs found Henrietta engaged in a whirlwind of public service. She never retired but continued working until her death at the age of eight-two. In these years, her legal work and role in the National Council would earn her a wider reputation. Finally, for Henrietta, some of the promises made about "the women's west" would come true.

Forum, 13:4 (1990), 333-46; Barbara N. Ramusack, "Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, in 1865-1945," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13:4 (1990), 309-21.

¹²³ NAC, NCWC Papers, Vol. 67, file 4, Letter Henrietta to Emily Cummings, 1 April 1915.

¹²⁴ *NCWC Report* (1915), 199-200.

VIII. A Council Ambassador, 1915-1920

By capitalizing on the cooperative spirit so evident among Alberta women's organizations, Henrietta organized eight Alberta LCWs.¹ Through her executive positions, the council ambassador led younger activists, coordinated rural and urban women's legislative agenda, and negotiated between eastern and western feminists. The postwar era's political disappointments and personal tragedies made these difficult years for Henrietta and the NCWC. When prairie activists and young professionals criticized the "old guard", Henrietta insisted Council needed experienced leaders. Her message of women's new responsibility as citizens stressed political education and cooperation, an unpopular position in the post-suffrage West where partisan politics flourished.²

Macleod was not the ideal retirement home for Henrietta nor were its residents thrilled at having such a well-known feminist in their midst. Accustomed to compromise, she philosophically accepted this fifth and final move. Still rough and provincial, the town boasted sandstone and brick buildings, new sidewalks, water and sewage services, electrical power, three theatres and several hotels.³ For the sixteen years Amelia, and Henrietta when she wasn't travelling, lived quietly and modestly in a small cottage among Macleod's three thousand residents. The sisters selected different churches, although both would have joined a Baptist Church had one existed. Amelia attended St. Andrew's Presbyterian and became a familiar figure at midweek prayer meetings as well as the Sunday School Superintendent and the Women's Missionary Society President.⁴ Henrietta accompanied Amelia to evening services and prayer meetings but usually joined Alice and Claude at the Anglican Christ Church, closely associated with St. Paul's Mission.⁵ Although

¹ John H. Thompson, "The Beginning of Our Regeneration: The Great War and Western Canadian Reform Movements," in *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), 450-67.

² Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1976).

³ See *MacLeod Alberta. Where Nature is making a Big City* (Edmonton: Byron May Co., 1912).

⁴ *Macleod Gazette*, 31 March 1938.

the British clergymen were neither evangelical nor sympathetic to the Canadian social gospel movement, Henrietta found a few evangelical reformers at Christ Church.⁶

Grandchildren remember Henrietta as the cook and gardener who took great artistic pride in her flowers, vegetables, bread, jams and preserves.⁷ Amelia became a respected music teacher and prominent member of the Women's Fortnightly Club. Although club rules specified a member must be sponsored, the confident and assertive Amelia submitted her own name then "paced up and down outside the closed door" while the women voted. The tenacious Miss Muir served as President and Secretary for the next twenty years.⁸ Macleod became the center of Amelia's life, but the ambitious Henrietta preferred Edmonton and Ottawa. Although Henrietta read voraciously and travelled extensively, the town's isolation and the absence of a large local women's community left its mark. Had Henrietta lived in either Edmonton or Calgary, she would have found leading the Alberta Council easier. Never one to complain, she accepted a hectic schedule, featuring ten to twenty yearly trips.

To the lonely widow, political work promised excitement and new challenges. The year following Oliver's death saw the achievement of provincial suffrage, the establishment of a Provincial Law Committee, the birth of four Alberta Councils, the appointment of two female judges, the completion of her book on Alberta women and the law, and finally the failure of Henrietta's bid for election as a school trustee. She explained proudly, "Sunny Alberta" appreciated "the work of women in standing shoulder to shoulder with their men folk in the development of their country." Alberta women "are more favoured in regard to legal status than are

⁵ Derek D. E. Hoskin, *Historic Christ Church Fort MacLeod* (MacLeod: printed privately, 1987). See also Frank Peake, "Anglicanism on the Prairies: Continuity and Flexibility," in *Visions of the New Jerusalem: Religious Settlement on the Prairies*, ed. Benjamin G. Smillie (Edmonton: New West Press, 1983), 55-68; T. C. Boon, *The Anglican Church from the Bay to the Rockies* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962).

⁶ See Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 15; Edwards A. Pulker, "The Role of Anglicans in the Reform of the Economic Order in Canada, 1914-1945," (Ph. D diss., University of Ottawa, 1974).

⁷ Interview Roome with Claudia Whipple, Calgary 28 August 1995.

⁸ *Fort Macleod- Our Colourful Past* (Fort Macleod: Fort Macleod History Committee, 1977), 71-72.

those of any other province.”⁹ Ironically, such a memorable period began with much soul-searching as Henrietta surrendered her grandson to his new step-mother and found any further involvement politely discouraged.¹⁰ Other problems surfaced during her four month Edmonton stay. Evelyn and Muir travelled East to attend the funeral of Evelyn’s father, leaving Henrietta to cope with dental surgery and the care of three grandchildren.

These personal troubles did not detract from the excitement which surrounded women’s enfranchisement during February and March. As Henrietta’s letters to Alice demonstrated she was an activist, comfortable and happy amid endless responsibilities, meetings and projects. She welcomed the Alberta’s Equal Suffrage Act, the result of intensive networking over the previous year.¹¹ The UFWA and the UFA both endorsed women’s suffrage. When the Legislature opened, Premier Sifton received a franchise petition signed by 40,000.¹² After a twenty-five year campaign, Henrietta joined many friends in the gallery to hear Sifton declare that women had “an unalterable right by eternal justice to be placed on an equality with men” and as citizens would bring a “gradual and continual change” for the better in provincial politics, a view Henrietta heartily endorsed.¹³ His suffrage legislation made Alberta the second province to enfranchise women.

1 March, Henrietta proudly explained to Alice, was “the great day for the women at the Legislature.” Men were formally requested to wait outside as female delegates crowded into the

⁹ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Introduction,” in *Legal Status of Women of Alberta* (Edmonton: Department of Extension, University of Alberta, February 1917); “Sunny Alberta,” *Woman’s Century*, September 1918, 78.

¹⁰ Interview Roome with Whipple, 28 August 1995.

¹¹ L. H Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 164-66.

¹² *UFA Report* (1915), 17, 36-37 and “Report of the President of the U. F. W. A.” See Leslie May Robinson, “Agrarian Reformers: Women and the Farm Movement in Albert 1909-1925,” (Master’s thesis, University of Calgary, 1979).

¹³ Quoted in Cathérine Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 73; *Edmonton Bulletin*, 2 March 1916. See also Barbara Nicholson, “Feminism in Western Canada to 1916,” (Master’s thesis, University of Calgary, 1975); Paul Voisey, “The ‘Votes for Women’ Movement,” *Alberta History* 23:3 (Summer 1975), 10-23 ; Faye Reinberg Holt, “Woman Suffrage in Alberta,” *Alberta History* 36 (Autumn 1991), 25-31.

legislative chambers. Henrietta packed her week with meetings and receptions, starting with a Government function for the female delegates. At the request of the Lieutenant Governor's wife, she and a few Calgary LCW women remained behind for further discussion. Later, the Premier's wife drove her to Cousin Frances' for dinner.¹⁴ An astute politician, Henrietta cultivated friendships with political wives and enrolled them as lobbyists for Council, a strategy she had learned from Lady Aberdeen.

The Alberta Council's legal campaigns had blossomed to become the best organized and most successful in Canada, an accomplishment which Henrietta, Emily Murphy and the Calgary and Edmonton Law Committees pointed to with pride. As always in politics, whether feminist or socialist, innovative structures and dynamic partnerships came complete with tensions, but on balance their legacy was impressive. In February Henrietta, Murphy and McClung began planning a Provincial Law Committee under the Alberta LCW umbrella. "This method may come to be adopted in the other Provinces," explained an optimistic Murphy to Emily Willoughby Cummings. "There seems to be no reason why separate political organizations should be started when we already have the machinery in our Committees on Laws," continued Murphy adding, "besides, the Government will not pay much attention to us once we have become divided."¹⁵ As long as consensus could be reached, this Committee proved effective. Even with cooperation, Alberta women found the political process exceedingly sluggish as Henrietta's endless formal petitions to the Attorney General and the Premier demonstrated.

During this session, Sifton and Cross listened patiently to the Council's petition to strengthen the 1915 Married Woman's Home Protection Act. Both men pretended to be surprised at women's opposition. Rather than protect women's interest as requested, the Act required a wife to file a caveat on the "home" to prevent its unilateral sale by her husband.¹⁶ "Some women have called this

¹⁴ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 8 March 1916.

¹⁵ NCWC Papers, Vol. 67, file 4, Letter Emily Murphy to Emily Cummings 7 February 1916. See also Hallett, 169 who argues that the Committee idea began on 1 March.

¹⁶ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Millie, 16 February 1916.

the Married Woman's Home Destruction Act," quipped one Edmonton critic who felt husbands would seek revenge if wives filed caveats.¹⁷ Despite women's opposition, the Government refused to consider any changes. They did agree to amend the Marriage Act, making fifteen the legal age and requiring both parents' consent for a minor's marriage, a concession Henrietta felt "acknowledges the mother's right in the child as far as marriage is concerned."¹⁸

On the evening of 1 March, women ceremoniously launched the Provincial Law Committee. Nellie McClung had requested Henrietta and other women leaders come to her home "to consider the new franchise." The group elected an executive and generated recommendations for legislative amendments to strengthen women's share of their husbands' estate, to create equal parental rights, to establish proportional representation, and to further "red light abatement."¹⁹ For the next two years, the Provincial Law Committee united influential women from the UFWA, WCTU, WI and the LCW together in a cooperative experiment. Henrietta served as Chairman and Convener, the UFWA President Irene Parlby as First Vice-Chairman, Calgary's Law Convener Maude Riley as Secretary and Alice Jukes Jamieson, the Calgary LCW president as Treasurer.²⁰

This was Henrietta's first opportunity to work with influential women who were destined to become important political figures in Alberta. Within six years, Irene Parlby would be elected to the Legislature and set a record as the British Empire's first cabinet minister. Twenty years younger than Henrietta, Parlby was a well-educated Englishwoman whose husband was a successful, central Alberta farmer. As President of the UFWA, Parlby soon became too busy expanding her organization to maintain office on the Committee.²¹ American-born Alice Jukes James, a strong

¹⁷ Elizabeth Bailey Price, "Laws of Alberta Concerning Women," *Club Women's Records Edmonton* (Edmonton Branch of the Canadian Women's Press Club, 1916), 114-19.

¹⁸ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Amelia, 16 February 1916.

¹⁹ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 8 March 1916. *Edmonton Bulletin*, 17 March 1916.

²⁰ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Report of the Vice-President for Alberta," *NCWC Yearbook* (1917), 333. See Carol Bacchi, "Divided Allegiances: The Response of Farm and Labour to Suffrage," in *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women And Reform in Canada 1880s-1920s*, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: Women's Press, 1979), 80-107.

²¹ See Barbara Cormack, *Perennials and Politics* (Sherwood Park, Alta: Professional Printing, 1968);

feminist reformer and the first female juvenile court judge, served until she received a second appointment as police magistrate in the new Calgary Women's Court.²² The Secretary, Calgarian Maude Riley worked with Henrietta until 1931. With drive, organizational ability, and commitment, Riley best personified Henrietta's ideal of "women's service". An executive member of many women's organizations, her activism sprung partially from an old-time "covenant with God" made while she and her young baby lay ill. Maude promised God that if they lived "she would devote her life to the welfare of children", a promise which she kept as President of the Alberta Council for Child and Family Welfare from 1923 until 1962.²³ Maude considered Henrietta her mentor, while the older activist regarded her protégé affectionately. The Committee's legal advisor Lillian Clements Gainer, Alberta's first woman lawyer, represented the new elite of educated and professional woman.²⁴ With Lillian's participation the Committee represented three generations of women. Although the bridge on the Committee was their broad Christian feminism, tensions soon surfaced between Lillian the professional and Henrietta the experienced veteran. Gainer, who was also Edmonton Council's Vice-President and Law Committee Convener, chafed under the older woman's leadership. The autocratic Henrietta refused to share either power or glory with young and inexperienced women. Although twenty years of political campaigns had developed Henrietta's confidence and sophistication, she felt uneasy about her eclectic education and threatened by assertive professionals like Gainer.

At ease interviewing the Premier, Henrietta fretted -and probably with good reason - about addressing the elitist Alberta Women's Association (AWA). When the AWA announced her

Catharine Cavanaugh, "Irene Parly: a Useful Life" (Ph. D. diss., University of Alberta, 1995).

²² *Calgary News Telegram*, 8 November 1913; *Calgary Herald*, 15 March 1920 and 1 October 1932. See also Lorraine Gordon, "Dr. Margaret Norris Patterson: first Woman Police Magistrate in Eastern Canada," *Atlantis*, 10 (Fall 1984), 98-107.

²³ Elise A. Corbet, "A. Maude Riley: 'A Do-Gooder, Not a Suffragette'," *Citymakers: Calgarians After the Frontier*, ed. Max Foran and Sheilagh Jameson (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1987), 209.

²⁴ *Alberta Club Woman's Blue Book* (Calgary: Canadian Women's Press Club, 1917), 121. *Edmonton Journal*, 6 September 1980; City of Edmonton Archives, Gainer Family Files.

upcoming lecture, Henrietta's first reaction was fear. "I felt as if my bones had turned to water", Henrietta mockingly explained to Alice and added, "it is to be hoped that at least I can articulate with my new teeth if I have them by then."²⁵ Feeling "like an imbecile" she quipped that her "brains ... have been muddled by the different bumps I have had, at least I do not seem to be able to think accurately or consecutively."²⁶ Despite such doubts Henrietta, a seasoned public speaker, gave a successful address on "Women in Public Service" to a crowd of two hundred university-educated women. She counselled women to first "measure up to God's idea of womanhood, and then no responsibility will be too deep."²⁷

Within the next two weeks, Henrietta organized councils in Medicine Hat and Red Deer. She mischievously explained to her sister that Medicine Hat women "will think my toothless appearance is my normal one."²⁸ Their 15 March meeting launched a strong Council led by two capable women, Mrs. Bellamy and Mrs. Williamson, the WCTU Vice President and newly-elected school trustee.²⁹ The Medicine Hat Council's labour sympathies contrasted sharply with the conservative and short-lived Red Deer Council, organized on Henrietta's return trip. Within a year, it had opposed the NCWC's lecture invitation to Jane Addams because of her pacifist sympathies, whereas the energetic Medicine Hat Council requested the NCWC endorse the union label.³⁰ Medicine Hat, a CPR union town with a strong Women's Auxiliary to the Typographical Union, supported the Labor Party. Red Deer however, the center of a prosperous farming community, became a UFA heartland and home for agrarian political organizations.

Council idealism appealed to Alberta women whose club publications documented their

²⁵ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 10 March 1916. See "Alberta Women's Association, Edmonton Branch," *Edmonton Club Women's Records*, 34-35.

²⁶ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 8 March 1916.

²⁷ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 14 March 1916.

²⁸ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Millie 16 February 1916.

²⁹ *Woman's Century*, August 1917.

³⁰ *NCWC Yearbook* (1917), 45-46.

organizing passion and wartime patriotism.³¹ Politicians, journalists and club leaders promoted a rosy picture of progressive Alberta. Joining this chorus, Henrietta boasted about “the splendid legislation passed by the Alberta Legislature.”³² Given this optimism, she easily organized an Olds LCW in May, a Macleod Council in September, and Wetaskiwin, Ponoka, Lacombe and Pincher Creek Councils in 1917.³³ Her pleas that these visits were essential links between the local councils and the National Executive was not taken seriously. Despite handicaps, Henrietta nurtured new Councils when Women’s Institutes, with funding from the Alberta Government, were competing for town women’s membership.³⁴

Alberta Council women claimed partial responsibility for the Liberal Government’s creation of the Edmonton and Calgary Woman’s Court in June and December 1916, and for the appointment of Emily Murphy and Alice Jamieson as the first and second female stipendiary magistrate in the British Empire. As with the dower campaign, the Council’s powerful lobby has been forgotten and Murphy given almost total credit. When an Edmonton Court ejected Council women during a contentious prostitution trial, Murphy became the spokesperson who met with Attorney General Cross. On behalf of Edmonton Council, she insisted the government create a woman’s court. Rape, prostitution, seduction and other criminal offenses related to women would be more fairly dealt with by women, argued Murphy.³⁵ By 1916 the Liberals had grown accustomed to negotiating with Council women since Henrietta had petitioned yearly since 1905.

Henrietta, Emily, and Council women considered Women’s Courts and female judges to be important innovations, conferring legal authority on women and establishing legal precedent.

³¹ See *Edmonton Club Women’s Records* and *Alberta Club Woman’s Blue Book*.

³² *NCWC Report* (1917), 33-34.

³³ *NCWC Yearbook* (1917), 32-34.

³⁴ Catherine Cole and Ann Milovic, “Education, Community Service and Social Life: the Alberta Women’s Institutes and Rural Families, 1909-1945,” in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, eds. Catherine A Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 19-32.

³⁵ Anita Penner, *Emily Murphy and the Attempt to Alter the Status of Canadian Women, 1910-1931* (Master’s thesis, Carleton University, 1979), 56.

