

SCHOOLS

Public Schools

Of all the lessons schools have tried to convey, perhaps the hardest was its message to women. From the little red schoolhouse to Cornell University, cultivating the intelligence of the "fair sex" has been of minimal importance.

New York State

Mastery of the three "R's" was not always considered essential for boys or girls. Before the American Revolution, the schooling of the rank and file was downright discouraged, the theory being that "ignorant" people could be more easily controlled.¹ One result of the War for Independence was an attempt at equality for all, and education for the general public was emphasized.

The New York State Board of Regents (the first state board of education in the country) was formed in 1784 to establish and supervise academies and colleges. However, the state was not as quick to develop elementary or "common" schools for all the people as to promote higher education for a select few.² The first major effort in developing a public school system was made in 1812, twenty-eight years later, when legislation provided for a common-

school system with school districts in each township.³ These schools initially charged tuition, and it was not until 1867 that reformers secured a system of free elementary schools.⁴

Tompkins County

As ever more families settled in Tompkins County in the early 1800s, the number of schools increased with the number of little pioneers. The first schoolhouse in Ithaca (it was also the church) was burned in 1817 by an angry mob over differences with an unpopular reverend.⁵ Though the elements have taken their toll on most early schoolhouses, some have survived; the "Eight-Square" schoolhouse in Dryden is one example, many others have been converted into residences or storage buildings.

The earliest schoolhouses were simple, but adequate. Most were of the one-room, ungraded, little-red variety. Girls and boys answered the clanging bell carrying their first reader, pencil, little framed slate (cushioned by a red cotton-wool band to save the teacher's nerves when dropped on the desk or floor), and shiny tin dinner pail complete with sandwich, red apple, and maybe a couple of homemade sugar cookies.

The schools had their problems. The School Commissioner of Tompkins County took a dark view of this circumstance in the Newfield schoolhouse in 1843:

I have seen the innocent pupils gathered around the stove, convulsed with trembling, with the cold piercing blast of winter driven furiously upon them and when they left the school house to perform those duties which nature has enjoined upon all created bodies, they were turned to the public gaze and thus, in early life, shame and modesty became, to them, strangers.⁶



It was not long before outhouses, however crude, were instituted.

The larger school buildings that replaced the one-room structures usually provided separate entrances for girls and boys. The DeWitt Building on Seneca and Cayuga Streets (originally Boynton Junior High School) is a case in point — the two signs prominently displayed on the outside wall left little room for error in the most absent-minded of schoolchildren. Similarly, playgrounds were often divided in half by a high board fence, and students were carefully divided in the classroom itself. Georgia Hare, Tompkins



"Awards of Merit," Ithaca High School, c. 1900.

County's first female lawyer (see "Professions") remembered:

Boys were seated at one side of the room and girls at the other. Although one of my clients, who is a grandfather, tells me that the boys and girls used to write notes to each other.⁷

A dangerous activity! If caught, they might very well suffer staying after class, having their hands "spatted" with a ruler, standing up in front of the class with their faces to the wall, being flogged — or that dreaded punishment, that No. 1 Humiliation — having to sit on a bench with the insufferable other half of creation. Imagine such torture — squirming with embarrassment while the whole class giggled.

These same feelings of confusion and curiosity toward the opposite sex surfaced in playtime activities. One of the many suggestive games instigated outside school walls was called "Picking Cherries."

Girl stands in a chair, the boy reaches up, brings her head down and kisses her once if he has been told to pick one cherry, or as many times as cherries have been indicated.⁸

Some boys probably consumed bushels of "cherries." Another local game called "The Sidehill Plow" was even more blatant.

Boy kneels on one knee, girl sits on the boy's other knee while boy kisses her.⁹

Apparently, flogging and corporal punishment only managed to contain sexual rumblings for the few short hours spent inside the classroom.

In the old days (of the nineteenth century), children spent many more sunshine afternoons outside the confines

of the classroom, than do children today. For one, the school year was often as short as twenty-eight weeks — just long enough to be eligible for state funding. In addition, there was no compulsory education law until 1874, and so many of the school-age children just never showed up. Even so, by 1870 only two common schools (one by Fall Creek and the other at the corner of Court and Albany Streets) were available to Ithaca's growing community of ten thousand. Andrew Dickson White, president of Cornell University, declared in February 1874:

It is a simple fact there is not today, of any sort, accomodation in this city of ten thousand inhabitants for one-half of the children between the age of five and fifteen years.¹⁰

At this criticism from the respected President White, concerned citizens called for a public meeting in which the condition of the schools would be reviewed and "immediate action may be had in regard to the establishment of a better system." On March third, a "large and enthusiastic" crowd met at Library Hall in downtown Ithaca, and the audience was addressed by various Cornell professors, members of the clergy, and the Ithaca Board of Trustees. Professor H. Potter of Cornell spoke on the sanitary condition of the schools "as observed by a personal inspection."¹¹ He grimly reported:

I think the schools of Ithaca — not in their instruction, but in buildings — are the worst and most contemptible of any in the state of New York. The buildings were probably good when constructed but now they are beneath contempt.¹²

The Reverend Tyler declared that for lack of facilities at least half the school-age children were left to "run in the streets and become paupers."¹³

Rev. Dr. White offered a solution to the problem. Having attained a certain population, he explained, cities could, by law, request the state legislature for a special act granting a system of "union graded schools." These would be much better schools, since tax dollars could be used to build and maintain them. Ithaca was eligible. The following resolution was then proposed and passed unanimously.

Resolved, that this meeting earnestly request the legislature of the state, now in session, to pass an act organizing a system of Union Graded Schools for our village.¹⁴

The petition was granted, and Ithaca's ungraded common schools gave way to the union graded system. Surrounding towns followed suit.

All these legislative and practical changes did not affect another basic problem, however—the scorn that faced female students was a handicap indeed. Since both men and women alike believed schooling was a distraction from any female's ultimate duty, motherhood, they were not encouraged in intellectual pursuits. Mary Elizabeth Mooney, upon graduating from Ithaca High School in the 1880s, spoke of this problem in her Commencement Day address:

In many of the young ladies towards whom the term "school girls" is applied with a feeling akin to contempt, lies the possibility of a great future . . . All might not come to be Elliots, or Nightingales, but every "school girl" as well as every other person, can perform the duties of each day as they come and in discharging them faithfully, will merit the approbation of all good people and what's better the approval of her own conscience.¹⁵

Academies

During the greater part of the nineteenth century, "academies" served the function of secondary education in New York State. In these schools young people aged twelve to sixteen lived and studied beyond the usual elementary school level.

The Board of Regents, a special governing body formed by an act of legislation in 1784, was vested with the authority to found colleges and academies.¹ At that time there were no public common schools in the state, and elementary and secondary education were wholly dependent upon individual or group incentive. The first academy was chartered in 1787. During the next seventy-five years the Regents incorporated more than four hundred academies widely distributed throughout the state. These schools could be coeducational, or designed for females or males only. The Waterford Academy for Girls, incorporated in 1819, was the first academy specifically for young women in New York.

Slow Acceptance

Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, the public was skeptical of secondary education; many parents



TRUMANSBURGH ACADEMY.

needed their children to work for the family, and men went into business at an early age. Firmly engrained was the belief that schooling beyond the elementary grades was impractical and unnecessary. Even at the peak of the academy era in 1855, only 3.7 percent of the secondary school age population was enrolled in academies.²

Female academies were especially controversial. Originally these schools concentrated on religious training, accomplishments (embroidery, painting, etc.), and domestic preparation. However, by the mid-century mark, academic subjects like arithmetic, geography, and history were introduced into many curriculums.³ Local dissenters stated by way of Ithaca's *Castigator* in 1823:

The education of the present race of females, is not favorable to domestic happiness. For our own part, we call education not that which smothers a woman with accomplishments, but that which tends to consolidate a firm and regular system of character, that which tends to form a friend, a companion, and a wife . . . more especially, that which refers all actions, feeling, sentiments, tastes and passions, to the love and fear of God.⁴

Advertisements from local newspapers of that period indicate that there were usually two or three female academies to choose from in Ithaca, while smaller surrounding towns might offer one.

The public view towards secondary education changed—possibly due to the demands of a newly industrialized society—and in the mid-1800s, the public clamored for more schools. The existing academies could not meet this need for several reasons: (1) tuition, though often very minimal, was a barrier to many, (2) required live-in boarding discouraged those who did not reside in the immediate vicinity of the institution, and (3) citizens desired secondary schools under the jurisdiction of local public officials, rather than private institutions operated by a few self-perpetuating members of a board of trustees.

