

## ABSTRACT

What is an archive? Is it a place? An object or objects organized into collections? A mentality? How have the creators of archives determined what should be archived, and what ideas about history have their decisions preserved? My research centers these questions in a study of the creation, over time, of the Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection, with its holdings related to the missionary work of alumnae from 1841 to the present.

In the early years of Mount Holyoke's history as a Female Seminary, its founders and teachers sought to disseminate Protestant values and create an alumnae body of pious teachers, mothers, and in time, missionaries. Its early archive—represented in published works, financial records, and objects sent to Mount Holyoke from missionary fields—produced histories centered on Christian action and salvation blended with colonial discourses of race and civilization that venerated missionaries' role in saving and civilizing non-Christian peoples.

At the turn of the century, once Mount Holyoke had become a college and moved to adopt more rigorous academic standards and empirical research practices, both its historical consciousness and its archive shifted. Librarians, students, and teachers reinterpreted archives as vital for understanding the human race and bringing about societal improvement. While this approach was more empirical, it reflected the religious mindset of previous generations as well as the Social Darwinism of the day. The Missionaries Collection grew to include more documents reflective of missionaries' everyday life, such as missionary publications and newspaper articles. In doing so, it reproduced racist discourses and continued to venerate Christianity as a sign of racial and social progress.

This project contextualizes the archive as a historical phenomenon that has been constructed, reinterpreted, and redesigned over time. The Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection is a prime example of an archival collection reflecting the distinct images of its creators' and archivists' historical consciousness over its nearly two centuries of existence.

The Formation of the Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection:  
Race, Redemption, and the Early Archive

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Thesis Essay

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## INTRODUCTION

At Mount Holyoke College's 2016 Commencement, Keynote speaker Joia Mukherjee presented Mount Holyoke as a disruptor of hegemony and a powerful force for social change. In so doing, she called back to the institution's origins, saying, "When this college was founded in 1837, the very idea of women's education was radical. Think about that for a minute. That revolutionary idea, that Mary Lyon put forward, made it her mission to use education to disrupt hegemonic forces of the day. That's your mission."<sup>1</sup> Mukherjee's invocation of Mount Holyoke's founder, Mary Lyon, to inform the goals of the present is a common theme in many speeches given at Mount Holyoke events. At Convocation in Fall 2022, Interim President Beverly Daniel Tatum's address drew on the past to construct Mount Holyoke as a brave pioneer that taught its students to push against boundaries. Tatum said,

There is something bold in describing a Mount Holyoke College education as "intellectually adventurous." I have seen a lot of college and university mission statements, and I haven't found another institution that describes itself this way. This college has been a bold place from its very beginning, a place that has done adventurous, maybe even risky, things and produced bold graduates — alums who are choosing their own adventure every day.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joia Mukherjee, "Commencement Address 2016," January 1, 2019, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/news/news-stories/commencement-address-2016>.

<sup>2</sup> Tatum, Beverly Daniel. "Convocation 2022 Address," September 19, 2022. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/news/news-stories/convocation-2022-address>.

And several months prior, for the Commencement ceremony for the Class of 2022, President Sonya Stevens described how she had “been thinking a lot about time and place—about the many challenges of this time in our history, of your time at Mount Holyoke and about how this place, nevertheless, anchors us in a sense of possibility and change, of shared pursuits and common values.”<sup>3</sup> Stevens’ description of Mount Holyoke creates an impression of historical continuity, suggesting that Mount Holyoke’s values—from the institution’s founding in 1837 up to its modern iteration—had remained constant over a hundred and eighty-five years later and still encouraged students to push forward and institute change.

Yet while many of these speeches pull from Mount Holyoke’s past to create continuity between it and the present, Stevens’ Convocation speech from 2017 probed the relationship between past and present in a more critical light. She said:

Mount Holyoke is a community that has endured—and celebrates—180 years of change. History whispers in the corridors and seeps from the bark of trees and the brickwork of buildings. The paths have been trodden by generations of students, faculty, and staff before you—and others will follow. On this campus, I often feel the truth of Mary Lyon’s words when she said that “this is an affecting spot to me. The stones and brick and mortar speak a language...”, and that we must here “learn to sit with energy.” We engage with the history of this place through memories, and archives, and traditions, and we slide into them, like hand-me-downs that fit like a glove—or not. For I am also mindful of a poem that a student wrote—and shared with me—four years ago, expressing her simultaneous sense of belonging to, and dislocation from, the history of the College: “See, (she wrote of Mary Lyon), I once thought she built this school for the likes of me / Till history showed me / that she founded this in 1837 / twenty-eight years before slavery had "ended.”<sup>4</sup>

Stevens’ speech addressed the divide between the ideological values of the past and present.