Without adequate study, scholars have dismissed these gains. One historian argued that these changes did not challenge sex discrimination because their creation rested on the assumption that women were psychologically different, more vulnerable, pure, submissive and domestic than men. When viewed solely through the lens of class analysis on the other hand, Murphy's appointment becomes merely "the result of an elite group offering a conventional reward for community services, and reacting to the minority who sought a separate court to try women."³⁶ Such conclusions underestimate women's achievements and overlook the legal significance of female sexual difference, a problem with which contemporary feminist jurisprudence has struggled.³⁷

Nurturing and moral women, Henrietta believed, could be intellectual just as rational men could be sensitive and moral, a position her feminist colleagues shared. Most male judges and police officers, however, opposed Alice Jamieson and Emily Murphy's appointment. Several launched an appeal with the Alberta Supreme Court arguing that women were not "persons" according to the British North America Act. The appointments were upheld in the *R v. Cyr (1917)* heard by Justice Stuart, the Premier's former law partner and Henrietta's friend. A supporter of women's political rights, Stuart concluded there is "no legal disqualification for holding public office in the government of this country arising from any distinction of sex."³⁸ Male hostility and anti-feminism lay behind the Calgary legal establishment's harassment of Jamieson. "Women could never step out of her female personality and entirely abandon her alleged prejudices and partialities," they argued. Challenging women's intellectual ability, they asserted, "it would be useless to try to plead a case before a woman: for her mind would be made up from the time she should read the newspaper report of the alleged crime."³⁹

³⁶ Penner, 56. For a different assessment see Marjorie Norris, *A Leaven of Ladies* (Calgary: Detselig, 1995), 163-73.

³⁷ See Mary Jane Mossman, "The Paradox of Feminist Engagement With Law," in *Feminist Issues: Race, Class and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Mandell (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 1995), 211-43.

³⁸ Quoted in Linda Silver Dranoff, *Women in Canadian Life: Law* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1977), 91-92. See Olive M. Stone, "Canadian Women as Legal Persons," *Alberta Law Review*, 17:3 (1979), 331-71.

³⁹ *Calgary Herald*, 15 March 1920.

Alberta feminists found the British suffragettes, Emily and Christabel Pankhurst, and the Women's Social and Political Union's methods deplorable. They both understood their struggle to redefine masculinity and femininity and the importance of the slogan "Votes for Women: Chastity for Men."⁴⁰ "I regret lawlessness," wrote McClung following Emily Pankhurst's 13 June 1916 Edmonton lecture. "Whether all the militants have done was right God only knows but I would rather take my place with them in the last day than with the women who sit at home babbling of indirect influence and womanly charm but never doing anything for the betterment of humanity."⁴¹ Suffragette militancy reflected frustration with endless failed campaigns. One historian has suggested "the same thing would have happened in Canada had the suffrage not been achieved."⁴² Henrietta, McClung, and many western feminists shared a unique sense of power, a reflection of their belief that pioneer women's work and worth had facilitated their acceptance as equal partners in politics, if not in economics.

Lurking behind this seductive mythology lay the face of Canadian anti-feminism, a powerful force familiar to Nellie McClung and Henrietta.⁴³ Respectability did not guarantee Henrietta support within her family or community. Henrietta's son-in-law criticized Nellie McClung's combative style, trivialized Henrietta's political activism and fame, and mocked his "eccentric" mother-in-law's style of dress. Claude's ranching buddies expressed similar views. Although Henrietta ignored such opposition, defended her views and refused to change her behavior or dress, she carefully avoided negative publicity.⁴⁴ Small-town society and conservative relatives

⁴⁰ Susan Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain 1860-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

⁴¹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 14 June 1916. See Linda Rasmussen et al., *A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1976), 185.

⁴² Deborah Gorham, "English Militancy and the Canadian Suffrage Movement," *Altantis*, 1:2 (Spring 1976), 110.

⁴³ Veronica Strong-Boag, "Independent Women, Problematic Men: First and Second Wave Anti-Feminism in Canada from Goldwin Smith to Betty Steele," *Occasional Working Papers in Women's Studies and Gender Relations* (Vancouver: Center for Research in Women's Studies and Gender Relations, University of British Columbia, Vol. 2: 2, 1993).

⁴⁴ Interviews Roome with Whipple, Sydney 2 April 1991 and with O. E. Gardiner, Vancouver 4 April 1991.

constrained the elderly Henrietta's behavior.

Building councils in rural communities required skill, persuasion, patience, and above all committed leaders who could ignore public ridicule. The Macleod Council overlooked their town's hostility towards political women and nominated Henrietta and Mrs. Fawcett for school board vacancies.⁴⁵ Neither won the 1916 election but it was a close race. As the Secretary tersely explained, "some members of the School Board made great efforts to defeat the women candidates."⁴⁶ Henrietta lost the 1917 election by one vote which the male returning officer cast to break the tie. Despite election irregularities these results stood as an expression of a divided town.⁴⁷ Had Henrietta been a resident of either Edmonton or Calgary, she could have launched a political career more easily. Macleod limited her options to an unpaid volunteer. During the post-suffrage era, Canada's political and legal establishment demonstrated hostility towards women occupying salaried positions, but exploited women's expertise as volunteers. Henrietta found the Alberta government eager to capitalize on her eighteen-year-career as the NCWC's Law Convener. Although they often requested she share her expertise with the new female voters, such flattering recognition was a poor substitute for a steady salary. Never paid for her services, Henrietta merely received assistance with her travel expenses and accommodation. She gave her time freely, an irony for a struggling widow left without a pension.

The University of Alberta commissioned Henrietta to prepare "some authentic literature to send to the numerous applicants for information reading the laws of Alberta that affect women."⁴⁸ Anxious to win female votes, the Sifton Government distributed her pamphlet free before the 1917 election. As a result of this publicity, Henrietta spent much of her time over the next three years

⁴⁵ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 16 November 1916.

⁴⁶ *NCWC Yearbook* (1917), 140; *Macleod News*, 23 November, 7 and 14 December 1917.

⁴⁷ *MacLeod Times*, 13 December 1917, 10 January 1918.

⁴⁸ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1917), 103. See Mary Crawford, *Legal Status of Women in Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Political Equality League, 1912); Helen Gregory MacGill, *Daughters, Wives and Mothers in British Columbia* (Vancouver: B. C. Moore Printing Co., 1913).

lecturing. Like McClung, Henrietta encouraged women to support the Liberal Government by arguing that women elsewhere had not received the same “courteous and sympathetic understanding” from their governments. Sounding like a prairie separatist, she added “the laws that disqualify Alberta women because of sex are Dominion ... except those that relate to parentage and in these they are given more rights than are other Canadian mothers.”⁴⁹

Alberta women’s euphoric mood touched everyone in 1916 but more sober thoughts prevailed by 1917. The post-suffrage honeymoon ended, a casualty of the dower campaign, the divisive debate on conscription, partial enfranchisement and the issue of women’s nonpartisan versus partisan loyalties.⁵⁰ On the Provincial Law Committee, Henrietta walked the tightrope between rural and urban women’s demands trying to define an acceptable middle ground on married women’s property rights. During the elections, she watched former friends disagree over strategy. Some supported the Conservative and Liberal parties, others the Union Government and the Nonpartisan League. Initially, cooperation seemed possible especially when the January 1917 UFWA Convention welcomed the NCWC as a “sister organization”. Henrietta’s address on women’s unity reflected her evangelical feminism as she argued “men’s work was more material and women’s spiritual.”⁵¹ Although such views meshed neatly with the dominant maternalism and anti-feminism, they also helped keep women in secondary positions. In her position as Chairman of the Law Committee, Henrietta left such “uplifting” rhetoric aside, and instead proposed safe amendments which she felt could unite women. The Committee required the approval of four organizations - LCW, UFWA, WI, and WCTU - before presenting amendments to Government. This cumbersome structure created endless problems for reaching consensus especially on the contentious property rights issue.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Legal Status of Women of Alberta*, 2-3.

⁵⁰ See Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *Toeing the Line: Women and Party Politics in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 3-32.

⁵¹ *UFA Report* (1916).

⁵² *NCWC Yearbook* (1917), 104.

Fearing the new female voter's power, the Alberta government passed the 1917 Dower Act and guaranteed that the homestead would be "unencumbered to the wife during her lifetime unless sold or encumbered with her consent". After a twelve year campaign, few women applauded this remedial legislation. Most expected more progressive reforms while the more radical demanded an equal share in all matrimonial property. At an April emergency meeting, the Edmonton LCW executive tried to censure the "inadequate" legislation but the moderates led by Henrietta and the Calgary LCW prevailed. Silenced by the majority decision to support the bill, the dissidents angrily requested the NCWC allow each LCW direct access to the Provincial Government.⁵³ Their bid for autonomy temporarily alienated the Edmonton LCW from Henrietta and the other LCWs. Over the next seven years, Alberta women struggled with the property question, never finding a satisfactory compromise.

1917 was a year of turmoil for the Edmonton LCW which "hotly debated" issues like "the power of the Executive", the NCWC constitution and conscription. Evelyn Muir Edwards resigned as Recording Secretary and the IODE withdrew.⁵⁴ Younger women obviously chafed under Henrietta's provincial leadership, but it is difficult to draw firmer conclusions in the absence of the LCW Edmonton minutes for these years. It is clear the dissidents felt handicapped by a provincial organization. They believed a few prominent women could achieve more radical legislation by using their personal influence within the Liberal Government. Such sentiments were not shared by the Calgary, Lethbridge or Medicine Hat LCW's, each a staunch supporter of Henrietta. The next six years proved Mrs. O. C. Edwards the more astute politician.

Enfranchisement complicated and changed women's politics in Alberta as elsewhere. No longer outsiders, women began making adjustment to a political process and structure which they had not created. Since former allies could not agree on reforms, these war years witnessed shifting alliances. During the June 1917 provincial election, Louisa McKinney successfully contested her

⁵³ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1918), 85.

⁵⁴ *NCWC Yearbook* (1918), 143.

home riding for the Nonpartisan League, an American agrarian reform movement. Like William Irvine, Calgary's Unitarian social gospel minister, McKinney asserted that the League's platform was "the only place where high-minded women of this Province can stand with dignity and clean feet."⁵⁵ McKinney became the first woman elected to government in the British Empire. A second female MLA, Roberta MacAdam, was elected as independent by the overseas Alberta soldiers and nursing sisters, adding further cement to the growing Alberta legend.⁵⁶

Behind women's excitement at their electoral success lay the shadow of future political divisions. McClung had campaigned for the Liberals and the Sifton Government.⁵⁷ Calgary LCW activist Marion Carson and Amelia Turner, a young Macleod stenographer, supported labour candidates⁵⁸ while Henrietta, a Liberal supporter, opposed McKinney's agrarian politics. Dr. Edwards had always exploited his Ottawa connections within the Liberal Party and expected political patronage and personal influence, especially Henrietta's, to further his career. Still a bourgeois Montrealer, Henrietta was also a pragmatic Canadian liberal nationalist. She found nothing appealing in the League's American political innovations. Henrietta was not enfranchised by Borden's Wartime Elections Act, divisive legislation which gave franchise rights solely to female British subjects with a close relative in the Canadian army.⁵⁹ During the controversial 1917 election she stayed on the sidelines careful to weather the storm partial enfranchisement created within the LCWs and NCWC. While not a Union Government supporter, Henrietta acquiesced to

⁵⁵ *Nutcracker*, 7 June 1917; Paul F. Sharp, *The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 87.

⁵⁶ Sheilagh Jameson, "Give Your Other Vote to the Sister," *Alberta Historical Review*, 15 (Autumn 1976), 10-16.

⁵⁷ Thomas, 165; Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis, *Firing the Heather* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1993), ch. 7.

⁵⁸ Anthony Mardiros, *William Irvine: The Life of a Prairie Radical* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1979); Patricia Roome, "Amelia Turner and Calgary Labour Women 1919-1935," in *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, eds. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 89-117.

⁵⁹ Gloria Geller, "The Wartimes Election Act of 1917 and the Canadian Women's Movement," *Altantis*, 2:1 (Fall 1976), 100-01.

conscription and worked with the Alberta Red Cross following the example of her Montreal friend Lady Drummond, its Canadian Assistant Commissioner.⁶⁰ Other feminists- Alice Chown, Flora Denison, and Francis Beynon - became outspoken pacifists, but not Henrietta.⁶¹

Professor Muir Edwards, in his mid thirties, also showed typical Canadian caution. Rather than enlist, he created the Soldier's Comfort Club, a weekly magazine for U of A's overseas soldiers,⁶² and volunteered for 'Home Defense', hoping to be posted at the Canadian Army training camp west of Calgary.⁶³ Although Alice's British husband Claude was over forty, he tried repeatedly to enlist and finally became a volunteer driver for the British Ambulance Committee of the French Red Cross.⁶⁴

The Alberta Councils experienced the same ambivalence and disagreement over conscription which plagued the Canadian nation. Calgary supported Borden's pro-conscription Union Government whereas Edmonton favoured the anti-conscription Laurier Liberals. This support caused most IODE chapters to withdraw from the LCW. In the postwar era, Edmonton played a diminished role in Alberta women's politics compared to the energetic Calgary Council. Aware of the lack of unanimity in Alberta as in Quebec, Henrietta steered a careful course. "Poor Quebec! ... it is certainly the "Ireland" of Canada," she wrote to Alice, wondering "what is going to take place now that conscription is passed. Some say civil war but I do not think that possible," she concluded

⁶⁰ See Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* (Toronto: Harper and Collins, 1992), 125-26; D. Geneva Lent, *Alberta Red Cross in Peace and War 1914-1947* (Calgary: Canadian Red Cross Society, 1947); Mary MacLeod Moore, "Canadian Woman War Workers Overseas," *Canadian Magazine*, November 1917.

⁶¹ Ramsay Cook, "Francis Marion Beynon and the Crisis of Christian Reformism," in *The West and the Nation*, eds. Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 187-208; Thomas P. Stocknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). Alice Chown, *The Stairway* (1921, reprint with an introduction by Diana Chown, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

⁶² W. H. Alexander, *The University of Alberta: A Retrospective 1908-1929* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1929), 19-20.

⁶³ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Amelia, 3 April 1917.

⁶⁴ Claude Gardiner, *Letters from an English Rancher*, Edited with an introduction by Hugh A. Dempsey (Calgary: Glenbow, 1988), x-xi.

adding her prejudice. "The French Canadian is more expert with his tongue than his gun."⁶⁵ Being a Laurier supporter for twenty years, Henrietta had difficulty with the Liberal Party's demise. Sifton, the Western Liberal, had entered Prime Minister Borden's Cabinet.⁶⁶

Canadian feminists, like Henrietta and Nellie McClung, harbored ambivalent views on war.⁶⁷ Stories of Belgian atrocities and the 1915 sinking of the *Lusitania* caused McClung "to see the whole truth ... that we were waging war on the very Prince of Darkness." Wartime propaganda convinced women that Christian nations were in danger from the barbaric Germans, the personification of evil. "I knew then that no man could die better," explained McClung "than in defending civilization from this ghastly thing which had threatened her."⁶⁸ Henrietta's evangelical feminism allowed her to sanction a just war, a battle of civilization over savagery. In contrast to McClung, Henrietta did not have to listen to her sons when they returned from battle, disillusioned by the senseless barbarism which they had witnessed. Isolated in Macleod, Henrietta accepted the rhetoric that women's participation in politics would bring a new era.

Throughout the war Henrietta followed the overseas fate of Macleod soldiers, like the Mountain Horse brothers, Blood graduates of St. Paul's School who joined the 191st Battalion.⁶⁹ Trying to bridge cultural differences, she explained the reasons behind the war to her former

⁶⁵ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice Gardiner, 12 July 1917.

⁶⁶ See John Herd Thompson, *The Harvest of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), ch. 6; James Miller, "The Alberta Press and the Conscription Issue in the First World War, 1914-1918." (Master's thesis, University of Alberta 1974).

⁶⁷ Nellie McClung, *In Times Like These* (1915, reprint with an introduction by Veronica Strong-Boag, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972). Veronica Strong-Boag, "'Ever a Crusader': Nellie McClung, First-wave Feminist," in *Rethinking Canada*, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1991) 308-21.

⁶⁸ Nellie McClung, *The Next of Kin* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1917), 112-13. See also Patricia Roome, "Images of the West: Social Themes in Prairie Literature, 1898-1930," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary 1976), ch. 2.

