

**The Religious Roots of Female Education in Sydney: A  
History of the Congregation de Notre Dame and Holy Angels  
Convent School, 1885-1911**

By

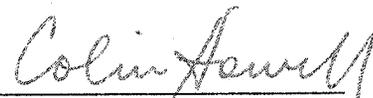
Amy Coleman

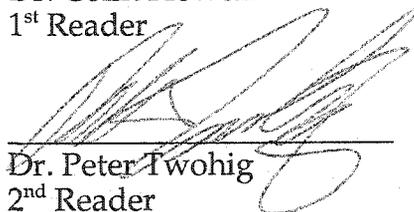
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## Abstract

The Religious Roots of Female Education in Sydney:  
A History of the Congregation de Notre Dame and  
Holy Angels Convent School, 1885 – 1911.

Amy E. Coleman  
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Holy Angels Convent School was opened in Sydney, Nova Scotia in 1885 by the Congregation of Notre Dame. The sisters had come to the town at the request of Father James Quinan, the Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish. This study examines the history of the Congregation in Sydney between 1885 and 1911 and the educational opportunities it provided for young women. As one of the first schools for young women in the town, Holy Angels offered a variety of educational programs designed to meet the needs of the young women of the town. They offered instruction in music, art, English and business. The thesis also analyzes the parental occupation, hometown, religion and age of the students, creating a demographic picture of the young women who attended the school. Finally, it examines the relationship between the Congregation of Notre Dame and the community, providing insight into the religious, social and educational conditions in the town in the late nineteenth century.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous support and help of a number of people. I would like to thank my advisor, Dr John Reid for making invaluable suggestions and giving helpful guidance throughout this entire process. Thank you also to the faculty and staff in the Atlantic Canada Studies Program whose readings, lectures and course-work helped to prepare me for this thesis.

I wish to acknowledge a special debt of gratitude to the Congregation of Notre Dame at Holy Angels, especially Sr Agnes Cordeau, who readily made available any material relevant to this study. I hope this history of Holy Angels meets with their approval and that they enjoy reading it. My sincere thanks are also extended to the former students and staff of Holy Angels that I interviewed, especially my grandmother Edith Coleman.

Thank you Marion MacKinnon, Jessie MacNeil, Elizabeth White, Sr Hilda MacKinnon, Sr. Teresa MacDonald and Sr Mary C MacInnis. Although the time period of my study did not permit the interviews to be quoted within the text, your comments and stories provided insight that I could not have gained from any other source.

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However, much of the credit for this thesis must go to my family. My wonderful parents Kathy and Charlie Coleman were the best “research assistants” anyone could ever have. They encouraged and supported me from beginning to end and their “life lessons” have taught me more than I could ever learn from books. Now when they ask “How’s the thesis coming Amy?” I can say “It’s all done.” Thank You.

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## Preface

Throughout the seventeenth century, religion, charity and education went hand in hand. Many religious communities established schools that benefited children who might not have otherwise received a formal education. The Congregation of Notre Dame of Montreal was one such organization which was established in the latter part of the seventeenth century. It developed from a small group of women who had dedicated their lives to teaching the children of the area while living a life devoted to Mary, Mother of God.

The founder of this Congregation, Marguerite Bourgeoys, believed that the poorer people of the colonial settlement should receive instruction not only in “Christian doctrine and conduct” but also learn reading, writing and “those skills necessary to enable them to earn a living.”<sup>1</sup> Bourgeoys’ views on educating all members of a society were unusual for her time, as the majority of French people during the latter part of the seventeenth century could barely read. Consequently, the poor would have been extremely fortunate to receive any educational training.<sup>2</sup> Bourgeoys was also aware that many people in France and some of the authorities in New France thought there was no

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<sup>1</sup>Patricia Simpson, Marguerite Bourgeoys and Montreal, 1640-1665 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queen’s University Press, 1997), p. 39. For further information about Marguerite Bourgeoys and the Congregation of Notre Dame see: Étienne-Michel Faillon, Vie de la Soeur Bourgeoys, fondatrice de la Congrégation de Notre –Dame de Ville-Marie en Canada, suivie de l’histoire de cet institute jusqu’à ce jour 2 vols. (Ville-Marie: Congrégation de Notre Dame, 1853); Sister Saint Henriette, Histoire de la Congrégation de Notre Dame (Montreal: Congregation de Notre Dame, 1941); Albert Jamet, Marguerite Bourgeoys, 1620-1700 2 vols. (Montreal: La Presse Catholique panamérique, 1942); Sister St Ignatius Doyle CND, Marguerite Bourgeoys and Her Congregation (Gardenvale, Québec: Garden City Press, 1940); Elizabeth F Butler, The Venerable Marguerite Bourgeoys 1620-1700 (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1932); Margaret Mary Drummond, The Life and Times of Marguerite Bourgeoys (Boston, Mass: Angel Guardian Press, 1907); Simone Poissant, Marguerite Bourgeoys 1620-1700 (Montreal: Les Editions Bellarmin, 1982).

<sup>2</sup>Katherine Burton, Valiant Voyager: Blessed Marguerite Bourgeoys, foundress of the Congregation of Notre Dame of Montreal (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1964) p. viii.

purpose in educating little girls of the lower class.<sup>3</sup> However, she believed that “little girls must learn about God but they must also be taught to earn a living, to read and write and to work with their own hands.”<sup>4</sup>

Held initially in a small stable, Bourgeoys’ school provided training for all children in the colony who were able to learn.<sup>5</sup> When the Congregation of Notre Dame first arrived in Quebec, Marguerite Bourgeoys followed the same educational theory and practice she had learned while an extern with the Congregation of Notre Dame in Troyes, France. In so doing, she was learning from one of the most advanced groups in France where Pierre Fourier, their founder, had been a great innovator in the field of pedagogy.<sup>6</sup> His ideas included: grouping children according to their intellectual development; using blackboards and slates; promoting good penmanship; and paying special attention to manner and etiquette so that children might be “cultured and have a gentle sense of ease in keeping with their social position.”<sup>7</sup> As well, the sisters were to “perceive in the girls they taught, persons who would one day wield influence as the mothers of families.”<sup>8</sup>

Although there is no direct information on the curriculum of her first school, Bourgeoys and her small group of companions taught the children to read, write, perform simple math, while also providing them with religious instruction. According to

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<sup>3</sup> Burton, p.76.

<sup>4</sup> Burton, p. 98.

<sup>5</sup> Although it would not have been common at the time, both boys and girls attended Marguerite Bourgeoys’ school until after the middle of the 1660s when the Sulpicians opened a school for boys. Simpson, p. 157. According to Sister Saint Ignatius Doyle there were five boys and three girls present on the first day of the school. Doyle, p. 186.

<sup>6</sup> Simpson, p. 38 and Burton, p. 98.

<sup>7</sup> Burton, p. 118.

<sup>8</sup> Simpson, p. 38.

Katherine Burton, “the stable school had textbooks, sent from France, and they contained the large and small alphabets and simple tales. There was a reader – Christian Thoughts – and the catechism. For older girls there was a book on rules of courtesy and politeness.”<sup>9</sup>

Along with her efforts to educate the children and young women of the colony, Bourgeoys established one of the first uncloistered religious communities for women in the Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup> The women who joined her group had to be devoted, for Bourgeoys had little to offer them in exchange for their efforts in teaching the children of Montreal. The women would “teach the children by day and by night do such other work as would enable the group to support itself. Thus they would be able to offer free education to the children of colonists and to any native children who came to be taught.”<sup>11</sup> Unlike many other women who had dedicated themselves to God, the women of Marguerite Bourgeoys’ congregation moved freely within the community and did not depend on dowries or endowments; consequently, they were able to accept all women, regardless of their social status. According to Patricia Simpson, “it was of fundamental importance to her [Marguerite] that her Congregation be egalitarian, that its members should not reproduce the distinctions and hierarchies of the world around them.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1671, the group received letters patent from King Louis XIV, establishing them as a permanent educational body.<sup>13</sup> One of the first things the sisters did was to adopt a uniform dress. They chose to wear a long black robe, a black belt with a veil, linen

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<sup>9</sup> Burton, p. 76; Doyle, p. 183 also indicates these texts as being used by Marguerite Bourgeoys.

<sup>10</sup> Simpson, p. 6; Burton, p. 99-100; Doyle, p. 194.

<sup>11</sup> Simpson, p. 139.

<sup>12</sup> Simpson, p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> Doyle, p. 89; Drummond, p. 85.

cornette and white kerchief. Despite receiving the letters patent, the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame had to wait until 1698 before their community received its rules.<sup>14</sup> In a special ceremony at that time, the Sisters pronounced four simple vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and the teaching of young girls. Following this act, each of the sisters received a religious name.<sup>15</sup>

In 1679, the Congregation of Notre Dame was at work in five different parts of New France – Ville-Marie, Point St. Charles, Lachine, Point aux Trembles and in a mission near Three Rivers.<sup>16</sup> By 1700, when Marguerite Bourgeoys passed away, there were nine houses of her Congregation in Canada with fifty-four sisters.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the next two centuries more missions continued to be set up and eventually English language houses were established elsewhere in British North America.

One of these English schools was Holy Angels Convent and School which opened in Sydney, Nova Scotia in 1885. The Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish had wanted to establish a Convent Boarding School for young girls in the county of Cape Breton. At this time, young women were expected to have some learning, but, more importantly, be proficient in homemaking skills and social graces. The Congregation of Notre Dame agreed to send three Sisters to Sydney. Although Sydney had never had a convent and most people likely had never seen a woman in habit, the sisters were welcomed to the town. Many hoped that the sisters could fill a gap created by the Sydney Academy's concentration on educating boys.

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<sup>14</sup> Drummond, p. 190; Poissant, p. 58.

<sup>15</sup> Burton, p. 175.

<sup>16</sup> Burton, p. 129.

<sup>17</sup> Burton, p. xiii.

In 1892, Holy Angels became a public school.<sup>18</sup> Financial support from the province and the municipality had been made conditional upon the removal of all religious references in the classrooms and hallways. Fortunately for the sisters, the Superintendent of Education found no grounds in the Education Act for such conditions, as long as the sisters followed the provincial guidelines, and so nothing was removed.

This public funding lasted until September of 1907 when the Superintendent of Schools informed the Superior of Holy Angels that no senior courses would be permitted in the convent school and that the senior students would have to transfer to the Sydney Academy. Sister St. Margaret of the Cross refused to comply and sent her resignation to the school board. By refusing to comply with public school guidelines, Holy Angels once again became a private school. It was sustained completely by the Congregation of Notre Dame with only small donations from benefactors.

In 1951, after forty-four years of being a private school, the School Board proposed a “new order of things” for the school and Holy Angels High School became a publicly funded institution once again. After this, salaries were paid to the teachers while the convent continued to provide the services of a librarian and instructors for art, drama, and singing. Enrollment was at a record high: forty-two sisters were in residence at the convent, and plans for the construction of a new building were announced.<sup>19</sup>

This study intends to examine the history of the Congregation of Notre Dame in Sydney, Cape Breton between 1885 and 1911 and the educational opportunities it provided for the young women of the area. The first section of the study will seek to

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<sup>18</sup> Carolyn Whalen, ““All for the Grace of God and the CND:” The Congregation of Notre Dame and the Early Education of Sydney, 1885-1953” *History* 492 (April 22, 1998), p. 20. Beaton Institute.

<sup>19</sup> Sister Agnes Cordeau and Margaret Young, eds. Holy Angels Centennial 1885-1985 (Sydney: City Printers, 1985), p. 50.

establish why the Congregation of Notre Dame decided to open a school in Sydney. This will involve examining the factors they considered before agreeing to do so and discussing the successes and difficulties faced by the Congregation at other missions within the province, as well as examining the economic, social and educational conditions in Sydney in the late nineteenth century. Once their reasons for opening schools have been established, it will be necessary to look at the students who attended Holy Angels. Using a variety of primary sources, a picture will emerge of the girls who attended the school. Because the school was a boarding school, the number of boarding students as compared to day students will be determined as well as the answers to the following questions: What type of work did their fathers do? Where were they living? What were their religions? Most of the girls who would have attended Holy Angels were Catholic, but not all.

Although girls of any religious background were eligible to attend Holy Angels, the school had an overwhelmingly Catholic atmosphere. Religion was part of the everyday experience at the school, especially in the early years. Catholic parents likely had no problems with this, but how did the parents of non-Catholic students feel? What about the community in general? How did they respond to the Sisters and to the school? The relationship between the Congregation of Notre Dame and the community will be the subject of the third section of the thesis.

The early history of the school and the educational opportunities it was providing will be the topic of the fourth section of the study. What was the initial curriculum offered by the sisters and how did this change over time? Did the sisters follow a progressive system of education or were they more traditional, encouraging young

women to enter religious life or prepare for their lives as wives and mothers? Also included in this section will be a comparison of the curriculum at Holy Angels with that of other religious orders.

Studying the history of Holy Angels will involve a critical analysis of both primary and secondary sources. As there have been limited studies on the Congregation of Notre Dame and on education in Sydney in general, there will be a greater emphasis on primary source material. These sources will include the Annals of Holy Angels Convent, Department of Education and School Board reports and ledgers kept by the sisters that record the students' names. The Cape Breton Advocate, the Sydney Record (later the Cape Breton Post), and the Chronicle Herald newspapers will also play a significant role, as religious controversy within the community was often the source of many editorials, and the local paper devoted considerable space to covering the activities of Holy Angels school. Other articles may reveal underlying attitudes towards the Sisters of the Congregation and towards the education of women.

However, the history of the Congregation and the educational opportunities the convent schools offered in Sydney must be put into a broader context. In order to achieve this context a greater emphasis will be placed on secondary literature. Marta Danylewycz is perhaps the most recognized scholar of women's religious organizations. In Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920, she explores the experiences of religious women in Quebec, focusing on the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame and the Sisters of Misericorde. By studying the history of these two communities and their relation to the history of Quebec, Danylewycz addresses three major aspects of women's religious lives: the economic, social and religious factors

that led to a dramatic increase in religious vocations in Quebec, explanations for these rising vocations, and the relationship between the growth of women's religious communities and the efforts of women to improve their situations. Doreen Vatour's masters thesis "Maritime Entrants to the Congregation of Notre Dame, 1880-1920: A Rise in Vocations" will also be a valuable resource. Vatour has shown that nearly 500 women entered the Congregation of Notre Dame from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island between 1880-1920. It is likely that these young women had similar reasons for entering religious life as their counterparts in Quebec. Another study that focuses on women religious is Heidi MacDonald's masters thesis, "A Century of Anglican Women Religious in Nova Scotia, 1891-1991," which provides a discussion on the state of religion in Nova Scotia throughout the twentieth century and about the women who chose to enter this life. Although her focus is Anglican women, she writes that "the 'strain' of Anglicans who tend to be supportive of nuns are from the Anglo Catholic tradition, which is in several ways quite similar to the Roman Catholic Church in its ritual and symbolism."<sup>20</sup> Sources that discuss childhood, family and society in Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, along with studies of educational developments in the country will be of great importance, as will material pertaining to women's experiences. However the source material available had limitations, making it difficult to link this study to wider social and cultural changes such as progressive reform, Catholic social action and Rerum Novarum.<sup>21</sup> Rather, it examines issues such as

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<sup>20</sup> Heidi MacDonald, "A Century of Anglican Women Religious in Nova Scotia, 1891-1991" MA Thesis Saint Mary's University, 1992. p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> The Rerum Novarum was the 1891 papal encyclical that denounced the abuses of unrestrained capitalism but rejected socialism as the solution. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 157.

the relationship between these Roman Catholic sisters and the community and looks at changes in the educational curriculum.

By tracing the history of Holy Angels School and the education offered by the Sisters, a clearer picture of the relationship between the Congregation of Notre Dame and the people of Sydney will develop. This study will expand upon the social history of Sydney and provide necessary information to the development of female education in the area. It will benefit not only those studying education or religion, but also researchers examining women's lives and experiences in the Atlantic Provinces.

## Time-Line of Events Holy Angels Convent and School

- 1884 – Father James Quinan writes to Senator William McDonald requesting a donation for the establishment of a convent boarding school for young ladies in the County of Cape Breton.
- October 29, 1885 – The Congregation of Notre Dame agrees to send three sisters to the Sydney mission.
- November 7, 1885 Sr. St. Domitilla, Sr. St. Helen of the Cross and Sr. St. Mary Alexis arrive in Sydney.
- January 1886 – The first boarders arrive and classes begin.
- November 1886 Father James Quinan gives the sisters \$20.00 to buy a cow.
- January 1887 – Sacred Heart Church is destroyed by fire.
- June 1887 - An arson attempt is made on the convent.
- November 1887 - A suspect is arrested after stones were thrown at the convent but was released due to lack of evidence.
- January 1888 - The first big concert is held at the convent – it raises \$150.00.
- January 1889 - The construction of Sacred Heart Church is finished.
- July 1889 - The convent hosts a three day exhibition of student work.
- August 1889 - The sisters visit the ruins at Louisbourg.
- December 1891 - A Christmas Tree is held to raise funds for a new heating system.
- July 1892 - The convent purchases a hot water heating system for \$1268.00.
- August 1892 – The Superior, Sister St. Domitilla is recalled to the Motherhouse in Montreal.
- December 1892 - Holy Angels becomes a publicly funded school.
- April 1893 – The principal of Sydney Academy, Mr McKeen, is named principal of Holy Angels school.

- June 1893 - A library is installed in the school.
- October 1894 - The insurance on the convent is increased from \$4000 to \$5000 and a fire escape is installed.
- August 1896 – The convent purchases three “Carr Chemical” fire extinguishers.
- January 1897 – Electric incandescent lighting is installed in the convent.
- February 1897 – Holy Angels receives permission to have holidays on Holy Days while counting them as days taught.
- March 1897 – A telephone is installed in the convent.
- 1899 – There are four departments at the school. Stenography and elocution classes are added to the curriculum in March.
- January 1900 – The Congregation of Notre Dame opens a school in Sydney Mines.
- October 1900 – Father D.M. MacAdam replaces Father Quinan as parish priest of Sacred Heart Church.
- 1901 – New classrooms are constructed as 200 students are registered in six departments. There are seven sisters and two lay teachers at the school.
- 1902 – The Congregation of Notre Dame opens Holy Redeemer convent and school in Whitney Pier.
- September 1903 – Work begins on the addition of a second floor above the chapel, to be used as a workroom and studio.
- March 1904 – Father James Quinan dies.
- September 1905 – Two hundred and forty students register in six departments; twelve boarders are turned away and plans to expand the convent are drawn up.
- April 1905 – The possibility arises of Holy Angels high school pupils being required to transfer to the Sydney Academy.
- 1906 – St. Joseph’s school is opened and Holy Angels is expanded.
- September 1907 – Holy Angels becomes a private institution once again, after Sister St. Margaret of the Cross refuses to comply with the Superintendent of School’s decision that no senior classes be permitted at Holy Angels.

- June 1911 – The twenty-fifth anniversary of Holy Angels is celebrated with a banquet.

## Chapter One

“In June 1884, the Reverend J. Quinan made an offer to the Community and our Reverend Mother Saint Bernard accepted the mission of Sydney.”<sup>1</sup>

Before the Congregation of Notre Dame agreed to come to Sydney in 1884, it would undoubtedly have had many important factors to consider: the size of the Congregation within Canada and its ability to assume control of another mission; their experiences at their eighteenth century mission at the Fortress of Louisbourg and at their current convents and schools in Nova Scotia; and the social, economic and religious nature of Sydney in the early 1880s.

Although their membership never included more than eighty women during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,<sup>2</sup> the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame began to establish schools throughout New France and by 1731 there were twelve different missions, including one in Louisbourg.<sup>3</sup> During the nineteenth century, however, a rise in vocations occurred as more and more women began entering religious life. In 1841, there were eighty-one professed members of the Congregation of Notre Dame. By 1849, the number had increased to 139, and by 1869 it had more than tripled to

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<sup>1</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 3. These annals are located on two microfilm reels in the Beaton Institute under MB 51 (Boxes 1 and 2). The years 1885 – 1922 are in French and a translation of this portion of the annals was graciously provided by Sister Agnes Cordeau.

<sup>2</sup> Although church officials urged the Congregation to expand the order, the Sisters chose to limit their membership, admitting women only when their numbers fell below eighty. Doreen Eleanor Vatour, “Maritime Entrants to the Congregation of Notre Dame, 1880-1920: A Rise in Vocations” (MA Thesis) University of New Brunswick, 1995. p. 36-37.

<sup>3</sup> A.J.B. Johnston, Religion in Life at Louisbourg 1713-1758 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1984), p. 91.

441.<sup>4</sup> Doreen Vatour adds, “By 1890, 1002 sisters were professed and at the turn of the century the Congregation recorded 1176 living professed sisters. The rise in numbers continued until well into the twentieth century, with 1402 sisters in 1910 and 1898 in 1920.”<sup>5</sup>

Many reasons have been suggested for this dramatic expansion in women’s religious organizations during the nineteenth century. Marta Danylewycz, in Taking the Veil An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920 and Doreen Vatour, in “Maritime Entrants to the Congregation of Notre Dame, 1880-1920: A Rise in Vocations” address the religious and socio-economic factors that led to such an increase. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec experienced a resurgence, becoming the dominant cultural and social institution within that society. Doreen Vatour says, “the most important driving force behind the revival was the emergent ultramontanist doctrine that reasserted the power and importance of the papacy, promoted a policy of centralization within the church, and rallied the faithful to the fight against liberalism, individualism, materialism, Protestantism and all other influences thought hazardous to a true Catholic faith.”<sup>6</sup> With its increasing power, the church began to expand its activities, assuming responsibility for hospitals, maternity hospitals, orphanages, asylums and schools. With regards to education, the church ensured that religious sisters, priests and brothers comprised the greater part of the Roman Catholic teaching staff in the provincial school system.<sup>7</sup> This expansion also

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<sup>4</sup> Doyle, p. 256.

<sup>5</sup> Vatour, p. 44.

<sup>6</sup> Vatour, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> Vatour, p. 40.

meant that additional religious men and women were needed to run these institutions; the church realized that increasing the membership of existing religious orders, creating new orders and bringing existing orders to Quebec from other locations would be the only way to meet the demand for religious personnel.

Despite the role played by the church in nineteenth century Quebec society, this was not the only factor that led women to choose life in a religious organization; there were also socio-economic factors. Lay women who chose to work faced low pay, little job security and poor living conditions; lay teaching, in particular, was an underrated profession. However, because of the church's control in areas of education, health care and social welfare, religious women were protected from outside competition and were assured of better working conditions. Other factors attracted younger women to religious life. Members of the Children of Mary Sodality were informed that religious life offered more opportunities and advantages than marriage; should they enter one organization and not like it, they were free to join another or leave religious life altogether. If they married they would have no such choice, for divorce was not an option.<sup>8</sup> Women began to realize that entering a convent could enable them to pursue life-long careers, to wield power and to enter the public sphere.<sup>9</sup> They did not simply enter religious life; rather, women could select the religious order that suited their needs, preferences and aspirations. As can be seen, women's reasons for entering religious life varied; Danylewycz concludes that:

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<sup>8</sup> Danylewycz, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Danylewycz, p. 160.