Advent of the High School

Legislation in 1853 authorized school districts in New York State to add what were then called "academical departments" to existing common schools. These paralleled the educational opportunities offered by the private academies and were, in essence, the first public high schools. In 1867, instruction in these departments was made tuition-free, and in less than ten years they overtook the academies both in number of institutions and pupils enrolled.⁵

In the face of this declining enrollment, the academies pondered their fate. Instead of waging a losing battle for

ITHACA FEMALE SEMINARY.

A FEMALE SEMINARY will be opened in the village of Ithaca, Tompkins county, N. Y. on Wednesday the first day of June next.

The Seminary is pleasantly located, with suitable pleasure grounds, to which the pupils will have access. The village is situated near the head of Cayuga Lake, and at the northern termination of the Ithaca and Owego Rail Road; and the scenery around it is unrivalled for beauty and magnificence.

This institution will be under the charge of Mr. JAMES F. COGSWELL, an experienced and successful teacher, as Principal, assisted by an efficient and accomplished corps of Female Teachers in the various departments.

A thorough and systematic course of instruction will be adopted, embracing the primary studies; the higher branches of English and classical education; the ornamental branches usually taught in such institutions; with the advantages of Lectures on Natural Philosophy, Chymistry, Geology, and Botany. In this course it is proposed to pursue the following plan:

PRIMARY CLASSES.

Reading, Spelling, Parley's Juvenile Works, embracing Geography, History, and Botany; Emerson's Arithmetick; English Grammar; Colburn's Arithmetick; Hale's History of the United States of America; Irvin's Jewish, Roman and Grecian Antiquities, per term, \$1 00

HIGHER DEPARTMENT.

FIRST YEAR.

First Term.—Adams' Arithmetick commenced; Watts on the Mind completed; English Grammar completed.

Second Term.—Adams' Arithmetick continued; Rhetorick completed; Ancient and Modern History commenced.

Third Term.—Arithmetick completed; Ancient and Modern History finished; Natural Philosophy studied.

SECOND YEAR.

First Term.—Algebra commenced; Geology completed; Geography commenced.

Second Term.—Algebra finished; Geography continued; Chymistry studied.

Third Term.—Botany studied; Geography finished; Natural Philosophy studied.

THIRD YEAR.

First Term.—Euclid commenced; Logic completed; Ancient History studied, with Rollin read.

Second Term.—Euclid finished; Chymistry studied; Modern History, with Russell's Europe read.

Third Term.—Botany studied; Kames' Criticism completed; Moral Philosophy commenced.

FOURTH YEAR.

First Term.—Moral Philosophy finished; Intellectual Philosophy commenced; Natural Theology completed.

Second Term.—Intellectual Philosophy finished; Astronomy commenced; Allison on Taste commenced.

Third Term.—Astronomy finished; Allison on Taste finished; Trigonometry studied.

Any of the above studies at, per term, \$7 00
In addition to the above, Latin, Greek, or French may be studied, if wished by the parent or guardian; for Latin and Greek with the other studies, in addition, per annum, \$5 00
If studied alone, 7 00
French, in addition, 5 00
Alone, 7 00
Musick, 16 00
Drawing or Painting in oil or water colors, 7 00

Students of the 1st, 2d, and 3d years, will attend a regular course of Lectures on Natural Philosophy, during the third term.

Students of the 2nd, 3d, and 4th years will attend a course of Lectures on Chymistry, during the second term.

Lectures on Geology will be delivered during the first term, and on Botany during the third.

Holbrook's apparatus for primary schools will be provided for the scholars of the primary department; and pretty extensive apparatus for Chymistry and Natural Philosophy, with Globes, Maps, &c. for the higher department.

The following are the regular commencements and terminations of each term. The first term of the year will commence the first Thursday after New Years, and continue 15 weeks, then a vacation of two weeks.—The second term will commence the first Thursday in May and continue 14 weeks, then a vacation of 4 weeks. The third term will commence the first Thursday in Sept. and continue 15 weeks, then a vacation of 2 weeks. The annual examination will hereafter be at the close of the spring term.

Board will be furnished in the Seminary, for pupils from abroad, at \$2 per week; pupils to supply their own beds, bedding, towels, and washing. The Principal and Teachers will board in the Seminary, and exercise a constant care over the pupils placed under their charge. Reference may be had to the following gentlemen: Rev. J. W. McCullough, Amasa Dana, Rev. A. M. Mann, Isaac Carpenter, Rev. C. G. Carpenter, Ben Johnson, Rev. Joseph Castle, W. A. Woodward, A. D. W. Bruyn, B. G. Ferris, A. St. John, William Andrus, William R. Collins, D. D. Spencer, Ithaca, May 7th, 1836.

LADIES' SCHOOL.

THE third quarter of Miss M'DONALD'S School for young ladies, will commence on Monday the 12th instant, at the Academy, in the village of Ithaca. The TERMS of Tuition:—

Orthography, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic—Two Dollars per quarter.
Geography, including the Elements of Astronomy and Map Making, English Grammar, History, Rhetoric, and Composition—Three Dollars per quarter.
Needle Work, Fancy Work, Drawing, and the French Language—Five Dollars per quarter.

The importance of a school in which the various branches of science will be accurately and systematically taught, requires no argument. The recommendations which Miss M'D. has from gentlemen of the first respectability in Albany, and the satisfaction she has given to the parents of her scholars, authorise the Trustees to anticipate a liberal encouragement.

Every attention will be given to the morals of young ladies entrusted to her care, and board furnished in respectable families and on the most reasonable terms.

LUTHER GERE,
D. L. BISHOP,
F. A. BLOODGOOD,
D. WOODCOCK,
H. ACKLEY } Trustees.

Ithaca, April 9th, 1824. n^o 48th.

BOARDING HOUSE.

MRS. BUTLER,

HAS OPENED A BOARDING HOUSE, for the accommodation of Young Ladies who wish to attend Miss M'DONALD'S School. Price, \$1 25 per week. Ithaca, April 20, 1824 n^o 49th.

ITHACA ACADEMY AND Female Seminary.

THE annual examination of these school will be at the close of the present term, which will be the 9th of August next. The last week of the term will be occupied in the examination. The following gentlemen are invited to attend as committee of examination.

Rev. C. G. Carpenter Rev. J. W. McCullough
" J. Castle " J. C. F. Hoos
" P. T. Todrig S. Mack, Esqr.
Hon. E. Mack Hon. C. Humphrey
Hon. A. Dana Hon. A. D. W. Bruyn
A. Sherrill, Esq. B. G. Ferris, Esqr.
Parents, guardians, and all who feel interested, are requested to attend.
Ithaca, June 21, 1837.

YOUNG LADIES' SCHOOL,

Corner Green and Geneva Streets,

The Spring term will open at the above named place, on MONDAY, April 22, 1867.

Terms—\$12.00 per annum, or \$3 00 per quarter, payable in advance. (4w211) MARY J. DRAKE.

MRS. PHELPS' SCHOOL,

For Young Ladies,

WILL commence on Monday next, at the Court House Room, where will be taught the usual branches of a polite and useful English education.
Ithaca, July 16, 1823.

School for Young Ladies, IN DANBY.

MISS DUNNING continues her SCHOOL, for the instruction of Young Ladies, in Danby, near the meeting-house, where are taught the various branches of a good education—Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, Rhetoric, Needlework, &c. Terms of tuition, \$3 per quarter. Board can be had in respectable private families, at seventy-five cents per week. The situation is healthy and pleasant; and every regard will be paid to the morals and manners of pupils.
Danby, Sept. 19th, 1820. n^o 6th

students against the public high schools, most simply decided to merge with the existing school system and *become* high schools; an act of legislation made possible this transfer of authority.⁶ Locally, the Ithaca, Groton, Dryden, and Trumansburg Academies became public high schools in the 1870s. In many cases, the change was in name alone; teachers, curriculum, and materials remained essentially the same.

The public high school enabled women to study advanced academic courses for the first time. This paved the way for women's colleges to appear, and later for coeducation to filter its way into the invincible and hostile male universities.