⁶⁹ Mike Mountain Horse, *My People The Bloods* (Calgary: Glenbow, 1989), ch. 17; James Dempsey, "The Indians and World War One," *Alberta History* 32:3 (Summer 1983), 1-8; James St. G. Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force," *CHR*, 70:1 (March 1989), 1-26.

servant Quioto, a frequent visitor now that her son-in-law worked for the Macleod NWMP. On this Sunday Quioto and her daughter spent the afternoon with Henrietta. As Henrietta told Alice, "I had finished my dinner but I was glad to cook them theirs."⁷⁰ Quioto expressed concern over her two sons serving with the Canadian Army in France. "The poor old Mother pulled out the little bag the Catholics wear around their neck" and "told me she prayed many times during the night and in the day to God to bring them home safe." With Quioto's daughter to interpret, Henrietta explained "what the English were fighting for and also about some of the dreadful things the Germans did to the women and children in Belgium and France."⁷¹

Henrietta and other Council veterans discovered that the war, women's enfranchisement, the western wheat boom and the reform movement's success each brought new problems for the NCWC, a product of different age. The 1917 Winnipeg Convention, explained the *Woman's Century*, "marks the opening of a new era" for the NCWC "since for the first time the meeting was composed - in greater part- of enfranchised women." Despite "old questions and problems" and "old plans", the editors argued discussions demonstrated "a new sense of hope and a strong note of optimism."⁷² Henrietta's NCWC executive positions gave her intimate knowledge of these old and new questions and a major role in setting policy. She pushed forward many health initiatives ranging from a call for a Federal Child Welfare Bureau, for a Dominion Department of Public Health, for Criminal Code amendments regarding child abuse to legislation for controlling venereal disease.⁷³ When conflict over the NCWC Constitution erupted, Henrietta aligned herself firmly behind tradition. Her response to women's altered place in the labour force was cautious, reasoned and impeccably Liberal. By far her most important contribution involved educating Canadian women about their legal rights, a role most Council women appreciated.

⁷⁰ Interview Roome with Claudia Whipple, Calgary, 30 August 1995.

⁷¹ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 15 August 1917.

⁷² *Woman's Century*, August 1917.

⁷³ R. L. Schnell, "'A Children's Bureau for Canada': The Origins of the Canadian Council On Child Welfare, 1913-1921," in *The Benevolent State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, eds. Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert (Toronto: Garmond Press, 1987), 95-111.

The tension between old and new approaches within the Council surfaced during debate on the moral questions surrounding the treatment of sexual offenders. At the NCWC's request, Henrietta's group gathered statistics which documented significant sexual abuse of young children by male offenders. The Law Committee recommended two types of medical intervention: first, the U of A researchers' experimental "X-ray treatment" for "abnormal sexual impulses", and second, castration. The later was the WCTU's old favorite and was supported by Alberta's new female judges.⁷⁴ Younger professionals, like Dr. Ritchie England, found such views embarrassing, an opinion historians have echoed. Since child sexual abuse remains pervasive and problematic today, their concerns merit investigation as women's protest against male sexual violence and exploitation. University graduates' scientific approach gained the upper hand in the NCWC during the war and caused volunteer "service" workers like Henrietta to appear less modern. It was, however, a tempest in a teapot and a battle over style. As advocates of state intervention and legislation to control behavior, Henrietta, Council veterans and younger professionals were all handmaidens of modernity. Both factions supported the 1917 Woman's Platform and called on the Canadian Government to create a Department of Health with a Child Welfare Division directed by "a competent woman".⁷⁵ The Canadian Government hired Dr. Helen MacMurchy in 1919, but contrary to women's request created "a narrow understaffed child and maternal hygiene unit" best known for its "Little Blue Books" for mothers. Charlotte Whitten and other disappointed reformers responded by creating the Canadian Council on Child Welfare, a voluntary association.⁷⁶

The NCWC and the Law Committee joined other Canadian reformers to demand VD legislation, following publicity that the Canadian Expeditionary Force had the highest level of VD

⁷⁴ *NCWC Yearbook* (1917), 104.

⁷⁵ *NCWC Yearbook* (1917), 69-73.

⁷⁶ Janice P. Dickin McGinnis, "From Health to Welfare: Federal Government Policies Regarding Standards of Public Health for Canadians, 1919-1945," (Ph. D diss., University of Alberta, 1981); Schnell, "A Children's Bureau for Canada," 108; Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: the Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988), 151.

among troops in the western European theatre.⁷⁷ Dr. Brett, Alberta's Lieutenant Governor and Chairman of the 1916 Alberta Social Service Congress, argued more people died in Alberta each year from syphilis than tuberculosis.⁷⁸ Henrietta led the Alberta Councils' request for legislation to create a system for disease control and public information, free diagnosis and treatment, and compulsory isolation of dangerous offenders. In April 1918 Alberta implemented legislation which gave health authorities extensive interventionist powers. Henrietta's Law Committee and the NCWC also endorsed *The Prevalence of Venereal Disease in Canada*, a report prepared by the Canadian Conservation Commission which recommended registration and isolation of infected persons, and segregation of the mentally unfit. In 1918 they welcomed the creation of a National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, later renamed the Canadian Social Hygiene Council, a conservative organization which ignored the message of condoms and 1909 discovery of Salvarson's treatment for syphilis.⁷⁹

Henrietta's Committee feared returned soldiers would infect their wives, prostitutes and "feeble-minded" women, easy targets for men's sexual advances.⁸⁰ Canadian eugenics advocates saw feeble-mindedness as a result of venereal disease, illegitimacy, and infant mortality. Ironically, MacMurchy argued that sterilization rather than segregation was a more effective method for controlling the unfit.⁸¹ Sterilizing "unfit women" seemed scientific, castrating sexual offenders merely barbaric. MacMurchy, Emily Murphy and the NCWC's Committee on the Equal Moral Standard and Traffic in Women played a leading role in eugenics issues such as race degeneration,

⁷⁷ Jay Cassel, *The Secret Plague: Venereal Disease in Canada 1838-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 122.

⁷⁸ "A Deadly Plague," *Woman's Century*, January 1917.

⁷⁹ Janice P. Dickin McGinnis, "From Salvarson to Penicillin: Medical Science and Venereal Disease Control in Canada," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Medicine*, ed. Wendy Mitchinson and Janice Dickin McGinnis (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 126-95.

⁸⁰ See Gail Savagè, "'The Willful Communication of a Loathsome Disease': Martial Conflict and Venereal Disease in Victorian England," *Victorian Studies*, 34 (Autumn 1990), 36-54.

⁸¹ Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1884-1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 37-45.

feeble-mindedness or venereal disease.⁸²

The division between older and younger Council women surfaced over the recommendations of "Women as Citizen" section in the 1917 Women's Platform, especially Council's silence on suffrage. With a nod to its western members, the Platform praised non-partisanship. Agrarian feminists like Violet McNaughton scoffed at Ontario Councils' attempts to create a Woman's Party, a move Henrietta favoured. Unlike Henrietta, McNaughton believed that class differences divided women too deeply for a meaningful program to succeed.⁸³ A growing western regional consciousness, heightened by wartime prosperity, challenged this vision also. Success for a Woman's Party dimmed as western LCWs chafed under the constraints of the NCWC's loose federalism.

Until the war ended, women worked at cooperation trying to create the female equivalent of male "statesmanship". The Ottawa Woman's War Conference called by Newton Rowell, the Vice-Chairman of the War Committee, for 25 February to March 1, 1918 symbolized women's wartime contribution and altered status as citizens. Henrietta, Alberta's LCW representative, joined over eighty leaders, among them Irene Parlby of the UFWA, Emily Murphy of the Canadian Women's Press Club, Mme Gérin-Lajoie from the Fédération Nationale St. Jean Baptiste, and Rosalie Torrington, the NCWC President. Delegates attended one of the following sectional meetings, on agricultural production, public health, thrift and economy, national registration and industrial activity. Henrietta's session on public health called for legislation to control venereal disease and a federal department of health. Among the many resolutions proposed, those on industrial activity would become increasingly relevant in 1919.⁸⁴

As befitting a senior "political advisor", Henrietta attended the House of Commons sessions, joined the NCWC deputation to the Government, and participated in NCWC executive meetings.

⁸² See Terry Chapman, "The Early Eugenic Movement in Western Canada," *Alberta History*, 25 (Autumn 1977) 9-17. Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982).

⁸³ Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women*, 334-35.

⁸⁴ NAC, RG 14, D2, Vol. 35 *Sessional Papers* no. 67, "Women's War Conference," 2-5.

On 20 March she listened to the Federal Franchise Bill. Her thoughts travelled back to 1896 when she had charge of “the last petition for women’s suffrage.”⁸⁵ Although she argued for “the effectiveness of persistent effort and the power of public opinion when such opinion is backed by the power of the vote,” the Senate defeated the House of Commons amendment to raise the age of consent to eighteen. “For twenty-two years the National Council has untiringly worked for this necessary protection to young girls,” wrote Henrietta. “It is with keen disappointment we see our hopes so nearly realized deferred again”. With typical patience, she concluded, “next year we may see the measure become law”.⁸⁶ What she did not say, as always, was that the Senate’s obstruction would encourage the NCWC to petition for women to be appointed to the Senate.

Henrietta and other seasoned Councillors were more accustomed to battering away at government blockades than fighting grass fires, such as the agrarian revolt which swept the prairie provinces and permanently altered Canada’s political map. The agrarian movement by embracing the social gospel, “wedded a universal religious perspective to the particular problems of its own condition.”⁸⁷ This combination provided some prairie feminists with a righteous crusade. Prairie representatives at Winnipeg in 1917, Brantford 1918 and Regina 1919 demanded greater power within the NCWC. Henrietta, as a Council veteran and evangelical feminist, remained an outsider to the movement sweeping the prairies. “That wonderful woman Mrs. O. Cc. Edwards of Alberta,” commented Nova Scotia Council member E. M. Murphy. “Personally, I decline to believe that any one town owns Mrs. Edwards. She is a splendid contribution from a splendid province.”⁸⁸

Henrietta believed lobbying, compromise and dialogue would resolve these tensions. At the Ottawa executive meetings, she opposed the proposed constitutional changes. Before the June 1918

⁸⁵ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Yearbook* (1919), 89-90.

⁸⁶ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Yearbook* (1918), 81.

⁸⁷ Richard Allen, “The Social Gospel as the Religion of the Agrarian Revolt,” in *The Prairie West: Historical Readings*, eds. R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 448.

⁸⁸ *Woman’s Century*, August 1917.

Conference she visited eight Alberta towns speaking against the changes, explaining the Women's War Conference and outlining women's role as citizens. The Convention appointed Henrietta and the BC Provincial VP, Lillie Day, both loyal NCWCers, and western dissidents Margaret McWilliams, Violet McNaughton, and Emily Murphy to the Special Committee on the Constitution convened by McWilliams, the Winnipeg president. Before the Committee prepared its report, however, the Convention made a significant change, one which Henrietta had defended at the previous executive meeting.⁸⁹ They created a temporary Provincial Executive Committee "authorized to bring forward to the provincial legislature all provincial matters endorsed by a majority of federated associations." This group could also "invite cooperation of other associations in the province, if desired."⁹⁰

Back in Alberta, Henrietta established a Provincial Executive Committee in October and absorbed the former Law Committee. Their first meeting Henrietta advertised as Calgary's "most representative and influential gathering of women". She became Chairman, Winnifed Ross of the UFWA, the Vice-Chairman, and Maude Riley, the Recording Secretary. An Alberta WCTU representative also joined the Committee.⁹¹ For the next thirteen years Henrietta presided over these annual October meetings held in Calgary. Each December she led a women's delegation to Edmonton to present their requests to the Premier.

Having achieved her goals, Henrietta opposed McWilliams' proposals and ardently defended the relevance of old-style politics for the post-suffrage political environment. Although both Westerners and Liberals, Henrietta and McWilliams shared little in common. Twenty-four years younger than Henrietta, McWilliams possessed a University of Toronto education but had spent only eight years in Winnipeg and less time in Council work. A member of Reverend C.W. Gordon's Presbyterian Church, she was impressed by the social gospel. According to her biographer, she

⁸⁹ NCWC Papers, Vol. 55, Executive Minutes 1918.

⁹⁰ *Woman's Century*, July 1918.

⁹¹ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Reports of Provincial Vice-Presidents Alberta," *NCWC Yearbook* (1919), 42.

awakened to feminism in the interwar period.⁹² McWilliams and her lawyer husband supported the separatist tendencies within the western Liberal Party and shared a growing resentment of eastern political power, a sentiment that Henrietta considered ridiculous. Entrenched in her Council positions, Henrietta obviously did not understand McWilliams' concerns. Only the recommendation regarding biennial meetings struck Henrietta as relevant. Trained in the older tradition of influence politics, Henrietta considered Honorary Presidents valuable. In fact, suggestions to limit elected office to three years and to eliminate proxy voting were direct attacks on Henrietta's position. At the 1918 Convention, she had served as proxy for all of the Alberta Councils except Edmonton and Calgary.⁹³ When committee members filled out their questionnaires, McWilliams complained to McNaughton that "the conservatives vote in a solid phalanx ... while the radicals vary."⁹⁴

After finally tasting power following enfranchisement, Henrietta, Emily Cummings, and other veterans were loath to resign in favor of younger women who had not earned their place by participating in the struggle. Writing in the *Woman's Century*, Henrietta argued that the proposed changes to the NCWC's constitution were neither democratic nor consistent with Canada's parliamentary tradition. She suggested readers consider that the

... limitation of eligibility for office is neither British or Canadian ... The yearly election by ballot ought to provide the way for dropping an inefficient officer rather than a way which in getting rid of one inefficient officer would deprive the council of many valuable and efficient workers. The Parliament of Canada has no such rule ... In large corporations and businesses, a head of a department is valuable in proportion as he gains knowledge and experience; so in the work of the National Council, embracing many branches and dealing with vital questions, the efficiency gained by experience is most valuable.

The three year rule would have "apprentices" conducting Council's work, a foolish proposition according to Henrietta.⁹⁵

⁹² Mary Kinnear, *Margaret McWilliams: Interwar Feminist* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

⁹³ Nellie McClung, "Alberta News," *Woman's Century*, July 1918.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Kinnear, 65.

⁹⁵ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Laws," *Woman's Century*, May 1919, 37.

Sophia Stanford's 1918 election to the presidency pleased Council veterans but alienated younger women and western dissidents who favoured the Toronto activist, Beryl Plumptre. Trying to mend fences and identify supporters, Stanford travelled West visiting Macleod and attending an LCW reception on 26 April 1919.⁹⁶ "A gracious embodiment of our National motto - The Golden Rule," proclaimed an enthusiastic Henrietta who felt "her inspiring addresses" impressed "her hearers of the value of unseen and eternal things".⁹⁷ Such comments left little doubt that Henrietta and Stanford understood each other. Even though Stanford had vigorously opposed Henrietta's recommendation for Provincial Executive Councils, they shared a similar vision for the NCWC.

When the 1919 Regina Convention rejected most of McWilliams' reforms and some members attacked her as "the embodiment of the materialism of the West", the angry Winnipegger recommended her LCW withdraw. Although several historians have argued that many Saskatchewan and Alberta LCW's left as a result of similar alienation, other factors contributed to the demise of Alberta's councils.⁹⁸ The newer, smaller and weaker councils located in the UFA heartland of central Alberta collapsed. Had the larger Calgary or Edmonton LCW withdrawn there would be more substance to the argument of anger at the "old guard" and the NCWC's conservatism. To accommodate this agrarian protest, between 1918 and 1921, the NCWC made gradual but significant changes, beginning with the Provincial Councils and reforms to the proxy system. The problem, however, was "only partially an issue of Council structure and procedures" and more fundamentally "a question of the usefulness of such a federation."⁹⁹ Henrietta believed that the NCWC could serve enfranchised women just as it had women since Lady Aberdeen's days, but younger western feminists like Irene Parlby and Violet MacNaughton placed their confidence in provincial organizations.

⁹⁶ *NCWC Yearbook* (1918), 185-86.

⁹⁷ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Reports of Provincial Vice-Presidents: Alberta," *NCWC Yearbook* (1919), 42.

⁹⁸ Strong-Boag, 389-90; Kinnear, 66.

⁹⁹ Griffiths, 150.

Parting company with these westerners, Henrietta made the NCWC her top priority especially after Muir died. In November 1918 he contracted influenza while volunteering at the emergency hospital during Edmonton's epidemic and died on the 11th.¹⁰⁰ "Professor overworked himself" explained the President who viewed Muir's death as "a case of martyrdom to a high sense of public duty."¹⁰¹ "Every one speaks of Muir's noble death," Henrietta wrote to Alice, adding "it is a great comfort to me so many of the letters say he died a soldier's death." Hoping to console her daughter, she continued: "When I see you I will tell you of my little visit with him. He was so quiet, said little, but with clear brave eyes saw death coming nearer each hour." Adding to the picture of a martyr, she concluded: "his last thought was to spare others."¹⁰²

Muir shared Henrietta's energetic personality, evangelical faith and service ethic. He had been a Knox Presbyterian Sunday School teacher, an Edmonton YWCA officer, an organizer of the University's Athletic Association, a rugby coach and a Student Council advisor. As an excellent example of muscular Christianity, Muir acquired an impressive professional reputation. He redesigned Strathcona's water treatment plant following the 1911 typhoid epidemic, and prevented other outbreaks. Later in 1913 he received commissions as Dominion and Alberta Land Surveyor.¹⁰³ When death visited her family for the third time in five years, Henrietta took refuge in her Christian faith. The two Biblical verses which she selected for Muir's tombstone expressed her belief - "That mortality might be swallowed up of Life" and "Greater Love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends." When Alice offered to pay for the family tombstones, Henrietta explained "it has grieved me that the way was not clear to place one for Father."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Janice Dickin McGinnis, "'A City Faces an Epidemic,'" *Alberta History*, 24:4 (Autumn 1976), 1-11.

¹⁰¹ University of Alberta Archives, William Muir Edwards Personnel File, Letter William Kerr to Frederick B. Brown, 16 November 1918.

¹⁰² EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 20 November 1918.

¹⁰³ W. M. Edwards Personnel File, Letter W. Muir Edwards to Strathcona Mayor 21 January 1911. Obituary Notice, *Alberta Land Surveyors' Association Annual Report* (1921).