Vocations multiplied and religious communities proliferated because there was little in the experience of late nineteenth century Quebec women to dissuade them from taking the veil. Almost everything, on the contrary, seemed to favour their movement into convents. The family economy, with its emphasis on the control of individualistic impulses and focus on collective need, schooled women in the principles of hard work and sacrifice necessary to life in a religious community. For middle- and upper-class women not so clearly subjected to the rigours of the family economy, secular society provided little room for social mobility and self-fulfilment. What could an ambitious woman do except seek social mobility through marriage or spiritual life?<sup>10</sup>

As more and more young women began entering religious life, the Congregation of Notre Dame was able to expand its activities, establishing missions in communities throughout Quebec, Ontario, and the Maritimes. Their Maritime missions were primarily in eastern Nova Scotia, northeastern New Brunswick and Queen and Prince Counties in Prince Edward Island. Although the population of these places varied, at the time the missions were established, most of the communities did have a significant Roman Catholic population. For example: 3,514 people were living in Antigonish, Nova Scotia in 1881, 2,654 of whom were Roman Catholic (the convent opened in 1883);<sup>11</sup> 1871 census records indicate that Bathurst, New Brunswick had a population of 4,469 people, 2,926 of whom were Roman Catholic (two convents opened in 1870);<sup>12</sup> and Port Hood, Nova Scotia (the convent opened in 1884) had 1,498 people listed in the 1881 census, 1,200 of whom were Roman Catholic.<sup>13</sup> During the nineteenth century, the Congregation

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<sup>10</sup> Danylewycz, p. 70.

<sup>11</sup> Census of Canada 1881.

<sup>12</sup> Census of Canada 1871.

<sup>13</sup> Census of Canada 1881.

of Notre Dame opened ninety-one houses throughout the country, only nine of which closed before the century was over.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the large number of convents opened by the Congregation of Notre Dame, little has been written about the order and the schools they established. Three articles published in The Canadian Catholic Historical Association outline the history of the Congregation of Notre Dame in Kingston, Toronto and Nova Scotia. In “Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame Nineteenth Century Kingston,” Sister Calista Begnal examines the history of the order at their first convent established in an English speaking area and writes that “these years, 1841-1868, are important ones in both the educational and religious history of Kingston and in the history of the Congregation. They form a period in which the Congregation began to grow and develop within a growing and developing Canada. The foundation in Kingston was the forerunner of English-language houses in the Maritimes, in the United States, in Montreal, and elsewhere in Ontario.”<sup>15</sup> It was not until much later, 1932, that the Congregation came to Toronto; the history of the order in that city is the subject of another article written by Sister Begnal. She notes that their contributions to the city were in three main areas: parish schools, bilingual education, and secondary school education for girls.<sup>16</sup> Sister Saint Miriam of the Temple’s article, “The Congregation of Notre Dame in Early Nova Scotia”<sup>17</sup> outlines the order’s history within Nova Scotia, beginning with the possibility that they had

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<sup>14</sup> Doyle, p. 271.

<sup>15</sup> Sister Calista Begnal, “The Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, Nineteenth Century Kingston Canadian Catholic Historical Association Vol 40 (1973), p. 33.

<sup>16</sup> Sister Calista Begnal, “The Daughters of Marguerite Bourgeoys in Toronto 1932-1982” Canadian Catholic Historical Association (1953), p. 67-80.

<sup>17</sup> Sister Saint Miriam of the Temple C.N.D. “The Congregation of Notre Dame in Early Nova Scotia” Canadian Catholic Historical Association (1953), p. 67-80.

established a mission in Port Royal in 1685 and continuing until 1901 which marked the closing of the Arichat convent (this convent had opened in 1856). She provides detailed comments on the convents established at Louisbourg (1727), Arichat and Antigonish (1883) but merely mentions that the Congregation had opened a school in Pictou (1880), and she totally omits the fact that it also opened several other convent schools in the province within this time period at Port Hood (1884), Sydney (1885), Mabou (1887) and New Glasgow (1887). Each of these articles provides a wealth of information regarding the early beginnings of the Congregation in these communities, and commonalities are evident. For instance, all of the convents suffered from financial hardships, an insufficient number of Sisters and poor or inadequate lodgings yet they continued to receive the support of the members of the community they served.

Thus, the nineteenth century was a time of rapid expansion for the Congregation of Notre Dame; however the Congregation's history and experiences at Louisbourg during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and at their current schools in Nova Scotia would likely have been carefully considered before the Sisters agreed to open another boarding school. A.J.B. Johnston has written about the Congregation and the girls' school it established at the French fortified town of Louisbourg. In the early 1720s, the Bishops of Quebec felt that girls growing up in Louisbourg were not receiving a desirable upbringing, but they believed that sending the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame would remedy the situation. When Louisbourg was captured by the British in 1745, the Sisters and their boarders were sent to France. Upon returning to Louisbourg four years later, they found their property destroyed and were forced to move to a smaller house, struggling to make

ends meet. In 1758, the Congregation of Notre Dame's struggles at Louisbourg came to a permanent end when the colony was once again taken by the British.

Although it is unclear what information the Congregation of Notre Dame would have had when considering its overall impact on Louisbourg society, the favorable opinions offered by the citizens of the colony and local officials would have been important.<sup>18</sup> The colonists attempted to support the sisters in any way they could; finding ways to give them money or to provide them with work so they could earn a small income.<sup>19</sup> Abbé Pierre Maillard felt that the whole moral character of the town had improved since the arrival of the Sisters. It is possible that the Sisters would also have known that Isaac-Louis de Forant, the late governor of Ile Royale, had designated the Sisters as his principle beneficiaries, testifying in part to the need and worthiness of the Sisters' mission.<sup>20</sup> However, not everyone in the colony felt the same way; negative comments were directed towards Marguerite Roy and the Congregation by Pierre-Herman Dosquet, coadjutor to the absentee bishop of Quebec and a Récollet priest, Michel-Ange Le Duff.<sup>21</sup> Had they known about these comments, it is likely that the

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<sup>18</sup> A.J.B. Johnston determined the female literacy rate in Louisbourg and demonstrated the significance of the Sisters' work by using an analysis of women's signatures in the parish records. He found that 40.4 percent of women in Louisbourg could sign their names. This was below the figure for Trois Rivières (54.5 percent) but above that of France (10-30 percent). However, when Johnston looked at only those women who were natives of Louisbourg and who may have been educated by the Congregation, he found that 57 percent were able to sign their name. However impressive these figures are, however, the Congregation would not have had them at their disposal. A.J.B. Johnston, "Education and Female Literacy at Eighteenth Century Louisbourg: The Work of the Soeurs de la Congregation de Notre Dame" in An Imperfect Past Education and Society in Canadian History ed. J. Donald Wilson, (British Columbia: Published in Association with the Canadian History of Education Association by Center for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction University of British Columbia, 1984), p. 48-66.

<sup>19</sup> An example of this was when the Sisters and boarders were able to make straw mattresses for the military barracks and flags for the Mi'kmaq.

<sup>20</sup> Johnston, p. 97.

<sup>21</sup> Johnston, p. 183.

Sisters would have ignored or brushed them aside when considering their impact on Louisbourg society.

Regardless of the type of information the Sisters had at their disposal, they were aware of the importance of the mission at Louisbourg and were eager to visit the site. After arriving in Sydney, the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame made several trips to the ruins at Louisbourg and each are recorded in the annals. After the first excursion in August 1889 the annalist wrote,

Since a long time our hearts had a strong desire, but due to the lack of a good chance, we could not satisfy it before today. It was the desire to go to Louisbourg and visit the ruins of one of our convents founded in 1728 and destroyed by the English at the siege of this town.<sup>22</sup>

Following the second trip in 1895 they wrote, “A nice old man, Mr. Patrick Kennedy served as a guide and showed us the site of the ruins which were the most important. Those of our convent were above all the ones that interested us most.”<sup>23</sup> The entry for the third trip, although shorter, continues to indicate the Congregation’s interest in the site, mentioning that they met several of their students there and brought back relics.

It was almost a century after leaving Louisbourg that the Congregation of Notre Dame returned to Nova Scotia. At the invitation of Bishop Colin Francis MacKinnon,

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<sup>22</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 67.

Bishop of Arichat, the sisters<sup>24</sup> arrived in Arichat in June 1856 to open a convent and school; a boarding school was opened the next year. Unlike the Sisters in Louisbourg, the Congregation in Arichat had a degree of financial security in that a large convent had been built for their use; a local woman had willed the Sisters use of a furnished house, the surrounding land and a legacy of 25 sterling pounds a year; they received a government grant of \$270 a year and a school board salary of \$290.<sup>25</sup> The Arichat convent and school continued operation until 1901 when shrinking patronage and accompanying financial problems simply became too much.

Perhaps due to the success of the Arichat school, the Congregation opened others in Pictou (1880), Antigonish (1883) and Port Hood (1884). Looking at the history of each of these schools, all seem to have had a high enrollment, religious and community support, as well as a reasonable degree of financial security. Stella Maris Convent in Pictou was erected in 1880 by Archbishop Ronald McDonald, the Pastor of Stella Maris Parish. In August of that year, two sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame arrived “to work for the education of youth, and to sew [sic] in young hearts the love of God and neighbor.”<sup>26</sup> Children could attend the school as day scholars or boarders, and both boys and girls were able to attend the Sunday school classes, although separately. According to

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<sup>24</sup> The first sisters were the Superior, Mother St. Elizabeth (Dorval), Sister St. John of the Cross (Marie-Sophie Dubuc), and Sister St. Mathilda (Murphy). Douglas Somers Ormond, A Century Ago at Arichat and Antigonish Reminiscences of Mary Belle Grant Ormond (1860-1947) (Hantsport, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1985), p. 16; Casket (28 July, 1927), p. 18. There are two additional sisters listed as arriving with the group, Sister St. Olive (Derouin) and Sister St. Mary of the Cross (de Beaujeu), according to History of the CND – Chapter II – Foundations in the Maritimes (Translation) p. 337-338. Beaton Institute MG 13, 13C.

<sup>25</sup> Ormond, p. 16-17.

<sup>26</sup> “Stella Maris, Pictou” The Casket Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Number (July 28, 1927) p. 19.

an article in the Casket<sup>27</sup>, the chief means of support for the school had been from donations and bazaars organized by the Rev Pastor and carried on by the assistance of the Children of Mary and the different societies of the parish.<sup>28</sup>

The next convent established by the Congregation of Notre Dame was Mount St. Bernard, opened in Antigonish in 1883, with the assistance of Bishop John R. Cameron of Arichat. Five nuns initially taught ninety students, offering classes from grades one to eight. An agreement was made with the local school trustees to share in the town's common school work and to draw the provincial grant,<sup>29</sup> suggesting that the Sisters and the community had an amicable relationship. Three years later, the convent qualified for government support as an academy and began teaching, in addition to the younger grades, upper grades from nine to twelve.<sup>30</sup> Renamed St. Bernard's Young Ladies' Academy, the school continued to grow and prosper, with a new building being built in 1894. That same year, Mount St. Bernard began an affiliation with St. Francis Xavier College, giving female students the opportunity to participate in college programs and to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree. According to James Cameron, this affiliation "effected a noteworthy expansion of higher educational opportunities for the region's Catholic women."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The Casket was an eight-page weekly newspaper published in Antigonish, beginning in 1852. Early issues are devoid of any appreciable amounts of material relating to events in the Antigonish area and the paper consisted largely of material reprinted from other sources and dispatches from abroad, especially England and Ireland. Gradually, however, the Casket assumed a very considerable degree of importance, becoming both widely known and frequently quoted even by the newspapers of metropolitan cities in both Canada and the United States.

<sup>28</sup> "Stella Maris, Pictou," p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> James Cameron, For the People A History of St Francis Xavier University (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> Cameron, p. 78.

Another convent run by the Congregation of Notre Dame was St. Peter's Convent in Port Hood, founded by Father Colin Chisholm in 1884 with the assistance of the late Honorable Peter Smyth who "willed land valued at four thousand dollars on which a convent was to be built, and also four thousand dollars to help out in the instruction of the children in the parish."<sup>32</sup> Teaching boys and girls in grades primary to ten, the four sisters worked hard to ensure the success of their school. They made the host for the parish to help with the revenue and financial stability of the convent and also led the choir. A generous donation was also given to the convent by Rev. John Chisholm and according to the history of St Peter's Church, "this was but the beginning of the numerous and continuous gifts which were given to the Convent by the generous people of the town and country."<sup>33</sup>

Looking at these schools in Pictou, Antigonish and Port Hood, one notices that each was established within a reasonably small geographic area, and in a short period of time. From this it can be concluded that the Congregation of Notre Dame had an interest in educating the young women of Nova Scotia; that there were enough Sisters in the Congregation to support the establishment of these schools; that they had the support of the religious leaders in each of these areas; and that the sisters proved themselves worthy of both community and financial support. The Congregation of Notre Dame was apparently pleased with its experiences and the activities carried out at each location. Thus, it is not surprising to note that three additional convents were opened by the

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<sup>31</sup> Cameron, p. 96.

<sup>32</sup> St. Peters Church 1881-1981 Port Hood Beaton Institute PAM 3389 p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> St. Peters Church 1881-1981 Port Hood, p. 13.

Congregation of Notre Dame in the next three years: Sydney (1885), New Glasgow (1887) and Mabou (1887).

Although the Congregation's ability to assume control of another mission was important, it would also have had to consider the social, economic and religious conditions in Sydney at the time. In 1885, with C.H. Harrington as the first mayor, Sydney became incorporated as a town and was immediately divided into three wards.<sup>34</sup> There was one barber, one baker, one druggist, one part-time policeman and detective, six clergymen, nine lawyers, four doctors (although there was no hospital in Sydney or nearby), numerous merchants, a surprising number of farmers, one bank (the Merchants Bank of Halifax), several newspapers,<sup>35</sup> five or six hotels,<sup>36</sup> a furniture factory, two carriage factories, two tanneries and three harness factories.<sup>37</sup> The town consisted of two principal thoroughfares, the Esplanade and Charlotte St., both of which were dirt roads approximately ten or twelve feet wide. There was a ferry running between North Sydney and Sydney, but there were no telephones,<sup>38</sup> no water system and no electric lights,

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<sup>34</sup> Pamela Newton, ed. Sydney 1785-1985 (Sydney: City Printers, 1985), p. 17

<sup>35</sup> John A. MacAulay, "Sydney in the 1880's," in More Essays in Cape Breton History, ed. R.J. Morgan (Windsor, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1977) p. 10 and Newton, p. 17. The newspapers were The Cape Breton Times, The Cape Breton Advocate and The Island Reporter.

<sup>36</sup> According to a commemorative book produced by the City of Sydney, the explanation for the relatively large number of hotels in the small town was the town's status as county seat and commercial centre, which required lodgings for numerous visitors. Newton, p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> R.J. Morgan, "History of the Sydney Academy: Some History of Sydney" in 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sydney Academy (Sydney: Sydney Academy 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, 1991), p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Public telephone service for Sydney began in 1890 when Tom Publicover, T.C. Hill and Walter Crowe bought the French Cable Company's abandoned line from Loraine to Sydney. Setting up the Eastern Telephone Co, they established phone service from Sydney to Louisbourg. The only other phones at the time were some private systems in the coal industry. Centennial Booklet Committee, County of Cape Breton 1979 Centennial p. 35.

although most street corners had a kerosene lamp post. The population of the area had been recorded a few years earlier as 3,667.<sup>39</sup>

The social hierarchy of Sydney drew from its colonial past; “old” families, even if they were not wealthy, formed the upper ranks. J.R. Osgood, writing about Sydney in 1875, remarked, “it is said that its society is of a high order of culture and exclusive dignity. It possesses many of the social attributes of an old colonial capital, though there are now no vestiges of its former position save the deserted barracks and decaying batteries.”<sup>40</sup> Ten years later, the Halifax Herald wrote “the caste system prevails among the people, and it is almost as immutable as in far away India. The native borns are the Brahmins; and they draw a distinct line between themselves and the Rahatryas or merchants, and those in turn hold socially aloof from the Sundras or laborers.”<sup>41</sup> This social structure later became more complex as immigrants were drawn to Sydney by the coal mines and the establishment of the steel industry. Not only did they come from the more rural areas of Cape Breton, but also from Newfoundland, the British Isles, Italy, and Eastern Europe.<sup>42</sup>

Yet members of all the social classes participated in leisure activities: the

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<sup>39</sup> Census of Canada 1881.

<sup>40</sup> J.R. Osgood, The Maritime Provinces: A Handbook for Travellers (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1881), p. 150-151 in R.J. Morgan “The Changing Face of Sydney” delivered to the Old Sydney Society February 27, 1975. Beaton Institute MG 12, 82 (9). p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Halifax Herald, October 1885 in Morgan, “The Changing Face of Sydney,” p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Ron Crawley, “Class Conflict and the Establishment of the Sydney Steel Industry 1899-1904” in The Island 1713-1990 ed Ken Donovan, (Sydney: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1990) p. 146-147.

Mechanics Institute<sup>43</sup> offered free lectures, many citizens indulged in horse racing, cricket was played at Charing Cross; children played hurley (a form of hockey), swam and skated in season. It seemed that “Sydney never lacked sportsmen and many were interested in horse racing but there was no race course. In winter the harbour ice was used and in summer on racing days George Street from the foot of Hardwood Hill to about Falmouth was converted into a temporary race track. In games, baseball, cricket, hockey and curling were the favourites in their season.”<sup>44</sup> From this, it would appear that the general population was interested in the various forms of recreation that were available, yet other social matters such as education received less attention.

The introduction of schooling to Sydney began slowly. Although the first school opened in 1786 and another attempt was made four years later, educational efforts were sporadic until the early part of the nineteenth century. In 1820, when Cape Breton ceased to be its own colony, education began to receive more attention. Under the conditions of the annexation, Cape Breton had to conform to the laws of Nova Scotia. These new laws made it easier for the residents of Sydney to find support for a grammar school rather

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<sup>43</sup> The Mechanics Institute in Sydney was founded by a number of citizens and former members of the British Garrison in 1837. It was immediately successful in petitioning the government for grants to assist with the purchase of books for a library and apparatus for illustrating and explaining lectures. Lecture topics were as varied as steam engines, the fallacy of spectral illusions, architecture, the atmosphere, lost opportunities, and emigrant squatters. Newton, p. 20. For more information on the Sydney Mechanics' Institute or Mechanics' Institutes in general see: C. Bruce Fergusson, Bulletin of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia Mechanics' Institutes in Nova Scotia No 14, (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1960), p. 39. Martin Hewitt, “Science as Spectacle: Popular Scientific Culture in Saint John, New Brunswick 1830-1850” Acadiensis Vol XVIII no 1 (Autumn 1988), p. 56-90.

<sup>44</sup> John A MacAulay, “Sydney in the 1880’s” More Essays in Cape Breton History ed. R.J. Morgan (Windsor, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1977), p. 9.

than a common school; consequently they set out to establish a combined town and grammar school.<sup>45</sup>

Then, in 1835, an act was passed by the General Assembly of Nova Scotia authorizing the Lieutenant-Governor to appoint trustees and to make a grant of land for school purposes in Sydney.<sup>46</sup> Unable to open a new school right away, the combined common and grammar school continued operation until 1841 when “the first academy in Cape Breton was opened in Sydney ... by the simple process of converting the combined grammar and common school, ...into an academy.”<sup>47</sup> It retained this status until 1850<sup>48</sup> when the grant from the provincial treasury was withdrawn, and the school was again reduced to a grammar school.<sup>49</sup> A common school was also opened in the town in 1851.<sup>50</sup>

When the public school law came into effect with the Education Act of 1864, the people of Sydney became more interested in their children’s education and wanted to ensure they had qualified teachers and decent schools. In 1866, using the special grants that were available for establishing academies, the Sydney School Board opened a new school,<sup>51</sup> which was later relocated and enlarged. This school, educating both boys and

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<sup>45</sup> D.C. Harvey, “Educational Activities in Cape Breton, 1758-1850” Journal of Education (September 1935), p. 525.

<sup>46</sup> J.G. MacKinnon, Old Sydney (Sydney: Old Sydney Society, 1989), p. 83. And R.J. Morgan, “History of the Sydney Academy: Some History of Sydney” in 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sydney Academy (Sydney: Sydney Academy 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, 1991), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Harvey, p. 532.

<sup>48</sup> Harvey, p. 532.

<sup>49</sup> “Across the Years, the Buildings and the Principals” in Sydney Academy Graduation Exercises Souvenir Program (Thursday June 25, 1981). Beaton Institute PAM 3380; E.T. MacKeen, A History of the Schools of Sydney (Sydney, Nova Scotia: Cameron, 1938), p. 2.; MacKinnon, p. 85.

<sup>50</sup> MacKinnon, p. 86.

<sup>51</sup> “Across the Years, the Buildings and the Principals” in Sydney Academy Graduation Exercises Souvenir Program (Thursday June 25, 1981). Beaton Institute PAM 3380.

girls, was known as the Sydney Academy and was divided into secondary and junior classes. Carolyn Whalen writes “these secondary classes prepared the young men of Sydney for careers as teachers. Yet, it was felt by many that these students should be doing more than preparing to take teaching licenses. The Academy worked at upgrading its courses so a leaving certificate from Grade 11 was deemed sufficient for acceptance into six or seven American and Canadian universities and a grade 12 diploma was merited as the first year equivalent of university classes.”<sup>52</sup> At the time of the Congregation of Notre Dame’s arrival in Sydney, residents were beginning to recognize the value in educating the young women of the town. No doubt it was hoped that the Sisters would fill the gap created by the Academy’s concentration on educating boys.

Sydney’s early economic history was largely dependent upon the coal and steel industries. By the 1860s, coal mining had become increasingly important in the Sydney-Glace Bay region. Besides providing employment for the men in the collieries, the coal mines stimulated the lumbering, ship building and shipping industries.<sup>53</sup> The National Policy, having “established a 50c per ton duty on coal imports, which was raised to 60c the next year,”<sup>54</sup> had a profound impact on the Cape Breton coal industry as it experienced tremendous growth in both local and Quebec markets. This industrial expansion continued for many years in Cape Breton.

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<sup>52</sup> Whalen, p. 7,8.

<sup>53</sup> Debra McNabb, Old Sydney Town Historic Buildings of the North End 1785 to 1938 (Sydney: Old Sydney Society, 1986), p. 9

<sup>54</sup> David Frank, “The Cape Breton Coal Industry and the Rise and Fall of the British Empire Steel Corporation” The Acadiensis Reader Vol 2 Atlantic Canada After Confederation (Acadiensis Press, 1988), p. 8. See also: T.W. Acheson, “The National Policy and the Industrialization of the Maritimes, 1880-1910” The Acadiensis Reader Vol 2 Atlantic Canada After Confederation (Acadiensis Press, 1988), p. 164-189.

Henry Melville Whitney, an American financier, was to play an important role in Cape Breton's economic history. After he formed a syndicate amalgamating several independent coal mines into the Dominion Coal Company, Sydney saw coal production rise dramatically.<sup>55</sup> As a result of the growing demand for coal, it was decided a railway should be built from the mines at Bridgeport to Sydney, enabling coal to be shipped in larger vessels than could be accommodated at Bridgeport. However, the people of Sydney were incensed that the railway might cut through the town and refused to allow it right of passage. The company was forced to find an alternate route, choosing to run the track through what was then the country.<sup>56</sup> The town joined the Intercolonial Railway System in 1890, linking Sydney with Railway centres in the Maritimes, central Canada and the eastern United States.<sup>57</sup>

Whitney later combined investments in local coal and limestone deposits with the purchase of iron ore mines in Newfoundland, creating the Dominion Iron and Steel Company in 1899.<sup>58</sup> This had "a profound effect on the economic and cultural profile of Cape Breton as thousands of islanders moved from the countryside to Sydney and the mining towns to catch the rising tide of industrial growth. Workers from Europe also

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<sup>55</sup> For further reading on Henry Melville Whitney and the Coal Industry of Nova Scotia see: Don MacGillivray, "Henry Melville Whitney Comes to Cape Breton: The Saga of a Gilded Age Entrepreneur" Acadiensis (1979); D.A. Muise, "The General Mining Association and Nova Scotia's Coal" Bulletin in Canadian Studies (1983); Ian McKay, "By Wisdom, Wile or War:" The Provincial Workmen's Association and the Struggle for Working-Class Independence in Nova Scotia, 1879-97" Labour/Le Travail 18 (Fall 1986); Ian McKay, "The Crisis of Dependent Development: Class Conflict in the Nova Scotia Coalfields, 1872-1876," Class, Gender and Region: Essays in Canadian Historical Sociology ed. G. Kealey. (Canadian Journal of Sociology, 1988); J.S. Martell, "Early Coal Mining in Nova Scotia" Dalhousie Review XXV (1945-46), reprinted in B. Tennyson, D. MacGillivray, eds. Cape Breton Historical Essays (UCCB Press, 1980).