Even as some students were able to make meaning out of Mount Holyoke’s past and see

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<sup>3</sup> Sonya Stevens, “Welcome to Commencement 2022,” May 22, 2022, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/news/news-stories/welcome-commencement-2022>.

<sup>4</sup> Stevens, Sonya. “Convocation 2017 | Mount Holyoke College,” September 5, 2017. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/news/news-stories/convocation-2017>.

themselves as carrying on the traditions and values of the school's previous graduates, other students—such as the unnamed poet in Stevens' speech—had to grapple with the realities of the past and the injustices that festered in Mount Holyoke's community.

Most contemporary speeches at Mount Holyoke that address the College's founding or its early history carefully avoid mentioning aspects of its history that would sit uncomfortably with the audience: for example, its strong ties to Protestant Christianity and missionary work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or how it grappled with race and the institution of slavery. Yet these speeches' continued reference to the past indicates how history is used to create meaning for the present. How community members understand and frame the College's history—or, as Stevens put it, how “we engage with the history of this place [Mount Holyoke] through memories, and archives, and traditions”—is mediated through personal experience and the prominent issues and events of their day. History can become a way to contextualize and guide the present, offering security and a sense of belonging through the lens of tradition and shared values, so long as it is not probed too deeply.

The excerpts from Convocation and Commencement speeches above all draw on archives to create an image of Mount Holyoke's history and its legacy in relation to modern day concerns. I use the term archive loosely, as something—whether it be a place, a document, a collection, or even a mindset—that represents and preserves a form of historical consciousness. The speeches referenced here all consider the Mount Holyoke archive through specific ideological lenses as they draw on the past to inform the present. Yet the archive itself is not a static, neutral entity. Just as people today view the archive through the lens of their contemporary historical context, people in the past determined what archival sources had value for future generations based on the ideological concerns of their day. That the College's archive preserves evidence of Mount

Holyoke's more contentious history is because someone, decades or even centuries ago, interpreted those documents through a particular ideological lens and decided they had lasting value. Archives are formed through iterative, evolving processes as people's social environment and belief systems change, and Mount Holyoke's archive is no exception. As we draw upon the archives to create meaning for the present, our conception of the past has already been determined, in part, by the past generations who made the archive what it currently is.

This thesis is about archives and how they have changed over time as people's values changed and their perception of history shifted, altering how people determined what had historical significance and was thus worth preserving. Mount Holyoke's archive offers unique opportunities to discuss archival history, as from its founding its leaders' Protestant Christian values influenced their perception of history and historical possibility. In turn, their outlook influenced what items Mount Holyoke preserved for posterity. Furthermore, Mount Holyoke was founded at a time when ideas about history and the relationship between past and present were in flux, which is reflected in its archive as the community sought a middle ground between ideas that God decided all historical events and that individual actions and beliefs influenced history.

While numerous collections in Mount Holyoke's archive could be used to illustrate its historical mindset at different points in time, its Missionaries Collection in particular evinces the College's ideas about empiricism, religion, race, and imperialism, how these ideologies changed over time in response to new social and political concerns, and how they influenced the shape of the archive. The collection includes a variety of materials—books, articles, unpublished papers, correspondence, lists, records of financial contributions, and more—all related to missionary work and the Mount Holyoke alumnae who served as missionaries. These materials date from 1841, four years after Mount Holyoke first opened, to the present day. While the collection has

been built up over the course of several centuries, it was processed and organized in its modern form relatively recently in 2008.<sup>5</sup> As such, its contents represent varying ideological viewpoints from different historical moments, as generations of Mount Holyoke's community interpreted the school's relationship to missionary work through their contemporary circumstances and shaped its archive accordingly. While the Missionaries Collection includes items dated up to the present, this paper focuses on changes to the collection from Mount Holyoke's founding in 1837 up to its 100th Anniversary in 1937, following which the collection did not receive major updates until the 1970s when the College hired its first official archivist.