¹⁰⁴ EG Papers. Letter Henrietta to Alice, 29 November 1918.

Marking Oliver and Muir's graves to symbolize their Christian service mattered deeply to Henrietta.

Muir's death overshadowed the November 11th armistice celebration just as it coloured the next years. After Evelyn's decision to move back to Ottawa, Alice, Henrietta's only remaining child, became very precious. "My thoughts are constantly with you and Aunt Min. I had such a longing to see you yesterday." She added "if you do not hear from me it is not because I am not thinking of you."¹⁰⁵ Ten year old Claudia, who had been educated by her mother and a governess, had spent the previous six months with her grandmother attending school. When Claude left for Europe in 1917, he found a manager for his Olsen Creek Ranche. After ten years of isolation, Alice moved into town so Oliver could also attend school. Although Henrietta hoped to keep her daughter and two grandchildren near, they joined Claude in England during the summer of 1919. A legacy from Senator W.C. Edwards, who died in 1921, gave Alice financial independence, paid for Claudia and Oliver's eastern Canadian private school education, and enabled the Gardiners to travel. In 1925 they sold their Olsen Creek Ranche, severed their ties with Alberta and moved to Victoria. Henrietta and Amelia stayed, the only remaining members of the Edwards household.¹⁰⁶

After Muir's death Henrietta's financial situation worsened. Her son had supported his mother by financing her purchase of rental property in Macleod. Now worried about the future, she offered her Indian collection of two hundred fifty items to the University of Alberta for \$5000. While visiting Edmonton, a New York museum agent assessed the Edwards' possessions as the best private collection because of its "scientific interest". However, Henrietta patriotically announced to Dr. Tory she would accept his less generous offer. "I would regret to see it go to the States as so much of our historic and scientific objects have already gone."¹⁰⁷ Henrietta insisted that the

¹⁰⁵ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to Alice, 29 November 1918.

¹⁰⁶ Interview Roome with Claudia Whipple, Calgary, August 28, 1995 and with Oliver Gardiner, Vancouver, 23 March 1993.

¹⁰⁷ U of A Archives, Henrietta Muir Edwards Collection, Letter Henrietta to Dr. Allan, 11 October 1919.

University display the collection and acknowledge Oliver, an agreement the University honoured.¹⁰⁸ Presiding over the sale of her Native collection demonstrated Henrietta's continuing role as a "benevolent" colonizer.

During these years Henrietta's approach to "Indian women" demonstrated the limitations of her liberal faith in the law as a solution to women's problems. She believed that legal equality would benefit Native women. The Law Committee had resolved that the NCWC "seek such legislation as will raise the social status of our Indian women and afford her equal legal protection with our white women."¹⁰⁹ Except for Emily Cummings and Dr. Ritchie, few Council women showed much personal enthusiasm for the campaign or shared Henrietta's liberalism. Henrietta and Emily were appointed as NCWC representatives to the Social Service Council's Committee on Indian Affairs in 1921. Using non-Indian women as role models helped solidify the stereotype of the slovenly Indian woman who neglected her house and her children. In the 1920s, the Department of Indian Affairs intervened in mothering and child care with its field matrons and social workers.¹¹⁰ Instead of bringing in Henrietta's brave new world of equal legal protection, state intervention produced compulsory fostering and adoption of Indian babies, involuntary sterilization of Indian women and a bitter legacy of persecution and discrimination.¹¹¹

Most feminists shared Henrietta's view of the state as "benevolent", grateful when governments responded to their campaigns for mother's allowances, equal guardianship, minimum wage for women and divorce reform. Henrietta applauded the Alberta Government's 1919

¹⁰⁸ *University of Alberta Press Bulletin*, 5: 20 (2 April 1920); "Dr. and Mrs. O. C. Edwards: Pioneer Collectors," *Friends of the University of Alberta Museums Newsletter* (Spring 1985). Buffalo "these Beast on ye Barren ground" (Catalogue Ring House Gallery Exhibition, 21 June to 6 October 1985).

¹⁰⁹ *NCWC Yearbook* (1917).

¹¹⁰ On American Indian field matrons see Lisa E. Emmerich, "To Respect and Love and Seek the Ways of White Women': Field Matrons, the Office of Indian Affairs, and the Civilization Policy, 1890-1930," (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, 1987) and "Right in the Midst of My Own People': Native American Women and the Field Matron Program," *American Indian Quarterly*, (Spring 1991), 201-16.

¹¹¹ Pamela White, "Reconstructing the Domestic Sphere - Prairie Indian Women on Reserves: Image, Ideology and State Policy, 1880-1930" (Ph. D. diss., McGill University, 1987), 138-43, 266.

Mother's Allowance Act which recognized the value of childbearing and supported the principle of government support to mother's with young children when the father was negligent. Pioneer social workers, like Charlotte Whitton who profited from such legislation, helped the state enter "into inadequate homes as the active agent of middle-class values."¹¹² Henrietta had approached the issue with more idealism, expecting to establish the importance of motherhood, not anticipating women's claims would be sacrificed for children's needs. In hindsight, such legislation perpetuated women's dependency, substituting a male-dominated state in place of the patriarchal family.

The patriarchal family concerned Henrietta and most feminists of her day, more than the evolving state as illustrated by the NCWC campaign to change Canada's divorce law.¹¹³ Since her Quebec years, Henrietta had supported liberal reforms in marriage and divorce law to remove the double standard and ensure equity. The war heightened married women's problems and created a climate to press harder for reforms. The issue surfaced as a dispute over whether the three prairie provinces could grant divorces.¹¹⁴ In March 1919, Henrietta joined the NCWC delegation to the Federal Government to present a divorce petition. Their four recommendations were premised on establishing equity and uniformity across Canada, not encouraging "laxity in divorce." They requested affordable legal fees and provincial divorce courts "composed of men and women Judges."¹¹⁵ Wives should be permitted to have a separate domicile and thus able to divorce a husband who "had removed his domicile to another country." They also argued that women and men's legal identities should be unaffected by marriage, a position Henrietta had fought for since

¹¹² Veronica Strong-Boag, "'Wages For Housework': Mothers' Allowances and the Beginnings of Social Security in Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 14:1 (Spring 1979); 25. See also Patricia Rooke, *No Bleeding Heart. Charlotte Whitton: A Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); Cynthia R. Comacchio, *"Nations Are Built of Babies": Saving Ontario Mothers and Children* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

¹¹³ See James G. Snell, *In the Shadow of the Law: Divorce in Canada 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 44-45.

¹¹⁴ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC* (1918), 82.

¹¹⁵ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Laws ... the Petition on Divorce," *NCWC Yearbook* (1919), 90. *Woman's Century*, April 1919, 10.

the 1890s.¹¹⁶ Despite their efforts, piecemeal reforms did not occur until 1925 and 1930. The Canadian public, the judiciary, and the state resisted redefining the nature of the family and women's role within this structure. Few Canadians were prepared to question the ideal of the conjugal family, a concept which had ideological, economic and political dimensions. Canadian society supported "the ideal of familism" which Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh have explained as "politically pro-family ideas." Such views served to strengthen the ideal family composed of a male-breadwinner and a female domestic labourer.¹¹⁷

Postwar labour conflict deepened Henrietta's support for an interventionist state which would be an "impartial umpire", mediating between capital and labour. She echoed the same message of industrial harmony through conciliation which William Lyon Mackenzie King had advocated in the prewar years.¹¹⁸ Ideological convictions rather than personal experience with either working women or labour conflict, both absent from southern Alberta's ranching community, dictated Henrietta's position. Had she lived in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge or Calgary, her views might have been less superficial, uninformed, and romantic. In company with most Canadian feminists, Henrietta welcomed Alberta's 1917 Factory Act which established a minimum wage for working women.¹¹⁹ Henrietta explained that this "living wage of \$1.50 per shift" made Alberta "- the first Province, I think, to pass such legislation," but ignored many women's criticism that the rate was too low. Margaret Lewis, a former English WSPU member, became Factory Inspector, a position she held

¹¹⁶ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1921), 97-98.

¹¹⁷ Snell, 28; M. Barrett and M. McIntosh, *Anti-Social Family* (London: 1980), 26. See also Jan Ursel, *Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1992), 125-72.

¹¹⁸ William Lyon Mackenzie King, *Industry and Humanity*, (1918, reprint with an introduction by David J. Bercuson, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973); Paul Caven, *An Impartial Umpire: Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

¹¹⁹ See Veronica Strong Boag, "Working Women and the State: the Case of Canada 1889-1945," *Atlantis* 6:2 (Spring 1981), 1-9; Linda Kealey, "Women and Labour During World War I: Women and Workers and Minimum Wage in Manitoba," in *First Days. Fighting Days*, 29-99; Margaret McCallum, "Keeping Women in Their Place: the Minimum Wage in Canada, 1910-1925," *Labour/Le Travail*, 17 (Spring 1986), 29-56; Bob Russell, "A Fair or Minimum Wage? Women Workers, the State and the Origins of Wage Regulation in Western Canada", *Labour/Le Travail*, 28 (Fall 1991), 59-88.

for the next seventeen years.¹²⁰

At the 1917 NCWC Convention, Medicine Hat delegates tried to enlist support for “the union label” campaign. Mrs. Bellamy moved “that as a guarantee of good conditions and fair wages for the employees, the National Council of Women undertakes to have the union label on all its printed matter”, and argued that the Typographical Union “was the oldest union standing for equal pay to men and women.” While Calgary’s President Alice Jamieson supported the resolution, Henrietta waffled and merely requested clarification. After the resolution’s narrow defeat, the NCWC created a special committee to study the labour question. The NCWC’s Standing Committee on the Organization of Women’s Labour represented the extent of Henrietta and the NCWC’s accommodation to labour.¹²¹

The general strikes of 1919 in Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton reinforced Henrietta’s views on government regulation. At the request of Calgary’s Mayor, Henrietta joined a committee investigating the conflict. “Capital and Labor are both to blame” she argued, adding that capital must pay “a fair and sufficient wage” and the government should set “a fixed rate” for a fair profit “to protect the general public and particularly the working classes.” If profiteering ended, working people could purchase “simple and stable comforts.” One can hear the Montreal bourgeois in her analysis that, “a tasteful and durable carpet, a comfortable reading chair, and a few books of which he is himself the owner, the working man might find home a more attractive place than those resorts where radicalism is invited.”¹²² As Henrietta knew, Alberta’s coal mining towns had an “infamous” reputation for radicalism. An advocate of state paternalism, she believed government regulation of the coal industry would undercut discontent.¹²³

¹²⁰ *Alberta Club Women's Blue Book*, 123.

¹²¹ Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women*, 305.

¹²² Henrietta Muir Edwards, “H. C. L. Report to the Mayor of Calgary,” *Woman's Century*, March 1920.

¹²³ See Warren Caragata, *Alberta Labour: A Heritage Untold* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co, 1979), ch 5. David J. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: the Rise and Fall of the One Big Union* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1979). Allen Seager, “A Proletariat in Wild Rose Country: the Alberta Coal Miners, 1905-1945,” (Ph. D. diss., York University, 1981).

The 1920 NCWC Women's Platform endorsed the principles of collective bargaining, "cooperation and profit sharing", equal pay for work of equal value, and an end to sex discrimination as the basis for employment.¹²⁴ Never having worked for wages in seventy-one years coloured Henrietta's understanding of these important principles. With the formation of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance, after the 1919 Calgary teachers' strike, female teachers demanded equal pay. Henrietta's vague response was that "equal salaries of men and women teachers is another indication of how woman is coming into her own."¹²⁵

Catching the new era's spirit, the *Woman's Century* launched a legal column in November 1918. As Henrietta explained, "enfranchised women citizens" wanted "accurate information concerning the laws of Canada". A condescending attitude, long and tedious discussions, and competition from young female lawyers and journalists anxious to provide more stimulating pieces shortened Henrietta's tenure with the periodical.¹²⁶ Her first piece accused Canadian women of being "superficial", passive and uninterested in legal questions. Women were fortunate "our men folk are better than their laws," announced Henrietta.

Sheltered and guided by our fathers and husbands, the great majority of us are as helpless as children and are not qualified to form an intelligent opinion of any document placed before us to sign - or to understand the great issues of the day. But like children, we are not too old to learn, and it should be the endeavor of every woman citizen to remedy her lack of knowledge.¹²⁷

Such a patronizing and elitist lecture made Henrietta sound like an aging and boring autocrat. She promised more interesting material would follow her "rather dry and lengthy" column on "the Constitution of Canada". Given this piece was submitted just after Muir's death, her effort was commendable.¹²⁸ Her later piece on the proposed changes to the NCWC Constitution was more

¹²⁴ *Woman's Century*, January 1920.

¹²⁵ *NCWC Yearbook* (1919). See also F. E. Hall, "Alberta Teachers' Alliance: Equal Pay for Equal Work in Calgary," *Woman's Century*, May 1919, 39.

¹²⁶ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Laws," *Woman's Century*, November 1918, 18.

¹²⁷ *Woman's Century*, November 1918.

¹²⁸ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Laws," *Woman's Century*, January 1919, 31.

exciting. In rejecting the proposal to elect three conveners to each Standing Committee, Henrietta invoked natural laws. "God has made living things with varying number of feet from bipeds to centipede," she explained "but never one with two, much less three heads."¹²⁹

Three new writers, Edith Lang, Lillie Young McKinney, and Vera Robinson took over the legal column. Henrietta could not have been pleased since Lang had opposed her for the position of Law Convener. McKinney, a Calgary "writer of special legal and news stories" asked to supervise a "Round Table Regarding Laws". A UFA supporter, she openly criticized the Liberal Government and initiated a public battle with Henrietta over equal division of marital property.¹³⁰ In her column McKinney questioned: "Are we asking for justice or favoritism? Are we asking to be protected against our husbands or are we asking to be protected with our husbands?" Marriage must be a partnership of equals, McKinney believed and she advised veteran feminists to abandon their requests for protection from their husbands.¹³¹ Robinson, a barrister, promised in her 1921 column "Legal Questions and Answers" to answer any questions, either in public or private, that might be "troubling our readers." Henrietta had difficulty competing with McKinney's sensational journalism and Robinson's professional qualifications.¹³²

Attempts at dislodging Henrietta from her executive positions failed. A skillful organizer, each year Henrietta visited every Alberta Council, worked with their executives and encouraged participation in legislative reform. The October 1919 and 1920 Provincial Council's Executive Meetings gathered together over twenty women. The resulting agenda which they presented to the Alberta Government reflected long negotiation, especially over married property rights. Despite conflict, Henrietta believed the Alberta Council was the "best organization to consolidate and express the wishes of and represent the various groups of organized women." The December 1920

¹²⁹ *Woman's Century*, May 1919, 27.

¹³⁰ *Women's Century*, October 1920, 33.

¹³¹ *Woman's Century*, October 1920.

¹³² *Woman's Century*, March 1921.

delegation, for example, requested stronger property legislation, liberal divorce reforms, support for children "born out of wedlock" and state care for "mental defectives."¹³³

Henrietta played a major role at the 1920 St. John, New Brunswick NCWC Convention. Besides delivering the Law Convener and Alberta vice-president's reports, she sat on the Women's Platform Committee with Emily Murphy and Alice Jamieson and assisted in preparing its special report. For several years she had also been an active member of the Special Committee on Revisions to the Criminal Code, convened by Dr. Grace Ritchie England. She was one of "the recognized leaders of many a convention battle", an honour shared with women like Mrs. Cummings, Mrs. Shortt and Mrs. Hamilton.¹³⁴ Often representing the conservative position, Henrietta also introduced new initiatives such as calling for women's appointment to juries, an issue dealt with in the 1920s.¹³⁵

"You are now citizens," explained the Woman's Platform, echoing Henrietta's lecture on women's new responsibilities.¹³⁶ After spending a lifetime struggling for these rights, Henrietta refused to follow younger women. She expected them to accept her leadership and experience. Behind her stubborn defense of her executive positions lay her conviction that the work God had called her to do was still unfinished. Fresh campaigns, such as one for women's appointment to the Senate, had yet to be initiated. Although the 1920s privileged youth and modernity, to stop her activities seemed unthinkable. Henrietta was wise to trust her instincts. Had she quietly retired from

¹³³ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1921), 41.

¹³⁴ *Woman's Century*, November 1920.

¹³⁵ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1920), 124-29.

¹³⁶ *NCWC Yearbook* (1920).

public service to her garden in Macleod, she would have missed becoming one of the famous five Alberta women.

IX. God's Mouthpiece, 1921-1931

Some of Henrietta's dreams for women, as well as her personal desire for fame, were finally realized before her death. During this decade she emerged as a sophisticated political leader at ease asserting women's citizenship rights, whether it be to sit on juries, own an equal share of matrimonial property, have their nationality not be dependent upon marriage, or be appointed to the Senate. Despite a growing anti-feminism and a resurgence of the ideology of domesticity, women's politics demonstrated experimentation.¹ Strong-minded females like Nellie McClung, Agnes Macphail, Irene Parlby and Cairine Wilson pioneered new pathways for women as members of parliament, cabinet ministers and senators.² Special recognition also came to Henrietta at the 1921 NCWC Calgary Conference, the 1925 ICW Washington Quinquennial, the 1930 Moncton NCWC Conference and during the 1929 "Persons Case".³

Now a senior activist, Henrietta expected to be taken seriously by government officials, women's organizations and especially NCWC members. This was a tall order considering that "feminism came under heavy scrutiny - and fire - by the end of the 1920s",⁴ a decade which privileged youth, innovation and technology.⁵ In the aftermath of the war, discord dominated all

¹ Veronica Strong-Boag, "Independent Women, Problematic Men: First and Second Wave Anti-Feminism in Canada from Goldwin Smith to Betty Steele," *Occasional Working Papers in Women's Studies and Gender Relations* (Vancouver: Centre for Research in Women's Studies and Gender Relations, University of British Columbia, Vol. 2: 2, 1993). See also Marlene Le Gates, *Making Waves: a History of Feminism in Western Society* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996); Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), ch. 6.