<sup>56</sup> Newton, p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> McNabb, p. 77.

<sup>58</sup> MacGillivray, p. 66.

began arriving. Poles, Hungarians, Lebanese, Ukrainians and other ethnic groups combined with the local population to give the industrial area a more cosmopolitan flavour than any other part of the Maritimes.”<sup>59</sup> By the early 1900s, the small town of Sydney had grown into a prosperous city, with people of all ethnicities, cultures and religions.

In the 1880s, Roman Catholics were the single largest religious group in Sydney but the various Protestant denominations formed the majority of the population. The census of 1881 finds the following religious make-up for the residents of Sydney:<sup>60</sup>

Catholics	1,555
Ch of Canada (Presbyterian)	1,085
Church of England	595
Baptists	224
Ch of Canada (Methodists)	194
Lutherans	4
Church of Scotland (Presbyterian)	4
Unitarians	4
Not Given	2

Thus, out of a total population of 3,667 Roman Catholics formed 42.4% (1,555) while the Protestant denominations made up 57.5% (2110). Despite the majority enjoyed by the Protestants in the town, there was little difference in the social standing of the two religious groups. When looking at the census of 1881, all categories of occupations are represented by both Roman Catholics and Protestants. The largest occupational groups in both cases were farmers, skilled artisans and manual workers.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Brian Campbell, “Early Cape Breton: surviving uncertainty” in Cape Breton A Changing Scene: A Collection of Cape Breton Photographs 1860-1935 by Owen Fitzgerald, (Sydney: City Printers, 1986), p. xi.

<sup>60</sup> Census of Canada 1881.

The town had two Presbyterian Ministers and two Baptist Clergymen while only one Roman Catholic Priest, one Methodist Preacher and one Anglican Priest.<sup>62</sup> Each of these denominations had a long standing connection to the town as St. George's Anglican Church was established in 1785,<sup>63</sup> a Methodist Preacher was sent to Sydney in 1829,<sup>64</sup> the United Baptist Church was established in 1864,<sup>65</sup> and St. Andrews and the Falmouth St. United Presbyterian Churches were established in 1875.<sup>66</sup> The first Roman Catholic Church in the area was St. Patrick's Church built in 1828, but when the congregation became too large, Sacred Heart Church was built under the direction of Father James Quinan.<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, members of the various religious denominations in Sydney appeared to have had an amicable relationship. Writing about the religious spirit in Sydney, Dr. William McK. McLeod remarked, "the old town of Sydney was most fortunate in its resident clergy they were like a corps of brothers and ours was the resulting blessing. In every matter which concerned the welfare of the towns, they had a living and sympathetic interest and to this, was largely due the fine feeling and agreement

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<sup>61</sup> Census of Canada 1881.

<sup>62</sup> MacAulay, p. 10.

<sup>63</sup> McKay, Karen "St George's Anglican Church, Sydney" The Nova Scotia Genealogist Vol XVIII no 2 (Summer 2000), p. 84; Robert Crocker, "St George's Anglican Church: The Cathedral of Cape Breton" p. 1 Beaton Institute. Reports – Churches, Anglican; Newton, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph G Angwin, Methodism in Cape Breton: A Retrospective 1789-1914 (Sydney Mines, 1914), p. 12. Beaton Institute PAM 1548.

<sup>65</sup> Eleanor Huntington, "A Story of Sydney Baptists" (Cape Breton Printers), p. 1. Beaton Institute PAM 1980.

<sup>66</sup> Rev. Archibald MacKinnon, The History of the Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton (Antigonish: Formac Publishing, 1975 for the Presbytery of Cape Breton), p. 22,25.

<sup>67</sup> John Campbell, With Our Hearts and Hands A History of Sacred Heart Parish (Sydney: City Printers, 2001), p. 18, 69.

which usually animated the people.”<sup>68</sup> However, there was an underlying tension between the Roman Catholics and Protestants that manifested itself on several occasions. McLeod does acknowledge that the arrival of the sisters had sparked anti-Catholic sentiment within the town to the extent that attempts were made to set the convent on fire. Although these attacks were isolated events, the divide between the two groups increased in the early years of the twentieth century as the idea of separate schooling became an important issue in the town.

Thus the Congregation of Notre Dame had several factors to consider before making the decision to open a convent school for young girls in Sydney. Because of the rapid expansion the order was undergoing during the nineteenth century, new missions were opened throughout Quebec, Ontario and the Maritimes. Several of these convent schools were established in Nova Scotia in the early 1880s, only a few years before the order was asked to go to Sydney. The success the sisters experienced at these missions, in the form of financial and community support, was looked upon favourably. Yet, the social, economic and religious conditions of Sydney would also have played a role in the Congregation’s decision. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, Sydney was experiencing tremendous growth; its population was increasing, the coal mines were producing vast quantities of coal, residents were beginning to value educational opportunities and Roman Catholics formed a significant part of the population. After taking all these factors into consideration, the Superior of the Congregation of Notre Dame decided to accept Father James Quinan’s offer and open a convent boarding school

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<sup>68</sup> Dr William McK McLeod *Memoirs* (1930) in Campbell, p. 64-65.

for young women in the County of Cape Breton. Three sisters were appointed to the Sydney mission and arrived in the town in November 1885.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The three sisters were: Sister St. Domitilla as superior, Sister St. Helen of the Cross for music and Sister St. Mary Alexis for French. Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 3

## Chapter Two

“... As the Institution, therefore, is not to be merely a parochial one, but is intended for the young girls of the entire County ...”<sup>1</sup>

Who went to school? School attendance is the topic of many studies across Canada as researchers try to determine who went to school and what variables in their lives enabled them to do so. The analysis of variables such as age, gender, location, parental occupation and school enrollment allows research on schooling to be linked with the examination of long-term economic change, provides an assessment of whether a particular school is serving the clientele it claims to and provides insight into the role of the institution in the community.<sup>2</sup> This chapter constructs a picture of the girls who attended Holy Angels by identifying and examining their social background. A comparison of the results from Holy Angels with similar studies will also provide an indication of whether the results are consistent with other regions and schools.

There are two ways in which to study school attendance. First, using the information contained in census records, researchers can analyze patterns of attendance across whole communities and relate the information about individual students to the socio-economic data about their parents. However, Ian E Davey writes that a major

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<sup>1</sup>Letter to Hon. William McDonald, Senator from Father J. Quinan. 1884. Holy Angels Convent.

<sup>2</sup>Chad Gaffield, “Schooling, the Economy, and Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century Ontario” in Childhood and Family in Canadian History, ed Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), p. 73; Ian E. Davey, “School Reform and School Attendance: The Hamilton Central School, 1853-1861” in Education and Social Change Themes from Ontario’s Past eds, Michael B Katz and Paul H Mattingly, (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 295.

drawback of this approach is that it is not possible to distinguish between the types of schools that the students attended.<sup>3</sup> The second method is to examine the registers of a particular school. Michael B. Katz writes that,

it is an intricate, lengthy, but nonetheless entirely feasible procedure to trace the students whose names appear in registers to other sources, especially to the manuscript census. This in effect locates the student in the context of his family; it shows the occupations, religion, and birthplace of his father and mother, the ages of his brothers and sisters, and, as well, a good deal about the structure and economic status of his household.<sup>4</sup>

The school registers for Holy Angels could not be located, but two ledgers held at the convent provided the necessary information to proceed with the analysis.<sup>5</sup> Complete class lists for January 1886 to spring 1895 were available, as well as the names of the boarding students from 1896 to 1901. The Censuses of 1881, 1891 and 1901 for Cape Breton County were used to locate the girls attending the school. The following information was recorded for each girl: age, religion, hometown and father's occupation;<sup>6</sup> 75.2% of the school population (875 of 1163) was successfully tracked.

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<sup>3</sup> Ian E. Davey, "Trends in Female School Attendance in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ontario" in Gender and Education in Ontario eds, Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1991), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Michael B Katz, "Who Went To School?" in Education and Social Change Themes from Ontario's Past eds Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly, (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 275.

<sup>5</sup> The names of the day students and in many cases, their fathers or guardians, were listed for the period beginning January 1886 and continuing until spring 1895. The data were organized by school year (September to May/June) and for three of the years, the students were further broken down into departments. Another ledger kept at Holy Angels recorded the names of the boarding students from 1886 to 1912. Several of the latter years were missing and at least one year appeared to be incomplete, and so the information for these years (1902-1912) was not used in this study. The name of the parent or guardian, as well as the location the boarding students were from and often the occupation of the parent or guardian was included in this ledger.

Holy Angels Convent School opened its doors in January 1886 with four boarders: Mary Quinan, Alexandra McNeil, Mary Laffin and Nora Reabbitt. Shortly after, several more girls joined them and the total number of boarders for this first year was nine. Enrollment for boarding students increased to twenty-three for the first full year of classes (1886-1887) and remained relatively constant for the next few years. However, in 1890-1891 the number dropped to fifteen and it remained below twenty for the next three years. Enrollment then returned to the twenties, where it stayed for the remaining years, except for 1897-1898 when there were only thirteen boarders. The annals comment on this, saying, “there are only 13 boarders; times are hard and money is scarce.”<sup>7</sup> The number of boarders must have increased in the coming years however, as twelve boarders had to be turned away in 1905.<sup>8</sup>

In January 1886, there were also eighty-four young girls enrolled in the school as day students. For the next six years the enrollment of day students stayed relatively consistent with a low of seventy-seven and a high of eighty-six. However, there was a jump in 1892-1893, the year in which Holy Angels first became a public school as the number of day students increased from seventy-seven to ninety-three. Two years later, the number of day students inexplicably increased to 114.

The total number of students from the period 1886 to 1894-1895 was relatively consistent. As Table 1 shows, the enrollment figures remained between eighty-nine and

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<sup>6</sup> In some cases, the girls were tracked in two census years to determine if any of these factors had changed. When a student could only be located once, the assumption was made that none of the factors had changed. When more than one individual existed with the same name and the details provided in the ledgers did not help to determine which one was correct, the information for the girl was recorded as unknown. The ages of the students were determined by adding or subtracting from the age listed in the census, making sure the age recorded would have been for the spring of the school year.

<sup>7</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup> Holy Angels Centennial, p. 26.

112. However, in 1894 -1895 there was a jump to 135 that coincided with a dramatic increase in the number of day students. Comments written in the annals indicate that the school was experiencing tremendous growth at this time. Referring to the school year 1898-1899, the sisters write, “during the year that has just passed, we registered 150 pupils.”<sup>9</sup> The total enrollment of 148 in 1899-1900 and 160 in 1900-1901 shows the continuing expansion the school was experiencing.<sup>10</sup> The upward trend continued, for in September 1901 the school registered 200 students in six departments.<sup>11</sup> This significant growth in enrollment at Holy Angels was no doubt due to the increase in population Sydney experienced as a result of the opening of the steel plant.<sup>12</sup> In only a year and a half the town’s population had more than tripled – in early 1899, Sydney’s population was less than 2,500 but by the end of 1901 it had risen to 9,901.<sup>13</sup> Because of such a high enrollment, the boarding students were sent to Mount St. Bernard while Holy Angels underwent construction to divide the dormitory in order to make new classrooms. In that year, the school employed seven sisters and two secular teachers. By June of 1902 there were 306 pupils registered at Holy Angels.<sup>14</sup>

Religion is an important factor when looking at the demographics of the student population at Holy Angels. Table 2 shows the religious background of the day students

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<sup>9</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 94.

<sup>10</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 99.

<sup>11</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 103.

<sup>12</sup> Holy Angels Centennial 1885-1985, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Morgan, “History of the Sydney Academy: Some History of Sydney,” p. 1; Douglas Pickup, “The Development of Sydney 1900-1914” BA St Francis Xavier University (1972), p. 8; Stephen J Hornsby, Nineteenth-Century Cape Breton A Historical Geography (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), p. 149.

<sup>14</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 106.

who attended the school. Catholics formed the majority of the population as over 80% of students in the first four years were Catholic. In the remaining years, the percentage of Catholic students declined, but they continued to be the predominant religious group. Students of other religions did attend Holy Angels, although these numbers were significantly lower. From 1886 to 1895, there were only four Baptist students and only one student who belonged to the Church of Scotland. There was however, a consistent representation of Church of England students, with totals varying between 3 in 1888-1889 and 11 in 1892-1893. This was the year in which Holy Angels became a public school, so it is possible that these parents may have felt more comfortable sending their daughters to a public school run by nuns rather than a private Catholic school. However, the religious references in the classrooms, upon which a controversy<sup>15</sup> in 1892 had been based, continued to remain in the school; the girls would have still been exposed to the Catholic faith.

When looking at the boarding students (Table 3), it is also overwhelmingly apparent that Catholics formed the largest group. In the first year, eight of nine boarding students (89%) were Catholic. In the following years, the percentage of Catholics was not as high (on average 73%) although the number of girls who could not be traced was greater. From 1886 to 1901, there was only one Baptist student, one Church of England student and one Canadian Presbyterian that attended Holy Angels as boarders. This may be accounted for by the continuous exposure of the boarding students to the Catholic

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<sup>15</sup> In 1892, financial support for Holy Angels from the province and municipality had been made conditional upon the removal of religious references within the school. The situation was resolved when the Superintendent of Education determined that the Education Act held no grounds for these conditions as long as the Sisters followed the provincial guidelines. Holy Angels Centennial 1885-1985, p. 22.

faith, rather than only during school hours, causing parents to be less likely to overlook the religious content within the classroom.

When looking at the religious background of all the Holy Angels students (Table 4), the same patterns are evident – Catholics formed the majority of the student population, although other religions were represented. Families who belonged to the Church of England did have a number of girls enrolled at Holy Angels as day students, but there was only one that boarded. Only one girl who belonged to the Church of Scotland or the Canadian Presbyterian church attended the school at any time, while a handful of Baptists were enrolled as day students and one was a boarding student. This is perhaps the most interesting, as the Free Baptists in Nova Scotia advocated a free school system within the province and opposed denominational schools.<sup>16</sup>

Very little is written in the annals with regards to the religious background of the students, so it is difficult to determine the sisters' feelings about the non-Catholic girls attending the school. However, their faith was very important to them and religious occasions such as first communions, confirmations and feast days are mentioned throughout. With regards to a first communion that took place in the convent chapel, the sisters did record a telling comment: "two of our boarders have the joy of making their first communion, Mary Laffin and Mary Martin; the latter is a little convert."<sup>17</sup> Mary Martin, one of the original boarders at the school, had been a Baptist according to the 1881 census. Comments such as this suggest that the Sisters were very much aware of the

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<sup>16</sup> George Edward Levy, The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces 1753-1946 (Saint John, New Brunswick: Barnes-Hopkins Ltd, 1946), p. 258.

<sup>17</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 7.

religious background of the girls attending the school and likely hoped that non-Catholics would convert to Catholicism.

The location or hometown of the girls enrolled at Holy Angels was also determined. Looking at Table 5, it is evident that most of the day students were from the town of Sydney; over 80% in the first three years and over 70% in the next five years. It is also possible that these percentages might actually be higher, as there were a significant number of girls whose location could not be determined, especially in the later years. The distance and the cost of travel would have been a limiting factor to many girls, making it difficult or impossible to travel to and from the convent each day. There were, however, a number of day students who did travel from areas such as Grand Narrows, Lingan, Bridgeport, Cow Bay, East Bay, Glace Bay and Balls Creek. It is possible that these girls could have traveled with someone who went into town regularly, or they may have stayed at a boarding house in Sydney. They could also have been partial boarders at the convent, going home on weekends. There were a few girls from North Sydney who traveled to Holy Angels daily, probably using the ferry service that existed between the two towns.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, only a handful of boarders were from Sydney. This is not surprising as parents were probably reluctant to pay boarding fees unnecessarily. But why did some girls from Sydney board at Holy Angels? Several of the girls boarded at the convent before entering the novitiate, while a few others had their fees paid by a priest. It is likely that the priests wanted the girls to board at the convent to ensure a desirable upbringing. Three girls had a father who was a ship captain, and it is possible that they were boarded at the school while he was away at sea. The occupations for the remaining men, however,

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<sup>18</sup> Newton, p. 36.

were varied and provide few clues as to why they chose to board their daughters and nieces. Perhaps they felt the girls would receive a more complete education by doing so.

Some boarding students came from much farther away, as seen in Table 6. There was one girl from New Brunswick, one from Prince Edward Island, and a number from Newfoundland. There were also three girls from the United States, in particular Boston and New York. Three girls came from Halifax and two from eastern Nova Scotia. It is difficult to say for certain why these families chose to send their daughters to Holy Angels, but it is likely that the parents had a previous connection to either Sydney or the convent itself. This would be a reasonable assumption, as Cape Breton experienced a surge of outmigration throughout the nineteenth century as people (mostly young, active men and women) moved to areas with more economic prospects.<sup>19</sup>

The remainder of the boarding students were from all areas of Cape Breton County, ranging from Meat Cove in the Cape Breton Highlands to Christmas Island, from D'Escousse to Lingan. With only a few girls originating from each area, it is difficult to see any commonalities or to determine why these girls chose to attend Holy Angels. Table 7 combines the data for the day students and boarding students with regards to their hometown and shows that the majority of the girls came from Sydney, although many came from the mining towns of Lingan, Glace Bay and Bridgeport. In fact, an average of 73% of the students from 1886 to 1895 came from these urban and industrial centres.

An analysis of the occupations of the fathers and guardians of the students at Holy Angels also helps to reveal a more complete picture of their social background. Tables 8,

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<sup>19</sup> Patricia Thornton, "The Problem of Out-Migration from Atlantic Canada, 1871-1921: A New Look" *The Acadiensis Reader: Vol Two Atlantic Canada After Confederation* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1988), p. 34-65; Alan Brookes, "Outmigration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations" *Acadiensis* (Spring 1976), p. 25-56.

9 and 10 show the occupation of the individual who was paying the fees at the school. Although it was predominantly the father, there were several cases of a mother, uncle, brother or priest assuming responsibility for the costs. Because the occupations were quite numerous and varied, they were organized into eleven categories: Professionals, Clergy, Merchants, Industrial Commercial Proprietors and Managers, Commercial Travelers and Salesmen, Skilled Artisans, Sea Captains and Pilots, Farmers, Non-Manual Workers, Manual Workers, Unemployed and those that were unknown.

Examination of the occupations for the day students (Table 8) shows that skilled artisans formed the largest group with 24.3% followed by manual workers who accounted for 14.3%. The dramatic increase in population can be attributed to the expansion in the coal and steel industries, as well as the Intercolonial Railway that had recently extended its route to the town. Manual workers associated with these industries (including, among others, miners, fishermen, and railway laborers) formed a large segment of the town's population, and skilled artisans such as carpenters, shoemakers and tailors were needed in the growing town. Thus, it is not surprising that these two groups formed the largest percentage of the student population at Holy Angels. Professionals, including lawyers, doctors, teachers, accountants and engineers, were the third largest group with 107 entries or 12.4%. It is also significant to note that there were forty-six sea captains and pilots whose daughters, sisters, nieces or wards attended the school.

When comparing this to the occupations listed for the boarding students (Table 9), it is evident that farmers formed the largest group, although only by a small margin. There were forty-five farmers, thirty-three sea captains and pilots, twenty-eight merchants and twenty-six professionals. The high number of farmers is not surprising as

“inland, much of the population depended upon farming. Along the intervals, second and third-generation settlers operated substantial farms, raising livestock for the Newfoundland market and supplying dairy products to the towns of eastern Cape Breton.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, we can see from Table 10 that the largest occupational group for the parents and guardians of girls attending Holy Angels was the skilled artisans. Between 1886 and 1895 there were 216 entries in this category. Manual workers, forming the second largest group, had 134 in comparison, while there were 115 professionals. The occupations that were the least represented were the clergy and commercial travelers and salesmen with ten and eleven respectively. Each of the other occupational categories had between twenty-six and seventy-one. The number of people who were unemployed was fifty-four, a significant number. An interesting feature not recorded in the tables, but related to this rather high level of unemployment, is the number of girls who attended Holy Angels free of charge. On several occasions the Sisters accepted students with all expenses being assumed by the convent; the ledgers reveal this with comments such as “Au nom de la Tres Su Vierge” and “boarder on providence account.” In total, eighty day students and four boarding students attended the school free of charge during the years of this study.

Age was another factor in determining the demographics of the student population at Holy Angels. To analyze the age breakdown of the students attending the school, the charts were broken down into three levels: those students younger than nine, those between ten and fourteen, and those older than fifteen. Although students of any age could have been in any scholarly level, these categories seemed to encompass the average

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<sup>20</sup> Hornsby, p. 203.

ages of the three departments as seen in the class lists of 1892-1893, 1893-1894 and 1894-1895.

When looking at the ages of the day students (Table 11), it is apparent that the majority of the girls were of a younger age. The highest number of girls in the older category was fourteen. This is in contrast to the totals in the other two categories which ranged from a high of twenty-eight and a low of sixteen for students under the age of nine, and a high of forty-two and a low of twenty-six for those between the ages of ten and fourteen.

Despite the lower number of boarding students, the number of girls over the age of fifteen was more significant when comparing with the other categories. There was not a wide span – the high being fourteen in 1889-1890 and the low being four in 1897-1898, but the average was eight. In contrast to the day students, the number of boarders under age nine did not rise above two at any time from 1886 to 1901, and the number of girls between the ages of ten and fourteen that boarded at the school ranged from only one to nine. Perhaps this is because older girls may have been more comfortable leaving home for longer periods of time.

Although school attendance is the topic of many studies across Canada, few researchers focus on a particular school; rather, they analyze attendance patterns for an entire city, village or town. This is the case in the articles “Schooling, the Economy, and Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century Ontario,” “The High School and the Household Economy in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890-1940,” and “Patterns of School Attendance

in Toronto, 1844-1878: Some Spatial Considerations.”<sup>21</sup> Fortunately, there are a few studies that analyze the demographics of the student population at individual schools. Comparing the results of these studies with the data from Holy Angels will provide an indication of whether the results are consistent with other regions and schools within Canada.

In her study of private boy’s schools in British Columbia, Jean Barman found that initially most of the clientele of the Vernon Preparatory School came from the immediate vicinity of the school, 93% of the fathers had been born in Britain and almost 70% were engaged in agriculture.<sup>22</sup> The results for the Shawnigan Lake School were similar. Barman indicates that during the 1920s the demographics at the two schools began to change; the proportion of students from the Okanagan Valley and Victoria declined, the number of fathers born in Britain decreased to about half and the majority were professionals and businessmen.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, it is difficult to compare these private boy’s schools with Holy Angels. Obviously the gender of the students is the biggest difference, while the socio-economic backgrounds of the two areas also pose problems. British Columbia, in the early part of the 1900s, was largely made up of British emigrants who farmed, while Sydney was a largely industrialized city with a varied ethnic background. The occupations of the fathers in these two studies reflected the area they were from and make it difficult to compare.