Many of the male students at the university were outspoken on the matter. The college yearbook, the *Cornelian*, proclaimed:

Our daughters have not yet entered the university — we trust they never may. It rejoices our hearts to see their smiling faces occasionally in the lecture rooms, but if the dear creatures wish to graduate, we prefer the sweet consciousness of their being at Vassar or Wellesley.⁴

In view of this sentiment, Ezra launched his campaign. On March 27, 1869, Susan B. Anthony came to speak in Ithaca at his invitation. She spoke on the subject of coeducation; if her speech affected some of the audience, it left others unconvinced. Goldwin Smith, professor of history and pillar of the early university, attended this speech. He later remarked, "Her prospectus of the future relations of the sexes seemed to be too much for her highly liberal audience, and was a great deal too much for me."⁵

Rumors that the university was about to open its gates to women were instantly denied. The *Cornelian* was quick to reassure the flustered male student body:

The Woman's Rights monomaniacs are attempting to mislead the public into the belief that female students are to be admitted here. The foundation of the rumor probably exists only in the imagination of some enthusiast.⁶

John Selkreg, editor of the *Ithaca Journal*, confidently explained to the Ithaca community:

Ladies will not be admitted next fall, nor for many falls to come, if ever. At present the faculty and trustees are nearly unanimous in their opinion that the admission of women to the University is impractical.⁷

First Woman at Cornell

In the spring of 1870, in the university's infancy, Cornell received its first application from a woman for admission. Jennie Spencer of Cortland had satisfactorily passed the examination for the state Scholarship, and President White was pleased to admit her under the terms of the charter.

The lady student proved excellent from every point of view and her admission made a mere temporary ripple on the surface of our affairs.⁸

So was she pleased to be there. As there were no acceptable facilities for women on the hill, she lodged in town. Jennie would either cross Cascadilla Gorge or go through the cemetery to climb the 440-ft. "Ithaca Alps" to

Cornell University

During the mid-1800s, an increasing number of women sought the benefits of a college education. Because they were not welcome in the men's universities, separate women's colleges were formed, such as Elmira College in 1855, Vassar in 1861, and Wellesley in 1870. Elmira College was the first to confer degrees equivalent — in name at least — to those offered in colleges for men.

Unfortunately these schools for women did not have nearly the status of men's colleges; a diploma from Radcliffe, for example, was worth piddling little compared to one from a "regular" university like Harvard. For this reason, feminists pressed for coeducation.¹

Ezra's Cornell

Cornell University was chartered on April 27, 1865. Founder Ezra Cornell was a Quaker, and he wholeheartedly embraced a policy of coeducation for his embryonic university. Writing to his granddaughter Eunice Cornell on February 17, 1868, he stated, "I want to have girls educated in the university, as well as boys, so that they may have the same opportunity to become wise and useful to society that boys have."²



Both the aging Founder and the youthful president had to be helped from their respective sick beds to attend Cornell's first Commencement Day Ceremony.

The question of admitting women was raised by president Andrew Dickson White on Cornell's Inauguration Day, October 7, 1868. He said:

Speaking entirely for myself, I would say that I am perfectly willing to undertake the experiment as soon as it shall be possible to do so, but no fair-minded young man or woman can ask us to undertake it now, as it is with the utmost difficulty that we are ready to receive young men.³

classes every day. This arrangement was fine in the spring and summer, but when faced with an infamous Ithaca winter:

One can just see the picture – Jennie Spencer toiling up the path the morning after the first snow storm, her long skirts, heavy with snow, tumbling her into drifts and over tombstones.⁹

Finally she went to President White and explained that the rigors were overwhelming – and she quit.

Jennie herself managed to slip in and out of Cornell causing only a “mere temporary ripple,” but her passing brought the issue of coeducation to the fore once again. In a public show of support, the Board of Trustees voted on March 21, 1872, to admit women to Cornell on the same terms as men. The one stipulation was that while men could enroll at age sixteen, women were required to wait an extra year.

Sixteen women were admitted to the university in the fall of 1872. Emma Sheffield Eastman, a transfer student from Vassar, became the first beskirted graduate, receiving in June 1873 the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy.

A Woman's House on the Hill

In light of the Jennie Spencer predicament, new accommodations were clearly necessary. On February 13, 1872, the Board of Trustees accepted the \$250,000 gift of lumber baron and fellow trustee Henry Sage to build and furnish special living quarters for women. The structure would be called, predictably, “Sage College for Women.”

A quarter of a million dollars was a lot of money – especially one hundred years ago. When Sage College opened in 1875 it boasted of an electric elevator, fully equipped gymnasium, greenhouse, covered corridor for walking in bad



weather, library, parlor, music hall, large drawing room, students' reading room, dining halls, 175 carpeted and completely furnished rooms – and even bathtubs! Both Andrew White and Henry Sage were determined to surround the female students with the comfort and luxury allegedly appropriate to the sex. The trustees proudly reported that the “engravings and casts with which the public rooms are decorated have been purchased at Berlin, Paris, [and] London.”¹⁰



1875: First graduating class picture inclusive of female students; male classmates appear nonchalant.



"[We] took seats, always at the very front – probably only three or four of us to keep each other company. And afterwards we slipped away and, if possible, vanished."

Response to the "Invasion"

Opinion on the new coeds was sharply divided. Those who favored coeducation – the minority – looked forward to something of a "new era" at Cornell, owing to women's "nicer sense of moral order and beauty." Vice-President William C. Russel asserted, "They are more drawn towards what is pure, and true, and honest. . . . They ought to exercise the greatest purifying power over us."¹¹

Dissenters claimed that instead of uplifting the menfolk, "womanly purity" would be contaminated by the men and lost forever. The *Cornell Era*, the university's weekly newspaper, despaired of the situation in fumbling verse:

If those who've honored woman as above them
Thus see them to pattern after men
Not in what's high, what leads the world to love them,
But in their nature's lower leanings, then
Can they help feeling that the finer senses
Have blunted, and less delicate, her mind
By frequent contact with their sex commences
To lose the priceless charm of womankind?¹²

One could almost see the transformation taking place:

The beings whom he was to worship beyond the shadow of college towers – who were to make him forget for a brief time the struggles of the classroom – these fair creatures whom he had set apart as something not to be profaned by association with prosaic toil, he finds with him in the classroom, their faces flushed with emulation, the spirit of rivalry gleaming from their eyes.¹³

In the way of explanation, one man offered:

To one who has been educated from boyhood wholly among those of his own sex, and who has associated women purely with the home-life he has enjoyed only once a year, to such a one the

presence of women in college halls and lecture rooms has all the appearance of sacrilege.¹⁴

Reassurances

In 1875 the administration distributed a brochure to quell the controversy surrounding coeducation. It dealt calmly with these oft-repeated concerns:

Q. – Is there any danger that the Lady students in the University may be developed into "strong-minded women," their womanly natures becoming hardened and something less beautiful substituted?

A. – The contrary is the case. . . . The offensive hardness and "strong-mindedness" complained of, arises among women who have felt themselves unjustly excluded from educational privileges to which they ought to have been admitted, and who have revolted at what they have not unjustly considered a denial of justice.

Q. – Does not the admission of young ladies tend to lower scholarship?

A. – The contrary is the case. Young ladies who enter a university, subjecting themselves to the entrance examinations and giving to study the years which are usually wasted in amusement, by that very fact, prove themselves earnest. Almost without exception the lady students have been among the best scholars in the various universities to which they have been admitted.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the brochure had little effect. "On the campus the ostracism of the unfortunate 'co-eds' is striking," reported the *New York Herald* in 1894. "They are regarded as invaders and interlopers, as elements which are entirely foreign and out of place in a university of the proportions



"They are regarded as invaders and interlopers, as elements which are entirely foreign and out of place in a university of the proportions and character of Cornell."

and character of Cornell." Furthermore, the "personal appearance and conduct in general" of the coeds' supposedly showed that "they would be out of place in fashionable college society," and simply were not the "social equals" of their male counterparts.¹⁶ However, the lyrics of one tune from an official Cornell songbook clearly identify at least part of the problem:

I'm glad all the girls are not like Cornell women
They're ugly as sin and there's no good within 'em.

The reason we're singing so loudly about it
Is simply because we are doing without it.¹⁷

This image of the undesirable Cornell coed hung on as late as 1950, when one exasperated student wrote in the *Cornell Daily Sun*:

Far and wide, Cornell co-eds are known as "dogs" or "pigs." Years before I came here I had heard that they were not only by far the world's ugliest women, but that they further disgraced their sex by their scandalously loose morals. We are told that we are conceited, spoiled snobs.¹⁸

Remembrances

Ellen Coit Brown, class of 1882, reminisced at length about her college years.