When Mary Lyon founded Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1837, she encouraged her students to serve God by working as missionaries both at home and abroad. The earliest archival documents in the Missionaries Collection thus reflect Lyon and alumnae's conviction in the power of Protestant Christianity and the importance of converting others to spread God's will. Their commitment to serve God led missionaries to deprioritize and denigrate the religious and cultural traditions of other races as lesser, and in so doing they became agents of imperialist, racist doctrines that sought to assimilate or outright eliminate peoples that did not conform to Eurocentric, Anglo-Saxon tradition. Mount Holyoke's nineteenth-century archive preserved objects from non-Christian cultures to encourage missionary work and record evidence of these cultures before they disappeared altogether.

As Mount Holyoke transitioned from a Seminary to a College in the early twentieth century, its archive transitioned along with it. The college remained Protestant, but it adapted to recenter empirical thought and research. It reinterpreted its missionary work, moving away from its focus on religious conversion to center missionaries' capacity to bring about social progress in

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<sup>5</sup> "Mount Holyoke College Missionaries Collection," Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.  
<https://aspace.fivecolleges.edu/repositories/2/resources/324>.



the Middle East and Asia. Yet even as missionaries founded educational and medical facilities, they continued to perpetuate racist ideologies based in social darwinism and westernization. As such, Mount Holyoke's Missionaries Collection did widen in scope as the College reconsidered how to document its history for future generations, but the increased number of documents emphasize the undercurrents of racial superiority and American exceptionalism that defined alumnae's social work abroad.

In Verne Harris' essay "The Archival Sliver", in which he discusses postcolonial archives in post-apartheid South Africa, he writes,

They [Archival records] do not act by themselves. They act through many conduits—the people who created them, the functionaries who managed them, the archivists who selected them for preservation and make them available for use, and the researchers who use them in constructing accounts of the past...all these conduits participate in the complex processes through which the record feeds into social memory.<sup>6</sup>

The past and present are always in communication with one another, as the past preserves certain records that the present then draws on to make meaning of the now. As Mount Holyoke today pulls from its archive to define itself as making a difference in the world, it should also consider where that archive originated from and the beliefs that went into its making. If we use the past to inform the present, we must be aware of what the past did and did not want to be remembered, and how that has made our archive what it is today.

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<sup>6</sup> Harris, Verne. "The Archival Sliver: A Perspective on the Construction of Social Memory in Archives and the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy." In *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by Carolyn Hamilton, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh, 136. Boston: Kluwer Academic, 2002.

## CHAPTER 1:

## MARY LYON, MOUNT HOLYOKE, AND BRINGING ABOUT THE MILLENNIUM

In 1851, Edward Hitchcock, a professor at Amherst College and one of Mount Holyoke Seminary's trustees, published Mary Lyon's memoir titled *The Power of Christian Benevolence*. Mary Lyon had died two years prior in 1849, and Hitchcock had taken on the task of compiling the manuscript and collecting letters, testimonies, and other documents illustrating Mary Lyon's life and motives. In the last paragraph of the preface, he described the memoir's desired impact on readers, saying:

Rarely, if ever, has any other private uninspired history made me feel so much the defects of my own motives and actions, or made the retrospect of life appear so meagre and unsatisfactory. May God's blessing accompany the work, so that many others may feel the like influence, and see *the power of Christian belevolence in the life and labors of Mary Lyon*.<sup>7</sup>

Religion played a prominent role in defining the course of Mary Lyon's life. She was born in 1897 in Buckland, Massachusetts as the fifth of what would be seven children. When she was five years old, her father died.<sup>8</sup> Eight years later, in 1810, her mother remarried and moved away

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Hitchcock, *The Power of Christian Benevolence : Illustrated in the Life and Labors of Mary Lyon*, Twelfth edition (Northampton: Bridgman and Childs, 1860): vi.