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<sup>21</sup> Gaffield, p. 69-92; Craig Heron, “The High School and the Household Economy in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890-1940.” Historical Studies in Education Vol 7 no 2 (Fall 1995), p. 217-259; Haley P. Bamman, “Patterns of School Attendance in Toronto, 1844-1878: Some Spatial Considerations” in Education and Social Change Themes from Ontario’s Past eds Michael B Katz and Paul H Mattingly (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 217-245.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Barman, “Skimming off the cream: the social impact of private education in British Columbia 1900-1950” History of Education Review Vol 16 no 1 (1987), p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Barman, p. 54.

Ian E. Davey, in his study of the Hamilton Central School from 1853-1861, found that skilled craftsmen formed the largest occupational group with 48.1% and professionals or commercial proprietors accounted for 20%. He also found that the professionals and proprietors consistently sent more boys than girls to the school in each age group and that skilled workers sent as many girls as boys. He suggests that “either the professionals and proprietors were more concerned with the education of their male children and sent more to school for longer, or they entrusted their daughters to private institutions. Artisans, on the other hand, were more likely to send their girls to the public schools and keep them there longer while their sons left to work at the father’s trade or to seek other employment.”<sup>24</sup> This would also be a reasonable explanation for the large number of girls at Holy Angels whose fathers were artisans. Another similarity that can be seen between the two schools is the relatively low percentage of manual workers - 10.9% at the Hamilton Central School and 12.8% at Holy Angels.

Davey also analyzed the ages of the students in 1853 and found that the majority of the students were between the ages of 6 and 13. This is consistent with the findings from Holy Angels as 36.6% were between the ages of 10 and 14. Had the age breakdown for each of the categories been the same, a more definite comparison could have been made. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in comparing the information from the Hamilton Central School to Holy Angels is that Davey’s analysis was only for two individual years, 1853 and 1861, whereas the data for Holy Angels exists for the entire period 1886-1895.

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<sup>24</sup> Ian E. Davey, “School Reform and School Attendance: The Hamilton Central School, 1853-1861” in *Education and Social Change Themes from Ontario’s Past* eds, Michael B Katz and Paul H Mattingly, (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 310.

Davey has also examined female school attendance patterns in Ontario, paying specific attention to the Burlington Ladies Academy and the Wesleyan Female College.<sup>25</sup> He found that few enrollment lists have survived for the private schools and academies that existed in Ontario, which varied from large institutions with extensive boarding facilities to groups of children taught by men and women in their own homes, but the lists for the Burlington Ladies Academy and the Wesleyan Female College have survived.<sup>26</sup> He found that the majority of girls attending the Ladies Academy were over the age of twelve and that 44.4% were over the age of sixteen, suggesting that they were “the daughters of those citizens who could afford, and deemed it desirable, to keep their girls in school throughout their teenage years.”<sup>27</sup> This is in contrast to Holy Angels where the greatest enrollment was between the ages of ten and fourteen and the Hamilton Central School where enrollment was highest in the age category six to fifteen. The grouping of the fathers’ occupations was evenly divided among the entrepreneurs and professionals and the skilled artisans.<sup>28</sup> This is similar to the breakdown of occupations found at the Hamilton Central School and Holy Angels. Although the skilled artisans and professionals were not evenly represented at Holy Angels, they were two of the largest groups represented. At the Wesleyan Female College, on the other hand, the students were drawn from a more exclusive and wealthy segment of society and were significantly

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<sup>25</sup> For a history of the Wesleyan Female College see: Johanna M. Selles, Methodists and Women’s Education in Ontario 1836-1925 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> Davey, “Trends in Female School Attendance in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ontario,” p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Davey, “Trends in Female School Attendance in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ontario,” p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Davey, “Trends in Female School Attendance in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ontario,” p. 15-16.

younger than the girls attending the Burlington Ladies Academy.<sup>29</sup> The parents were mostly Methodist, over half were merchants, manufacturers and professionals, and the proportion of artisans was considerably less than at the other school. It is not surprising that the majority of students at this school and Holy Angels were of the same religious faith as the individuals who were running them – Methodists at the Wesleyan Female College and Catholics at Holy Angels.

This chapter provides an analysis of who attended Holy Angels in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Variables such as age, religion, fathers' occupation and hometown provided the opportunity to locate the students in the context of their family and the community. The data contained in Tables 1 through 13 helped to construct a demographic picture of all students from 1886 to 1895 and the boarding students from 1896 to 1901. The typical girl who enrolled as a day student at Holy Angels was Roman Catholic and was from Sydney or one of the surrounding mining towns. Her father was generally a skilled artisan, although a considerable number of professionals and manual workers in the town also sent their daughters to Holy Angels. She was most likely between the ages of ten and fourteen. The typical boarding student, on the other hand, was also Roman Catholic, although her home was throughout Cape Breton County. Some girls even came from Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and the United States. The fathers of the boarding students were mostly farmers and the girls were generally older than fifteen. The demographics of the student population at Holy Angels were then compared with studies of schools in British Columbia and Ontario. Although direct comparison was difficult, it was interesting to note that skilled artisans

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<sup>29</sup> Davey, "Trends in Female School Attendance in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ontario," p. 18.

formed the majority of parental occupations at Holy Angels, the Hamilton Central School and the Burlington Ladies Academy. Evidently, skilled artisans saw value in sending their daughters to school. There were also a large number of professionals and men involved in entrepreneurial occupations at each of the schools. This analysis provides an identification and examination of the girls who attended Holy Angels. The chapter thus provides a broader picture of the social background of residents in Sydney and helps to complete the history of the school.

## Chapter Three

“One thing a stranger readily remarks is the interest taken by the citizens, both Protestant and Catholic, in their convent.”<sup>1</sup>

No institution stands alone. It is influenced and shaped by the people, institutions and organizations within the community it serves. The interaction of Holy Angels with the citizens of Sydney, Sacred Heart Parish, the mayor and the Sydney School Board all played an important role in its development. This chapter, while exploring key events in the convent’s history, also emphasizes the impact of these external influences.

When the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame arrived in Sydney on November 7, 1885 they wrote, “at last we greet Sydney which awaited us for so long a time.”<sup>2</sup> First going to the church to hear Mass, the sisters lived in the Glebe House for seventeen days while they waited for the convent to be finished. Upon taking possession of the building the sisters wrote, “if our convent, small as it is, passes for one of the finest in Nova Scotia, this is not because of our work, but because of the zeal of our devoted pastor who has raised the necessary money for the construction, by soliciting contributions of the parishioners of Sydney, Low-Point and Lingan and of some benefactors.”<sup>3</sup> Many of these parishioners additionally contributed to the new institution. The women of Sydney presented the sisters with \$100.00 to help buy the furniture of the

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<sup>1</sup> “Closing Exercises at the Convent of the Holy Angels,” The Casket (8 July, 1897), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 5. Very little is known about the benefactors although a ledger entitled “Nos Bienfaiteurs” is located at Holy Angels Convent. In it there is a memorium to the Baroness Alexandrine Georgine Didelot who is referred to as the godmother of Holy Angels Convent. The annals record a gift of “a silver gilt ciborium, four candlesticks, a crucifix and a bronze lamp, a canon, a Missal and missal stand” from her. p. 9.

house and individual women donated the drapes for the sanctuary, a clock for the community room and an altar tablecloth. The ladies of Low-Point and Lingan gave “thirty feather pillows, three feather beds ... twenty pairs of pillow cases, six pairs of sheets, fifteen woolen blankets, a dozen colored quilts, bedspreads, and three white quilts.”<sup>4</sup>

Despite the friendly reception given to the sisters when they first arrived, their presence did not please everyone. An unidentified arsonist attempted to incinerate the convent in June 1887,<sup>5</sup> and a second attack occurred just a few months later. Stones were thrown at the windows, one of which landed on the knees of a student while she was seated at the dinner table. According to the sisters, “the one suspected was arrested and the matter went to court. As they had no proof against him he was set free, and the expenses were paid by the Roman Catholics of Sydney. They also paid for a guard for six days.”<sup>6</sup> The fact that the Roman Catholic residents of the town paid for the expenses relating to this incident is not surprising. The convent was the recipient of financial donations and gifts on numerous occasions. These gifts are recorded faithfully in the annals, such as the following entry in April 1886: “Madame Lenny gave us a gift of 6 dollars, Madame Townsend 4 dollars, Madame Dormilt 4 dollars Mr. MacDonald 2 dollars, Mr. MacIntyre 2 dollars, Mr. Gillis 1 dollar, Captain Ryan 1 dollar, Mr. McVarish 2 dollars, Miss Callahan 2 dollars, Miss MacLellan \$1.50, Mr. Cook 2 dollars, Mr. Laffin 2 dollars, Mrs. Burke 3 dollars, Mrs. Gannon 5 dollars Mrs. Collison 5

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<sup>4</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 12, 13.

dollars.”<sup>7</sup> The sisters mentioned every gift they received regardless of its size, as well as who gave the gift and its intended use. Often donations of money were used to purchase religious statues or musical instruments. Other people supported the convent by providing them with sugar, loads of coal, or services:

Mr Samuel Theriault, one of the agents of the telephone company made us a present of a telephone booth and paid half the cost for one year. This generous gift is greatly appreciated. It will render us many services, sparing us many trips to town.<sup>8</sup>

We also owe a great deal of gratitude to doctors Randall and Kendall who refused to accept any money for their intelligent and assiduous service.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the gifts given to Holy Angels were intended to help them raise money. This was the case with the many articles that were donated each time the convent held a “Christmas Tree”. A Christmas Tree appears to have been a bazaar that provided entertainment as well as a meal. In 1889, a Mr. A.J.G. McAchen donated a box of toilet articles, a knife and a silver fish fork which helped the sisters raise eight hundred dollars.<sup>10</sup> On another occasion, the sisters held a Christmas Tree to raise the funds needed to purchase a new heating system; this time they raised five hundred dollars.<sup>11</sup> Concerts, plays and recitations were also held to help finance the little convent. Owing to the

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<sup>7</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 102. The Dr Kendall referred to by the sisters was Dr Srthur Samuel Kendall. For more information about him see: Moira Ross, “Dr Arthur Samuel Kendall, His Life and Times as a Medical Doctor, Politician and Citizen of Cape Breton Island, 1861-1944.” (MA Thesis) Saint Mary’s University. 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 20.

support of the citizens of Sydney these events were highly successful, and, in some instances, people had to be turned away because the hall was too small.<sup>12</sup> The Sydney Record and the convent annals mention that these functions were attended by both Roman Catholics and Protestants. A concert in July 1891 brought the sum of one hundred dollars, while another in March 1896 raised three hundred dollars.<sup>13</sup> The annals also mention several concerts, usually held at the end of the school year, that were not intended to raise money but rather to highlight the talents of the students.

The support for the convent shown by the residents of Sydney could also be seen in articles and letters published in the local papers. For instance, on July 17, 1890 The Casket contained the following: “the Catholics of Sydney and vicinity have much reason to congratulate themselves that they have such an institution for the education of their daughters as the Convent of the Holy Angels under the careful management of the Sisters of the Congregation.”<sup>14</sup> The author went on to compliment the sisters and the pupils saying that the closing exercises at the school:

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<sup>12</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 28, 71. For newspaper coverage of a concert held in 1907 see: “Musical Recital at the Convent,” The Sydney Record (25 November, 1907), p. 1; “A Coming Event: Much Talked of Concert to be Given at Convent of the Holy Angels Next Week,” The Sydney Record (7 December, 1907), p. 8; “The Convent Pupils in Entertainment” The Sydney Record (13 December, 1907), p. 5, 8.

<sup>14</sup> “Convent of the Holy Angels,” The Casket (17 July, 1890), p.

convinced those ... of the very effectual work that is being done and the great care the Rev. Sister St Margaret, under whose efficient supervision the department is, bestows upon her pupils. The young ladies showed that they were acquiring practical knowledge in all the subjects on the curriculum which embraces high school branches. The apt, prompt and lively manner in which the questions put to them by the Rev. Father Quinan and other visitors ... were answered, gave evidence of the thoroughness of their knowledge, and that they were not prepared especially for the occasion.”<sup>15</sup>

The same opinion was echoed several years later in an article written in The Casket:

“...The examination served to show that these ladies, who devote their lives to the arduous work of education, are thoroughly competent and abreast of the times. ... those who have the happiness of having their daughters trained in this institution should by every effort show their appreciation of his noble and disinterested act, all of which will be a source of pleasure to his (Rev Quinan’s) generous heart.”<sup>16</sup> Sentiments like these surely pleased the sisters and encouraged them to continue the work that they were doing.

The interest shown in Holy Angels can also be seen by the number and variety of visitors the convent had, ranging from the Catholic Councillors of Cape Breton County in January 1886 to the Governor General and his wife in 1897.<sup>17</sup> Officers from ships that docked in Sydney also visited Holy Angels while in port. When the Rear Admiral Sallandrouze of Lamornaix, Commander of the *Naiade* (a French ship) visited Holy Angels he was surprised to hear the sisters speak French so well.<sup>18</sup>

Priests and bishops from all over the world called at Holy Angels convent when they were in Sydney and they generally said Mass for the sisters. The sisters also received

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<sup>15</sup> “Convent of the Holy Angels,” The Casket (17 July, 1890).

<sup>16</sup> “Examination in Holy Angels Convent Sydney” The Casket No 26 (14 June, 1900), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 6, 83.

<sup>18</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 29, 47.

visits from other religious: two Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny stayed at Holy Angels for twelve days on their way to St. Pierre and Miquelon in 1894; several Good Shepherd Sisters from Halifax visited in September 1895; several Sisters of Mercy from Newfoundland stayed at the convent in 1897 and the Filles de Jesus stayed at the convent when they first arrived in Sydney in 1904.<sup>19</sup> The sisters at Holy Angels seemed to enjoy these visits and probably looked forward to additional ones. Other visitors to the convent included the Superintendent of Education in June 1894 and Dr. Chisholm of St. Francis Xavier College in Antigonish who visited Holy Angels the next year. He was interested in the details of keeping house and examined the convent down to the last detail.<sup>20</sup> These visits show that people both within the community and those from further away were aware of Holy Angels and interested in its welfare.

Holy Angels Convent enjoyed a friendly and supportive relationship with Sacred Heart Parish in Sydney, which began with founder Father James Quinan. When the sisters first arrived in Sydney they wrote, “there we were presented to our pastor who came to meet us. He received us as if we were angels descended from Heaven and took the train with us.”<sup>21</sup> Father Quinan supported the sisters and the school throughout his life: he provided them with financial assistance, donated prizes for the student examinations, attended functions put on by the convent and said Mass regularly in the convent chapel. In October 1900, Father Quinan retired as Pastor of Sacred Heart Church, becoming Chaplain to the sisters. To mark the occasion, the students and sisters of Holy

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<sup>19</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 58, 68, 80, 119.

<sup>20</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 65-66.

<sup>21</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 4.

Angels presented him with a desk.<sup>22</sup> His successor, Father D.M. MacAdam, also established a close relationship with Holy Angels. He supported them in much the same way as Father Quinan had, but does not appear to have had such a close personal connection with the sisters.

The relationship between Father Quinan, Father MacAdam and the sisters at Holy Angels was mutually beneficial. The sisters supported their pastors in every way they could. When Father Quinan fell ill in 1892, the sisters nursed him, not allowing anyone else to stay with him at night. As well, each year, they celebrated the anniversary of his ordination. On his golden jubilee, in March 1903, the convent celebrated saying, “We could not remain silent and indifferent with regard to this event ... we realize that our debt to our good founding father can never be paid by our feeble tributes, and we leave it to Heaven to reward him as he merits. He who has worked with such great fervour in the vineyard of Sydney for fifty years, who has cherished and served this convent with all his heart as Priest and Father.”<sup>23</sup>

Upon his death on March 7, 1904, the sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame in Sydney were deeply saddened. Several former pupils of the convent gave a portrait of Father Quinan to the sisters. They wrote: “we received a beautiful portrait of our beloved founder ... it adorns the walls of our parlour, recalling to future occupants of the house, the debt of gratitude we owe to him who from the heights of heaven will watch over us and interest himself in the development of the work so dear to him.”<sup>24</sup> Even after his

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<sup>22</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 100.

<sup>23</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 111.

<sup>24</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 117-118.

death, Father Quinan continued to support the convent; his will provided for “the perpetuation of the Convent of the Holy Angels.”<sup>25</sup>

The church also supported the congregation financially when the sisters decided the convent needed to be enlarged. In the fall of 1905, the Superior of the Convent made a plea to parishioners for assistance in constructing an addition to the building. For three months in early 1906 there was a collection taken in the church for the erection of two schools, the second being St. Joseph’s which the parish had decided was needed. After assisting with the construction of these two buildings, the parish also had to provide for the salaries of the sisters and the maintenance of St. Joseph’s school. Prompted by the growing population of the area and the success achieved by Holy Angels, the Congregation of Notre Dame had also opened two other schools in the area previous to St. Joseph’s. In 1900, Notre Dame Convent was opened in Sydney Mines and in 1902 Holy Redeemer Convent was opened in Whitney Pier with the assistance of Neil MacDonald, the parish priest of Holy Redeemer Church.<sup>26</sup> The support offered to the Congregation of Notre Dame by Sacred Heart Parish and the Roman Catholic Church continued for many years.

Throughout its history, Holy Angels Convent regularly received visits from the Mayor of Sydney. Most of these visits occurred when the registers needed to be signed or just after an election. The sisters generally looked upon these relationships favourably and the annals faithfully record each of the visits, including one by Mayor Colin

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<sup>25</sup> “Father Quinan’s Will – Various Charitable Bequests,” The Sydney Record (16 March, 1904), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 96, 107, 127; Annals of St Joseph’s School 1906-1943, p. 1; Reginald S. Donovan, Brenda M LeBlanc, Sheila M Walsh and Vincent W Young, “A History of Holy Redeemer Church, Its Parishioners and Organizations” A Canada Community Development Project Federal Government Sponsored by Holy Redeemer. June 17, 1983.

McKinnon in February 1893: “We received this evening a visit from the Mayor, Colin McKinnon and from Mrs Gillis and McVarish, school commissioners, the purpose of their visit was to place their signatures on the registers which have to be sent to Inspector MacNeil. At the same time, the mayor expresses to us his wishes for the prosperity of the convent and his desire to contribute to it with all his power.”<sup>27</sup> Later that month C.H. Harrington, the newly elected Mayor, visited the convent. The school also received regular visits from the school commissioners, and after one such visit in March 1895 the sisters wrote “we received today a visit from one of the school commissioners, Mr. AG MacLean. This proves that they have a great interest in the convent classes.”<sup>28</sup> It is unclear, however, how this seemingly ordinary visit would prove interest in the classes at Holy Angels. Perhaps school commissioners only visited classrooms on special occasions or at certain times of year. If this was true, an unscheduled visit would indicate an interest in the school.

Walter Crowe, who was elected Mayor in 1897, visited the convent shortly after his election and apparently left the sisters with the impression that he was a friend of the convent.<sup>29</sup> This was later proven when the sisters inquired as to the possibility of having holidays on Holy Days. Mayor Crowe initially wrote, “...Let me say that were it in my power I should be only too pleased to accede to your reasonable request. But I find our reference to the school law, the Board has no authority to grant holidays – except the five additional days usually given in extension of the summer holidays...”<sup>30</sup> After consulting

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<sup>27</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 41.

<sup>28</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 61.

<sup>29</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 76.

with the Principal, however, the Mayor decided that an arrangement could be made whereby the sisters could count holy days as taught. It was decided that the sisters would keep the students a quarter hour later the day before and the day after the holy day. "As our pupils remain till 3:45 pm (a quarter of an hour being devoted to spiritual reading) the plan was in every way satisfactory," to the sisters. Upon his re-election the following year, Mayor Crowe gave the students a holiday.<sup>31</sup> At the close of the school year, Mayor Crowe presided over the closing exercises at the convent, of which The Casket wrote "among the medals was one given by Mayor Crowe of Sydney who, although a Protestant takes the warmest interest in the institution."<sup>32</sup>

In 1903, Walter Crowe retired from the position of Mayor. The sisters at Holy Angels considered this a personal loss. In a letter to Mr. Crowe concerning his retirement they wrote "...we have had every reason to know that your wise administration of civic affairs, your broadmindedness in all matters pertaining to liberty of conscience and your consummate prudence and tact in adjusting difficulties, were to us a source of strength and security."<sup>33</sup> They also asked for his continued interest and patronage of the convent. His reply assured the sisters of this and showed his appreciation of the work the sisters were doing in Sydney.<sup>34</sup> The sisters saw his letter as "proof of the devotion of our ex-

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<sup>30</sup> Letter from Mayor Walter Crowe, February 10, 1897 to the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, In Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 77.

<sup>31</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 86. According to a letter written by Mr Crowe on February 10, 1897 to the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame the "so-called Mayor's Holiday is of course not claimed as such in the returns, but is regarded as a completed day." Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> "Closing Exercises at the Convent of the Holy Angels," The Casket (8 July, 1897), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from The Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, February 10, 1903 to Mr Walter Crowe, In Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 108-109.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Mr Walter Crowe, February 14, 1903 to the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame in Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 109-110.

mayor and our sentiments of gratitude. Under his administration the salaries of the sisters were considerably increased. He has always been gentlemanly to us and a great admirer of our work.”<sup>35</sup> Mayor Wallace Richardson, who replaced Mayor Crowe, also visited the convent and expressed his good will. The sisters were happy with his election as “this dear gentleman though Protestant is, it is said, is a very good friend of the Catholics and in particular our convents.”<sup>36</sup>

Arbor Day in Sydney was a day in which good relationships between Holy Angels Convent, the mayor and the Sydney Academy prevailed. On one occasion, in May 1893, Arbor Day saw the girls of Holy Angels receiving a tour of the academy building, attending a lecture at the school and planting trees. In other years, Arbor Day was celebrated at the Convent with recitations and performances.<sup>37</sup> The relationship between Holy Angels and the Sydney Academy during the 1890s always seemed to be pleasant according to the convent annals. However, because the Sydney Record is not available for these years, it is difficult to determine if the relationship would have been portrayed differently in the newspapers. In June 1897, the two schools collaborated on the celebrations for Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. On June 15, the students practiced singing at the convent and the next week the girls went to the academy, “our students have also gone to the Academy to practice singing for this memorable event. They are always treated with much courtesy,”<sup>38</sup> wrote the sisters.

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<sup>35</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 110.

<sup>36</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 146.

<sup>37</sup> “Arbor Day Celebrations: Exercises at the Convent, Argyle and Ashby Schools: Interesting Programs Tree Planting and Cleaning Up School Yards – Songs and Recitations” Unknown Source.

<sup>38</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 81.

The relationship with the principal of the Academy was also generally friendly. In 1894, Mr E.T. MacKeen, the principal of the Sydney Academy, proposed to Sister St. Leonard of Port Maurice, teacher of the first class, to make application to obtain her grade XII. The matter was referred to the Superior General of the Congregation of Notre Dame and Bishop Cameron, who both encouraged the sister to continue her studies. With the help of the vice-principal of the Academy who went to the convent to help her, Sister St. Leonard of Port Maurice prepared for the exams. The annals do not record if she passed, but say “it is understood that this course, if she succeeds will bring us nothing except the honor but it will bring something to the schools of the town in the financial area.”<sup>39</sup> Another favourable reference to the Academy Principal occurred in October 1895 when E.T. MacKeen visited the convent before attending an educational conference in Truro. The sisters were pleased that he had the courtesy to visit them and to take into consideration their opinions. Upon returning, he gave them a report of the deliberations and resolutions adopted by the assembly.<sup>40</sup>

In September 1892, the possibility arose of Holy Angels receiving financial support from the school board, but it is unclear who was responsible for initiating the idea.<sup>41</sup> The Provincial Superior of the Congregation of Notre Dame came to Sydney to decide whether the convent should refuse or accept this money. There were conditions requiring the removal of all religious references from the classrooms and walls of the

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<sup>39</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 53.