There was a general understanding that the men did not want us there. This seemed a harmless enough peculiarity and we readily observed the decorum suited to their attitude. Men and women did not, by code, recognize acquaintances of the opposite sex when passing in the campus walks; we never talked to the men in the halls or the classrooms when going and coming, nor walked about with them anywhere.

The classroom was no better:

In the large lecture halls and the small classrooms, mostly filled with our brothers and cousins and future husbands, we walked demurely, as inconspicuous as we could manage, and took seats, always at the very front—probably only three or four of us to keep each other company. And afterwards we slipped away and, if possible, vanished.

On one occasion, some male students exhibited this unseemly behavior:

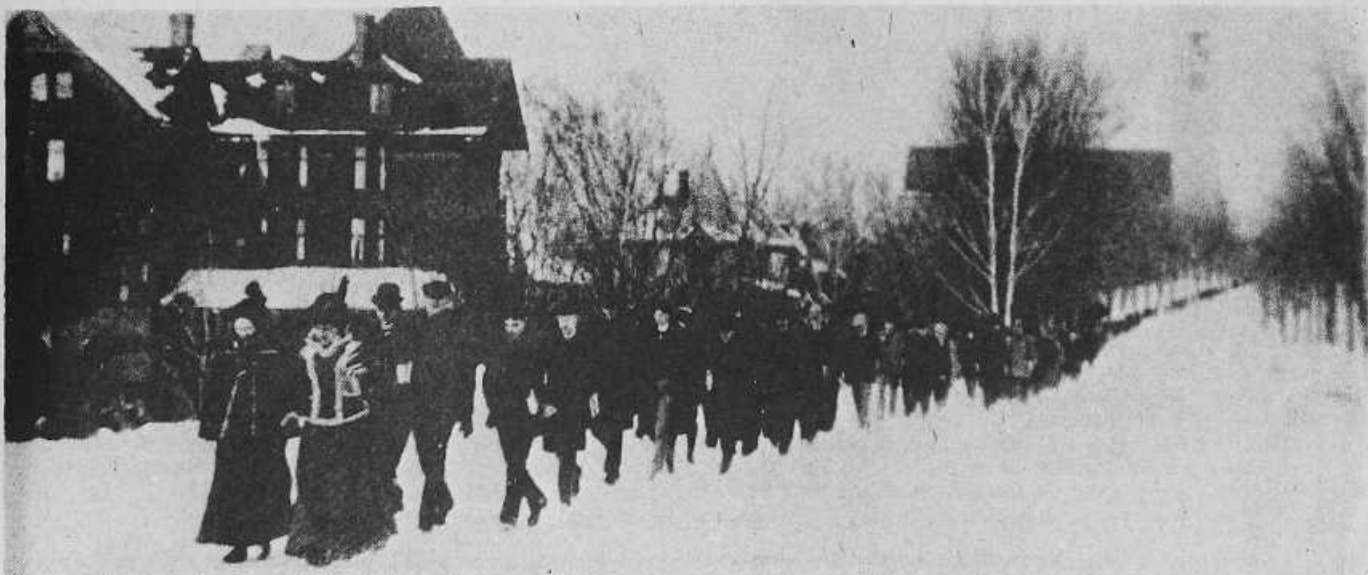
A roystering group of them turned on the fire hose one night through the window of our retiring room and [our] only retreat, in Morrill Hall, and we found the place [the] next morning sodden from ceiling to floor and very dreadful. I suppose we were infuriated, I seem to remember an indignant and perhaps vociferous bunch of us standing around the outskirts. But I cannot remember that we ever achieved redress from the men . . . and the university cleaned up the mess.

As far as dating was concerned:

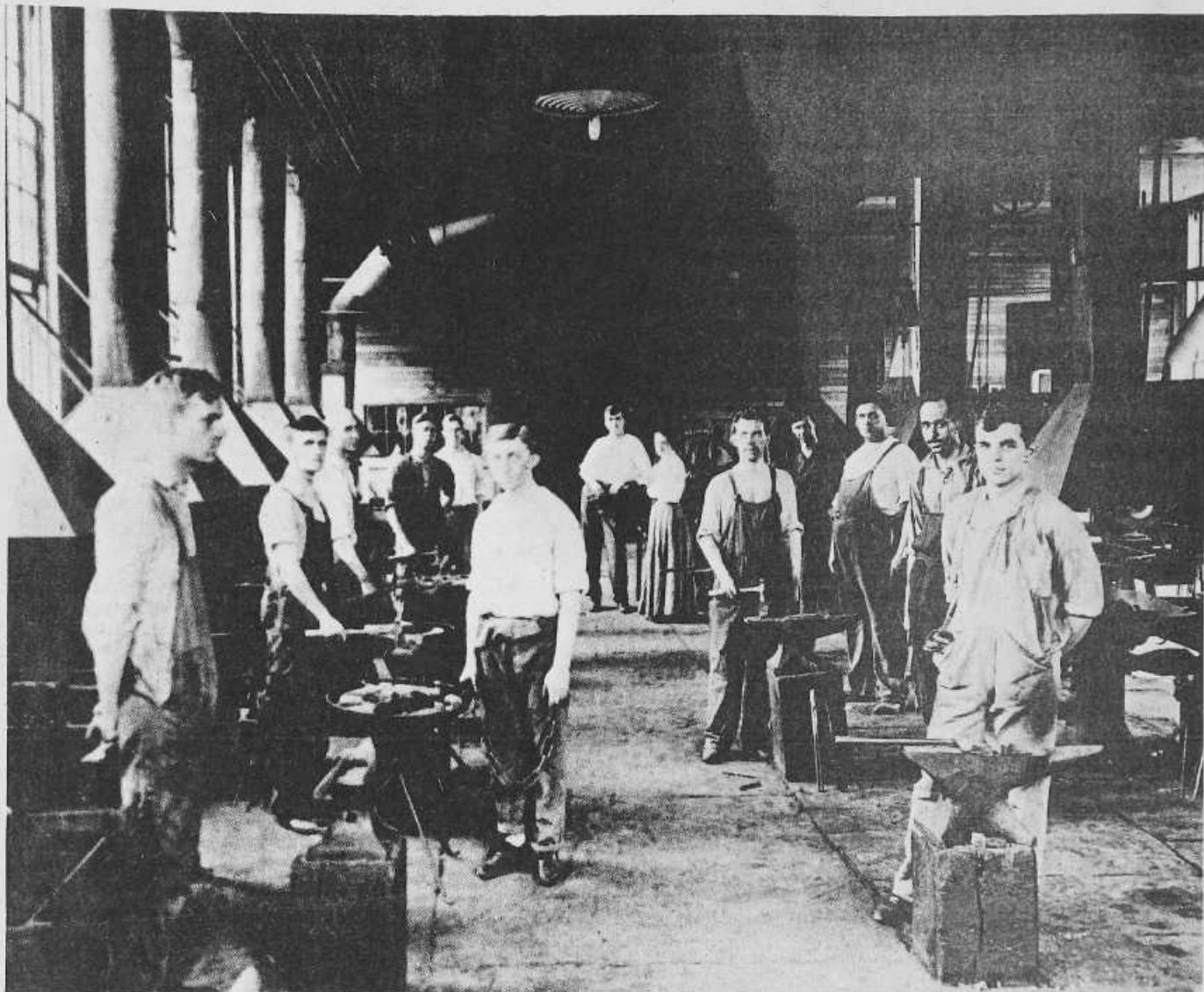
I think there must have been a studied avoidance of the couple idea. We were on trial, and we knew it, before the world and our own public, and discretion sat upon us, women and men alike. (Of course, a warm handclasp under a buffalo robe on a cold night is nothing—we, I must say, were human.)

One time her German professor Mr. Ryerson invited the class to his home for an evening "seminar," but without inviting the women. They showed up anyway.