² See Terry Crowley, *Agnes Macphail and the Politics of Equality* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1990). Valerie Knowles, *First Person: a Biography of Cairine Wilson* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988).

³ See Una Maclean, "The Famous Five," *Alberta Historical Review* (Spring 1956); Olive M. Stone, "Canadian Women as Legal Persons: How Alberta Combined Judicial, Executive, and Legislative Powers to Win Full legal personality for all Canadian Women," *Alberta Law Review*, XVII (1979); Rudy G. Marchildon, "The Persons Controversy," *Atlantis*, VI (Spring 191), 93-113.

⁴ Cott, 271.

⁵ Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: the Lives of Girls and Women 1901-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 19), ch. 6.

levels of Canadian society. Traditional political parties suffered while new groups, the Progressive Party and the United Farmers of Alberta, gained in popularity. The labour movement battled fiercely to keep their wartime gains.⁶ Everyone felt the impact of the automobile, the radio, the electrical and communications revolution, and American popular culture. William Aberhart, Alberta's future Social Credit Premier, began his Sunday religious broadcast from Calgary in 1923 just as the Edmonton Grads, the ladies basketball team, made their bid for international fame.⁷ All over North America, aging feminists like Henrietta fought two contradictory stereotypes. To some critics, their insistence on removing "sex discrimination" was an "archaic" message. To others, their demands were too "futuristic".⁸

Still spiritual, ambitious and tenacious, Henrietta navigated the stormy 1920s remarkably well. True to her evangelical roots, she believed Christians died "only when they had fulfilled their mission in this world."⁹ For as long as she enjoyed good health, Henrietta worked towards achieving women's full participation in Canadian public life, a cause she believed was divinely inspired. Not every issue attracted the activist's interest. While Henrietta favored McClung's campaign for women's ordination in the United Church, she had never sought a leadership position in the Anglican Church, a denomination in which she never felt fully comfortable.¹⁰ Henrietta

⁶ See John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985); W. L. Morton, *The Progressive Party in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950). S. M. Trofimenkoff, ed., *The Twenties in Western Canada* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1972).

⁷ See William Mann, *Church, Sect and Cult in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955); James H. Gray, *The Roar of the Twenties* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975); Elaine Chalus, "The Edmonton Commercial Graduates: Women's History, An Integrationist Approach," in *Winter Sports in Alberta*, eds. Elise Corbet and A. W. Rasporich (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1990).

⁸ Cott, 271.

⁹ GAI, Henrietta Muir Edwards Clipping File, Edna Kells, "Unusual Memorial to Honor Mrs. O. C. Edwards Suggested," Newspaper clipping, nd (approx. 1932).

¹⁰ See Constance Lynd, "Paul, the Preachers and the Women," *Woman's Century*, April 1920; Mary E. Hallett, "Nellie McClung and the Fight for the Ordination of Women in the United Church of Canada," *Atlantis*, 4:2 (Spring 1972), 2-16. Mary E. Hallett and Marilyn Davis, *Firing the Heather* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1993), ch. 8. Nancy Hall, "The Professionalization of Women Workers in the Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Churches of Canada," in *First Days. Fighting Days*, 122-33; John D. Thomas, "Servants of the Church: Canadian Methodist Deaconess Work, 190-1926," *CHR*, LXV (September 1984),

fortunately missed the bitter disputes that plagued the Baptist congregations¹¹ although her sister Amelia participated in the debates surrounding union of the Methodists and Presbyterians. By not engaging in such religious struggles, Henrietta steered clear of a spiritual crisis.¹²

Unlike most of her contemporaries, Henrietta maintained her youthful spirit until her death. Journalists and co-workers frequently commented on her “gallant little figure” of five feet, her boundless energy and her vivacious personality.¹³ Several anecdotes from the 1920s captured Henrietta’s spunkiness, a quality absent from her voluminous legal reports which were written in a more masculine voice to convey authority, knowledge and analysis. The first story comes from the 1921 Calgary NCWC Convention. Just before delivering a speech, the tiny Henrietta decided such a large audience would have difficulty seeing her. To the delight of her listeners, she quickly climbed onto a chair on the platform and began her talk. Younger Council women marveled at the seventy-two-year-old veteran, still as feisty and humorous as ever, unconcerned about falling.¹⁴

These same qualities impressed her grandchildren. Muir’s daughter Joyce Edwards, a student at the University of Toronto, recalled coming home for holidays and driving her grandmother in the family’s new automobile along the Ottawa River to Henrietta’s summer home. The faster Joyce drove, the more her grandmother enjoyed herself.¹⁵ Joyce explained Henrietta sometimes requested to stop at the Parliamentary Library to do “some research”. Another favorite “grandmother

380-95.

¹¹ See George Rawlyk, *Champions of Truth: Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists* (Burlington, Ont: G. R. Welsh, 1990); N. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1954).

¹² Other activists did not, see Ruth Crompton Brouwer, “The Between-Age Christianity of Agnes Machar,” *CHR*, 65:5 (1984); Katharine Rideout, “A Woman of Mission: The Religious and Cultural Odyssey of Agnes Withemute Coates,” *CHR*, 71 (1990).

¹³ Edna Kells, “Unusual Memorial to Honor Mrs. O. C. Edwards Suggested.” See also “Address Delivered by Mrs. G. R. Davis on the Occasion of the Unveiling of the Plaque Commemorating Mrs. Henrietta Muir Edwards,” July 1964, copy courtesy of Nancy Miller, Calgary.

¹⁴ *Woman’s Century*, June/July 1921.

¹⁵ Interview Room with Joyce Scully, Ottawa, 4 June 1990.

incident” occurred during an Ottawa dinner party. Several male guests, knowing Henrietta’s temperance politics, underestimated her wit. After dinner, the men insisted on smoking in front of the ladies rather than retiring outside as was customary. Knowing the men expected a lecture, Henrietta instead asked for a cigarette, requested that one of the gentlemen light it, thanked him graciously and then smoked the entire cigarette with pleasure. The more uncomfortable the men became, the faster Henrietta puffed, knowing her female hostess would censure her husband later that evening.¹⁶

Since the elderly Henrietta took great pleasure in recounting such escapades with family members, her humor, wit, and idiosyncrasies soon became legendary. Granddaughter Claudia insisted Henrietta refused to wear a brassiere. Her defense against such new fashion statements was predictably a religious one. She humorously quipped that if God had intended women to be so dressed thus he would have provided them with a bra.¹⁷ Although family members considered Henrietta and Amelia “health fanatics”, the sisters kept their own counsel and experimented with different herbal drinks. They also advised their granddaughters to attend university, have a career, lead useful lives, and ignore their culture’s growing preoccupation with beauty, sexuality and domesticity.¹⁸ One great niece recalled being uncomfortable every time Henrietta visited their Edmonton home. With piercing eyes, her imposing great aunt would always ask: “Well? what useful work do you plan to undertake this year.”¹⁹ Henrietta did not mean marriage. Her conventional niece never found an acceptable response, nor did many young Canadian women raised in the interwar years. Although younger women admired Henrietta’s vitality, few understood her drive or were willing to follow in her footsteps.

¹⁶ Interview Roome with O. E. Gardiner, Calgary, 30 September 1995.

¹⁷ Interview Roome with Claudia Whipple, Calgary, 31 August 1995.

¹⁸ See Nan Ribins, “I Would Rather Have Beauty than Brains,” *Chatelaine*, February 1931; Stuart Ewan, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

¹⁹ Private Collection, Letter Dorothy Read to Nancy Miller. See also Strong Boag, ch. 1 for a discussion of “Growing Up Female”.

Frustration at younger women's passiveness occasionally surfaced in Henrietta's NCWC reports. In 1928, for example, she urged Canadian women to learn about the St. Lawrence Waterway Project, correctly arguing that "ownership and control of Canada's greatest asset, her water power" would "become enormously valuable." Henrietta complained that :

many of our women do not realize their responsibilities for the actions of their representatives, who act for them in the Legislature, and take little interest in how the business of the Government is carried on. One feels like saying to them, "Martha, Martha, Thou art careful and troubled about many things", trifles! compared to the interest of our country.²⁰

Even when outlining a new political issue, Henrietta relied on religious imagery to capture her message. At age eight-one, she reported leaving a meeting with the Alberta Premier feeling the conference had been worthwhile. "While we may not get all we ask for yet we always make some progress and we must ever remember that "Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty".²¹

The 1921 Alberta provincial election disappointed rather than surprised Henrietta who had been vigilant in campaigning for the Liberals.²² While lecturing to UFWA and WI groups the previous year, she had encountered growing hostility to the Liberal Government. Writing to the Attorney General regarding their reissuing of her pamphlet, *The Legal Status of Women Alberta* Henrietta asked: "Did you see my reply to the statement by Mrs. McKinney in the *Calgary Herald* that women in Alberta had not rights worth mentioning?" She continued: "I am not keen in appearing in newspapers but the statement was so very unfair to the present government that I could not let it pass."²³ Before the election, Henrietta accepted many lecture invitations from rural women's groups. As a result, work on her pamphlet was put aside, but as she explained her time was "well spent in enlightening them" since many women were "very unfair to the Government

²⁰ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1928), 56.

²¹ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Report of the Alberta Provincial President," *NCWC Yearbook* (1931), 36.

²² See Howard Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1990), ch7, 8. Also Carl Betke, "The United Farmers of Alberta, 1921-1935," in *Society and Politics in Alberta*, ed. Carlo Caldarola (Toronto: Methuen, 1979).

²³ PAA, Alberta Attorney General Papers, Box 67, No. 75, 126. Letter Henrietta Muir Edwards to Mr. Browning, 17 May 1920.

owing to their ignorance."²⁴ Although Henrietta industriously outlined the Liberal Government's impressive record on most women's issues -that is except dower rights- rural women wanted a farmers' government in office.²⁵

Predictably, a change in government did not significantly alter the direction of women's campaigns, although Nellie McClung and Irene Parlby's presence in the Legislature increased women's visibility and influence. Alberta's progressive record on women's legislation was the result of women's extensive organizing, able leadership, innovative structures, fragile alliances and common feminism. Few studies acknowledged this because Alberta women's politics during the post-suffrage era has been poorly researched.²⁶ One political scientist incorrectly argued that British Columbia represented the only province where female MLA's formed alliances with suffrage organizations.²⁷ Until recently, most studies have considered women's achievements marginal, and blamed suffrage leaders and their philosophy for the presumed "failure" of women's politics to bring about revolutionary changes in the 1920s.²⁸ Such interpretations underestimated the impact of patriarchal political structures which remained firmly intact in Alberta as elsewhere in the 1920s.²⁹

²⁴ Attorney General Papers, Box 67, Letter Henrietta Muir Edwards to Mr. Browning, 22 October 1920.

²⁵ On McClung see Hallett and Davis, 162-73. See Henrietta Muir Edwards, *The Legal Status of Women in Alberta* (Macleod: Alberta Department of Attorney General, 1921).

²⁶ Two exceptions are Patricia Roome, "Amelia Turner and Calgary Labour Women," in *Beyond the Vote; Canadian Women and Politics*, eds. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Nancy Langford, "All that Glitters: the Political Apprenticeship of Alberta Women, 1916-1930," in *Standing on New Ground*.

²⁷ Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *Toeing the Lines: Women and Party Politics in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); M. Janine Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1985); Jill McCalla Vickers, "Feminist Approaches to Women in Politics," in *Beyond the Vote*, 16-36.

²⁸ Sylvia B. Bashevkin, "Independence versus Partisanship: Dilemmas in the Political History of Women in English Canada," in *Rethinking Canada*, 252; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canadian Feminism in the 1920s: the Case of Nellie L. McClung," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 12 (Summer 1977), 58-68.

²⁹ See Veronica Strong-Boag, "'Pulling in Double Harness or Hauling a Double Load': Women, Work and Feminism on the Canadian Prairies," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 21:3 (Fall 1986), 32-52; Rayna Rapp and Ellen Ross, "The Twenties Backlash: Compulsory Heterosexuality, the Consumer Family and the Waning of Feminism," in *Class, Race and Sex: the Dynamics of Control*, eds. Amy Swerdlow and Hanna

As John Blue, the provincial legislative librarian remarked, Alberta women had "a genius for organization."³⁰ The Provincial Executive Committee provided a forum for women's organizations to debate issues and lobby the Government. Club women who had worked together for many years showed a weak attachment to partisan politics, especially when they were shuffled into subordinate roles in women's auxiliaries. Most women's organizations preferred the independent voice which the Committee provided. In Canada, as in the United States, women maintained their tradition of exerting political influence through voluntary organization and continued their earlier pattern of lobbying.³¹ In the Alberta Legislature, however, Nellie McClung's presence as a Liberal opposition member and Irene Parlby's position as the UFA's Minister Without Portfolio reassured Henrietta that women and feminist reforms would receive a fair hearing. Every issue women raised in the 1920s involved extensive networking, especially the question of married women's property rights.

From 1918 until 1926, the representatives who attended the Provincial Executive Committee's annual fall meetings debated dower rights and the "community of interest" principle.³² Everyone agreed that the present Dower Act did not protect married women, especially since the 1919 amendment appeared to cancel earlier guarantees. Alberta judges gave the Act a narrower interpretation than the Legislature had intended. Enough confusion existed to cause several Alberta judges to request clarification from the UFA government.³³ For seven years, Henrietta's Committee had petitioned for an amendment "to secure to the wife the use of her home during her husband's

Lessingers (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1993), 93-107.

³⁰ John Blue, "Women's Organizations and Activities," in *Alberta Past and Present*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1924), 419-26; Shelly Anne Bosetti-Piche, "The Interest of Edmonton Club Women in Education, Health and Welfare 1911-1939," (Ph. D. diss., University of Alberta, 1990).

³¹ Cott, "Voluntarist Politics," 85-114.

³² *Woman's Century*, February 1920.

³³ Catharine Cavanaugh, "The Limitations of the Pioneering Partnership: the Alberta Campaign for Homestead Dower," *CHR*, LXXIV: 2 (1993).

lifetime, and the use of the furniture of the homestead after her husband's death.”³⁴ Being the Committee's Chairman, Henrietta presented their modest request when the delegation met with the Premier each January. Behind the scenes, however, she campaigned vigorously within each Alberta Council for “equal property rights.”³⁵

Council women opposed her efforts, especially Jean Williamson, the President of Medicine Hat's LCW, who peppered the Liberal and UFA government offices with long and angry letters. Writing to Attorney General Boyle in 1917 she accused Henrietta of promoting “Equal Property Rights” and smugly explained, “we voted against this. The next time she came she sprung community rights on us.” Apparently Williamson said, “I see no difference” adding “except in the name.” She challenged Henrietta to put the question to a vote. Henrietta declined,³⁶ but her growing influence within Alberta women's organizations worried opponents like Williamson who warned the Government that women did not favour such legislation. “Many of these women accepted community rights because Mrs. Edwards said so,” she complained. “I am positive that the women of Alberta are not ready to express an opinion of what would be best. They have not studied enough.” Despite numerous detailed explanations from the solicitor in the Attorney General's office, Williamson refused to accept that “any property which the wife had before marriage remains her separate property and does not become community property after marriage and cannot be touched by the husband.”³⁷ She took a pessimistic view of marriage and the law. Since married women could not accept paid employment, she argued, husbands should pay women for the services they provided as housewives. She asserted that men should never have access to women's separate property nor should wives be liable for their husbands' debts, a matter over which they

³⁴ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Report of the Alberta Provincial President,” *NCWC Yearbook* (1922), 44.

³⁵ *Woman's Century*, February 1920, 10.

³⁶ Attorney General Papers, Box 67, File 1106, Letter Jean Williamson to Mr. Boyle, March 1919.

³⁷ Attorney General Papers, Item 75. 126/110b. Letter Solicitor to Mrs. J. H. Smith, 13 March 1922. (Jean Williamson sent letters using her neighbours name and address.)

rarely had any control.³⁸

After 1921, women's organizations increased their pressure on the new UFA Government to resolve the dower question. Frustrated with another four years of inactivity, Henrietta charged the government with betraying women's interests. The incident which triggered her protest was the UFA government's refusal to pass legislation correcting the Johnson vs. Johnson decision, a case which clearly violated the intention of Dower Act. "We have not got what we thought we had", complained Henrietta adding, "we know now we are not protected."³⁹ Every year, since 1918, the UFWA had also called for equal property rights for married women.⁴⁰ Finally, on their behalf, Irene Parlby introduced "An Act Establishing Community of Property as between Husband and Wife" in the winter of 1925. Attendance at the November 1924 Provincial Executive meeting reflected women's anticipation of this legislation. Henrietta and Council members met with Nellie McClung, Alice Jamieson, and representatives from the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, the IODE, the WCTU, and the UFWA "guests." They attempted to arrive at a consensus on the "economic position of married women."⁴¹ In February, the delegation met with the Premier and discussed the controversial bill. When the bill was predictably defeated in the Legislature, the Government formed a committee to study the question - composed of Henrietta, Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, UFWA representative Mrs. F.E. Wyman and lawyers Miss S.M.G. Duff, George Ross and F. De Roussy de Sales.⁴²

Although Henrietta had supported the Act as a "concrete plan to recognize the right of a wife to an equal economic status with her husband", she finally concluded that the "women of the

³⁸ Attorney General Papers, Letter Jean Williamson to Hon. Mr. Brownlee, 22 January 1922.