<sup>40</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 68.

<sup>41</sup> This is an important episode in the history of Holy Angels, but unfortunately little source material exists. The Sydney Record published the minutes of the school board meetings in great detail but issues of the paper are not available until after 1900.

convent, about which the sisters felt very strongly. According to the annals,

this affair gave rise to many vexations, anxieties and heartbreaks. They even wanted the disappearance of the religious symbols in our classrooms and to take from us the liberty to say a word about the good God or any religious subject during class in order to earn provincial government and municipality money. The Divine Master who had been the witness of our anguish was also our sole consolation and the only support of our courage during these days of trial.<sup>42</sup>

The reasoning of the school board and their feelings regarding the matter are largely unknown. However, in 1906, Colin McKinnon wrote a letter to the Sydney Record; he had been the chairman of the school board in 1892. He wrote that a petition had been presented by the Roman Catholic Congregation of the town asking that the convent schools be brought under the control of the school board. The spokesman for those opposed to the petition, Walter Crowe, stated that the Sydney school board did not have the legal power to bring the convent schools under its control, but that he personally had no objection to this being done. As chairman, Colin McKinnon contended that they had the right to pass upon the petition, subject to the approval or disapproval of the superintendent of education and the council of public instruction for the province.<sup>43</sup>

On October 24, 1892, the provincial Superintendent of Education, A.H. MacKay, resolved the situation after finding no grounds in the Education Act for such conditions.<sup>44</sup> His letter stated, "if the town of Sydney requires additional public school accommodations and the Board instead of building wish to make arrangements for renting or otherwise obtaining the use of the convent school rooms they are free to do so

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<sup>42</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 36.

<sup>43</sup> Colin McKinnon, "Mayor Fullerton and Convent Schools: Are School Funds being Paid Illegally? Letter from Ex-Mayor McKinnon," The Sydney Record (11 April 1906), p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Holy Angels Centennial, p. 22.

as long as in every respect the schools are considered subject to all the provisions of the school law.”<sup>45</sup> The sisters rejoiced, saying,

our confidence in Him has not been in vain, for after many misunderstandings and interpretations of the law, correspondence and explanations with Bishop Cameron of Antigonish, the Mother House and Reverend James Quinan of Sydney, we succeeded in keeping in our classrooms, the crucifix, a picture of the Blessed Virgin and at the same time a salary from the government and municipality.”<sup>46</sup>

Thus, in December 1892, Holy Angels became a public school under the direction of the school board.<sup>47</sup> In April 1893, the principal of the Academy, Mr E.T. MacKeen was officially named as principal of the convent classes.

Two commissioners of the School Board then visited the convent and offered to pay rent for the classrooms and to furnish the coal for heat.<sup>48</sup> A few months later, the sisters asked the school board for an increase in salary and were granted this request; “this board agreed to pay \$150 instead of \$60 to the first class teacher; \$125 instead of \$60.00 to the second class teacher and \$100.00 instead of \$40.00 to the third class teacher and \$60 extra for classroom rental and \$20 for the heating of these same classrooms.”<sup>49</sup> The sisters were also pleased when the salary of one of their teachers, Sister St. Mary Clementine, was increased by \$25.00 in March 1898 and that they received \$10.00 more

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<sup>45</sup> Letter received from A.H. MacKay, Superintendent of Schools, October 24, 1892 in Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 36-37.

<sup>46</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 38.

<sup>47</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 38. Sr St Leonard of Port Maurice, Sr St Margaret of Bavaria, and Katie Dunlop were engaged as teachers in the convent school. Sr St Phillip of Bethsaida, whose diploma was from Quebec, was not accepted by the province of Nova Scotia.

<sup>48</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 43.

<sup>49</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 50-51.

for coal. With regards to this they wrote, “the Mayor, Mr Crowe and Mr Hanrahan, 1<sup>st</sup> Councillor, to whom we owed for the most part this favour gave us to understand that the salaries of teachers of the second and third classes should be the same as those teaching the first class and he would try to work for this for the next year.”<sup>50</sup> There is nothing recorded in the annals in the following year about this, but the sisters did receive another raise in April 1900. This time it was “\$25.00 for the first, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> departments and \$20 for the fourth department along with fifty dollars for the cleaning of the classes.”<sup>51</sup>

Other provinces in Canada also had publicly supported Roman Catholic schools throughout their history. A comparison of Sydney with Manitoba and New Brunswick can help to place the situation in a wider context. Prior to 1890, Manitoba had a dual system of education. Each section had independent control of all areas of school management: curriculum and examination, textbooks, discipline and the grading and licensing of teachers. The Manitoba Act of 1870 had protected the right to separate schools by adopted the wording of the educational clause in the British North America Act (which established the right or privilege to denominational schools for a Province only if that right or privilege had existed by law before Confederation) and including the phrase “by law or practice.” In 1890, however, provincial legislation was passed to set up a single system of free, non-sectarian, public schools. It was determined that this legislation did not abolish the right to conduct denominational schools at private expense, but it revoked the privileges of provincial and local support. A heated debate arose over whether the Manitoba legislature had the power to tax Roman Catholics for the support of

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<sup>50</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 87.

<sup>51</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 97.

public schools and whether the province could refuse to make grants to any sectarian schools in the future.

The issue was challenged in court under two different provision of the Manitoba Act but the Roman Catholics were not successful in their attempts to maintain publicly funded separate schools. The Conservative government in Ottawa also tried to get the Manitoba government to restore the separate school privileges and, when they were unsuccessful, promised to pass legislation compelling such an action. However, the passage of this legislation was prevented by the Liberals who were elected to power. Minor concessions were then made to the Roman Catholics including the legalizing of religious education from 3:30 to 4:00pm each day and the employment of a Roman Catholic teacher where there were from twenty-five to forty pupils of that faith attending a school.<sup>52</sup>

In New Brunswick, the situation was similar. The Parish Schools Act of 1858 had provided for a system of schools officially under the control of the Board of Education, but with the real power and authority resting with the trustees of the individual schools. However, the provisions of this act were revoked by the New Brunswick legislature in 1871. It said that in order to receive federal aid, schools had to be non-sectarian. Denominational schools did not have to close but would have to be supported by private sources, and the parents of pupils attending these schools would be taxed to support the common schools. Despite continued resistance on the part of the Catholics, the Supreme Court of New Brunswick ruled that the government was not bound to provide public

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<sup>52</sup> Ronald J. MacDonald, Separate School Question Across Canada, and in Particular the Sydney Area Master of Education Thesis, St. F. X. University, (1966), p. 10-12; C.B. Sissons, Church and State in Canadian Education An Historical Study (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1959), p. 163-213; George M Weir, The Separate School Question in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1934), p. 35-50.

support for minority denominational schools because the separate schools had existed in practice, but not in law, at the time of Confederation.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, publicly funded separate schools in both Manitoba and New Brunswick no longer existed at the time that Holy Angels began receiving financial support from the school board. It was possible for Holy Angels to receive this funding because Nova Scotia had set up a system of publicly funded schools whereby “the public school trustees might rent school-rooms or the entire building of denominational schools, appoint as teachers those recommended by the owners of the rooms, and operate the school in accordance with the law.”<sup>54</sup>

Holy Angels received financial support from the school board until 1907 when it again became a private school. The circumstances surrounding this situation, however, are complicated and go back several years. In March 1905, the school board was made aware that the number of students enrolled in high school classes at the county academy was gradually decreasing. This was a concern because if the numbers went too low, the school would lose the provincial grant of several hundred dollars each year.<sup>55</sup> This decrease in attendance was attributed by the school board to the fact that two other schools in the city were also delivering the high school curriculum, but were not receiving the provincial grant. These schools were Holy Angels Convent and Holy Redeemer Convent. Members of the school board suggested that “as long as the necessary high school work was being done in the city it should count as a part of the

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<sup>53</sup> Peter M Toner, “The New Brunswick Schools Question,” Canadian Catholic Historical Association 1970 (37) p. 85-96; MacDonald, p. 3; Sissons, p. 217-250.

<sup>54</sup> MacDonald, p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> “Special Meeting of School Board,” The Sydney Record (24 March, 1905), p. 1.

work of the county academy and should entitle the latter to its right share of the provincial grant.”<sup>56</sup>

It was a topic of much debate and controversy, and Rev. Clarence MacKinnon,<sup>57</sup> a Presbyterian, and Rev D.M. MacAdam, a Roman Catholic, exchanged several letters on the subject. These men did not hold public office and were not officially involved in the situation. Rev. MacKinnon felt that the academy needed to be saved and that this could be done by requiring that all high school branches under the control of the school board be taught within its walls.<sup>58</sup> Father MacAdam, on the other hand, stated that with regards to the Sydney Academy, “I have all the interest of a former student in that institution. I fully recognize the good work it has done in the past and cannot but regret the decreased attendance that has come with our increased population... Its seems absurd that only children doing high school work in the Academy building itself can be counted for the Academy grant. All the schools are under the supervision of the principal of the Academy, and surely this should be sufficient. ... Personally, I desire nothing but the most friendly relations between the convent and the academy, and I should be willing to do anything in my power to prevent the loss of the academy grant. Our Catholic boys attend that institution and are likely to do so for an indefinite period.”<sup>59</sup> A petition was also placed before the school board by a delegation of evangelical ministers who asked

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<sup>56</sup> “Special Meeting of School Board,” The Sydney Record (24 March, 1905), p. 1

<sup>57</sup> Rev Clarence MacKinnon, the Minister of St. Andrew’s Church in Sydney until 1905, was an outspoken Presbyterian who became the Principal of Pine Hill Divinity College in 1927. For further information about Rev. McKinnon see: F.Stewart Wallace, The MacMillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (London and Toronto: MacMillan, 1963), p. 470; Rev Clarence MacKinnon, Reminiscences (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1938).

<sup>58</sup> Rev C. MacKinnon, “Rev C. MacKinnon Agrees to Differ,” The Sydney Record (28 March, 1905), p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> Father D.M. MacAdam, “Father MacAdam States Position,” The Sydney Record (29 March, 1905), p. 5.

that instruction in high school branches be confined to the academy.<sup>60</sup> In attempting to deal with this matter, the school board decided to get the opinion of the superintendent of education. A.H. MacKay's reply, published in the paper, put to rest the possibility of counting the students at Holy Angels as part of the Academy high school. MacKay mentioned however, "if the two convents to which you refer are so near your County Academy that they can co-operate as a single institution, their rooms being not too distant for the convenient transfer of classes: and if fractional classes in the various institutions are combined in one or the other of the buildings, then it would be possible, it appears to me, to consider the combined institution as the County Academy."<sup>61</sup> This was not the case in Sydney and so the school board still faced the same problem. It is uncertain how the situation was eventually resolved, but the high school pupils at Holy Angels were not required to transfer to the Academy.

The articles and correspondence found in The Sydney Record allow us a glimpse at the sentiments of the clergy and the school board but they do not tell us how the Congregation of Notre Dame felt about the matter. For this, we must examine the Holy Angels Convent annals. In April 1905, the sisters wrote, "For sometime now there has been question of our high school pupils uniting with Sydney Academy. We are praying with fervour that our pupils will never be obliged by the school board to join the public school to complete the number necessary to maintain the academy. Several propositions were made to the superintendent of Public Instruction ... in a private interview with

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<sup>60</sup> "Petition to the School Board," The Sydney Record (11 April, 1905), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> "Convent Schools and Academy: Superintendent of Education Gives His Views on Question," The Sydney Record (15 April, 1905), p. 3.

Father MacAdam, father addressed to these gentlemen that it would be useless to attempt a union that all of Sydney would be against. And not one of our students would want to leave us, even the Protestants who come to attend our classes.”<sup>62</sup> Upon learning that the convent students would not be required to attend the academy, the sisters wrote “... We are most grateful to our friends in heaven and on earth who have helped us to solve so completely victoriously the debate concerning the separation. Neither the discussion of several Protestant ministers in the press or in the pulpit, nor the secret plots did us any harm. On the contrary, superior instruction and education worked to our favour and our enemies had to renounce the victory they hoped to achieve.”<sup>63</sup> It is unclear from either the annals or from the papers whether the County Academy continued to receive its grant or not.

It was also in 1905 that the controversial issue of separate schooling swept across Canada, including Sydney. The issue had started in the House of Commons in Ottawa with an autonomy Bill that proposed the creation of two provinces in the Northwest: Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Bill had a clause that guaranteed the people of those areas the right to separate schools in perpetuity, causing dissension throughout the country.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 121.

<sup>63</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 121-122.

<sup>64</sup> MacDonald, p. 35-49. Much has been written about this issue, with authors outlining the early educational history of the area and examining the various amendments made to the autonomy bill before it was approved. See: Manoly R Lupul, The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question: a study in church-state relations in western Canada, 1875-1905 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Sissons, Church and State in Canadian Education (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1959); George M. Weir, The Separate School Question in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1934); Irene A. Poelzer, “The Catholic Normal School Issue in the North-West Territories, 1884-1900” Canadian Catholic Historical Association (42) 1975, p 5-28.

In Sydney, the clergymen gave sermons and wrote letters expressing the Roman Catholic and non-Catholic perspectives. Rev. D.M. MacAdam<sup>65</sup> represented the beliefs of the Roman Catholic people while Rev. Clarence MacKinnon and Rev. Dr W.H. Smith<sup>66</sup> were the most prolific and outspoken in the opposing camp. In general, the non-Catholics felt they would be made to support Roman Catholic schools to which they had moral objections. They believed that separate schools were free from public supervision, that they would cost more and that they were lacking in efficiency. In contrast, Roman Catholics generally believed that the non-sectarian schools found throughout Canada were really Protestant. They tried to disprove many of the arguments made by non-Catholics, saying that they did not want Protestants to support the schools, rather Roman Catholics just wanted their share of the public money. Roman Catholic protagonists also said that they were willing to give any other religious group this same opportunity. In Sydney, this controversy continued for a few weeks and then gradually tapered off, with no clear resolution. Across the country, however, the issue of separate schooling continued to generate interest and conflict. It was not until July 18, 1905 that the situation was resolved in Ottawa with the Senate passing the Autonomy Bill. An amended section

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<sup>65</sup> See: Rev D.M. MacAdam, "The Question of Separate Schools," The Sydney Record (23 March, 1905), p. 5; Rev. D.M. MacAdam, "The Separate School Question," The Sydney Record (27 March, 1905), p. 5; Rev D.M. MacAdam, "Father MacAdam States Position," The Sydney Record ( 29 March, 1905), p. 5; Rev. D.M. MacAdam, "Rev. D.M. MacAdam on Separate Schools Address Delivered in Sacred Heart Church, Sydney, Sunday Evening, 12<sup>th</sup> inst," The Casket (30 March, 1905), p. 2; Rev D.M. MacAdam, "Second Sermon on Separate Schools," The Sydney Record (4 April, 1905), p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Rev Clarence MacKinnon, "Separate Schools in the Northwest," The Sydney Record (22 March, 1905), p. 5; Rev Clarence MacKinnon, "The Separate School Question," The Sydney Record (25 March, 1905), p. 5; Rev Clarence MacKinnon, "Remarks on Separate Schools," The Sydney Record (27 March, 1905), p. 1; Rev Clarence MacKinnon, "Rev. C. MacKinnon Agrees to Differ," The Sydney Record (28 March, 1905), p. 28; Rev Clarence MacKinnon, "School Question in Sydney," The Sydney Record (23 September, 1905); Rev Dr W.H. Smith, The Sydney Record (2 April, 1905).

had validated the Territorial Ordinances of 1901, meaning that the rights and privileges of the religious minority were defined and limited by the terms of this Ordinance.

In early 1907, the convent schools in Sydney were again on the front page, as a key topic in the mayoral election. In the spring of 1906, Sacred Heart Parish had acquired land about a mile from Holy Angels, with the purpose of building a new school to accommodate the growth of the parish. The school board, however, refused to give support to St. Joseph's School,<sup>67</sup> so the parish paid the teachers salaries and maintained the school.<sup>68</sup> In the election the following year, the legality of continuing to pay the salaries for the sisters at Holy Angels and Holy Redeemer came under fire. The two candidates held opposing views: Finlay MacDonald's position was that he would not grant assistance to a new convent school, but he would not interfere with the present grants to the other convents, while F.C. Kimber believed that denominational schools should not be assisted by civic money and was opposed to the recognition of these schools as part of the public school system.<sup>69</sup> For Kimber, the withdrawal of the present grants was a question of legality; was paying the salaries of the sisters and renting the convent schoolrooms unlawful? Finlay MacDonald's loudest argument focused on the financial benefits of the convent schools: "during the last year 1906 we spent \$23,069.55 on the maintenance of our schools. Of this amount we paid \$19,031.32 for salaries etc, for the public schools and \$4,438.23 for the convent schools. 1592 pupils attended the

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<sup>67</sup> "Special Meeting School Board," The Sydney Record (10 April, 1906), p. 1; Annals of St Joseph's School, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> Annals of St Joseph's School, p. 3. St Joseph's School came under the direction of the school board in July 1908. "St Joseph's School Taken Over By Board," The Sydney Record (24 July, 1908), p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> "School Question Becomes Issue," The Sydney Record (15 February, 1907), p. 1; "Finlay MacDonald on School Issue," The Sydney Record (28 February, 1907), p.1; "F.C. Kimber's Parting Shot," The Sydney Record (4 March, 1907), p. 1,3.

public schools and 755 pupils attended the convent schools. The public school pupils cost us \$11.96 per head and the convent school \$5.87 per head”<sup>70</sup>

Everyone in the city seemed to have an opinion on the “separate school question.” Clergy from several of the religious denominations preached sermons and wrote letters to the editor; most seemed to be against the convent schools. Rev. J.L. Batty of the Methodist Church believed that the school question was simply more evidence of the increasing hold that the Roman Catholic Church was seeking to get over the civic matters in the city.<sup>71</sup> In contrast, Rev. A.J. MacDonald, the Pastor of St. James Church, said that he admired the courage and tenacity of purpose displayed by the Roman Catholic people in the stand they had taken. He thought that it was necessary to get to the root of the problem and eliminate the source from which the trouble sprang.<sup>72</sup>

Perhaps the most outspoken member of the clergy was Rev. Dr. W.H. Smith, an Anglican. He felt that the whole issue boiled down to the proper relationship between the convent schools and Sydney’s educational institutions.<sup>73</sup> He wondered whether the school board exercised the same control over the convent schools as it did over the public schools and used the example of the appointment of teachers at the convents. Dr. Smith wrote that names were submitted in a group by a representative of the Roman Catholic Church, and the school board simply ratified these appointments. He claimed that “this exceptional method of securing teachers for the convent schools reveals a denominational

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<sup>70</sup> Finlay MacDonald, “The Financial Aspects of the School Question,” The Sydney Record (4 March, 1907), p. 1,3. See also Finlay MacDonald, “Rejoinder from Finlay M’Donald,” The Sydney Record (4 March, 1907), p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> “Schools and Temperance,” The Sydney Record (18 February, 1907), p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> “Rev. A.J. M’Donald on School Issue,” The Sydney Record (25 February, 1907), p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> W.H. Smith, “Convent and Public Schools,” The Sydney Record (2 March, 1907), p. 1,5.

control altogether unique in the history of the public school”<sup>74</sup> and made the accusation that “the convent school exists for the express and announced purpose of religious education. They may be regarded as public to secure financial support, but in reality all know they are part of the religious education of the Roman Catholic Church.”<sup>75</sup> Smith wrote that he had no criticism of the convent schools as a means of education within the Roman Catholic Church, but he did object to the public schools “being controlled by the machinery of the convent and then calling them public schools. They are public only in the sense that Protestant scholars can attend and that they receive public grants; but in all other respects the whole atmosphere and influence is wholly Roman Catholic.”<sup>76</sup>

Other people in the city also voiced their opinions, many of whom wrote in support of the convent schools. Writing under a pseudonym, “PAX” agreed with Dr. Smith that the convents did receive special treatment with regards to the appointment of teachers, but he felt that the present status of the convent schools was based on sound principles. He said, “it looks now as if the determination to let matters stand as they are at present would be acceptable to many Protestant and Catholic citizens even while the smoke of battle clouds the air.”<sup>77</sup> Another individual, writing under the name “Observer,” agreed that the situation should be left alone, writing “if my Roman Catholic neighbor

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<sup>74</sup> W.H. Smith, “Convent Schools Undenominational?: Rev Dr Smith Questions Position Taken By Mr D.A. Hearn,” The Sydney Record (27 February, 1907), p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> W.H. Smith, “Convent and Public Schools,” The Sydney Record (2 March, 1907), p. 1,5

<sup>76</sup> W.H. Smith, “Convent and Public Schools,” The Sydney Record (2 March, 1907), p. 1,5. See also W.H. Smith, “Another Letter From Dr Smith,” The Sydney Record (1 March, 1907), p. 1,8; W.H. Smith, “Are the Convent Schools Catholic?” The Sydney Record (11 March, 1907), p. 1,4; W.H. Smith, “Dr. Smith Replies to “Presbyterian,”” The Sydney Record (25 February, 1907), p. 1,8.

<sup>77</sup> PAX, “The Solution of the School Difficulty: Leading Protestant Layman Submits His View to the Electors,” The Sydney Record (2 March, 1907), p. 1.

prefers to send his girls to such schools – and it costs me nothing extra – why should I object?”<sup>78</sup>

D.A. Hearn argued that the convent schools were not denominational or separate schools; rather, “they are public schools taught under the regulation of the council of public instruction and are in all respects subject to these regulations. The teachers are members of a religious community but are not teaching any doctrine under their engagement as teachers.”<sup>79</sup> Finlay MacDonald echoed this saying, “the present arrangement is that the school board rents certain rooms in the convent for school purposes. The pupils are there taught by duly certified teachers and the board pays the salaries. These schools are not separate schools and are open to all. Most Catholics and some Protestants prefer to send their children there, and their doing so is a matter of choice.”<sup>80</sup> Both acknowledged that the sisters did “teach catechism after school hours to Catholic children.”<sup>81</sup> A.J.G. MacEchen argued that the teaching of Christian Doctrine to Catholic children after class, when the opinions and convictions of other children could not be interfered with, was not sufficient reason to withhold support.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Observer, “Defends Public School Teachers,” The Sydney Record (25 February, 1907), p. 1, 3.

<sup>79</sup> D.A. Hearn, “Convent Schools Undenominational Sisters Engaged under same agreement as Public School Teachers,” The Sydney Record (26 February, 1907), p. 1. See also D.A. Hearn, “Protestants and Convent Schools,” The Sydney Record (1 March, 1907), p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Finlay MacDonald, “The Financial Aspects of the School Question,” The Sydney Record (4 March, 1907), p. 1,3. See also Finlay MacDonald, “Rejoinder from Finlay M’Donald,” The Sydney Record (4 March, 1907), p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> D.A. Hearn, “Convent Schools Undenominational Sisters Engaged under same agreement as Public School Teachers,” The Sydney Record (26 February, 1907), p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> A.J.G. MacEchen, “Facts about the Convent Schools,” The Sydney Record (7 March, 1907), p. 1,5. See also: A.J.G. MacEchen, “Public Schools of Nova Scotia,” The Sydney Record (4 March, 1907), p. 6; A.J.G. MacEchen, “A.J.G. MacEchen on Legal Aspects of School Question,” The Sydney Record (1 March, 1907), p. 1,3.