The Butler or something in pants opened the door. He said that Mrs. Ryerson was not receiving tonight. We said nevermind we had come to the seminar. In a state of some confusion the man opened a door and let us in to a room filled with youths sitting around smoking, and the Professor in the midst of reclining gracefully in a deck chair, pipe in hand—obviously being interrupted. There was a moment of intense stillness, a sort of bated breath effect. Then the professor sprang up with an appearance of great agitation; he addressed us standing there horrified, with an irregular speech to the effect that Mrs. Ryerson would be down immediately, and he must have automatically handed us a chair, for we certainly sat down and were glad to. He was completely upset, he seemed to scurry as he went into the hall and called up the stairs. But the lady never appeared and we sat there frozen immobile during the rest of that interminable evening. [The seminar] was only a long monologue delivered by the professor . . . between puffs as



"Men and women did not, by code, recognize acquaintances of the opposite sex when passing in the campus walks . . ."



A lone coed in Sibley engineering school.

he contrived to loll in his deck chair. I recall not a word of it except this, which I have never forgotten: "Nothing is so distressing as crudity."

Other Pioneers

With so few females enrolled, a woman often found herself the lone coed in class, a truly frightening experience. Charlotte Crawford, class of 1906, remembered:

Nora elected civil engineering and led a miserable life as the only coed in Sibley. She was an only child and had never learned to take teasing. Her fellow students repeatedly stole her slide-rule and other instruments and persecuted her in every way. My sister Mollie, along with the other few girls registered as "medics," suffered similarly, but our brothers had taught her how to handle tormentors and she finally succeeded in winning her persecutors over to her side. The boys didn't seem to mind the girls studying the classics, so I was very little bothered.²⁰

("Nora," incidentally, was Nora Stanton Blatch, granddaughter of feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton.)

Meanwhile, Mary Rogers, class of '96, held a different view of coed life. She recalled:

The so-called "position of women at Cornell" was not for me a matter of much concern. I was of a family of eight, five boys and three girls, brought up in a home where girls were as important as boys, and as smart, and as capable and real people, and any discussion of the subject seemed to me a waste of breath.²¹

Some of these early female students escaped victimization, but doubtless, most floundered in troubled waters.

In the World

Though almost religiously studious and averaging marks 10 percent higher than the men,²² about the only career female graduates initially found open to them was teaching. The statistics seemed to indicate they could not "make it" in the job market, and one alumna wrote:

So long as we are excluded from competition on equal terms in the world's work, I think we

should decline to furnish statistics that would show our comparative lack of achievement without making clear at the same time the almost insuperable prejudices and hardships (unnecessary ones, I mean) to which it is due.²³

Meanwhile, campus life went on. But the relative constancy that had been established was shattered when in 1884 a decision by the Board of Trustees stirred a handful of coeds to rebellion . . .

SAGE UPROAR

The luxurious Sage College for Women opened in 1875, and twenty female students moved into their new home. "That small family of twenty will rattle in those large halls,"²⁴ grumbled founder Henry Sage. Once firmly settled in, the question of supervision for the women occupied the attention of the university authorities.

Protection

For a long time, the supervision of Cornell coeds was rather lax. A rules committee with student and faculty representation was established for the women at Sage College, but apparently they chose not to exercise their power.²⁵ Those women who boarded in town (rather than at Sage) were able to come and go, totally unrestrained. Recalls one such alumna:

I do not remember the least supervision by the University of our behavior and acts off the campus. . . . We certainly amused ourselves as we pleased. And we were pleased with simple things — being mostly countrified and unsophisticated. In small companies of intimates we explored the lovely region around Cornell enjoying it immensely and storing it in our hearts.²⁶

This arrangement worked for awhile. But Henry Sage was disgruntled — he opted for a strict system of supervision and regulations for all coeds. His wife revealed that he was "bitterly disappointed" that the women were living free of imposed restrictions. "He had been full of hope and faith and had given his money readily only to have the whole thing turn out as a failure."²⁷ But Sage was persistent, and was soon to have his way.

In the late 1870s, rumors flew that the university would soon be requiring all women to live at Sage College under the supervision of a matron appointed by the university. Male students were not required to live in any sort of allocated housing; those who did choose dormitory life were not forced to suffer the presence of a matron or any other kind of supervision. Various members of the *Cornell Era* staff, supporting the right of coeds to live wherever they chose, indignantly stated in 1879 that parents who wanted close restraints on their girls ought to send them elsewhere, for Cornell was a place for independent women who did not need boarding-house rules.²⁸

Before any official steps were taken by the university, the coeds took steps of their own. In 1875 they organized a comprehensive plan for self-government (see "Medley"). Called the Sage College Association, the plan stipulated that a president and secretary be chosen along with an executive committee to enforce the rules. Under the new system all women would be expected to be in the building by 9:30 P.M. unless "detained by an entertainment or social gathering."²⁹ "Callers" were to be received in the parlors, and women could not walk, sit, or linger on the grounds

after dark. The proposal was adopted and, for a time, served to quiet fears for the ladies' moral rectitude.

In the meantime, other plans had been suggested. One in particular called for the young women to board with professors and their families. Distrust of the moral character of the professors, however, caused the plan to be thrown out.³⁰

The Last Straw

Sage College, for all its convenience and style, was beyond the means of many women — it cost \$5.50 per week for room and board, whereas similar facilities could be found downtown for as little as \$3.75. Other students simply preferred to secure lodgings off campus. By 1884, half of the female students lived in town, and only twenty-five in the establishment geared for one hundred and seventy-five. Here they hit an especially tender nerve — with the mansion standing nearly empty, the university was not getting a good return on its investment.

On July 3, 1884, in the unsuspecting quiet of midsummer, there was a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees in which the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, that all lady students be required to room and board at Sage College, unless specifically excused, for due cause shown, by the Committee on Sage College.³¹

In addition, a matron — "guide, counsellor and friend" — would be appointed to keep a watchful eye open.

By way of explanation, the trustees issued a circular which carefully stated the reasons for the decision.

The trustees do not feel that it is of any advantage either to the country, or to the lady students; or to the reputation of the university, to allow young ladies, for the saving at the most of fifty or sixty cents per week, to deprive themselves of well-ventilated rooms, good food, opportunities for exercise, bathing and social improvement. . . . Better by far that a young lady go without a university education than thus undermine her constitution and prepare to go forth from Cornell University as just one more



Canoeing on Beebe Lake.

addition to the great number of sickly, weakly, weary American women unfit for any duty requiring bodily or intellectual vigor.³³

But what it came down to was simply that the building was losing money. Finally, they informed the women that anyone who could not live with this decision would receive a dismissal with all the best wishes of the Board, Sage College, and the university faculty.

Response

Many coeds, especially those who would be forced to move, were aghast. One asserted that she got plenty of exercise climbing the hill every day, and it was confinement at Sage College that would render her a "sickly, weakly, weary" American woman.³⁴ Another stated that the trustees "must indeed be hard pressed for velvet to glove authority's iron hand."³⁵ Cornell student Emma Neal Basset of Corning circulated this response to the trustees' ultimatum:

The Sage College Circular Translated

To Miss Small Income

My dear friend,

The trustees of Cornell University have decided that if you cannot afford a gymnasium, a bathroom, a greenhouse, a parlor, a reading room, and a society room, you had better not try to come to our university. Indeed, we are so convinced that our judgement of what is for your welfare is better than your own, that we kindly will not let you come, save on the above conditions. . . . Moreover, we have a beautiful building, the gift of a good man, which we do not know what to do with - unless you come and live in it. . . . It may seem hard to you that we should sacrifice your life to a building; but the building is very beautiful, you know, and a good man gave it to us, and we must please him. Believe, too, that this is really a kindness to you and to our country. For though you have all the culture our University can afford, and have not had a bathroom and a greenhouse, you would be wretched and useless. So stay at home, my friend, and get on as best you can; and if ever it seems unjust that you can not share the instruction which the university loves to give, remember the beautiful building which you have been the means of enabling us to keep, and be happy.³⁶

That was fun, but the women had something more substantial in mind. Extensive correspondence with the entire body of female alumnae was undertaken and a com-

prehensive statement called "The Memorial" was compiled for presentation to the Board of Trustees. One organizer remembered:

This vast work was carried on devotedly and thoroughly through weeks and months and included the writing to all the Presidents of the co-educational colleges with questions as to their policies and experience in the housing of their women students. No secretaries, no typewriters, no telephones, the handful of girls doing the work scattered in their homes.³⁷

The work as yet unfinished, the Fall '84 semester began with the new restrictions uncompromisingly in force at Sage and the first matron installed.