³⁹ Attorney General Papers, Item 692. 9.

⁴⁰ *UFA Report* (1918), 25.

⁴¹ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Report of the Alberta Provincial President, *NCWC Yearbook* (1925).

⁴² Attorney General Papers, George Hoadley, Acting Chairman, Memorandum re Committee, 15 December 1925. See also Cavanaugh, 223-25.

Province” did not favour such legislation.⁴³ In 1926, the Government passed several amendments, as recommended earlier by the Provincial Executive, to strengthen the Dower Act. On behalf of the Committee, Henrietta thanked the Premier. “Great satisfaction is expressed,” she explained “on all sides by the women at this protection to their interests in their home.”⁴⁴ As a liberal democrat who was accustomed to working within the parliamentary system, Henrietta accepted compromise although she never conceded defeat. Her Committee returned the next year with a request for further changes to the Dower Act. In the meantime, the Government Committee launched a thorough two-year study. In the end their report also concluded that public opinion was not behind the concept of “community property.”⁴⁵ Women’s claim to control their property and also receive a share of the husbands’ property was “an unfair position”, the report asserted. Henrietta certainly supported the Committee’s view that “there should be an equal sharing of both assets and liabilities.”⁴⁶ The Committee, however, merely recommended the Dower Act be amended giving a wife “one-half of the surplus after a forced sale of a ‘homestead’ under mortgage.” They further suggested the term homestead be defined as six lots or one acre in urban areas and 320 acres in rural ones.⁴⁷

Beyond the married women’s property question, Henrietta joined other Alberta women’s organizations in their campaign to improve health facilities, especially in rural areas. In hindsight, their crusade against the “feeble-minded”, which resulted in the 1928 Alberta Sexual Sterilization Act, was definitely not progressive.⁴⁸ The Provincial Executive Committee supported the UFWA,

⁴³ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Report of the Alberta Vice-President,” *NCWC Yearbook* (1926), 45.

⁴⁴ Attorney General Papers, Box 67, Letter Henrietta Muir Edwards to the Premier, 24 May 1926.

⁴⁵ Cavanaugh, 223-24.

⁴⁶ PAA, Premiers Papers, *Sessional Papers*, “Report of Committee on Community Property Rights.”

⁴⁷ City of Edmonton Archives, EM Papers, Scrapbook 4. “Community of Property Bill May be Abandoned,” Newspaper clipping, 1928.

⁴⁸ See Ian Clarke, “Public Provisions for the Mentally Ill in Alberta 1907-1936,” (Master’s thesis, University of Calgary, 1973); Terry Chapman, “The Early Eugenics Movement in Western Canada,” *Alberta History*, 25 (1977), 9-17.

the driving force for this legislation, even though Henrietta was not a strong eugenic supporter. Dr. Helen MacMurchy led the NCWC's campaign⁴⁹ while in Alberta, Irene Parlby and Emily Murphy became key spokespersons.⁵⁰ Given the strength of Henrietta's evangelical faith and her liberal democratic convictions, environmental and religious solutions appealed to her. For sexual offenders and "moral perverts", however, she had always believed castration to be the only workable solution. In common with Parlby and Murphy, she optimistically assumed that government officials and health professionals would accurately identify mental illness and avoid gender discrimination.⁵¹

In 1928, Henrietta was appointed as urban women's representative on the Alberta Government's Advisory Committee on Health, created as an adjunct to the Department of Health.⁵² Only two other women, one from the UFWA and the other from the Alberta Registered Nurses, served on the committee. During the first year, Henrietta joined other representatives to encourage the extension of the UFA Government's travelling clinics, the creation of free medical exams for school children and public health education, and the establishment of public health services in rural areas.⁵³ However she was less progressive on other questions. Henrietta supported the nativist sentiments which flowed freely among the members of the Government's Advisory Committee on Women's Immigration. Colonies of non-English speaking immigrants, they argued, should be kept "small enough for each member to be brought into contact with the Canadian environment." Like her fellow committee members, Henrietta believed that large colonies which did not assimilate presented a "menace ... to a Greater United Canada."⁵⁴

⁴⁹ See Angus Maclaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990).

⁵⁰ PAA, Item 75. 181, Parlby Address, "Mental deficiency, Address to the United Farm Women of Alberta. January 1924." See also Anita L. Penner, "Emily Murphy and the Attempt to Alter the status of Canadian Women, 1910-1931," (Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1971), 97-102.

⁵¹ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Report of the Alberta Provincial President," *NCWC Yearbook* (1929), 56-58.

⁵² See Susan Kooyman, "The Policies and Legislation of the United Farmers of Alberta Government 1921-1935," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1981).

⁵³ *NCWC Yearbook* (1929), 57.

⁵⁴ *NCWC Yearbook* (1929), 57. See Constance Lynd, "Race Suicide," *Woman's Century*, February 1920;

Issues of immigration and health, while important, did not capture Henrietta's attention to the same degree as the provincial and federal campaigns for women to serve as jurors. Now that women were citizens, she argued, they should receive this important responsibility. Despite such logic, only the initial victory came easily. Responding to petitions from Henrietta's Committee and pressure from female MLA's, the Government passed the 1921 Alberta Jury Act which permitted women to serve in civil cases. A maximum of three female jurors could be requested by a female defendant. If the plaintiff was also a women, all six jurors could be female. Women were not permitted to serve on criminal cases since federal legislation required juries to be kept together during a trial, a requirement that many feared would damage women's reputation.⁵⁵ According to one reporter, MLA Louisa McKinney "pertinently asked why women could not serve on any jury, seeing they could be present at the case." McKinney reasoned: "We have women lawyers and women magistrates, why then would it soil a good woman's mind to sit on a jury?"⁵⁶ Although Henrietta and the NCWC Law Committee annually petitioned the Federal Government to amend the Criminal Code and require "mixed juries", they encountered deep-seated opposition.⁵⁷ Sex remained grounds for exclusion from criminal cases until the 1972 amendment to the Criminal Code.⁵⁸

Women's request to serve on juries challenged male biases and sparked deep-seated fears about giving women power and responsibility, rights traditionally associated with masculinity. The Nanaimo LCW's resolution on mixed juries asserted that it was unfair for one sex to monopolize the administration of the law. Men represented an "unconscious sex viewpoint". Women's

Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982).

⁵⁵ Constance Lynd, "Women Jurors," *Woman's Century*, December 1920; Anne Anderson Perry, "Women on the Jury," *Woman's Century*, May 1921. Linda Silver Dranoff, *Women in Canadian Life: Law* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1977), 95.

⁵⁶ Perry, *Woman's Century*, May 1921.

⁵⁷ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1921), 96.

⁵⁸ Dranoff, 96.

disqualification placed them, they argued, “on par with the infirm, decrepit, afflicted and persons not in possession their faculties.” Such a situation, their representative concluded, was “a reflection of the dark ages when woman was believed to be an inferior creature.”⁵⁹ The dark ages prevailed longer than Henrietta and Council women expected. In “progressive” Alberta, women could claim exemption from jury duty simply because they were female. Dependency and femininity remained firmly linked in the Canadian consciousness.⁶⁰ Since advertisements actively promoted passivity as sexually attractive for women,⁶¹ a cool reception both in the government and in the broader society greeted Henrietta and the Law Committee’s proposals. Although the group lobbied other provinces to pass jury legislation, few followed Alberta’s lead. Manitoba waited until 1952, New Brunswick 1954, Prince Edward Island 1966 and Quebec held out until 1971.⁶²

Henrietta’s firm hold on the Law Committee’s convenership allowed her to play a leading role in the NCWC’s ongoing campaigns. Despite her many Alberta commitments, she arranged to attend the NCWC executive meetings, almost every national conference and meet with federal officials on a yearly basis. One characteristic example of her involvement was the April 22, 1921 deputation to the federal Minister of Justice, composed of herself, Dr. Ritchie England, Mrs. Shortt, Miss Carmichael, and Mrs. Thorburn and members of the Special Committee on the Criminal Code. Each of their ten requests, ranging from women on juries and wife desertions as an extractable offense to a uniform Canadian divorce law, remained on the agenda throughout the 1920s.⁶³ Henrietta launched a new campaign for the personal naturalization of married women,

⁵⁹ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Mixed Juries,” *NCWC Yearbook* (1926), 93.

⁶⁰ For a contemporary view by a British feminist written in 1927, see Cicely Hamilton, “The Return of Femininity,” in *Time and Tide Wait for No Man*, ed. Dale Spender (London: Pandora Press, 1984), 79.

⁶¹ See Stuart and Elizabeth Ewan, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); Jill Conway, “Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution,” in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington & London, Indiana University Press, 1972).

⁶² Dranoff, 96.

⁶³ Henrietta Muir Edwards, “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Yearbook* (1921), 95.

arguing that the 1920 Canadian Naturalization Act should be amended to allow women who marry aliens to retain "their own nationality when they so desire." She told the Minister that "girls as well as boys were educated in love of country, and it should not be made compulsory to lay this patriotism at the altar of marriage."⁶⁴ The ICW had encouraged members to campaign for such legislation in their respective countries and to petition the League of Nations as well.

Because legislation governing women's naturalization involved the British government, the Canadian government refused to make a public commitment despite numerous letters and frequent representation from Henrietta to Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Minister of Justice Earnest Lapointe.⁶⁵ The campaign extended further as well. On April 1, 1924 Nellie McClung, at Henrietta's urging, placed a resolution favoring personal naturalization of married women before the Alberta Legislature.⁶⁶ Although McClung received the province's moral support, the federal Liberals remained silent, hiding behind the lack of unanimity on the question displayed at the 1926 Imperial Conference.⁶⁷ The next year, Henrietta again wrote to Lapointe attempting to solicit his support. Agnes Macphail, the feminist MP, assisted by submitting a resolution on "personal naturalization". Macphail's move forced a debate in Ottawa but, as Henrietta gloomily reported, no further action occurred.⁶⁸ Fortunately, Henrietta lived long enough to see the Canadian Government grant some concessions to women in the 1930-31 Naturalization Act. Helen Gregory MacGill, Henrietta's successor as Law Committee Convener, remarked:

... if the laws of the husband's country do not make her of his nationality she may remain British. The same is in the case of the wife of the husband renouncing British nationality. In the case of the British-born woman she apply to the Secretary of State six months before change to retain British nationality. While these are gratifying advances the nationality of

⁶⁴ *NCWC Yearbook* (1921), 99-100.

⁶⁵ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1924), 62-63.

⁶⁶ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1926), 97.

⁶⁷ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1927), 74.

⁶⁸ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1927), 75. See also Crowley, ch. 5; Linda Stewart, "A Woman of Courage: A Biography of Agnes Macphail," (Ph. D diss., University of Toronto Press, 1991), 268-70.

Canadian women is yet vested in them personally, nor based upon the same as that of the men of their country.⁶⁹

Years of experience taught Henrietta that political campaigns to remove sex discrimination from Canadian legislation could drag on forever. Feminists needed allies at every level of government and ample patience to achieve even minor amendments. Students of women's politics have argued "where gender equality was legislated, it did little to vanquish the persistence of patriarchy." Although sex discrimination was prohibited in "public or civil positions" by Britain's Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919, female teachers, nurses and civil servants who married were forced to resign their positions.⁷⁰

Progress on Canadian divorce reform and pension legislation was achieved only after the Ginger Group in the House of Commons lent its support to the NCWC Law Committee. In 1924 Calgary's Independent Labour MPs, Joseph Shaw and William Irvine, introduced a motion in the House of Commons in support of the principle of equality in divorce. The following year they introduced a bill to this effect. Canada's first divorce statute passed, thanks to the Law Committee's effective lobbying and the support and perseverance of sympathetic western MPs.⁷¹ As Agnes Macphail's speech indicated, the coalition supported equity not liberalization of divorce. "It would be a good thing to make marriage harder rather than easier," explained Macphail who shared Henrietta's conviction that women contributed more to marriage than did men. Sadly, for all their efforts, they merely became economically dependent.⁷² Henrietta's Law Committee pushed for further changes to this act. W. J. Ward, a Manitoba Progressive MP, happily advanced their suggestions from 1926 onward, until finally a bill, known as the Divorce Jurisdiction Act, was

⁶⁹ Helen Gregory MacGill, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1932), 1.

⁷⁰ Le Gates, 278.

⁷¹ *NCWC Yearbook* (1925), 78. James G. Snell, *In the Shadow of the Law: Divorce in Canada 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 60-61; "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1926), 96-97.

⁷² Crowley, 94-95; See also James Snell and Cynthia Comacchio Abele, "Combating Nuptiality: Restricting Access to Marriage in Early Twentieth Century English-speaking Canada," *CHR*, 69 (1988), 466-89.

passed in 1930. Now married women, who had either been deserted or lived apart from her husband for two years, could acquire a separate domicile and commence divorce proceedings. Previously, a wife must establish desertion lasting for two years before she could begin divorce proceeding. A husband did not face the same requirements.⁷³

The campaign for women's appointment to the Senate, an appropriate symbol of women's politics in this decade, represented not just another legal victory for Henrietta but the climax of her long career. As before, despite different political loyalties, Alberta activists employed networking skills to defeat the federal government's opposition. Such audacity elicited stiff resistance by the gentleman's club of male politicians and judges, revealed the customary government inaction and profiled the "Alberta five's" astute political skills.⁷⁴ Recently, the "Persons Case" has captured public interest even in the West where the Senate historically has never been a popular institution.⁷⁵ The story, however, is seldom placed in the context of Alberta women's politics where it properly belongs. Emily Murphy usually receives credit for initiating the campaign even though Henrietta maintained correctly that the NCWC played an important role.⁷⁶ In 1919, the Law Committee and the NCWC petitioned for women to be appointed to the Senate following the Senate's rejection of the House of Commons recommendation to raise the age of consent to eighteen. The Council argued that since this body passed legislation affecting women, they should be represented, preferably by women. That same year Emily Murphy, now President of the Federated Women's Institutes, encouraged her group to request women's appointment.

When a western Senate vacancy arose in 1921, calls for Murphy's appointment were followed by a NCWC resolution to appoint Henrietta. The Calgary Council's 1923 motion explained that Henrietta deserved such recognition for "the splendid service she has rendered the women of

⁷³ Snell, 62-63,

⁷⁴ Marchildon, "The Persons Controversy."; Stone, "Canadian Women as Legal Persons."

⁷⁵ See Constance Lynd, "Shall We Abolish the Senate," *Woman's Century*, November 1919.

⁷⁶ Henrietta Muir Edwards, "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook (1930)*, 82.

Canada by her intensive study of laws and by the many reforms brought about by the work of her committee.⁷⁷ The King Government, however, sidestepped the women's petitions, arguing that section 23 of the British North America Act, regarding the qualifications of a senator, specified "male" persons. To appoint a woman, the Government explained, would require a constitutional amendment, a measure women's organizations felt sure would never occur. At the 1927 constitutional conference between the provinces and the federal government, the issue of women's eligibility for an appointment did not even surface.⁷⁸

During the next phase of the campaign, Henrietta played a supporting role. Emily Murphy's brother, who had recently been appointed to the Ontario Supreme Court, informed her about a section in the federal Supreme Court Act which allowed "interested persons" to request an interpretation of a constitutional question presented in the BNA Act. Murphy selected four prominent Alberta colleagues - Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby and Louisa McKinney. Each received a letter dated August 5, 1927 from Murphy explaining her view that an amendment was unnecessary and an appeal likely to be successful. Murphy suggested the group present three questions to the Supreme Court focusing on the constitutional ability of the federal government to appoint women to the Senate. She requested each women join her by signing and returning the letter by register mail.⁷⁹ This done, against the women's wishes, the Minister of Justice and the Cabinet decided to focus on the question of women as "persons", an issue the five women had tried to avoid. This old chestnut had a long history in Alberta where debates on whether women "were" persons appeared at every political corner, starting with the movement to amend the municipal franchise fifteen years earlier, but reappearing over women's appointment as judges.⁸⁰ "Our procedure in submitting this to the Supreme Court was a wise one, instead of submitting it to

⁷⁷ GAI, Calgary LCW Papers, Minutes 7 February 1923.

⁷⁸ Marchildon, 102.

⁷⁹ EM Papers, Letter Emily F. Murphy to My Dear Mrs. McClung, 5 August 1927.