The Editor of the New Glasgow Eastern Chronicle, a Presbyterian, also had an opinion on the subject. He wrote that the convent schools would always exist and “those convent schools being with us we would recognize them and give them their share of public money, so long as the teachers were licensed and the schools would stand inspection. In Nova Scotia Protestants are strong enough to grant the Catholics that privilege; they are strong enough to take it away if Catholics abuse it.”<sup>83</sup> Because the opinions offered by the residents of Sydney were so varied and intense it looked as if a resolution would be hard to come by. However, a few months later, in May 1907, the “separate school question” was resolved at a meeting of the school board. The board moved and then unanimously adopted the following:

Whereas it has been alleged that certain irregularities have been permitted in connection with the engagement of teachers and the conduct of some of the schools hitherto recognized as public schools of the city of Sydney;

And whereas it is the duty of the board to prevent such irregularities and to administer the school system of the city in accordance with the acts and regulations pertaining to the public schools of the province of Nova Scotia.

Therefore Resolved that this board record its intention to observe the regulations regarding the engagement of teachers for the city schools, and to enforce rigidly the regulations regarding instruction during school hours.

And that the Supervising Principal be instructed to report promptly to the board any infraction of the regulations that might be observed by him.<sup>84</sup>

It was a simple solution for such a complicated and spirited issue, but the school board felt it would satisfy the majority of people. It allowed the Roman Catholics to keep their

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<sup>83</sup> “Our Educational Problems: Frank Statement on the Convent School Question by a Pictou Presbyterian,” The New Glasgow Eastern Chronicle in The Sydney Record (3 April, 1907), p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> “Meeting of School Board: Convent School Question Discussed and Resolution Passed,” The Sydney Record (7 May, 1907), p. 1.

convent schools, but promised the Protestants that the schools would be monitored and any irregularities would be addressed.

Despite having put to rest the election issues surrounding the convent schools, the sisters were not out of the water yet. In July 1907, the appointment of teachers for the following school year came up for discussion at a school board meeting. The mayor stated that in his opinion “the appointing of religieuse to the positions of teachers contravened the spirit of the Educational Act and that he would oppose any further such appointments.”<sup>85</sup> However, despite this, the school commissioners visited the convent to see about the engagement of teachers for the school and the sisters were engaged as teachers for the next year.<sup>86</sup>

On September 19, 1907, however, the fate of Holy Angels changed dramatically: the school board decided to approve the removal of all high school students to the Sydney Academy. Not all the school commissioners were convinced this was the best move, “as the teachers had been engaged and all preparations made for the work of the ensuing year, anything that would so radically disturb these arrangements could not possibly be viewed as the wisest course to be pursued.”<sup>87</sup> Another felt that,

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<sup>85</sup> The Sydney Record (3 July, 1907), p. 8.

<sup>86</sup> “School Board reappoints Convent School Teachers,” The Sydney Record (9 July, 1907), p.1; Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 138.

<sup>87</sup> “Proposed High School Changes: Committee Approves Supervising Principal’s Suggestion: Commissioner Hanrahan Objects,” The Sydney Record (19 September, 1907), p. 1.

the measures suggested by the committee were too drastic in nature, the instruction given at the Convent schools was equal to that imparted elsewhere and there was therefore no immediate need of the change being brought into effect. In fact ... there was much to be gained in considering the matter well and thoroughly. A number of the convent pupils were pursuing studies other than those to be found in the syllabus... due notice should have been given these pupils to allow of their making arrangements necessitated by the action of the Board.<sup>88</sup>

Mr. C.P. Moore stated that, "the Board could not regard the convent teachers as those doing high school work and if subjects other than those laid down by the council of public instruction were being taught during school hours the provisions of the Education Act were being violated. If not, he saw no reason why arrangements would have to be disturbed under the new order."<sup>89</sup> He also indicated that it was only in the last three years that the board had become aware that the convent schools were teaching high school work.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the concerns put forth, the recommendations of Mr. C.P. Moore (the supervising principal) were approved. The teachers at the Convent of the Holy Redeemer and the Convent of the Holy Angels were notified of this change. At Holy Angels Sister St. Margaret of the Cross, "declined to entertain the proposal and expressed herself as

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<sup>88</sup> "High School Work Must Be Stopped at the Convents," The Sydney Record (24 September, 1907), p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> "High School Work Must Be Stopped at the Convents," The Sydney Record (24 September, 1907), p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> "School Board Holds Meeting," The Sydney Daily Post (24 September, 1907), p. 1. This time frame would be consistent with an article that appeared in The Sydney Record in August 1904. It commented on the need for more Grade A teachers in the city but Commissioner Gillis drew attention to the fact that there were already four Grade A teachers in Sydney all doing high school work. He claimed that people overlooked the fact that high school work was being done in Holy Angels and Holy Redeemer Convents. "High School Work in Sydney: Commr Gillis Points Out That 4 Grade A Teachers Are Now Employed," The Sydney Record (27 August, 1904), p. 8.

being opposed to doing other than high school work. She was unable to concur in the decision reached by the committee and gave as her reasons the fact of her having been employed for the ensuing year to teach academic work.”<sup>91</sup> The school board asked her to reconsider, but she refused, and her resignation was sent to the school board. It was also published in the paper. When Mr. Moore went to the classes to tell the senior students that they were to get a transfer from the convent to Sydney Academy, Sister St. Margaret of the Cross (in the presence of Mr Moore) told her pupils that they were perfectly free to accept his proposition or to stay at Holy Angels as a private school.<sup>92</sup> On October 7, 1907, the sisters opened two private classes for the senior students. A few days later, on October 15, 1907 the sisters recorded, “we continued our work in peace and we are pleased to note that not one single student, Protestant or Catholic, left the school. Even three Protestants came asking us as a favour to keep them in the convent, thinking that it was obligatory for them to go to the academy.”<sup>93</sup> It was only Holy Angels high school that became a private institution, as the lower grades continued to be administered by the School Board and a new principal appointed.

In exploring the history of Holy Angels, it becomes clear that the school was influenced and shaped by outside forces. The people, institutions and groups within Sydney, as well as the religious and political situation across Canada, played an important role in its development. The idea of separate schooling, and the controversy that surrounded it throughout the country, did not bypass Sydney. A heated debate arose

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<sup>91</sup> “High School Work Must Be Stopped at the Convents,” The Sydney Record (24 September, 1907), p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 143.

<sup>93</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 143.

in 1907 with regards to the financial support that Holy Angels had begun receiving in 1892 from the school board. Clergy from each of the Protestant denominations severely criticized and attacked the school, while other citizens wrote in support of Holy Angels. The situation was resolved in a manner satisfactory to all involved, but later that same year the school board, the Sydney Academy and Holy Angels became embroiled in another disagreement. Rather than complying with the school board's decision that all high school students must attend the Sydney Academy, Holy Angels made the decision to become a private school once again. Despite the fact that the relationship between the Congregation of Notre Dame at Holy Angels and the Sydney School Board was often controversial, key episodes in the school's history were a direct result of the interaction with this group.

The residents of Sydney also played an important role in the school's development as did Sacred Heart Parish. The Roman Catholics of the city supported the school in any way they could: attending concerts and bazaars, writing letters to the editor in praise of the convent schools and providing financial support. Without this financial help, Holy Angels would not have been able to afford the enlargement of the convent in 1906 or the opening of St Joseph's school the same year. It must also be remembered that the parish was responsible for building the convent before the sisters' arrival. Most Protestants in the town seemed to tolerate the convent and showed support on occasion by attending concerts and bazaars. Others, such as Walter Crowe, had a significant impact upon Holy Angels. While he was Mayor, Crowe ensured that the sisters received an increase in their salary and helped them to achieve holidays on religious holy days.

The relationship between Holy Angels and these external influences was not always positive but it was because of these relationships that Holy Angels evolved the way it did.

## Chapter Four

“The young ladies showed that they were acquiring practical knowledge in all the subjects on the curriculum which embraces high school branches.”<sup>1</sup>

To study completely the history of a school, an analysis of curriculum is necessary. In examining the program of studies offered by Holy Angels, the following questions will be addressed: What was the initial curriculum offered by the Congregation of Notre Dame and how did it change over time? Did the sisters follow a progressive system of education or were they more traditional, encouraging young women to enter religious life or prepare for their lives as wives and mothers? How did the curriculum at Holy Angels compare to that offered by other Roman Catholic religious orders? The answers to these questions will help to form a more complete picture of the history of Holy Angels and address its impact upon the young women of the town.

When the Congregation of Notre Dame was first founded in Quebec, there was no education system that the sisters had to follow. Rather, they taught the subjects and skills that they felt were important. However, by the time that the Congregation of Notre Dame arrived in Sydney, Nova Scotia had a mandatory province-wide educational curriculum for public schools. In 1889 the curriculum consisted of the following classes:

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<sup>1</sup> “Convent of the Holy Angels,” The Casket (17 July, 1890), p. 2.

### Common School Course (Grades I-VIII)

Oral Lessons on Health	Geography Grades III-VIII
Oral Lessons on Temperance	History Grades V-VIII
Oral Lessons on Moral / Patriotic Duties	Arithmetic Grades I-VIII
Oral Lessons on Nature	Algebra Grades VIII
Singing (theory and by rote)	Geometry Grades VIII
Reading Grades I-VIII	Writing Grades I-VIII
Spelling Grades II-VIII	Drawing Grades I-VIII
Language Grades I-VI	Bookkeeping Grades VIII
Grammar Grades VII-VIII	Latin Grades VIII
Composition Grades VII-VIII	

### High School Courses (Grades IX - XI )<sup>2</sup>

English Language	Physics
English Literature	Botany
Geography	Chemistry (Inorganic and agriculture)
History	Physiology
Arithmetic	Geology
Geometry	Latin
Algebra	Greek
Practical Mathematics	French
Drawing	German (was added in 1890-91)
Book-keeping	

The annals of Holy Angels do not reveal a great deal about the educational program offered at the school. However in 1883, students at the Congregation of Notre Dame's convent in Arichat received instruction in "French, English, Writing, Arithmetic, Bookkeeping, Geometry, Geography, Use of Globes, Ancient and Modern History, Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, Vocal and Instrumental Music, (Landscape) Drawing ... Painting and Drawing, Rhetoric, Needlework, Botany and Conchology."<sup>3</sup> It would seem

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<sup>2</sup> Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia for the year ended 31 July 1889.

<sup>3</sup> Ormond, p. 18. A description of the courses offered by the Arichat convent is also provided in "Young Ladies Academy, Arichat" *Aurora* (28 November 1883), Vol 4, no 101, p. 2.

likely that the sisters at Holy Angels would have followed a similar program of studies. However, in 1889 an advertisement for Holy Angels indicated that “the usual course of studies embraces all the branches of a thorough English education. French taught by a French lady; fancy work and plain sewing. The special branches, such as music, singing, drawing, painting, etc are carefully and successfully taught.”<sup>4</sup> By comparing these descriptions with the provincial curriculum for 1889, it can be seen that the sisters at Arichat (and probably Holy Angels) were offering most of the required classes, although algebra, practical math, physics, physiology, geology, Latin and Greek were missing. It is interesting to note that the classes not being offered were of a more scientific nature and that the sisters did offer additional classes in the more “ornamental branches,” and at Holy Angels it would appear as if they were emphasizing them. It must be remembered, however, that Holy Angels did not become a public school until 1892 and so was not obligated to follow the provincial curriculum until then.

A 1904 advertisement in the Cape Breton Illustrated provides the first comprehensive description of the curriculum at Holy Angels. The course of study consisted of three departments: English, Music and Art. The English department was subdivided into three courses: Elementary, Intermediate, and Academic. Each of these courses was then sub-divided again into grades. According to the advertisement, “the elementary and intermediate courses cover the ground required in preparation for high school entrance. The Academic Course extends over a period of four years, and on its

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<sup>4</sup> Advertisement 1889, Holy Angels Convent

successful completion a diploma will be awarded by the Institution.”<sup>5</sup> The Academic course comprised the following classes:

English (Grammar, Composition, Rhetoric, History of English Language, Literature, according to prescribed authors.)  
French (Grammar, Composition as in Arnold’s Latin Prose)  
Authors (Caesar, Cicero, Virgil)  
Mathematics (Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Practical Mathematics, Trigonometry)  
Science (Botany, Chemistry, Physics and Astronomy)  
History (Canadian, British, Universal)  
Bookkeeping

In addition, constructive and free hand drawing, needlework, calisthenics and vocal music formed part of the regular curriculum, while typewriting, stenography, physical culture and elocution were considered extras. Daily classes in Christian Doctrine and Bible History were also available for Catholic Students.<sup>6</sup> By 1907, The Casket reported that Holy Angels offered two courses: classical and commercial. “Young ladies wishing to prepare themselves for the position of teachers or stenographers,” it continued, “may here combine the accomplishments with a thorough English and Business Course, as special advantages are afforded for the study of Modern Languages, Art and Music. Well-equipped Gymnasium, out-door exercise, tennis, basketball, etc.”<sup>7</sup>

Although the sisters did not comment much on the classes they were teaching, they do discuss the structure of the school. In 1892, the convent consisted of three “classes” which roughly corresponded to senior high, junior high and elementary schools.

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<sup>5</sup> “Holy Angels Academy for Young Ladies” Cape Breton Illustrated No 1 (Christmas 1904), p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> “Holy Angels Academy for Young Ladies” Cape Breton Illustrated No 1 (Christmas 1904), p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> “Convent of the Holy Angels, Sydney NS” Casket (25 July, 1907), p. 5.

The first class of twenty girls were roughly fifteen years and up, the second class of thirty girls were probably ten and up, while the third class of approximately fifty girls were younger than ten.<sup>8</sup> By 1899, the school had increased to four departments with the first department consisting of Grades 9 and 10, the second department being grades 6, 7 and 8, the third department being grades 4 and 5 and the fourth consisting of grades 1, 2 and 3.

The annals mention that a library was installed in the school in June 1893 and that on many occasions the sisters were given gifts that would help in the instruction of the classes. These gifts included an historical map of the world, several natural history maps, an encyclopedia set and mineral specimens.<sup>9</sup> The annals also noted that the public examiners in 1900 were “delighted to see the students perform by themselves the laboratory experiments in Chemistry.”<sup>10</sup> And with regards to the science classes at the school, the inspector of schools for Cape Breton wrote in 1904 that, “... provision has been made for a Crowell Cabinet of Physical apparatus for the High School department of the Convent of the Holy Angels which has under excellent management ever since its establishment, been doing work of recognized merit.”<sup>11</sup>

Because the sisters made so few references to education in the convent annals, it is significant that a composition book from 1889 has survived.<sup>12</sup> The book, originally

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<sup>8</sup> Whalen, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 17, 63, 69, 104.

<sup>10</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> Report of Mr J.T. McNeil B.A. Inspector District No 7 Richmond and Cape Breton for the year ending March 31, 1904. p. 112.

<sup>12</sup> “Compositions” Holy Angels Convent. This composition book from 1889 originally belonged to Mary MacDonald of Sydney. It was donated to Holy Angels Convent in 1985 by her daughter, Mary Ellen Judson. Mary MacDonald attended Holy Angels and would have been fifteen years old when this composition book was written. She taught throughout Cape Breton before marrying Lawrence Kehoe. She died in 1924

belonging to Mary MacDonald of Sydney, contains instructions for the correct salutation and closing of a letter; the proper form of a letter as well as sample letters of application, introduction, congratulation, condolence and recommendation. The letter of application is particularly interesting for in it the students are applying for a teaching position in a Halifax public school, suggesting that the sisters may have encouraged the students to consider a career in teaching.

There are also thirteen compositions or essays on a variety of topics. Several of these are on religious topics, such as “The Blessed Virgin,” “Duties Towards God” and “Benediction.” Others are of a more general nature and include “Advantages of Good Education” and “Duties to our School Companions.” However, many of these entries have religious content even though the title does not suggest it. This is the case with “The Month of May.” In it, Mary writes about the first month of summer and how wonderful it is to see the green leaves, flowers and the birds singing. She also mentions that “May is my favourite month. The reason I prefer it to the rest of the months is because it is the month of Mary, consecrated to the honour of the Blessed Virgin.” She continues: “During May we celebrate the feast of the ‘Finding of the Holy Cross’ and also, the ‘Ascension’ that is when our Divine Lord ascended into Heaven.”<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting entry in this composition book was a poem of approximately seven pages entitled “The Angels Story.” It tells of a small boy who dies at Christmas and is taken to Heaven by an angel. On the journey, the angel tells him a story about a small, sickly orphan boy who had looked longingly at the boy’s large home and lush grounds. Although the servants had told the orphan to go away, the boy had

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<sup>13</sup> “Compositions” Holy Angels Convent.

given him some roses and treated him kindly. Upon reaching heaven, the angel reveals that it was he who had been the little orphan boy. This composition is revealing for it illustrates an awareness of wealth and poverty on behalf of the author. The poem also provides a glimpse of her views on heaven, death and the innocence of children and likely reflects the views of the Congregation of Notre Dame as well.

The survival of this composition book allows for a closer examination of the content of the classes at Holy Angels than would be possible from other sources. The book itself is a small, cloth bound book and the contents were written in clear cursive handwriting. There is no indication of scratched-out mistakes or of teacher's corrections, suggesting that the students may have written earlier or later drafts that were graded by the sisters. It is unclear whether the students chose the composition topics themselves or whether a topic was assigned by the sisters. The essays are not dated, but the sample letters are all dated April 30, 1889 indicating perhaps that the instruction in letter writing was a single component of a larger writing class.

The Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame at Holy Angels placed a special emphasis on music, beginning with the purchase of two pianos on January 12, 1886 just days after the school opened. The following year, the sisters decided that two pianos were "insufficient for the number of musicians," and bought a third piano for \$428.00.<sup>14</sup> Before the start of classes in August 1887, the second teacher of music, Sister St. Marie of the Rosary, arrived in Sydney from Montreal.<sup>15</sup>

Students at Holy Angels were able to receive instruction in both vocal and instrumental music. By September 1897, lessons in piano, violin, mandolin and guitar

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<sup>14</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 12.

were available.<sup>16</sup> According to an article in The Casket that year, “the instrumental music was in the opinion of competent judges the best that could be furnished by any institution in eastern Nova Scotia - three pianos, an organ, three violins, mandolins and banjos all handled with exquisite skill furnished music that might please the most fastidious.”<sup>17</sup> An advertisement for Holy Angels, in 1904, described the music program as follows:

the Practical Course is divided into seven grades, but when pupils wish to present themselves before a Board of Examiners at the various local centres, they are classified as Primary, Junior and Senior Candidates. The Theoretical Course follows the above system of grading. Great importance is attached to Theory from the very beginning. In fact, advanced work such as four part harmony and composition is being done by some of the students.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the Sisters at Holy Angels were capable of teaching the Tonic Sol Fa method of music instruction. Although this method of music instruction was quite popular throughout Quebec and the Maritimes,<sup>19</sup> it appears the skills of the sisters may have been unique in the Sydney area. In March 1893 a professor of this method, Mr Anderson,<sup>20</sup> arrived in Sydney and “was quite astonished and disappointed and complained to his

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<sup>16</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent.

<sup>17</sup> “Closing Exercises of the Convent of the Holy Angels” Casket (8 July, 1897), p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> “Holy Angels Academy for Young Ladies” Cape Breton Illustrated No 1 (Christmas 1904), p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> J. Paul Green and Nancy F. Vogan, Music Education in Canada A Historical Account (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 8-12, 28-32.

<sup>20</sup> Reverend James Anderson was a Presbyterian minister who was appointed by the Nova Scotia government to provide Tonic Sol Fa instruction to schools in various areas of the province in 1891. He traveled throughout the province for several years before moving to Ontario in 1894.

friends in the village that all the communities of Nova Scotia had accepted his services as teacher of the Tonic Sol Fa, except that of Sydney.”<sup>21</sup>

Two years later in December 1895, the sisters mention that several of the students were preparing for a vocal musical review of the Tonic Sol Fa method, under the direction of Sister St. Joseph Calazance. Apparently, Rev. James Quinan was so pleased with their progress that he promised a special prize for that branch of musical instruction.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the obvious use of the method by the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame in Sydney, the report of the Inspector of Schools for Richmond and Cape Breton for the same year said

...it would be very desirable that some means could be found of training more of our teachers in the Tonic-Sol-Fa system of music with a view to its introduction into more of our schools. Where this admirable system is in use, notably in the departments of the North Sydney schools conducted by the Sisters of Charity, where it has been in vogue for some years, and in the auxiliary departments of Sydney academy where it has been introduced as a result of Rev. Mr. Anderson's visit and instructions last year, the results obtained are marvelous. Children of the tenderest years grasp it with so much ease! ...<sup>23</sup>

It is difficult to determine why the inspector would not have know that the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame were teaching this method at Holy Angels, for it was a public school at the time and did receive visits from the school inspectors.

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<sup>21</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 42, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> Report of Mr J.T. McNeil B.A. Inspector District No 7 Richmond and Cape Breton for the year ending July 31, 1895 pg 90.

The musical skills and talents of the students were demonstrated at the numerous concerts held at Holy Angels, including one on December 22, 1886: “We had a little dramatic and musical session before the departure of the students for the Christmas holidays.”<sup>24</sup> After another concert a few years later the sisters wrote, “All say it was the best one we’ve had so far. After each number, nothing but encores.”<sup>25</sup> The students also sang regularly at Mass in the convent chapel, “the pupils sang like angels. Their little French hymn gave pleasure to all.”<sup>26</sup> Recognition of this musical talent was given during the distribution of prizes at the end of the school year, as prizes were given to students who excelled in both vocal and instrumental music.<sup>27</sup>

Using the ledger of boarding students from Holy Angels and the convent annals, it is possible to determine the number of boarding students enrolled in music. Table 14 shows the number of boarding students who were enrolled in music at Holy Angels from 1886 to 1901. In the first year, eight of nine boarding students or 89% were enrolled in music lessons while there were 78% and 69% in the next two years. However, the number dropped significantly in 1888-89 to 38% (only 8 of 21), corresponding to a small but inexplicable drop in the total enrollment at the school. After this, the number began to rise and even reached 100% in 1891-92. The numbers then leveled off for the remaining years, with an average of 69.5%. For the years 1903 to 1910 (Table 15), the total number of students enrolled in music lessons is also available. These numbers ranged from a low of twenty-eight in 1904-05 to a high of eighty-seven in 1909-1910. Unfortunately, the

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<sup>24</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 10,11.

<sup>25</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> The Casket (17 July, 1890), p.2.

total enrollment at the school is unavailable for these years, making it impossible to determine the percentage of the student body that took music lessons.

Another branch of instruction at Holy Angels was art. The advertisement in The Cape Breton Illustrated in 1904 described the art department as offering:

...a full course of instruction in Decorative Art, Drawing and Painting. The Studio is large, airy and well lighted, and is abundantly supplied, with studies, casts, models and standard works on art. The course beginning with the study of form and proportion extends through a series of subjects, namely, crayon and charcoal drawing, pastel, watercolors, oil painting, outdoor sketching and painting on china. Art embroidery, lace making and the latest styles of fancy needlework are taught.<sup>28</sup>

Despite this glowing and detailed description, the sisters only made a few references to the art department or the artistic talents of the students. In July 1889, Holy Angels had their first exhibition of works, which lasted three days. The sisters wrote that a large number of ladies of the town came to see the work of the pupils and congratulated them on their success; in June 1906, another exhibition took place in which fancy work and art pieces were displayed.<sup>29</sup> Despite the limited number of references to art in the convent annals, the department must have been successful for an article describing the closing exercises of the Convent of the Holy Angels in June 1908 devoted considerable space to describing the art studio and ornamental works of the students at the school:

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<sup>28</sup> "Holy Angels Academy for Young Ladies" Cape Breton Illustrated No 1 (Christmas 1904), p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> "Art Exhibition at Convent" The Sydney Record (29 June, 1906), p. 8.

previous to the rendering of the evening's program, many of the guests visited the Art Studios where the work of the students was on exhibition. In the china painting studio, the work of Mrs (Dr) Cunningham, Mrs Wilfred Clark, Mrs (Judge) McKenzie (North Sydney), Mrs C. Lorway and Miss O'Handley was particularly noted, but in the other studio the array of oil paintings, water colors, charcoal and crayon studios, pyrography, embroidery, point lace, and seemingly every other kind of needlework was too beautiful and bewildering for anything but a general notice.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, it would appear that many of the art students at Holy Angels were married women from the town. This is consistent with a notice in the Sydney Record that said "Lessons in French, plain sewing, cutting and fitting will begin at the same time ... Ladies wishing to take private lessons in painting, plain sewing, fancy work, cutting and fitting will apply to the studio for particulars."<sup>31</sup>

The total number of students taking art from 1903 to 1910 can be seen in Table 16. In 1903-04 there were only eight students but the number doubled the following year to sixteen and then increased dramatically in 1908-09 to 59. In 1909-1910 however the number dropped to thirty. Total enrollment statistics are not available for that year and so it is impossible to determine whether this loss in art students was the result of a broader enrollment decrease.

The sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame also felt that they were responsible for the proper upbringing of the girls in their care. At Mount St. Bernard, for instance, the sisters believed it was their duty to "encourage the students in habits of order, simplicity, economy, conscientiousness, and Christian devotedness. Such characteristics would, they

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<sup>30</sup> "Brilliant Closing - Convent of the Holy Angels" Casket (2 July, 1908)

<sup>31</sup> "The Convent Schools" The Sydney Record (22 August, 1904), p. 1.

believed, make and mark the true woman”.<sup>32</sup> In 1906, the Sisters at Holy Angels wrote that they must, “act on the spirit and hearts of the children who will come to this house, give them docility, the spirit of sacrifice and a great fidelity to grace.”<sup>33</sup> Many citizens of the town also realized that the training the sisters provided went beyond academic subjects, for “... the institutions under the directions of these good sisters are all ready so well and favourably known throughout the whole diocese that it is not necessary to refer to their many excellent fruits in the form of many young women who having received their education there have not only become bright ornaments to society themselves, but assisted much in elevating its tone.”<sup>34</sup>

It has also been suggested that religious communities opened boarding schools as a means of replenishing the order with new members,<sup>35</sup> but in her study of St Joseph’s Academy in Toronto, Elizabeth Smyth writes, “the evidence collected on the Toronto community of the Sisters of St. Joseph indicates either that this was not a primary goal of the boarding school, or that the Sisters were not very successful in achieving this objective. Less than 5% of the girls attending the school as boarders entered the community as novices.” At Holy Angels, the situation was similar as only eleven young

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<sup>32</sup> Cameron, p. 78.

<sup>33</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 128-129.

<sup>34</sup> “Convent of the Holy Angels” *The Casket* (17 July, 1890), p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil*; Barbara Cooper, “That We May Attain to the End We Propose to Ourselves ...” *The North American Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1932-1962*, (PhD diss., York University, 1989) in Jean Huntley-Maynard, “Catholic Post-secondary Education for Women in Quebec: Its Beginnings in 1908,” *Canadian Catholic Historical Association* 59 (1992), p. 271.

women entered the novitiate of the Congregation of Notre Dame during the period of this study.<sup>36</sup>

Despite this interest and emphasis on the proper upbringing of the young women, the Congregation of Notre Dame held a progressive and practical attitude towards education.<sup>37</sup> Although there is no evidence that the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame at Holy Angels designed or initiated new programs, the sisters did ensure that a variety of programs were offered at their schools, helping to provide young women with a choice about their future. Young women educated at Holy Angels left school with the training and skills necessary to pursue whatever path they so desired, regardless of whether they chose a career in teaching or business, marriage or life in a religious community. The Congregation of Notre Dame was aware of the opportunities available to young women and the educational programs offered reflected this. This progressive attitude can also be seen in the number of students who obtained provincial diplomas. The first mention of Holy Angels students qualifying for provincial diplomas occurred in 1889: “although now only four years in operation, the efficiency of the teaching staff is proved by the fact that within that period, the Institution has sent forth a half score of its pupils graded to preside as teachers in the public schools of the County.”<sup>38</sup> This success was also acknowledged in a letter to the editor of the Sydney Record the following year:

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<sup>36</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals. These young women were: Alexandra McNeil, Cassie Gillis, Katie O’Connell, Mary Laffin, Minnie Joyce, Rose Slattery, Agnes Young, Millie Tobin, Mary Campbell, Miriam O’Toole, Alice O’Connell.

<sup>37</sup> For an examination of the progressive movement within Atlantic Canada see: E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 155–229.

<sup>38</sup> Advertisement 1889, Holy Angels Convent.

Its pupils year after year are becoming more and more prominent by their success at the annual examinations for teaching diplomas. This year no less than six have secured grades in the following order of merit: - one took grade B with a good average, three grade C, and two grade D. The number of pupils educated at this young institution now holding licenses to teach in the public schools of this Province is twenty-two, all secured during the last three years. This is a very fair show, and, if we take into consideration the limited number of pupils attending the classes - at most not more than a hundred - speaks volumes for the ability of the teachers and the soundness of their method, as it does also for the cleverness and application of the pupils.<sup>39</sup>

In 1897, the same opinion was echoed in an article written in the *Casket*, "Sydney Convent is not a very pretentious institution, but the large percentage of Provincial Scholarships taken yearly by its pupils shows that thorough work is being done within its walls."<sup>40</sup>

The number of Holy Angels students who were successful in obtaining provincial diplomas from 1887 to 1909 can be seen in Table 17. Out of a total of 120, the majority of the students, 102 or 85.0%, obtained either a Grade C or D, while 16 students (13.3%) were granted Grade B and only 2 (1.7%) granted Grade A. A loose sheet of paper inserted into the Holy Angels Convent Annals mentions that from 1899 to 1903 only Grades B, C, and D were written at Holy Angels and that it was not until several years later that Grade A was taught at the school. This helps to explain why so few students attained this level. According to the convent annals, a Miss Cusack was the first Holy Angels student, in July 1905, to be granted a Grade A license.<sup>41</sup> However, regardless of the grade obtained, 120 provincial teaching diplomas were granted to Holy Angels

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<sup>39</sup> "Letter to Editor" *The Sydney Record* (20 October, 1890).

<sup>40</sup> "Closing Exercises of the Convent of the Holy Angels," *The Casket* (8 July, 1897), p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Holy Angels Convent Annals, p. 123.

students. Had the Congregation of Notre Dame been offering a more traditional form of education, it seems unlikely that this many students would have been successful.

The work of the Congregation of Notre Dame in achieving post-secondary education for women in Quebec is further evidence of the progressive attitude they held. Prior to 1908, Catholic girls in Quebec who wished to continue their studies at the post secondary level had two options: attending McGill University (non-sectarian but viewed as Protestant) or going to another province, the United States or France. According to Jean Huntley-Maynard, “these options were limited to girls from families with means and a progressive attitude towards university education for females.”<sup>42</sup> By the late 1880s, however, two of the boarding schools run by the Congregation of Notre Dame (Villa Maria and Mont Ste Marie) had become “the seedbeds of women’s collegiate education and important centres of middle- and upper-class social feminism.”<sup>43</sup> People looked to the Congregation of Notre Dame to support the cause of higher education for women and to plead its case with the Archbishop.

Although many members of the order were sympathetic to feminist concerns about the lack of higher education for women, they were initially silent on the issue. In 1904 the Congregation of Notre Dame did seek affiliation with Laval University but was told that the “time was not ripe to have young women pursue higher studies.”<sup>44</sup> In 1906, however, both the Congregation of Notre Dame and the Archbishop reacted with alarm upon hearing that a non-denominational school was planned for young women of the area. The sisters quickly presented plans for a dual French and English institution and for

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<sup>42</sup> Huntley-Maynard, p. 37-48.

<sup>43</sup> Danylewycz, p. 123. in Huntley-Maynard, p. 43.

<sup>44</sup> Huntley-Maynard, p. 45.

a four year baccalaureate program modeled on that offered in the male classical colleges. Both the French and English speaking institutions had as their aim, “the training of students who in the future sphere will be distinguished for scholarship and womanly culture and emphatically for firm and uncompromising catholicity combined with the attractive grace of virtue.”<sup>45</sup> In September 1908, the Rector of Laval University informed the Congregation of Notre Dame that both institutions had been affiliated with the Montreal campus of Laval University.

A comparison of the educational program offered by the Congregation of Notre Dame in Sydney with that of other religious orders across Canada will help to put this discussion of female education in a wider context. Mary Paula Penney’s dissertation “A Study of the Contributions of Three Religious Congregations to the Growth of Education in the Province of Newfoundland” examines the work of the Sisters of the Presentation and the Sisters of Mercy. Both of these Catholic religious orders came to Newfoundland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had a profound impact upon education within that province. The Sisters of the Presentation arrived in 1833. Their educational system was two-fold: it instructed students in the science of the earth and knowledge of heaven. Besides religion, their curriculum originally stressed the practical needs of life, such as reading, writing, needlework, spinning, knitting and plain cooking.<sup>46</sup> By 1860 however, this basic industrial program had changed considerably to meet the needs of the people they served and included classes in geography, English grammar, history, maps and the use of globes. The Sisters of Mercy arrived in 1842 and, in their schools, great attention was paid to

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<sup>45</sup> Huntley-Maynard, p. 47.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Paula Penney, “A Study of the Contributions of Three Religious Congregations to the Growth of Education in the Province of Newfoundland,” PhD diss. Boston College 1980. p. 115.

character development, with religion permeating all aspects of the curriculum. The Sisters established industrial schools to prepare girls to earn a livelihood and opened “pension schools” to accommodate girls from the middle class. By 1861 the curriculum at their schools resembled that of the Presentation Sisters.

Religious instruction and moral training were the main objectives of the curriculum in the schools of these religious congregations. According to Penney, “in the early schools of the sisters, the majority of students were prepared for non-professional careers and for their particular role as mothers of families ... consequently, commercial training formed an integral part of the curriculum of the schools ... at a considerably young age, students from these schools entered the non-professional and business life of the community.”<sup>47</sup> The Newfoundland religious orders also prepared students for careers in teaching, and the Sisters of the Presentation trained female teachers (who were generally sent to localities outside St. John’s where no religious were available) free of charge. At Holy Angels the situation was similar, for the Congregation of Notre Dame encouraged the students to further their education and explore careers in teaching and commerce.

The Sisters of St. Joseph<sup>48</sup> were another Catholic religious order involved in educating young women. At St. Joseph’s Academy in Toronto, they initially offered instruction in “every branch suitable to the complete Education of Young Ladies, with

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<sup>47</sup> Penney, p. 213.

<sup>48</sup> Within the Sisters of St. Joseph, the duties of temporal and spiritual direction were individually assigned to officers of each new house. Each house was to be headed by the Bishop of the diocese and to have a spiritual father, appointed by the Bishop. Thus, each new foundation was independently administered. For a study of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet see: Carol K. Coburn and Martha Smith, *Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836 – 1920*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

strictest attention to their moral and polite deportment.”<sup>49</sup> The curriculum was generated and regulated by the order and included classes in,

English, French and Italian Languages, Reading, Writing, Grammar, Geography, History, Intellectual and Practical Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Book-keeping, Elementary Chemistry and Botany, Natural Philosophy, Logical Analysis, Astronomy and Use of Globes, Rhetoric, Vocal and Instrumental Music, Drawing, Painting, Plain and Ornamental Needle-work, Wax Fruit and Flowers, &c (sic).<sup>50</sup>

Training in music and fine arts was not considered part of the core curriculum at the school but was available for an additional fee. The talents of the students were showcased at public performances and examinations, similar to those held at Holy Angels. By the end of the nineteenth century, the academy offered students a choice of three programs: a collegiate course, an academic course and a commercial course. Completion of these courses led to external certification, which provided credentials for employment and allowed young women the opportunity to seek “a lifestyle economically independent of family or religious life.”<sup>51</sup> Referring to the commercial course, Elizabeth Smyth writes, “the fact that this program was offered indicates that the academy realized the necessity to provide some of its pupils with training enabling them to compete for the opportunities

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<sup>49</sup> Prospectus, (1870?). Box 8. ASSJ. Quoted by Elizabeth Smyth, ““A Noble Proof of Excellence”: The Culture and Curriculum of a Nineteenth-Century Ontario Convent Academy,” in Gender and Education in Ontario, eds. Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1991), p. 272. See also: Elizabeth Smyth, ““Developing the powers of the youthful mind”: The Evolution of Education for Young Women at St. Joseph’s Academy, Toronto, 1854-1911,” Canadian Catholic Historical Association Historical Studies 60 (1993-1994), p. 103-125.

<sup>50</sup> Smyth, ““A Noble Proof of Excellence”: The Culture and Curriculum of a Nineteenth-Century Ontario Convent Academy,” p. 272.

<sup>51</sup> Smyth, ““A Noble Proof of Excellence”: The Culture and Curriculum of a Nineteenth-Century Ontario Convent Academy,” p. 284.

available to women in the growing commercial sector.”<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to note that a commercial course was also available at Holy Angels, suggesting that the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame were also aware of the employment opportunities available to young women.

In comparing the educational programs of these religious orders with that of the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame at Holy Angels, similarities can be seen. In all of the schools, an emphasis was placed on the moral and spiritual development of the student. Religious references permeated each of the classes and separate instruction in Christian Doctrine was often available. As well, the curriculum at each school evolved over time to meet the needs of the community it served. Originally, these religious orders provided instruction of a practical nature, focusing on subjects and skills that would help women in their role as wives and mothers. Gradually however, the curriculum changed to incorporate more academic and classical subjects as women began preparing for careers outside of the home.

Another institution offering educational opportunities to young women was the Mount Allison Ladies Academy which opened in 1854 in Sackville, New Brunswick. Because of the “scale of the female branch of the Sackville Academy ... and the absence of any comparable denominational institution” it was a “major school for girls in the region.”<sup>53</sup> John Reid writes that, “the education offered to female students at the academy was characterized by a lesser concentration on classical subjects and the omission of subjects pertaining to careers and social roles considered inappropriate for women. Yet it

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<sup>52</sup> Smyth, ““A Noble Proof of Excellence”: The Culture and Curriculum of a Nineteenth-Century Ontario Convent Academy,” p. 281.

<sup>53</sup> John G. Reid, “The Education of Women at Mount Allison, 1854-1914,” *Acadiensis* Vol 12 no 2 (Spring 1983), p. 8-9; See also: John G. Reid, Mount Allison University: A History, to 1963 Vol I: 1843-1914, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

was equally clear that the courses of study were not exclusively designed to cultivate good taste and the accomplishments of the drawing room.”<sup>54</sup> This is comparable to the curriculum offered at Holy Angels which combined academic and classical subjects with training in the “ornamental branches” such as needlework (both plain and fancy), music, drawing and painting. It was because they offered such broad curriculums that Holy Angels and Mount Allison were not considered finishing schools, rather they were schools that promoted women’s education.

In May 1872, Mount Allison College determined that women would be eligible to receive college degrees under the same terms and conditions imposed upon the male students.<sup>55</sup> Concern arose at the Ladies Academy as to whether there would be a decrease in enrollment as a result of this decision or if the school would become known as a finishing school. The Academy decided, however, that if the high standards of the literary departments could be matched by high artistic standards in the other departments, then the entire institution would be strengthened. In the fall of 1887, a four year diploma course was introduced, providing “a coherent and graduated programme of art study” and the music department was strengthened by the requirement that all students study musical history and theory. A “teacher’s diploma” and an “artists’ diploma” were granted from the conservatory. To cater to women interested in a professional career, the school began offering short-hand, typing and domestic science. According to Reid, “through new curriculum developments, therefore, the ladies college had been equipped to serve new demands and to offer new career opportunities considered appropriate for women

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<sup>54</sup> Reid, “The Education of Women at Mount Allison, 1854-1914,” p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> Reid, “The Education of Women at Mount Allison, 1854-1914,” p. 15.

students.”<sup>56</sup> It would appear that this was a tool employed by both Mount Allison and Holy Angels to ensure future enrollment and continuing success.

Convent schools were not the only option available for young women interested in obtaining an education. Private schools for women proliferated throughout the country in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These schools developed as a result of the increasing number of families wanting to educate their daughters and the increasing number of women and “gentlewomen” willing or eager to support themselves by teaching. Instruction generally focused on the “ornamental branches” and was intended to stress the moral education and polite deportment of the students, but some private schools expanded their curriculum to include more academic subjects. S.K.P. Fales school in Halifax offered classes in “not only the conventional subjects taught to women in the best schools of the day but also mythology, natural history, natural and intellectual philosophy, botany, astronomy, chemistry, rhetoric, logic, prose, and poetry.”<sup>57</sup> Often financially insecure, most of these initiatives were short-lived; advertisements in Upper Canadian Newspapers suggest that many did not last for more than two years.<sup>58</sup> In Nova Scotia, Gwendolyn Davies writes, “often seeming to be the only way that a genteel widow or daughter could support herself, the schools were tentative operations, usually suggesting in their very advertisements their financial precariousness.”<sup>59</sup> In Sydney, the following private lessons were advertised in The Daily Record:

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<sup>56</sup> Reid, “The Education of Women at Mount Allison, 1854-1914,” p.31.

<sup>57</sup> Gwendolyn Davies, “Private Education for Women in Early Nova Scotia: 1784-1894” Atlantis Vol 20 no 1 (Autumn 1995), p. 14.

<sup>58</sup> Jane Errington, “Ladies and Schoolmistresses: Educating Women in Early Nineteenth-Century Upper Canada,” Historical Studies in Education Vol 6 no 1 (Spring 1994), p. 79.

<sup>59</sup> Davies, p. 12.

Mr Frederic Liscombe, Professor of Voice Culture, Piano, Organ and Mandolin. At Charlotte and Amelia Strs. Sydney

A lady graduate from S. Kensington School of Arts and National Gallery, London, wishes to form a class in oil and watercolor painting. Apply Studio, Young Women's Reading Room, South Charlotte St.

Alberta V Fowler, Teacher of Elocution and Physical Culture; also Public Reader. At Hotel Gordon, Esplanade.<sup>60</sup>

Attendance at public schools provided another alternative for young women seeking to obtain an education. By the mid 1800s, public discussion in Canada had begun to focus on the perfect mix of the useful, ornamental and intellectual strands within female education, and educational opportunities expanded as parents began to see more value in educating their daughters. However, many families could not afford the fees charged by private girls' schools, so parents turned to education departments and provincial school systems for assistance. In Nova Scotia, a system of free schools was inaugurated in 1864.<sup>61</sup> In Sydney, the Central School and the Sydney Academy provided public school education for the young women who did not attend Holy Angels. Secondary classes at the Academy were intended to prepare the young men of Sydney for careers as teachers but according to Carolyn Whalen, "it was felt by many that these students should be doing more than preparing to take teaching licenses. The Academy

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<sup>60</sup> The Daily Record (24 June, 1901), p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> C.B. Fergusson, The Inauguration of the Free School System in Nova Scotia, (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1964), p. 27. When Charles Tupper presented the bill to the Nova Scotia legislature he called for the establishment of a Council of Public Instruction, the separation of the duties of the Superintendent from that of the Principal of the Normal School, the creation of a board of commissioners to be appointed for each of the nineteen counties or districts in the province, and the paying of teachers' salaries by voluntary subscription or assessment, not by fees per pupil. The bill stopped short however, of compulsory assessment, which was introduced the following year.

worked at upgrading its courses so a leaving certificate from Grade 11 was deemed sufficient for acceptance into six or seven American and Canadian universities and a Grade 12 diploma was merited as the first year equivalent of university classes."<sup>62</sup> However, there is little discussion of young women attending Sydney Academy and no mention of the curriculum available to them. This suggests that either female students were allowed to enroll in the same program of studies as the male students or the classes open to them were considered secondary and were simply not mentioned.

By analyzing the curriculum offered by the Congregation of Notre Dame at Holy Angels a more complete history of the school is available. Although information about the program of studies at Holy Angels was rarely mentioned in the convent annals, descriptions of the classes offered can be found in newspaper advertisements. Initially the Congregation offered instruction in a variety of subjects including French, English, Writing, Arithmetic, Bookkeeping, Geometry, Geography, Use of Globes, Ancient and Modern History, Chemistry and Natural Philosophy but classes in the more "ornamental branches" seem to have been given special emphasis. The situation was similar at the schools run by the Sisters of the Presentation and the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland and at the Sisters of St. Joseph's Academy in Toronto. Importance was also placed on the moral and spiritual development of the students at each of these schools.

In order to meet the needs of the young women of Sydney the curriculum at Holy Angels continued to evolve over time. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Holy Angels was divided into three departments: Music, Art and English, and by 1907 it was offering classical and commercial programs. This progressive attitude towards education can also be seen in the large number of Holy Angels students who successfully passed the

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<sup>62</sup> Whalen, p. 7. See also MacKeen.

examination for provincial diplomas and in the Congregation's efforts to develop post-secondary educational opportunities for women in Quebec. Regardless of the educational program undertaken by the young women who attended Holy Angels, the skills and knowledge imparted by the Congregation of Notre Dame would have helped them choose whether they wanted to marry and have children, enter religious life or pursue a professional career.

## Conclusion

Holy Angels was a private girls' school run by the Congregation of Notre Dame in Sydney, Nova Scotia. It was one of the first schools for young women in the area and because of this, and the fact that it was run by a Roman Catholic religious order, it has had a fascinating and controversial history. Although the young women of the town were able to attend the Sydney Academy, the citizens of Sydney believed that the minds and talents of their daughters would be uplifted with the arrival of the Congregation. It was the intent of this study to examine the history of Holy Angels Convent and School between 1885 and 1911 and the educational opportunities it provided for the young women of Cape Breton County.

As a result of the rapid expansion the Congregation of Notre Dame was undergoing during the nineteenth century, the order opened schools throughout the country including several in eastern Nova Scotia. Before it made the decision to open Holy Angels however, the Congregation of Notre Dame considered the financial and community support shown towards the schools previously opened in the province and the social, economic and educational conditions in Sydney. Once the decision was made to open the new school, the Sisters turned their attention towards preparing the convent for the first students.

Who attended Holy Angels? The analysis of variables such as age, religion, fathers' occupation and hometown allowed this question to be answered. Not surprisingly, the majority of the students were Roman Catholic and from the town of Sydney or one of the surrounding mining towns. They were generally between the ages of ten and fourteen and most of the fathers were skilled artisans or farmers. Differences

could be seen from year to year however, and when comparing the day students with the boarding students.

It was not only the students who played a role in the history of Holy Angels however. The people, institutions and groups within Sydney, as well as the religious and political climate across Canada, played an important role in the school's development. Key episodes in the school's history were a direct result of the interaction with the school board and the citizens of Sydney, including the issue of receiving public money and the separate schools controversy. Although members of the Sacred Heart Parish and many others supported the school, it was not universal for an arson attempt was made on the convent a few years after the arrival of the Congregation and negative comments were directed at the school by the Protestant clergy during the separate schools controversy.

Regardless of their religion, however, the people of Sydney were interested in the educational programs offered at Holy Angels. While initially focusing on the more "ornamental branches," the school did offer classes in the more academic subjects including French, English, Writing, Arithmetic, Bookkeeping, Geometry, Geography, Use of Globes, Ancient and Modern History, Chemistry and Natural Philosophy. Importance was also placed on the moral and spiritual development of the students. The school was more than a finishing school, however, as the curriculum continued to evolve to include new classes and skills, allowing the young women the choice of entering religious life, pursuing a professional career or marrying and having a family.

More than a chronological listing of events, the thesis critically examines each episode in the school's history including significant administrative changes in 1892 when the school first began receiving public funding and in 1907 when it once again reverted to

being a private institution. By arranging the chapters thematically it was ensured that each of the topics was explored fully: the things the Congregation of Notre Dame considered before opening the school, the demographics of the student body, the relationship between the school and the wider community as well as the educational programs available at the school.