[We] took no notice of this; nothing could be done about it, the Memorial still in embryo, and could not at any rate be brought to the attention of the trustees until their meeting of next June.³⁸

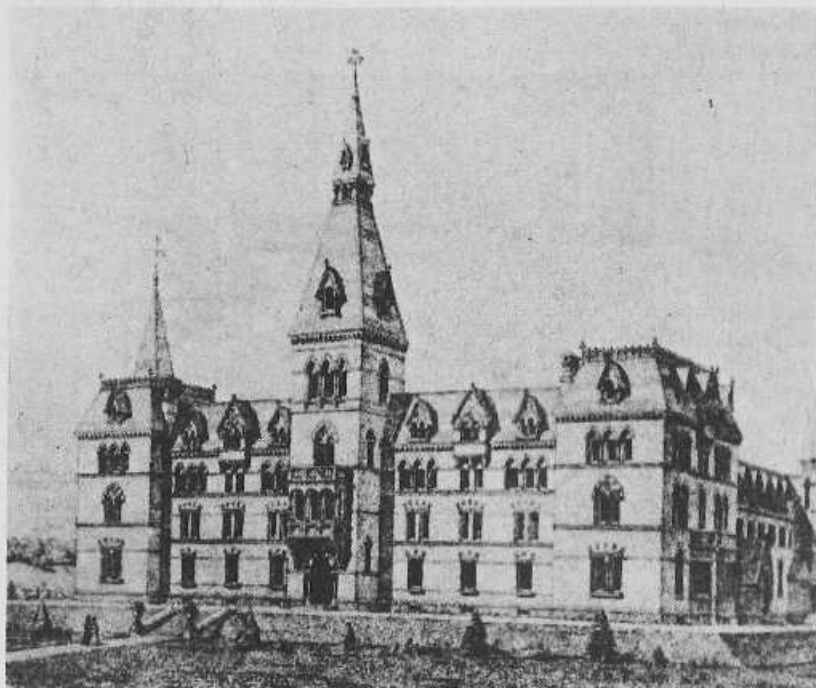
The Showdown

Meanwhile the young rebels were making repeated trips to see President White and other university authorities, explaining and clarifying their position.

We told the trustees we [had] been brought up to keep clean without bathtubs and had done so to date and it made us mad to have a bathtub thrust upon us in the light of these facts. We had behaved ourselves, Sage girls and outsiders alike, with such perfect decorum that they had nothing to urge against us. We objected especially in this connection to the matron idea. It was a snub, unwarranted and infuriating, and not to be borne.³⁹

But of all arguments, the most pointed was this:

[The] law deprives one class of students - a class which has not merited the deprivation - of personal liberty in the matter of residence. . . . Although it had been the declared policy of the University to admit all students on equal terms



Two views of Sage College.

RULES FOR PRESERVATION OF REPUTATION.

1. No Miss shall waltz with any Professor under thirty years of age.
2. No Miss shall receive calls from any male unless the Matron is present.
3. No Miss shall encourage the attentions of any gentleman with the direct intention of trifling with his affections.
4. No Miss shall embrace any opportunity of sitting nearer than three feet to any gentleman, nor allow any gentleman any such opportunity to embrace her. (To obviate any such accident sofas have been excluded from the building.)
5. No Miss shall wear any gaudy clothing or jewelry (rings particularly forbidden).
6. No Miss shall play Copenhagen or Pillow and Key with any but members of the Faculty.
7. All Misses must retire at ten o'clock, in order to preserve the healthful bloom upon their *cheek*. (Those interested in *coeducation* take notice.)
8. The head waiter will prevent the Misses entering the dining room who are late to breakfast.
9. No Miss shall form an *engagement* of any nature tending to interfere with her lessons.
10. Daily reports of the conduct of the Misses shall be laid before the Investigating Committee, and the Chairman, in conjunction with the Matron, shall take a parental interest in the welfare of the girls.
11. The Misses attending this school are expected at all times — in lecture rooms, on the campus, in Sage Parlors and elsewhere — to preserve a modest, lady-like and bashful demeanor; no sheep's-eyes, smiles or bows permitted. If a rosy blush is seen to mantle the *cheek* of any Miss at the appearance of any member of the opposite sex, it will be taken as a sign of an incipient affection, and the Miss will be incontinently sent home.

this statute made a distinction between the terms on which women are admitted and on which all other students are admitted.⁴⁰

President White responded to the controversy unsympathetically:

When young women insisted on their right to come and go at all times of the day and night, as they saw fit, without permission, it was like their right to walk from the campus to the beautiful point opposite us on the lake: the right the undoubtably had, but insurmountable obstacles were in the way . . . public opinion was an invincible barrier to the liberties they claimed.⁴¹

On June 9, 1885, "The Memorial" was presented to the Board of Trustees, brandishing fifty-two signatures.⁴² Unfortunately, it was at this meeting that President White announced his resignation, and so the question was never brought up for discussion. As Sage College had been peacefully operating under the new system for a year, the trustees probably felt it was not worth their time and trouble to deal with this outdated complaint. The issue was dropped.

Insult to Injury

The dissidents graduated, and the whole episode slipped from the collective consciousness. In fact, the women of the class of '95 printed a brochure entitled "A Tribute to Henry Sage" in which they praised Sage College and thanked him for the privilege of being "sheltered within its walls for the years of their university training."⁴³

DEAN OF WOMEN CONTROVERSY

Life at Sage College proceeded under the watchful eye of the matron — or "warden," as she was also called. However, the number of women at Cornell University was increasing in the early 1900s, and the needs of the students soon outgrew the abilities of any one matron. In 1909 an "Advisor of Women" was appointed to provide counseling to the students about problems not directly related to dorm life — that is, extra-curricular activities, sorority affairs, and economic, vocational, and academic concerns.

Cornell was not unique. The need for an administrator of women's activities was apparent on campuses all over the country. The position was quickly gaining official recognition, deserving of the prestigious title — "Dean of Women." In 1903 a National Association of Deans of Women was founded with a grand total of eighteen members; by 1927 their number had jumped to 1,015.⁴⁴ Back at Cornell, however, there was some reluctance to promote a woman to this lofty position.

A Cook on the Faculty

There were two big differences between a "Dean of Women" and a mere "Advisor."

First, a dean would have membership on the faculty, whereas an advisor would not. The all-male faculty⁴⁵ held tight control over all aspects of student life; a Dean of Women would dilute this monopoly. Current president Jacob Gould Shurman expressed unqualified reluctance when it was first proposed that a woman be named to the university faculty. He held up his hands in horror and exclaimed, "What, a cook on the faculty! Never!"⁴⁶

Second, although the Advisor of Women had full administrative and counseling responsibilities (easily the equal to

many a high-paid male official), her lowly title limited her status, powers, and especially her salary. Trustee Harriet Moody explained in her report of 1917:

The argument for the use of this title is briefly that in all coeducational universities of equal rank with Cornell the title of Dean is a recognized one, and that of Advisor is considered trifling and inexpressive, coupling with it a belittling of the office.⁴⁷

Resignation

Gertrude Martin became the Advisor of Women in 1909, fully believing she would soon be the new Dean of Women. By 1912 she was convinced this was not going to happen. She described the atmosphere of the university in her annual report of that year:

[There is] an unwillingness to admit that the institution is really and permanently committed to the policy of coeducation; a feeling that the presence of women somehow renders it inferior to the other great eastern universities; a hope that by some arrangement the stigma of coeducation may be removed; . . . a determination to keep it meanwhile, in curriculum and atmosphere, as distinctly a man's institution as possible.⁴⁸

Petitions and pleadings succeeded in keeping her at Cornell for another four years — in the capacity of Advisor.

The alumnae of the Federation of Cornell Women's Clubs was at the active core of the Dean of Women controversy; they ran surveys, presented reports, and repeatedly demanded the deanship be granted to a woman. The opposition, however, was firm.

Faculty Position

Faculty members expressed their views in a 1917 report of a committee which investigated the question of the deanship.

There is no ground whatsoever for the statement that the organization and course of study at Cornell ignores the educational interests of women. If there had been little thought given to the interests of women as women, it is equally true that the interests of men as men have not been considered. The criticism is itself based on the assumption that there is one kind of education for women and another for men. The co-educational principle, on the other hand, to which the University is committed, assumes that there is no question of sex in university education.⁴⁹

The report was unanimously adopted by the faculty.⁵⁰

After a twelve-year campaign, the trustees approved the position of "Dean of Women," complete with the proposed salary of \$5,000. This change of heart was due in part to monetary considerations; owing to a \$10 million dollar endowment for increased faculty salaries, that sum was no longer representative of a Dean's salary and was, in fact, closer to the salary of a professor.⁵¹ Nonetheless, a woman had been granted membership on the faculty, and the principle championed. In 1921 Georgia White, Advisor of three years, was promoted and became Cornell's first Dean of Women.