⁸⁰ See chapter 8, 223-24.

the favour of politicians,” wrote Murphy to McClung. With cynicism she concluded: “These will likely come out now into open opposition (forced out) because we have them by the short hair.” Ever the realist, she explained “Thank God, we are going to have some powerful support before we are through with it.”⁸¹

The subsequent case *Edwards vs. the Attorney General of Canada*, a reflection of the alphabetical order of the names on the petition, has been well documented making only a brief summary necessary.⁸² On 24 April 1928, the Supreme Court responded negatively to the government’s question “Does the word ‘Persons’ in section 24 of the British North America Act, 1867, include female persons?” All five judges agreed that: “Women are not ‘qualified persons’ within the meaning of section 24 of the BNA Act, 1867, and therefore are not eligible for appointment by the Governor General to the Senate of Canada.”⁸³ Unfortunately, correspondence between Murphy and Henrietta has not survived so it is impossible to do more than speculate on the women’s private conversations. Their strategy is, however, clear. Eight days after the judgment, on 2 May 1928, Murphy sent Henrietta and the others copies of an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.⁸⁴ Although new arguments were not advanced, the JCPC reversed the Canadian Supreme Court decision. On 18 October 1929, Lord Sankey declared: “Their lordships are of the opinion that the word ‘persons’ in section 24 does include women, and that women are eligible to be summoned to and become members of the Senate of Canada.”⁸⁵

Overnight Henrietta and the other women became Canadian celebrities. Interviews, their pictures, and the story appeared on the front page of most Canadian newspapers. Headlines in the Alberta papers explained “Feminists in Senate Fight Win Triumph” and “They’re All Persons

⁸¹ PAA, Acc. No 91. 60, Letter Emily F. Murphy to My Dear McClung, 6 August 1927.

⁸² See n3.

⁸³ *Canada Law Report, Supreme Court of Canada* (Ottawa: 1928), 278.

⁸⁴ For a copy of her letter, see PABC, McClung Papers, Letter Emily F. Murphy to Mrs. McClung, 2 May 1928. Henrietta reprinted their petition in her “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Yearbook* (1929), 86-87.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Marchildon, 110.

Now⁸⁶ and told readers “Legislative Privileges Not Confined to Males Under B. N. A. Act”.⁸⁷ Macleod was the one exception. Despite Henrietta’s long residence in southern Alberta, the paper carefully ignored publicizing either her role or the women’s success. Only a small editorial appeared on 25 October stating “Women Are Persons”.⁸⁸ Fortunately for Henrietta, the Calgary and Edmonton papers gave her ample attention, as they had on so many previous occasions. Formal recognition for Henrietta from Macleod residents would have to wait for a few more years.

Henrietta’s 1930 Law Report presented her judgment on this legal victory. “The rejoicing all through Canada,” she wrote, “was not so much that it opened the door of the Canadian Senate to women, as it was that it recognized the personal entity of women, her separate individuality as a person.”⁸⁹ She proudly reported that Alberta had also recognized this by passing “its Act respecting the Removal of Sex disqualification.” To achieve this victory had been Henrietta’s personal mission for many years. Still a nineteenth-century female evangelical, her speeches de-emphasized women’s role in the victory. Credit should go, she argued, “first to the National Council of Women, second to Federal Government, third to a committee of five Alberta women, who were the harvesters to go forth to reap where others had sown.”⁹⁰ For a seasoned politician, old patterns died hard. At eighty years of age, Henrietta’s speeches still demonstrated deference, polite denial, and the celebration of service rather than the admission of personal accomplishment. Such familiar habits were too deeply entrenched for Henrietta’s to abandon, especially before a critical public.

Fortunately, as always, Henrietta had God on her side because many Canadians expressed their disapproval of the women’s bold actions and their “undignified” celebrity status. Despite

⁸⁶ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 1 October 1929.

⁸⁷ *Calgary Herald*, 1 October 1929.

⁸⁸ *Macleod Times*, 24 October 1929.

⁸⁹ “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Yearbook* (1930), 81.

⁹⁰ “Law Committee Report,” *NCWC Yearbook* (1930), 81.

Henrietta's acknowledgment of the Federal Government, King did not appoint any of the five women to the Senate vacancy. Instead the honour went to Cairine Wilson, ironically a wealthy and loyal eastern Canadian Liberal, and distant relative of Henrietta.⁹¹ Predictably, given the backlash against feminism, the five women's femininity was frequently called into question. McClung explained that she had received an anonymous letter which said: "Admire your pluck but not your spirit. In thought, action and view you belong to the species of men closer than you do to woman. The whole five of you. I seen your pictures." Although she responded with her usual cryptic humor, McClung astutely concluded: "To say that a woman is not beautiful has been considered damaging evidence against her and quite sufficient to offset her arguments."⁹² The male writer had the decency not to dwell on the women's age. McClung had pointed to this cultural bias against "aging women" in her earlier article, "I'll Never Tell My Age Again."⁹³

Although Henrietta had grown accustomed to ignoring such views, like McClung she welcomed the recognition women's organizations lavished on the five petitioners. Typical was the reception given in their honour by the Calgary Woman's Canadian Club when three hundred women, most of whom Henrietta had known personally during her twenty-five years as an organizer, toasted their success. Over the past decade the NCWC had frequently honored Henrietta. In 1925, she had been elected to its elite club of eighteen honorary members, each one a personal friend. Also, she had been privileged to attend the ICW's Quinquennial Meeting in Washington in May and meet, for the last time, her old friend and mentor Ishbel Aberdeen.⁹⁴ Then, the October following the JCPC's decision, she travelled east to Niagara Falls to attend the thirty-seventh

⁹¹ Knowles, ch 3. Kate Wilson, the elder sister of Norman who was Cairine's husband, married W. C. Edwards, Oliver's older brother.

⁹² Nellie L. McClung, "Two Men and Five Women," *Farm and Ranch Review*, 1 March 1930. See Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1990).

⁹³ Nellie L. McClung, "I'll Never Tell My Age Again," *MacLean's*, 15 March 1926. See also Sharon McIrvin Abu-Lanban and Susan A. McDaniel, "Aging Women and Standards of Beauty," in *Feminist Issues*, 97-110.

⁹⁴ *NCWC Yearbook* (1925), 8, 42.

NCWC Convention and basked in the Council's hearty congratulations. "We feel much honoured," declared the President, "that Mrs. O. C. Edwards, Provincial President in Alberta, and for many years our Convener of Laws for the Protection of Women and Children, was one of the five Alberta women who made the appeal."⁹⁵ Absent from those who wished her well was co-worker and friend, Emily Willoughby Cummings, who had died that year.

Aware that she might also "met her Master" soon, Henrietta enjoyed the last years of her life determined to continue "her work." In June 1931, she travelled to Moncton, New Brunswick to attend her last NCWC Convention. Along the way, she visited her favorite places, her eastern family and her friends. Her daughter Alice later commented that "she was feeling so well and had such a happy time. As a mark of their esteem and affection the executive presented her with a travelling case, which greatly touched her." Among the many trips which she had made over the years, Henrietta told her daughter this was "the pleasantest trip."⁹⁶ But it was not all pleasure for, as her lengthy Law Report revealed, Henrietta still followed every legal battle in Canada. She informed her readers that the Quebec Franchise Bill was defeated but explained, "our French sisters are now leading in the franchise battle and are hopeful of victory."⁹⁷

Back in Macleod, Henrietta worked on a new but familiar project, the creation of a library for the community, an ambitious assignment given the economic conditions. In December 1930, as a representative of the NCWC, she had attended a Conference on Library Service held at the University of Alberta. At the conclusion, an Alberta Library Association was formed. Henrietta also learned that the Victoria League in London, England would help start a library. Writing in February 1931, she explained to the secretary that: "the lack of Library Service is a real privation in the rural district of a new country such as the western prairie Provinces of Canada."⁹⁸ When the

⁹⁵ *NCWC Yearbook* (1930), 29.

⁹⁶ EG Papers, Letter Alice Gardiner to Lady Aberdeen, nd 1932?

⁹⁷ "Law Committee Report," *NCWC Yearbook* (1931), 99.

⁹⁸ PAA, Macleod Public Library Papers, Letter Henrietta Muir Edwards to Mrs. B. Rawlins, 5 February 1931.

books arrived, the industrious Henrietta, acting on behalf of the LCW, petitioned the municipality for permission to create a reading room out of the abandoned jail. The cautious Mayor responded: "I would like to suggest to the Local Council of Women the advisability of proceeding slowly in this matter," and explained "times are most certainly difficult."⁹⁹ The fiery Henrietta wrote back with unusual sarcasm and demanded assurances that the building would be theirs by spring, explaining that after only two days they had fifty-five members. On the 8th October 1931, the town council responded with the guarantee to Henrietta's Committee.¹⁰⁰

Even though she was ill, Henrietta chaired the Provincial Executive Committee's annual gathering in Calgary on October 23 and 24, 1931. Returning home Henrietta soon developed pneumonia and died peacefully in her sleep on November 9. "For her we cannot grieve," explained her daughter Alice in her letter to Lady Aberdeen. "It was how she wished to go, in the midst of her work. The spiritual world was so close to her and we feel she has gone home to her rewards to be with her Saviour and her loved ones."¹⁰¹ This same view was expressed in a letter written by a young Edmonton Council worker. Mary Ponton explained to a friend: "I am feeling so sorry and a dear old friend has gone ... She always made time to come to dinner or tea or to spend Sunday afternoon, and was so interesting and full of her work. She was most modest and unassuming and said that the Lord was just using her for His mouthpiece and her intelligence was a gift from Him to enable her to do His work. She was a wonderful woman and I think it is beautiful to live until 81 years and be as vigorous and alert as you ever were."¹⁰² Such private recollections, stressing as they do Henrietta's spiritual faith, need to be placed alongside the many public tributes which her death evoked. These emphasized her secular achievements, calling her a great Canadian and "one

⁹⁹ Macleod Public Library Papers, Letter Henrietta Muir Edwards to Mayor and Councillors, 15 September 1931; Letter E. Forester Brown, Sec. Treasurer to Mrs. Edwards, 24 September 1931.

¹⁰⁰ Letter Henrietta Muir Edwards to Mayor and Councillors, 5 October 1931. Letter E. Forester Brown to Mrs. Edwards, October 1931.

¹⁰¹ EG Papers, Letter Alice M. Gardiner to Lady Aberdeen, nd, December 1931?

¹⁰² Private collection, Letter written by Julia Ponton after Henrietta's death in 1931.

of nature's gentlewomen." ¹⁰³ Both were important sides of Henrietta's character. Blessed with remarkable self-confidence, Henrietta had always known "where she was going" and ignored any messages for the broader culture which did not mesh with her convictions.

When asked several years earlier to reflect upon life for the benefit of the *Canadian Home Journal's* readers, Henrietta gladly outlined her personal philosophy. "All my life," she wrote, "God's Banner o'er me has been love. Looking back I see that some of the tragedies and hard things of my life have been my greatest blessings." Ever the optimist she continued "I have travelled a long way on the Road of Life, always up". Speaking to younger women, Henrietta asserted that "Going down the Hill of Life, is a heathenish expression". As a Christian, she firmly believed that "We are not going down, we are climbing up." Holding such a view meant that Henrietta feared neither old age nor death. Indeed she rejected the very idea of death, telling her readers: "I am sure there is no death, only a passing on to things more wonderful and more beautiful of which man has not even conceived." She counselled her audience to consider that "when we reach the end we leave our mortal part and take flight into the Ocean of Eternity."¹⁰⁴ Doubt, despair and confusion were foreign concepts to Henrietta. In an letter, written to her daughter Alice on the eve of her fiftieth wedding anniversary, she reflected:

... in looking back the way seems strewn with blessings, hard places there were sometimes on the road but what happy companionship! What a son! What two dear daughters! What a husband!! I think few women are as blessed as I. I feel grateful to God for I do not deserve what he has given me - my husband and I walked together in perfect accord for 39 years. My children have never given my any anxiety. It is true I sit alone here tonight, but Aunt Min is with me, in looking backward from childhood my path has been strewn with love and care, in looking forward is the joyful day of reunion.¹⁰⁵

Despite such romantic reminiscences, Henrietta's life had never been easy. Had she been tempted to indulge in self-pity, she could have found ample fuel to fire this sentiment. The early death of her daughter, son and husband, Oliver's career failures, their constant financial predicaments, the

¹⁰³ *Calgary Herald*, 19 November 1931.

¹⁰⁴ Mrs. O. C. Edwards, "Looking Back on Life," *Canadian Home Journal*, May 1931.

¹⁰⁵ EG Papers, Letter Henrietta to My Dear Daughter, 12 September 1926.

family's many moves and her isolation in Macleod make a lengthy list which could go on to include her unfulfilled dreams for a political career, endless "futile" women's campaigns and the scorn she had received from many residents in her local community. Instead, Henrietta believed she was privileged and blessed. Life was a spiritual journey designed with a purpose complete with a reward at the end.

At a special service conducted on 11 November 1931 at Macleod's Christ Church, many town residents, previously so begrudging in their acceptance of their "famous" citizen, finally paid generous tribute to Henrietta. The clergyman's text was Psalm 116, verse 15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saint."¹⁰⁶ Not surprisingly, Henrietta had requested to be buried in Edmonton beside Oliver, Margaret and Muir. The capital gave her a massive, formal funeral reflecting her quarter century of involvement in women's politics.¹⁰⁷ In remaining an evangelical feminist, Henrietta had challenged the 1920s privileging of youth and beauty and asserted her right as a veteran to lead the Alberta Councils and the NCWC Law Committee. A product of a religious age, she was not seduced by the pleasures of "Corporate America" as were many younger Christian women.¹⁰⁸ To the end of her life she believed she was "God's Mouthpiece" commissioned by "her Master" to work for women's equality.

¹⁰⁶ "Macleod Pays Warm Tribute," *Calgary Herald*, 21 November 1931.

¹⁰⁷ "High Tribute Paid Prominent Woman," *Edmonton Journal*, 13 November 1931.

¹⁰⁸ See Rawlyk, *Champions of Truth; Ewan, Captains of Consciousness*, 14.

Postscript

Constructing the biography of a “modest and unassuming” Canadian woman is a challenging theoretical project. A reluctant subject, Henrietta resisted such intrusion. Intensely private and spiritual, she wanted her public service to be remembered not her personal life. Over her long career, Henrietta deliberately avoided drawing public attention to herself as anything other than a crusader for women’s rights. Although a well-known western Canadian feminist, Henrietta was seldom interviewed by journalists in contrast to her colleagues Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy and Irene Parlby.¹ Nor did she tell her own story like McClung,² allow younger colleagues to prepare her biography as Murphy and Parlby did,³ or encourage her friends and family to publish any tribute after her death.⁴ As “God’s mouthpiece” Henrietta expected to receive her reward in Heaven. Her legacy to Canadian women was “her work”, as her tombstone stated, not her life. Having lived far from the center of power even in her own country, Henrietta often felt insignificant beside more famous international suffragists. Most historians have echoed this judgment making the erasure of Henrietta’s voice complete. Only an identity as a member of the “Famous Five” saved her from anonymity and made this biography possible.⁵

A confident Mrs. Henrietta Muir Edwards knew herself, understood what she wanted out of life, and carefully selected the battles she was prepared to fight. I refer to this self, the acting subject, as “Henrietta”, the one name which followed her from birth to death. Others such as Miss

¹ For example Emily F. Murphy, “What Janey thinks of Nellie,” *MacLean’s*, 1 September 1921, 15; Natalie Symons, “Nellie McClung of the West,” *Canadian Monthly*, February 1916, 232.

² Nellie McClung, *Clearing in the West: My Own Story* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1935).

³ Byrne Hope Sanders, *Emily Murphy: Crusader* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945); Barbara Villy Cormack, *Perennial and Politics* (Sherwood Park, Alta: Professional Printing, 1968).

⁴ See “Plaque unveiled in Ottawa Senate Chamber: Daughter of Judge Murphy is Heard,” *The Business and Professional Woman*, June 1938, 6. Also Red Deer and District Archives, Irene Parlby Papers, Manuscript, “The Last of Five by Muriel Millen.”

⁵ See “The Famous Five: Recognition Sought for Heroes of ‘Persons Case’,” *Calgary Herald*, 9 October 1996. A foundation has recently been established to commemorate and build two monuments to the women’s memory.

Muir or Mrs. Dr. Edwards represented stages of her life but never its totality. Finding and revealing a woman's subjectivity, "where the subject becomes known to us through her actions and her history", should be the central task of women's biographers, explains Kathleen Barry. This does not mean identifying with Henrietta, a process which Barry argues is "an objectification of the other - a refusal of subjectivity."⁶ Through reconstructing the significant and insignificant moments in a life story, a biographer establishes agency. In making such choices, a woman's subjectivity is revealed. Along with French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, Barry stressed the importance of time and of narrative in deconstructing the dualisms that have "unpeopled history." Good biography should "render the constructed divisions that separate social history from grand history, divorce theory from reality, macro from micro, into false categories."⁷

Taking Henrietta seriously as a "subject" involved locating and understanding the choices she made and the life she constructed as a woman in a patriarchal society. Beyond this personal story, lies another. Here the stage is the Canadian women's movement and her importance as a representative figure. Uncovering this dimension involved questioning the collected wisdom of social, intellectual, political and women's history. After listening to Henrietta's words and following her actions, the centrality of her evangelical Protestant faith became clear as did the importance of this tradition to her feminism and the Canadian women's movement. Henrietta's diary, for example, stressed the importance of her conversion experience while her public activities from the 1870s onwards always emphasized the religious perspective which she shared with co-workers. While working "in the Master's vineyard", Henrietta explained, "I always felt that I dwelt among friends." Although these words were written in 1897 as she was leaving Ottawa and the YWCA Presidency, they applied equally well to her lengthy public career.⁸

⁶ Kathleen Barry, "Postscript: On Women's Biography," in *Susan B. Anthony: A Biography of a Singular Feminist* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 364.

⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Vol. 1, translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁸ *Report Ottawa YWCA (1897-98)*, 5.

Family, country, class and gender defined the context within which Henrietta made her life choices. The Baptists Muirs of Montreal expected each of their children to become evangelical missionaries. Marriage, Christian philanthropy and Sunday School service were the only “career” options open to Muir women, that is if they wanted to remain respectable. Empowered by her belief in a “woman’s commission”, her calling from God to work for women, Henrietta embarked on her journey in the 1870s with a Christian reading room for Montreal’s young working women. From these humble beginnings came an association, a newspaper, a printing office and a program to train women as printers. Being married, pregnant and raising two small children did not deter Henrietta from managing this project. Illustrating the newspaper, books and tracts which the Montreal Women’s Printing Office published, clearly signaled her claim to a separate identity as a public person.

The next critical moment occurred when Henrietta’s husband left Montreal for the Northwest in the early 1880s, just when her projects began flourishing. Given the freedom to chose, Henrietta would have remained in Montreal. Fond of her husband, anxious to see her marriage succeed, and hopeful that Oliver would help parent their two young children, Henrietta went West. As the dutiful wife, she accepted a new identity as a pioneer woman, a role model for Native women, and an “expert” on Native culture for Montrealers.⁹ But in 1883 and again in 1903, Henrietta refused to become a missionary to Native women. On a personal level she devoted her time, her energy and her talents to Aboriginal women and the Christian project. In public, however she was a crusader for women, expecting that “one day” her efforts would benefit Native women. Eventually they would vote, own property, and become lawyers and politicians. In the meantime, she regarded them patronizingly as children, a view her husband heartily endorsed.

Committed to advancing “white women’s” position in a “feudal family system”, Henrietta joined the Saskatchewan WCTU seeing temperance and dower rights as predominantly women’s

⁹ See Sarah Carter, “First Nations Women of Prairie Canada in the Early Reserve Years, the 1870s to the 1920s: A Preliminary Inquiry,” in *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength*, eds. Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk with Marie Smallface Marule, Brenda Manyfingers, and Cherly Deering eds. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996).

issues. Her children's need for advanced education and Henrietta's desire to return home produced a move to Ottawa. Although disastrous for Dr. Oliver Edwards' career and the family's financial stability, Ottawa nurtured Henrietta's evangelical feminism to maturity. Staying in the North West would have robbed Henrietta of crucial experiences and important friendships which arose from meeting women like Bertha Wright, Roberta Tilton, and Lady Aberdeen or working on the executive of the Home for Friendless Women, the YWCA, the Ottawa LCW, the Charleton County WCTU, the Ottawa Decorative Arts Society and the Baptist Women's Home Mission Society. While Henrietta found the 1890s exciting times, historians concentrating on the public face of feminism have represented this era as the doldrums for the women's suffrage movement.¹⁰

Staying in Montreal from 1897-1903, while Dr. Edwards worked in the North West for the Department of Indian Affairs, represented another choice. While the children needed an education, Henrietta also benefited from her Montreal years, a time when she consolidated her position in the NCWC and became the Convener of the Law Committee. Unable to be a lawyer, Henrietta settled for a career as a legal expert. She would, however, never receive payment for either her time or her expertise. While she campaigned for young women's right to practise law, Henrietta was almost fifty and too indebted to enter university. Fortunately for her own happiness, a powerful sense of being called by God prevented her from growing bitter. It also provided an excellent justification for her ambition. Chronic financial problems while frustrating never deterred Henrietta from pursuing her cause, although they certainly placed limitations on her effectiveness. Family responsibilities rarely stopped Henrietta for long. Even living on the isolated Blood Reserve did not prevent her from creating an Alberta network of local councils, a task that required endless travel and coordination. One can only imagine the determination needed to persevere against the odds of finances, location, advancing age and, too often, family and community scorn. Her actions were those of an independent woman.

Although Henrietta pursued her artistic work seriously for over twenty years, when she moved

¹⁰ See Catherine Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

to Alberta she devoted all her energies to the women's movement. One writer explained her commitment thus:

Neither her marriage nor her hobbies, which included chess, Esperanto, amateur photography and taxidermy (two cranes she had stuffed held open the drapes between her living room and dining room) were allowed to interfere with her welfare work. She agitated for prison reform, held prayer service for woman prisoners.¹¹

Although Henrietta spent many lonely hours during her decade on the Reserve, she did not use her spare time for painting. Instead she donated her art supplies to a young aspiring Macleod art student, Annora Brown.¹²

After tracing Henrietta's endless public commitments, I rejected the thesis, prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s, that evangelical Protestants were backward and conservative, somehow not "modern". Evangelical feminists were among the most energetic activists in the Canadian women's movement. They were never "single-issue" ladies. My research encouraged a reassessment of distinctions drawn by earlier historians between religious and secular feminists. From such a false dichotomy comes statements like "secular suffragists were usually less hesitant than temperance suffragists to call upon the state to implement their reforms".¹³ Although Henrietta qualifies as a "temperance suffragist", she fought for a Christian state which would implement temperance, suffrage, and a complete program of legal and political reforms. Hers was never a solitary voice. Over fifteen women's organizations welcomed Henrietta on their executive before 1905. Organizations like the YWCA shared a language drawn from the Bible and understood by many other Canadian feminists.

Henrietta's unique place in Canadian feminism rests upon the contribution which she made during her thirty years career as Convener of the NCWC's Law Committee. Even here religion fused with politics. As Henrietta's tombstone explained: "Let her Own Works Praise Her: Her

¹¹ Jean Bannerman, *Leading Ladies Canada* (Belleville, Ont: Mika Publishing, 1977), 150.

¹² Annora Brown, *Sketches From My Life* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1981), 74-75.

¹³ Carol Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred: the Ideas of Canadian Suffragists* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 99.

Delight was in the Law of the Lord.” A Christian vision lay behind her legal campaigns. Like Baptists women in the early nineteenth-century, she interpreted various New Testament verses to mean that “sex discrimination” was a man-made system not a God-ordained one. If the highest spiritual authority valued women, so too must the temporal world of business, law and politics.

In using the term “feminist”, I refer to women who consciously aimed at altering the gender hierarchy in women’s favour.¹⁴ This was Henrietta’s objective whether she used the idiom of liberal, equal rights, maternal or evangelical feminism. Perpetuating the status quo was never her goal, not in marriage, economic relations, sexual relations, education, the world of paid employment, the law, politics or religion. Until her death she spoke with authority, as an integral voice in the Canadian woman’s movement. Unfortunately, when Canadian historians have studied first wave feminism they have gazed too affectionately on British and American history, longing one suspects for a figure like Christabel Pankhurst or Emma Goldman to enliven their story. The subsequent accounts have neglected to come to terms with the cultural context of nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada, specifically the place of religion.¹⁵

This biography addresses another silence in the literature on Canadian feminism. The dominance of organizational studies means that the public face of the movement has eclipsed an equally important dimension, the private lives of Canadian feminists. A collective biography of leading Canadian feminists¹⁶ would tell a different story, one which would weave together private and public domains. Many of the Christian feminists who have peopled Henrietta’s story ran women’s organizations: Emily Willoughby Cummings, Harriet Boomer and Roberta Tilton in the NCWC; Maria Craig, Louisa McKinney, and Nellie McClung in the WCTU; and Mary McDougall, Bertha Wright and Emily Kerby in the YWCA. Emily Murphy, who is usually

¹⁴ See Nancy F. Cott, “What’s in a Name? The Limits of ‘Social Feminism; or Expanding the Vocabulary of Women’s History,” *Journal of American History*, 76 (1988). For a recent discussion see Marlene Le Gates, *Making Wave: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996)

¹⁵ Mrs. O. C. Edwards, “Looking Backwards on Life,” *Canadian Home Journal*, May 1931.

¹⁶ This project has been undertaken by Philippa Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private Roles and Public Commitment* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

portrayed as a “secular feminist”, was an Anglican parson’s wife and a religious woman. Although they never waxed eloquent in public on their spirituality, the “Famous Five” shared a strong Christian faith. This forgotten “private world” will not be publicized during the 70th Anniversary celebrations of the Persons Case in 1999. The women’s court challenge which established women’s right to be appointed to the Senate has remained the focus of past and present “heroine” making projects.¹⁷

Henrietta’s story demonstrates another crucial weakness in suffrage historiography, that is the tendency to privilege class questions and neglect sexual ones. In Canada, this approach has produced a conflict model which has exaggerated differences between working-class and middle-class women, rural and urban dwellers, and eastern and western Canadians.¹⁸ Certainly conflict existed, but so did a shared sense of sexual grievance, political impotence, economic dependency and legal disabilities. Henrietta’s involvement in Alberta women’s politics from 1905-1931 illustrates the extensive cooperation and networking that occurred between various communities of women. Even in the post suffrage era, women politicians regardless of formal political affiliations struggled to continue “the fight.” Thus UFA Cabinet Minister Irene Parlby, a spokesperson for rural women, was “humbly petitioned” by the Calgary Women’s Labour group not to resign but to continue as a “woman’s candidate”,¹⁹ a position McClung, Murphy, McKinney and Edwards supported. Veterans of many battles reacted angrily when told by younger feminists in the 1920s and 1930s that their movement had been a failure. “Canadian Women Have NOT Failed in Politics,” asserted Helen Gregory MacGill, a sentiment that Henrietta shared.²⁰

Historian Carol Bacchi, eager to apply a Marxist analysis,²¹ asserted these Canadian women

¹⁷ See *Calgary Herald*, 9 October 1996.

¹⁸ Carol Bacchi, “Divided Allegiances: The Response of Farm and Labour Women to Suffrage,” in *A Not Unreasonable Claim*, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1979), 89-108.

¹⁹ Red Deer City Archives, Irene Parlby Papers, Letter Dear Mrs. Parlby from (Mrs.) Marion Carson, 1 June 1930.

²⁰ Helen Gregory MacGill, “Canadian Women Have NOT Failed in Politics,” *Liberty*, 16 May 1936.

²¹ For a critique see Nancy C. M. Harstock, *Money, Sex and Power: Towards a Feminist Historical*

never intended to make a revolution. "Liberation deferred" was her conclusion, a contentious one that many historians have challenged.²² Like the majority of Canadian and British feminists, Henrietta was "genteel by birth but not by any action of her own." Phillipa Levine recounts stories of British feminists who were -like Ida, Amelia and even Henrietta - "bourgeois more in name than in circumstances."²³ Henrietta's lifestyle for over fifty years, from 1876-1931, reflected her husband's economic status while her unmarried sisters remained tied to their father's, brothers' and brothers-in-law's generosity. Unable to earn a living, indeed barred from many professions as a married woman, Henrietta could only dream of economic independence. In reality her social position reflected Oliver's choices, actions and whims. Marriage had meant downward not upward social mobility for Henrietta.

Beyond asking what "class" as a category of analysis meant for these women, a preoccupation with ideas, ideology and questions of "radical" and "conservative" has obscured the importance of women's private lives and of their moral and sexual campaign. As Phillipa Levine explains:

Though the sexual issues are not 'more' important than other campaigning areas, their explicit intrusion into a world dominated by formalized bureaucracy and institutionalized speech opened up the feminist arena substantially. Feminist politics succeeded in rendering public and speakable a strong undercurrent of Victorian sensibility, empowered against women by its very silence in their presence. In this respect do the sexual campaigns of this era take precedence in my account.²⁴

Henrietta and her contemporaries insisted on speaking about "sexual issues" in public contexts. Although they did not use the term "patriarchy", they shared "a sustained critique of the gendered order of society" and a commitment to assert women's self-determination.²⁵ In Henrietta's biography, moral and sexual campaigns are connected to legal and political ones, a project which

Materialism (Boston: Northeastern University Press 1985), part II, ch. 7-11.

²² Bacchi, 148-49. See also "Prelude" n120.

²³ Levine, 8-9.

²⁴ Levine, ix.

²⁵ Levine, 2.

British historians Susan Kent and Phillipa Levine argue is essential for “configuring feminism historically”.²⁶ The public face of Canadian feminism needs to be reconnected to women’s private lives.

“Life has three distinct periods,” wrote Henrietta in 1931 just months before her death, “Childhood, Adolescence and Maturity.” Henrietta refused to recognize a final one, “old age”. Having built her life around her spiritual faith and her commitment to seek justice for women, she could see only the next campaign. While her family and younger feminists regarded the independent eighty-year-old activist with a mixture of admiration and amusement, some women and many men looked upon her activities with scorn. Fifty years later, the second wave feminist Gloria Steinem observed that “women may be the one group that grow more radical with age ... a feminist revolution rarely resembles a masculine style one.” Steinem mused that, “One day, an army of grey-haired women may quietly take over the earth.”²⁷ Of the “Famous Five” who worked together for over twenty years, Henrietta was the eldest by almost twenty years. The others belonged to her daughter Alice’s generation. In 1929 these two generations of women belonged to a small but experienced “army of grey-haired women” who bequeathed to younger women opportunities which had been denied to them. As feminist political theorists have argued, a politics which grows out of a critique of sexuality and gender inequality has its own mechanisms and structures.²⁸ Reading Henrietta’s life story presents a different perspective on first wave feminism, the Canadian

²⁶ Susan Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Levine, ch 1.

²⁷ Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellion* (New York: New American Library, 1983), 216-18.

²⁸ See Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1983).

women's movement and gender politics. Her biography suggests numerous possibilities for rewriting Canadian history.

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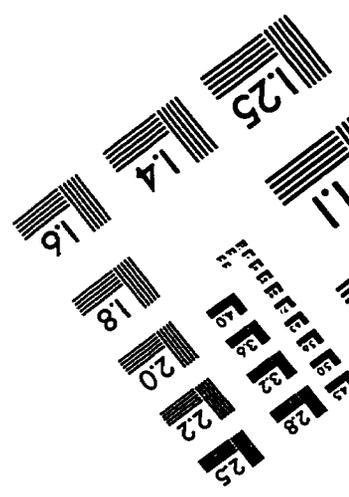
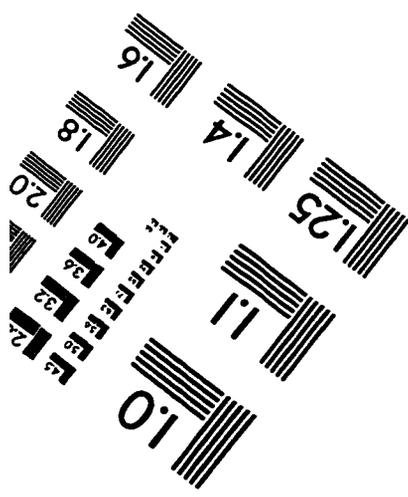
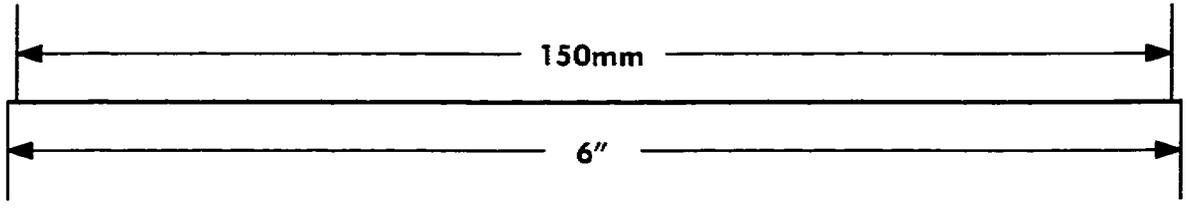
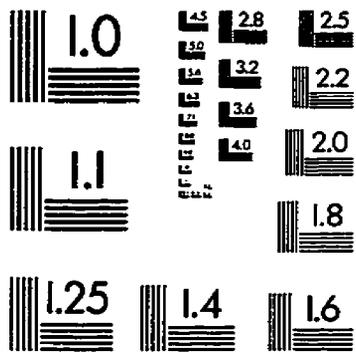
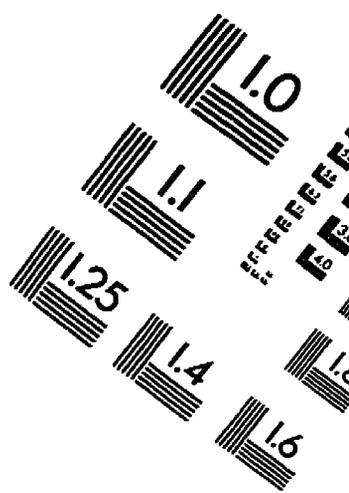
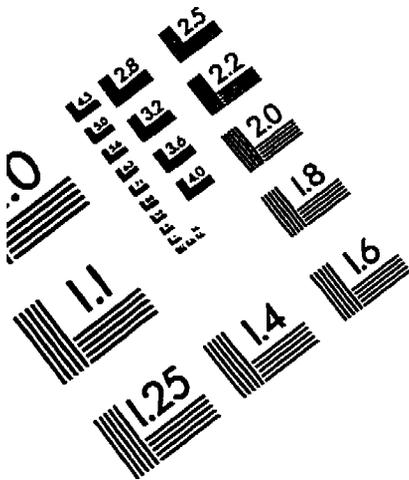
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