However, due to limitations with the available source material, it was not possible to fully link the history of this convent school with broader cultural and social issues such as the progressive movement, Rerum Novarum, and Catholic Social Action. Rather, this history of Holy Angels attempts to fill the gaps left by previous scholars in the educational and religious history of the town. Historians writing about Sydney and Cape Breton have traditionally focused on the Fortress of Louisbourg, the rise and fall of the coal and steel industries, labour unrest and immigration and emigration. While these studies are valuable and help to provide the context within which this study is set, more research was needed to form a more complete picture of the social history of the area. The subject of education has been addressed by E.T. MacKeen and D.C. Harvey who trace changes in education, focusing on the numerous schoolmasters and schools as well as educational legislation. These histories while useful, however, do not explore female educational opportunities. Undergraduate papers and histories written by local historical buffs are also useful but they generally lack critical analysis, as does the centennial history of Holy Angels published by the Congregation of Notre Dame in 1985.

This study provides necessary information on the development of female education in the area and expands upon the social history of Sydney. It will benefit not only those studying education or religious orders, but also researchers examining

women's lives and experiences in Atlantic Canada. However as with any study, there remain unanswered questions and new avenues for research. The history of Holy Angels needs to be continued from 1911 to the present. Although Holy Angels has been a public institution since 1951, the convent and the sisters continue to play a role in its history and development. The story of their continued presence, in spite of dwindling numbers within the order, would make a valuable contribution to historical literature. A thorough history of the Sydney Academy would allow for comparison with the educational programs at Holy Angels, providing a more complete educational history of the city. Most of all what is called for are other histories of schools run by the Congregation of Notre Dame throughout the country. These studies would then allow the representative and unique characteristics of Holy Angels to stand out more clearly. Only through future research will we acquire a more complete understanding of the role played by the Congregation of Notre Dame in Sydney and in the lives of the young women who attended their schools.

Table 1  
Enrollment at Holy Angels

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Day Students	84	85	86	75	80	74	77	93	92	114				132	122	140
Boarding Students	9	23	26	21	20	15	12	17	20	21	18	24	13	18	26	20
Total	93	108	112	96	100	89	89	110	112	135				150	148	160

Notes: The total number of students for the year 1898-1899 and 1900-1901 were obtained from the Holy Angels Convent Annals p. 94 and p. 99. The number of day students was then found by subtracting the number of boarding students from the total enrollment. The total enrollment for the year 1899-1900 was obtained from the City of Sydney Annual Report for that year and the number of day students was determined by subtracting the boarding students from this total.

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; City of Sydney Annual Report; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 2  
Religious Background of Holy Angels Day Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Catholic	67	73	71	61	55	57	50	59	55	52						
Baptist							1			3						
Ch. of England	6	4	4	3	5	6	7	11	9	10						
Ch. of Scotland	1															
Can Presb.																
Unknown	10	8	11	11	20	11	19	23	24	49						
Total	84	85	86	75	80	74	77	93	88	114						

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 3  
Religious Background of Holy Angels Boarding Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Catholic	8	18	18	15	18	13	10	10	11	16	14	17	12	14	15	12
Baptist						1										
Ch of England															1	
Ch of Scotland																
Can Presb.	1															
Unknown		5	8	6	2	1	2	7	9	5	4	5	1	4	10	8
Total	9	23	26	21	20	15	12	17	20	21	18	24	13	18	26	20

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 4  
Religious Background of all Holy Angels students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Catholic	75	91	89	76	73	70	60	69	66	68	14*	17*	12*	14*	15*	12*
Baptist						1	1			3						
Ch of England	6	4	4	3	5	6	7	11	9	10						
Ch of Scotland	1														1	
Can. Pres	1															
Unknown	10	13	19	17	22	12	21	30	37	54	4*	6*	1*	4*	10*	8*
Total	93	108	112	96	100	89	89	110	112	135	18*	23*	13*	18*	26*	20*

\* data is only available for boarding students

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 5  
Origin/Location for Holy Angels Day Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Sydney	68	74	69	58	58	57	57	66	61	61						
North Sydney	5	1	1													
Glace Bay/Reserve Mines										1						
Louisbourg																
Lingan		1	1	1		1										
Shenacadie																
Bateston																
Cow Bay								2	2	1						
Mira																
Arichat																
Christmas Island																
Lorraine																
Grand Narrows			2	2	2	3			1	1						
D'Escousse																
Beaver Cove																
Bridgeport	1	1	1	2												
Meat Cove																
Pt Edward																
East Bay								1	1	1						

Port Morien																
Balls Creek						1				1						
Bras D'Or																
Groves Pt.																
Irish Cove																
Halifax, NS																
Lourdes, Antig Co																
Afton, NS																
Nfld																
NB																
PEI																
U.S.																
Unknown	10	8	12	12	20	12	20	24	23	48						
Total	84	85	86	75	80	74	77	93	88	114						

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 6  
Origin/Location of Holy Angels Boarding Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Sydney	2	3	2	3	6			5	2	4	3	5		3	2	5
North Sydney		1				1	1	1					1	1	2	
Glace Bay/Reserve Mines		3	3	4	3		2		3	4	2	2			1	2
Louisbourg			1			1				2	3	3	2	2	5	2
Lingan	6	8	7	5	6	5	1	1	2	4	1	1	2	1	1	5
Shenacadie												1	1	1		
Bateston		1	1													
Cow Bay	1	1					2							1		
Mira		1				1										
Arichat											1					
Christmas Island			2						2		1	1				
Lorraine		1	1													
Grand Narrows							2	2							1	1
D'Escousse			1	1	1											
Beaver Cove			1	1												
Bridgeport				1	2	2	1		1	2	1			1		
Meat Cove									1							
Pt Edward													1	1		1
East Bay						1			1			1	1	1	2	

Port Morien												1	1	1		1
Balls Creek																
Bras D'or													1			
Groves Pt.													2	2	1	
Irish Cove															1	
Halifax												3				
Lourdes, Antig. Co							1									
Afton, NS										1						
Nfld.		2	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	1			1	1	1	
NB										1	1	1				
PEI							1			1	1	1				
U.S.			3													
Unknown		2	1	4		2	2	4	5	1	3	4		2	9	6
Total	9	23	26	21	20	15	12	17	20	21	18	24	13	18	26	20

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 7  
Origin/Location of all Holy Angels Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Sydney	70	77	71	61	64	57	57	71	63	65	3*	5*		3*	2*	5*
North Sydney	5	2	1			1	1	1					1*	1*	2*	
Glace Bay/Reserve Mines		3	3	4	3		2		3	5	2*	2*			1*	2*
Louisbourg			1			1				2	3*	3*	2*	2*	5*	2*
Lingan	6	9	8	6	6	6	1	1	2	4	1*	1*	2*	1*	1*	5*
Shenacadie												1*	1*	1*		
Bateston		1	1													
Cow Bay		1					2	2	2	1				1*		
Mira		1				1										
Arichat											1*					
Christmas Island			2						2		1*	1*				
Lorraine		1	1													
Grand Narrows			2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1					1*	1*
D'Escousse			1	1	1											
Beaver Cove			1	1												
Bridgeport	1	1	1	3	2	2	1		1	2	1*			1*		
Meat Cove									1							
Pt Edward													1*	1*		1*
East Bay						1		1	2	1		1*	1*	1*	2*	

Port Morien												1*	1*	1*		1*
Balls Creek						1				1						
Bras D'Or													1*			
Groves Pt.													2*	2*	1*	
Irish Cove															1*	
Halifax												3*				
Lourdes, Antig. Co								1								
Afton, NS																
Nfld		2	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	1			1*	1*	1*	
NB										1	1*	1*				
PEI								1		1	1*	1*				
U.S.			3													
Unknown	10	10	13	16	20	14	22	28	28	50	3*	4*		2*	9*	6*
Total	93	108	112	96	100	89	89	110	112	135	18*	24*	13*	18*	26*	20*

\* data is only available for boarding students

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 8  
Occupation of Individual paying fees for Holy Angels Day Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Professional	13	14	12	9	8	10	9	12	11	9						
Clergy			1													
Indust/Comm Propr/Managers		1	1	3	2	2	2	3	2	3						
Merchants	1	1			1	2	3	6	7	7						
Commercial Travel/salesmen								2	2	1						
Skilled Artisans	26	27	26	21	20	20	19	15	19	16						
Sea Captain/ Pilots	6	5	6	6	7	4	3	3	3	3						
Farmer	2	2	1		1	1	1	2	2	3						
Non-manual worker	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	4						
Manual worker	18	13	14	12	10	10	10	14	11	11						
Unemployed	3	7	6	4	5	6	4	6	4	3						
Unknown	13	13	16	17	23	16	23	28	29	54						
Total:	84	85	86	75	80	74	77	93	92	114						

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals; John G Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison, 1854-1914" Acadiensis Vol XII, no 2 (Spring 1983), p. 25.

Table 9  
Occupation of Individual paying fees for Holy Angels Boarding Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Professional	1	1	1			1	1	1		2	2	2	4	4	4	2
Clergy		1	3	2	1			1	1		1			1		1
Industr/Comm Prop/Manager				1	2	1			1	2	1	4	1	2		1
Merchants	2	4	4	2	2	2	1	1		2	1	1		1	5	
Comm Travel/Salesman		1					1		2	2	1	1				1
Skilled Artisans	1	2	1		1			1		1	2	2			1	1
Sea Captain/ Pilots	1	3	4	4	5	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	4	1	1	
Farmer	3	5	3	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	3	2	
Non-Manual worker				1	1	1			2	1	1	1		1	2	2
Manual worker	1	1	2	1	2		1	1		2	1	1	1	1	1	2
Unemployed							2	2	2		1	1				
Unknown		5	8	6	2	3	2	7	8	6	4	6	1	4	10	10
Total:	9	23	26	21	20	15	12	17	20	21	18	24	13	18	26	20

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals; John G Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison, 1854-1914" Acadiensis Vol XII, no 2 (Spring 1983), p. 25.

Table 10  
Occupation of Individual paying fees for all Holy Angels Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Professional	14	15	13	9	8	11	10	13	11	11	2*	2*	4*	4*	4*	2*
Clergy		1	4	2	1			1	1		1*			1*		1*
Indust/Comm Propr/Managers		1	1	4	4	3	2	3	3	5	1*	4*	1*	2*		1*
Merchant	3	5	4	2	3	4	4	7	7	9	1*	1*		1*	5*	
Commercial Travel/Salesmen		1					1	2	4	3	1*	1*				1*
Skilled Artisans	27	29	27	21	21	20	19	16	19	17	2*	2*			1*	1*
Sea Captain/ Pilot	7	8	10	10	12	7	4	4	5	4	1*	1*	4*	1*	1*	
Farmer	5	7	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	2*	4*	2*	3*	2*	
Non- Manual worker	2	2	3	4	4	4	3	2	4	5	1*	1*		1*	2*	2*
Manual worker	19	14	16	13	12	10	11	15	11	13	1*	1*	1*	1*	1*	2*
Unemployed	3	7	6	4	5	6	6	8	6	3	1*	1*				
Unknown	13	18	24	23	25	19	25	35	37	60	4*	6*	1*	4*	10*	10*
Total:	93	108	112	96	100	89	89	110	112	135	18*	24*	13*	18*	26*	20*

\* data only available for boarding students

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals; John G Reid, "The Education of Women at Mount Allison, 1854-1914" Acadiensis Vol XII, no 2 (Spring 1983), p. 25.

Table 11  
Age Breakdown for Holy Angels Day Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Younger than 9	26	20	21	18	21	19	16	28	22	25						
10-14	37	42	37	38	31	36	29	35	32	26						
Older than 15	10	13	14	7	8	8	13	6	12	14						
Unknown	11	10	14	12	20	11	19	24	26	49						
Total	84	85	86	75	80	74	77	93	92	114						

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 12  
Age Breakdown for Holy Angels Boarding Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Younger than 9	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	1
10-14	3	5	6	4	4	3	3	1	1	9	6	7	7	6	2	3
Older than 15	5	11	11	11	14	11	7	8	8	6	6	8	4	8	12	8
Unknown		5	8	6	2	1	2	8	9	5	5	9	2	4	10	8
Total	9	23	26	21	20	15	12	17	20	21	18	24	13	18	26	20

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 13  
Age Breakdown for All Holy Angels Students

	Jan 1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Younger than 9	27	22	22	18	21	19	16	28	24	26	1*				2*	1*
10-14	40	47	43	42	35	39	32	36	33	35	6*	7*	7*	6*	2*	3*
Older than 15	15	24	25	18	22	19	20	14	20	20	6*	8*	4*	8*	12*	8*
Unknown	11	15	22	18	22	12	21	32	35	54	5*	9*	2*	4*	10*	8*
Total	93	108	112	96	100	89	89	110	112	135	18*	24*	13*	18*	26*	20*

\* data is only available for boarding students

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901; Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Ledger of Day Students Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 14  
Holy Angels Boarding Students Enrolled in Music

	1886	1886- 1887	1887- 1888	1888- 1889	1889- 1890	1890- 1891	1891- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1898- 1899	1899- 1900	1900- 1901
Total Number of Boarding Students	9	23	26	21	20	15	12	17	20	21	18	24	13	18	26	20
Boarding Students Enrolled in Music	8	18	18	8	9	10	12	10	17	19	14	15	9	10	19	10

Source: Ledger of Boarding Students 1886-1912 Holy Angels Convent; Holy Angels Convent Annals.

Table 15  
Holy Angels Students Enrolled in Music

	1903-1904	1904-1905	1905-1906	1906-1907	1907-1908	1908-1909	1909-1910
Number of Students Enrolled in Music	33	28	46	57	85	71	87

Source: Holy Angels Convent Annals; Table of Enrollment Statistics 1903-1910, Holy Angels Convent.

Table 16  
Holy Angels Students Enrolled in Art

	1903-1904	1904-1905	1905-1906	1906-1907	1907-1908	1908-1909	1909-1910
Students Enrolled in Art	8	16	21	19	53	59	30

Source: Holy Angels Convent Annals; Table of Enrollment Statistics 1903-1910, Holy Angels Convent.

Table 17  
 Number of Holy Angels Students Receiving Provincial Diplomas

	1887- 1892	1892- 1893	1893- 1894	1894- 1895	1895- 1896	1896- 1897	1897- 1898	1899- 1900	1900- 1901	1901- 1902	1902- 1903	1903- 1904	1904- 1905	1905- 1906	1906- 1907	1907- 1908	1908- 1909
Grade A													1 PartA		1		
Grade B	1	1		2					1			2	3			1	5
Grade C	12	1	3	2	4	1		1	6		2	2	1		5	5	4
Grade D	9	4	1	2	3	1	3	4	2	2	5	4	2		5	4	2
Total:	22	6	4	6	7	2	3	5	9	2	7	8	7		11	10	11

Source: Holy Angels Convent Annals

## Appendix A

Letter to Hon William McDonald  
Senator  
(From Father J. Quinan)

I have undertaken to erect in the Town of Sydney, a building intended for a Convent Boarding School for the County of Cape Breton.

The need of such an Institution is an acknowledged one. On several occasions during the last fifteen years I have been urged by persons from various parts of the county, well acquainted with the needs and wishes of the population, to start such an establishment for Eastern Cape Breton.

I have constantly declined to do so until I could see my way clear through certain difficulties by which I was hampered.

I see my way now; but the convent project has meantime grown somewhat on my hands, so that, altho' prepared to throw myself into it with all I possess of means, health and energy, I feel it, nevertheless, to be my duty to every precaution against debt, of which I have a terror for myself and which, if saddled to any great extent on the Institution, might cripple its prosperity for years.

His Lordship, the Bishop of the Diocese, in giving his approbation to the project thus kindly expresses himself: - "Your praiseworthy undertaking to provide the means of a suitable education for the young girls of your own and neighbouring missions, has my sincerest good wishes and most earnest prayers for its success. May every grace prosper you and every one who will have contributed towards so holy an object."

As the Institution therefore, is not to be merely a parochial one, but is intended for the young girls of the entire County, I venture to appeal to you in its behalf, and to solicit a donation, for which I shall remain forever grateful.

## Appendix B

Halifax, NS  
24<sup>th</sup> October 1892

M.Y.I. Macneil Esq A.B.  
Inspector of Schools  
Sydney CB

Dear Sir:

Your communication of the 19<sup>th</sup> inst. accompanied by a copy of the petition of the Roman Catholic congregation of Sydney, dated 15<sup>th</sup> September and addressed to the chairman of the School Board of Sydney town and also a copy of the resolution of the said School Board in reply, dated October 6<sup>th</sup> 1892, have been duly received. I fail to see that there is anything in the papers submitted that calls for action by the Council of Public Instruction.

Subsection 10, section 3 of the Act has never been interpreted by this department to mean that school's boards could not establish separate departments for the sexes without the permission of the Council, which in no instance has had occasion to interfere with the arrangements of any local school authorities in reference to such a question.

If the town of Sydney requires additional public school accommodations and the Board instead of building wish to make arrangements for renting or otherwise obtaining the use of the convent school rooms they are free to do so as long as in every respect the schools are considered subject to all the provisions of the school law.

The harmonious coordination and cooperation of the various departments will of course, be secured by the Board under the direction of the principal of their schools.

I am,  
Yours very truly  
A.H. MacKay

## Appendix C

Halifax, 11 April 1905.

Charles P Fullerton, Esq., The Mayor, Sydney, CB.

Dear Sir, - In reply to your inquiry of the 6<sup>th</sup> instant I beg to say that I should be glad to be of service to your County Academy, as also to your convent schools, providing at the same time, the laws, the principles of economical grading and the rights of the other academies from whose grants any increase you might obtain would be deducted, are all dully conserved.

The law requires schools in each school section to be graded whenever possible, - common schools as well as high schools. In populous communities such as Halifax, school trustees can allow two parallel series of grades to exist without prejudice to a complete system of grading.

But if by breaking the classes of a common school or an academy into two parallel sets of grades, the maximum class which one teacher can effectively manage is divided into two fractional classes, twice as many teachers have to be employed to give the same class drill to each class. This approximately doubles the cost, or halves the efficiency of the schools, diminishing in the same proportion the usefulness of both the local, municipal funds expended in their support.

Such a policy calls for a reduction instead of an increase of public money.

The County Academy grant has for a number of years been fixed at \$10,000 per annum, to be divided to each institution in proportion to the number of class "A" teachers of the days taught and the number of qualified high school students. Any increase of funds to your Academy by "counting in" pupils attending other, non-academic, schools would therefore be virtually deducted from the grants to the other academies; so that even were the principles of economical grading not ignored, it would cause all around a feeling of unfairness among other institutions to take funds from them by "counting in" pupils under non-academic teachers in the Sydney Academy. But should the principle of economical grading not be observed, I do not see how the proposal could be justified even should the grants to the academies be fixed as they were under the original law.

The separate high school classes, although injurious to your high school system to the extent that they cause the teaching of fractional classes in duplicate, have no doubt some advantage or they would not have developed. You enjoy this advantage; then why ask for the other advantage which this advantage prevents you from winning as the other academies do according to law?

In the case of the Antigonish County Academy to which you refer, the convent is near the College which functions as the County Academy; and the two are understood to work together as one institution for academy purposes. Small classes from the two institutions are combined under one teacher, the classes being taught separately as a rule only when they are practically large enough for one teacher. Should this course change at Antigonish so that the two institutions would not be practically one institution for academic purposes, the Convent students who pass the County Academy Entrance Examination, could not be fairly "counted" as in the County Academy. The convent

would then be merely a high school like a multitude of other high schools which draw the regular Provincial Aid for licensed teachers, but do not participate in the Academic grant.

If the two Convents to which you refer are so near your County Academy that they can co-operate as a single institution, their rooms being not too distant for the convenient transfer of classes; and if fractional classes in the various institutions are combined in one or the other of the buildings, then it would be possible, it appears to me, to consider the combined institution as the County Academy. Of course, the pupils thus "counted in" would have to pass the County Examination, and be taught mainly by teachers with an Academic License as required by law in all County Academies.

I shall be very glad to co-operate with you in advancing the efficiency and the funds of your County Academy on lines which all can see are substantially identical everywhere as the law requires.

In the \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_  
truly. (Sgd.) A.H. McKay  
Superintendent of Education

## Appendix D

Sydney, Seventh October, 1907

“To the Board of School Commissioners:

Gentlemen, - About three weeks ago after the beginning of the scholastic year, I learned from the public press that, at a meeting of the School Board, you had decided upon closing the department which I have taught for fifteen years, and that it was your intention to transfer me to a lower grade of work.

However acceptable that change might be to me personally, I felt that not only should I resent the lack of consideration shown myself in this unparalleled breach of courtesy, whether social or official, but that in justice to my forty high school pupils, and out of respect for the wishes of their parents, who at the beginning of the school year had entrusted them to my care, I should, on principle, refuse to comply with an order so arbitrary and ill-timed. I am still of the same opinion, and in this I am upheld by my pupils, and, it necessarily follows, by their parents, for not one of the number has accepted a transfer to Sydney Academy, although they were left perfectly free to choose for themselves.

I regret, exceedingly, that my long period of service as a teacher in the public schools of Sydney, should be brought to a close in a way so calculated to make my relations with the School Board anything but a pleasant memory. However, in justice to the past, it is only fair to add that personally I have received much kindness from school officials, and, if I except this last unfortunate incident, have been treated with a courtesy that never failed.

I have the honor to be, gentlemen, respectfully yours,  
Sister St Margaret

## Appendix E

### Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame Holy Angels 1885 – 1911

Sister St Domitilla	Sister St Berard
Sister St Helen of the Cross	Sister St Germaine
Sister St Mary Alexis	Sister St Raymond
Sister St Margaret of the Cross	
Sister St Mary Euphrosyne	
Sister St Mary Gertrude	
Sister St Marie of the Rosary	
Sister St Emilien	
Sister St Phillip of Bethsaida	
Sister St Frances Romaine	
Sister St John of Matha	
Sister St Leonard of Port Maurice	
Sister St Margaret of Bavaria	
Sister St Marie Clementine	
Sister St John of Britto	
Sister St Camillus de Lellis	
Sister St Joseph Calazance	
Sister St Mary of Good Council	
Sister St Maurice	
Sister St Etheltrude	
Sister St Genevieve	
Sister St Phillip Benito	
Sister St Martin of Tours	
Sister St Mary of the Ascension	
Sister St Mary of the Crucifix	
Sister St Roseline	
Sister St Casilda	
Sister St Raymona Pennafort	
Sister St Dympna	
Sister St Leonidas	
Sister St Mary Dolores	
Sister St Mary of the Temple	
Sister St Pamphile	
Sister St Mary Aloysius	
Sister St Donat	
Sister St Marcella	
Sister St Florentia	
Sister St Frances of Rome	
Sister St John of the Cenale	
Sister St Gaudence	

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**HOLY ANGELS CONVENT**

170 GEORGE ST.  
Sydney, Nova Scotia  
B1P 1J2

To Whom It May Concern:

I wish to certify that historical researcher, Amy Eileen Coleman, a graduate history student of St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, was given permission to access all the archival files of Holy Angels Convent and School for the purpose of her graduate thesis entitled "The Religious Roots of Female Education in Sydney: A History of the Congregation de Notre Dame at Holy Angels Convent School, 1885-1911."

The archival files of Holy Angels Convent include information on both the founding of the Convent and the School. The files consist of daily records, or annals, letters of school and ecclesiastical authorities, letters of former students, official documents, scholastic and social achievements of students and many other written materials for the period 1885-1911. All documents were made available to and used by Ms. Coleman in her research.  
topic.

Signed,



Sister Agnes Cordeau, CND, Ed.D. (University of Toronto)  
Director of Archives  
Holy Angels Convent

September 12, 2003