Today

An office of the Dean of Students exists at Cornell University today for women and men alike; the Dean of

Women issue and all its related controversies, battles, and debates is now only so much history.

MEDLEY

Sage College and the Self-Governed Coed

The women at Sage College enjoyed a unique internal structure. They had their own class organization, dramatic club, athletic association, and social roster. Every evening there was a half hour of dancing in the gymnasium. As one outsider marvelled in 1900, it was "exactly as if they were in a college of their own."⁵²

An important aspect of life at Sage was the value placed on self-government. The Cornell trustees realized that the best method of supervising the coeds was some form of imposed authority in conjunction with self-government, since "self-regulation is the method most in harmony with self-respect, and that rules made by the women themselves would be respected far more."⁵³

The first self-government group – the Sage College Association – was established in 1875 (see "Sage Uproar"). Its sole purpose was to establish regulations for student conduct, such as when the lights go out and male visitors take their leave. It had no university-sanctioned power, but within the association an Executive Committee, composed

primarily of seniors, had responsibility for enforcing the regulations. One alumna remembered:

The rules were few and concise. You had to be in by eleven . . . After eleven, the front door was locked, the side doors earlier. If you were out after eleven, you had to ring the night bell. The girl who answered the night bell was given her room rent-free.⁵⁴

Although by 1892 coeds were no longer required to live at Sage College, university women took a cue from their Sage College predecessors and spurred on the second major effort in self-government. In 1917 the faculty expelled a woman for smoking a cigarette, and the repercussions were overwhelming. The coeds wanted a voice in serious disciplinary matters and demanded that the powers of the existing Women's Self-Government Association (WSGA) be expanded. A liaison committee between faculty and women students was established, empowered with complete jurisdiction over all disciplinary matters involving undergraduate women. The WSGA functioned until 1970.⁵⁵

Sororities and Required Residence

Cornell's first sorority, Kappa Alpha Theta, was founded in 1881; soon to follow was Kappa Kappa Gamma. Both





Trying it on for size — Cornell coeds see how the other half lives.

THE ITHACA JOURNAL, WEDNESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 27, 1915.

CONVENTIONS THAT RULE OVER WOMEN STUDENTS RAPPED

Why Tolerate Conditions That
Do Not Apply to Men?
Say Speakers at Ethics Club
—Self-Government Rules
Ridiculed.

That the self-government rules for women of Cornell are absurd in their restrictions and a discredit to the women themselves was the idea brought out by several faculty members at the meeting of the Cornell Ethics Club last night in Barnes Hall. Professor Alfred Hayes of the College of Law, the speaker of the evening, said in his talk on "Woman's Sphere."

A co-educational institution should offer a fair field in academic and non-academic activities to all students. If class offices, dramatic, musical, literary and business opportunities are closed on grounds of sex there is something radically wrong in the position of both men and women. Women should fight and fight and fight any such system. If a short-sighted desire to conform to standards which

men students impose controls their action they may expect to be a plaything for a few dancing hours, ignored in the serious business of life.

Should women submit to any rule requiring them to live in dormitories when no such rule is imposed on men? This means that a woman can come to college with assurance, in the absence of somebody's consent only if she can pay \$10 a week for board, lodging and laundry or desires to live in some home doing work for room or board. If on the farms of New York the father sees that it is possible for his son to go to Cornell for \$50 less than he can be certain his daughter can go for, and certainty is essential if the girl is to prevail in her desire for an education, an economic handicap of \$50 is imposed, and not only this girl but every woman student and every man who believes in fair play should point out that already nine-tenths of our high school graduates are kept from college by economic limitation and that a burden of \$50 a year means scores, perhaps hundreds of girls denied a higher education.

Swaddling Clothes.

Student government imposes a series of limitations on women students. Are men similarly restricted? Are university students to be wrapped in swaddling clothes? Perhaps so, but should not the process begin with men who appear to be much more prone to drink and immorality.

The only justification for such limitations is that the men students look upon women as fair prey and the women that they must be protected not against the violent men, but against standards in men students, which make it unsafe for women not to be limited in their freedom. It may be and probably is true that all the rules of student government would be voluntarily observed by all or nearly all of the women students, but as restrictions we justify them as a necessity

which will be outworn in a brighter and better future when men and women can associate together freely on terms of equality and neither sex needs to fortify itself by unjust handicaps against the other or be protected by conventions which curtail freedom; the day comes when men and women will hold in their own souls the light which will give them perfect liberty. In that day they will be free.

Stir Up Rebellion.

Professor Hayes said that he wished to stir up rebellion among the women students against the convention they submit to at Cornell. Women are handicapped here through a man-made system. There is no chance for them to make the managership of the Cornell football team or to be president of their class, no matter how far above the others they may be. They are "running with weight." However, it may be possible that some conventions are necessary at the present time.

Professor Hayes read the restrictive rules under which all the women of Cornell live, but translated them in terms of men, thereby causing a great deal of laughter. The speaker stated that no man would stand such rules of chaperonage, etc. He suggested that perhaps the reason why the women of Cornell do not rebel against them is that they want to stand well with the men students. "I doubt whether you would gain the respect of the men students as much by serving as a pleasant plaything as much as you would by your independence and self respect. Cannot we hope for a breaking down of barriers of this type?"

Defends the Women.

A woman student rose when the discussion was opened, to defend the

girls. She showed that the rules that Professor Hayes considered absurd had been made necessary by conventions imposed by men and to which the girls must live up in order to preserve their welfare and happiness in the University.

A member of the faculty then spoke for a few minutes stating that he had taught in five co-educational schools and that the Cornell girls are superior to any other college women with whom he has come in contact in strength and character and general capability. In some co-educational colleges where the men and women are together in all their activities, the men lack a certain virility and the woman a quality of womanliness, he thought.

Professor H. A. Bill brought out in a short talk that the idea of most American colleges is to put men in a position to decide things for themselves and so develop self-reliance and independence. "It is absurd to have rules laid down by Mrs. Grundy," he said. "The fact that the women can tolerate them is a discredit to them."

"I find in correcting history papers that I cannot tell the difference between the work of men and women. There is absolutely no difference in written work. But in classes the girls all sit like bumps on a log. One who asks me a question in class is regarded by the other girls as a freak. They are so afraid of being thought queer. That is why I believe that for a long time the vote of the women, when they are enfranchised, will be a heavy conventional vote."

"We say to the men of Cornell, 'Be a self-developing personality.' And to the women, 'Do what your ancestors have been doing before you.' And the girls tolerate it."



Nearly all the women at the University participated in the annual Spring Day festivities. Pageants portraying legends and history as well as current activities, were enacted with splendor and enthusiasm.

restricted membership to those well-bred female students "who had influence with the faculty."⁵⁶

The Delta Gammas were the first sorority group to include women from many different walks of life, and were also the first to leave Sage dormitory for a house of their own.⁵⁷ After several moves, they finally settled in the beautiful house at 603 East Seneca Street which was to be their home for over twenty years (the building still stands).

Sororities became especially vogue in the 1920s. Cornell authorities were pleased at this trend; the population of women students was increasing tremendously, and the university was hard pressed to provide "adequate" housing—that is, housing with structured activities, rules, and some official presence to insure conformity to those rules. University authorities strongly believed it their responsibility to protect the women they felt had been entrusted to their care. In fact, when the supply of "supervised" housing was exhausted in 1920, the Board of Trustees responded by limiting the enrollment of women.⁵⁸ Sororities, then assumed some of this burden in lieu of the university.

The required residence of women on the Cornell campus is an example of the changing times. From the first, male students were allowed to live wherever and however they wished, but after an initial period of freedom, these same rights were not returned to all women until 1970.⁵⁹

Women's Studies

There was very little support for a proposed women's studies program at Cornell in 1970. A majority of the response to a questionnaire distributed to Cornell faculty and directors was clearly negative.

... truly disastrous. A black studies program is divisive enough. Female studies would be, I think, inevitably aimed at political goals which I am far from sharing.

... divisive, unnecessary, and improper. Ridiculous. There is not any program in male studies. If you don't know the facts of life, then you don't belong in college.

... needless. Before long, we will have a special studies program for coal miners' sons or some such foolishness.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, a small committee of students, staff, and faculty persisted and were able to secure modest funding from the offices of two deans, the director of the Center for Research on Education, and the Provost of the University. In September 1970 an experimental program called Female Studies was established. It lasted only eighteen months; the conflicting ideals and goals of the planners caused irreconcilable divisions, and the program fizzled.

A sympathetic dean and growing national awareness of women's issues prompted the women's studies advocates to try again. Newly arrived faculty women joined with members of the original committee, and in April 1972 the Women's Studies program was given one more chance.

From Fall 1972 to Fall 1975, 1,600 students (one fifth of whom were men) enrolled in the Women's Studies Program, and chose from some seventy-five courses, among them "Female Stereotypes and Heroines," "The Black Woman in America," and "Patriarchalism and Feminist Political Theory."⁶¹

Though missing the mark as recently as 1970, as of Spring 1976 the Women's Studies Program became an established part of the Cornell curriculum. Its very existence is

significant; this once staunchly male institution has acknowledged the value of a women's program.

Ithaca College

Ithaca College, as we know it today, has been a long time coming. In fact, had things turned out a little differently, the name "Ithaca College" might have referred to a totally different institution; plans for another Ithaca College were in the works at least sixty years before the present college was even conceived of.

The First Ithaca College

In 1821 the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church applied to the State Legislature for a permit, or "act," to incorporate an "Ithaca College" (Ezra Cornell was only fourteen years old at the time and far away from Ithaca). The institution was to be essentially non-denominational, though subject to visitatorial supervision by the Conference. A citizens' committee of nine was appointed by the Conference to set the wheels in motion. Their job was to locate and organize the college, and raise within three years the \$50,000 required by the state charter for a college endowment to fund the operation of the school. One generous soul donated ten square acres of land on East Hill, about equidistant between Cascadilla Creek and Fall Creek. This gift was gratefully accepted.

A highly controversial issue was the Methodists' decision to admit women on the same terms as men. The committee took a noble posture.

The necessity of an institution for the education of females as well as males, is too obvious to require any argument. We need only ask ourselves the question, do the happiness and prosperity of community and individuals depend on them, and has not their education been neglected?¹

The committee agreed to erect three brick buildings, one of which was intended exclusively for the "education of female students,"² a sorely disadvantaged class.

Without question, they are deprived of the most important source of happiness, the pleasures of the mind, and [are] reduced to mere sensual beings, or the subjects of an infatuated imagination.³

The ever-present skeptics claimed that women had no need of academic achievements since as wives and mothers they would have little use for book knowledge. Many individuals were honestly convinced that women were born with minds inferior to men's and were physically too frail to withstand the rigors of scholarship. Despite such criticism, Ithaca College planners were determined. They appealed to the community, "Does not such an institution, conducted on such enlightened principles, merit the patronage of a liberal and enlightened people?"⁴

Perhaps it did, but sadly, the Ithaca College was not fated to become reality. The best efforts of the fund-raising

committee managed to collect only \$6,000, and this lack of support from the community is one theory put forth as to why the venture fell through.⁵ Another theory was proposed in the *Ithaca Journal*, which in 1965 in its 150th Anniversary Edition stated that "circumstantial evidence can be shown from three sources to prove that this university did not materialize because of a violent disagreement between the two men most active in the enterprise, and because of the cry, 'misappropriation of funds.'"⁶

Whatever the reasons, three years after it was first proposed, the plan for an Ithaca College was abandoned.

The Second Ithaca College

Ithaca College as we know it today on South Hill has changed considerably over the years. Originally it was a conservatory of music — not at all academically inclined. Opening day was September 19, 1892, a modest showing of just four rooms at 403 East Seneca Street (the building still stands). The Conservatory of Music boasted eight teachers and 125 students; three of the teachers and most of the students were women. Piano, voice, and musical accomplishments were considered desirable feminine attributes, and young girls were encouraged to attend the Conservatory for their musical instruction.

The school was moderately successful. In 1895 existing facilities were expanded to include a Band School. Two years later the "Williams School of Expression and Dramatic Arts" was introduced.

In 1920 physical education also joined the ranks of the Conservatory curriculum. Though some females majored in this area, they were thought to be out of their depth. As one woman — now a coach at I.C. — describes it, "They might *perspire*, but they weren't supposed to *sweat*. They just weren't supposed to play that hard." This feeling toward female physical education majors lasted for many years, and still lingers on today. "I guess like all women athletes I was a renegade," this alumna remembers. "I incurred the term of 'tomboy' and you try to ignore it but you weren't flattered by it. . . . I can't say I was always received with open arms. I guess if you liked sports, [they thought] there was something wrong with you."⁶

In 1926 the State Department of Education granted the Conservatory authority to award bachelor degrees in music, physical education, and oral English (speech pathology and audiology). The next step was for the Conservatory to be granted collegiate status, and the accompanying accreditation. In 1931 Dr. Harlan Hoyt Horner, superintendent of Public Instruction, visited Ithaca to inspect the Conservatory facilities to that end; favorably impressed, he agreed to recommend approval of the Conservatory's petition at the next meeting of the Board of Regents. On that date, March 19, 1931, the charter was issued granting the desired status along with a new name — "Ithaca College."

In 1931 the College underwent an internal reorganization and formed three main divisions — the Music School, Physical Education Department, and English & Drama Department. In the decade following accreditation, other departments were introduced into the I.C. curriculum — radio in 1941, business in 1945, arts & sciences in 1951; Authority was granted from the Board of Regents to confer additional degrees — in 1931, the Bachelor of Science degree; in 1942, the master's degree in music, fine arts, speech, and drama, and the doctor's degree in music and fine arts; and in 1950, the Bachelor of Science degree in the liberal arts.

Originally the majority of Conservatory students had been women. Accordingly, when the United States entered World War I in April 1917, Conservatory enrollment was



The Ithaca Conservatory of Music, c. 1900.

not seriously affected. But by World War II, male students amounted to nearly half the total enrollment, and when the draft in 1943 swept students into service along with the other draftees, the difference was marked. Whereas enrollment in 1941 was a booming 540, the number had dwindled to 220 only two years later.⁷ Professor Walter Beeler, ten years the director of the Band School, returned in the fall of 1943 to find "his beloved band consisting almost entirely of girls." The orchestra had only a few men. In fact, except for the exclusively male organizations, female students dominated student groups and activities.⁸

The war ended in the summer of 1945, too late in the school year to have much impact on the fall enrollment. In the fall of 1946, however, the college was flooded with returning veterans. In 1948 the student population at Ithaca College had swelled to over 1,500, 890 of which were former servicemen taking advantage of their G.I. benefits.⁹

In the 1950s, Ithaca College trustees faced the problem of expansion. This was not a new problem – in fact, the college had already moved four times. From the original location on Seneca Street, it settled into a yellow brick house at 314 North Geneva Street. The next move in 1895 saw it stationed in the second and third floors of the Wilgus Opera House at State and Tioga Streets. In 1909 the college relocated across the street to 138 East State Street when Jacob Rothschild purchased the Wilgus House in order to expand his department store. Then in 1910 it took possession of Judge Douglass Boardman's house next to

DeWitt Park. Various dormitories and additions were built or rented as the college expanded, but even so, it seemed to be outgrowing the town. After considering moves to Binghamton, Auburn, and Utica, the decision was made to move the entire campus to its present location, one mile up South Hill on Route 96B. The first cornerstone for the new campus was laid in 1910. The move was completed in less than ten years.

Today

The 1976 Ithaca College enrollment, according to the Admissions Office, is "a little more tipped to the girls' side – about 52 to 48 percent women to men."

As far as a women's studies program at Ithaca College, there is none per se, though individual faculty members offer courses for and about women, usually several per semester. With faculty sponsorship, individual students may choose to pursue this subject matter on their own. However, there is no structure to the study, no cumulative series of courses as in other fields that work to build on and complement each other. One part-time instructor attributes this to the "low priority" of women's studies with the virtually all-male administration. In fact, she continues, "There seems to be no [Ithaca] college-wide recognition by the administration of the special needs of women at this time or of any of the issues which have been raised by the contemporary women's movement."¹⁰