<sup>8</sup> Hitchcock, *The Power of Christian Benevolence* : 3.

with her unmarried siblings, leaving Lyon to live with her brother and take over housekeeping.<sup>9</sup> In 1819, her brother moved to New York State. Lyon had to fend for herself and struggle to earn a living as a teacher while continuing her own education.<sup>10</sup> Her various struggles—familial loss, financial issues, and more—contributed to bouts of depression and religious turmoil. In a letter to a friend in 1825, Lyon wrote, “I hope, my dear sister, you live near your Savior, while I am far from him, and walk on in darkness.”<sup>11</sup>

Lyon had begun to find religious meaning in her life several years prior, when she attended the Byfield Ladies Seminary in 1821. The Seminary was taught by Reverend Joseph Emerson, a Congregationalist minister and educator who “endeavored to show them [the students] their responsibility as the representatives of Christ” and “the propriety of their exerting an influence in favor of the Redeemer and his cause upon their fellow pupils.”<sup>12</sup> Through Emerson’s influence, Lyon’s religiosity grew, and the year following in 1822 she joined the Congregational church in Buckland.<sup>13</sup> Over the next couple of years, her religious turmoil slowly fell away and she dedicated herself to serving God and spreading his will among her students.<sup>14</sup>

Mary Lyon founded Mount Holyoke Female Seminary over a decade later in 1837 so the daughters of poor New England farmers had an opportunity to access higher education despite their financial struggles.<sup>15</sup> Religious education and revival were central aspects of the Seminary’s structure. In a Circular she wrote and published in 1839, Lyon described religious culture as foundational to the institution, saying “This institution has been built for the Lord, that it might

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<sup>9</sup> Hitchcock, *The Power of Christian Benevolence*: 9.

<sup>10</sup> Hitchcock, *The Power of Christian Benevolence*: 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Hitchcock, *The Power of Christian Benevolence*: 41.

<sup>12</sup> Hitchcock, *The Power of Christian Benevolence*: 16.

<sup>13</sup> Hitchcock, *The Power of Christian Benevolence*: 23.

<sup>14</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries*, Religion in America Series (Oxford University Press, 1997): 31-32.

<sup>15</sup> Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women’s Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s*, Second edition. (University of Massachusetts Press, 1993): 17-18.

be peculiarly his own.”<sup>16</sup> Funds to build the school primarily came from Protestant churches, and many of the trustees were prominent preachers in the community.<sup>17</sup> The daily routines of Seminary students included public worship, Bible lessons, church attendance, and religious instruction.<sup>18</sup> While the Seminary was dedicated to women’s higher education and soon rose to prominence, it did so in a heavily religious context that both liberated the women it taught from certain societal norms while maintaining others.

Religion was baked into Mount Holyoke’s structure years before its founding. As the Seminary’s community centered Protestant Christian faith in their lives, so too did religion become central to the Seminary’s perceived historical significance as an institution dedicated to spreading Christian values not just through its student body, but through future generations and across the globe. The Seminary, founded at the tail end of the Second Great Awakening—a series of Protestant religious revivals that took place across the US in the early nineteenth century—built off of religious discourses espousing the power of the individual to spread God’s will and bring about the millennium. Mount Holyoke’s religious foundation thus had a profound influence on the shape of its early archival holdings, as its archival holdings primarily focused on the significance of the Seminary’s Protestant Christianity over other aspects of its administration.

### *Jonathan Edwards, Millenarianism, and the Second Great Awakening*

Mary Lyon was one of many who found religious purpose in the early nineteenth century during the Second Great Awakening. The Second Great Awakening was a series of Protestant religious revivals beginning with revivals in Connecticut in the 1790s and ending in the 1830s.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Mary Lyon, *Mary Lyon, Documents and Writings*, ed. James E. Hartley (South Hadley, MA: Doorlight Publications, 2008): 211.

<sup>17</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*: 19.

<sup>18</sup> Lyon, *Mary Lyon, Documents and Writings*: 211.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Conforti, “Edwardsians, Unitarians, and the Memory of the Great Awakening: American Unitarianism, 1805-1865,” in *American Unitarianism, 1805-1865* (Boston, 1989): 32-33.

These revivals attracted numerous new converts to Protestant denominations and led to the formation of many reform-minded organizations across the United States. Many people turned to religion in response to the cultural and societal upheavals of the time period, as the early nineteenth century saw the rise of capitalist market systems in daily life, changing gender relations and family structures, and the first great democratization of politics as more free white men gained full suffrage.<sup>20</sup> Religion promised a form of security and community in the midst of a turbulent political and economic landscape. Mary Lyon was among the many whose lives were disrupted by the changing social order and who found solace in Protestant Christianity.

While religious revivals took many different shapes as they spread from state to state, Mary Lyon was influenced by her teacher, Joseph Emerson. Emerson was one of many Congregationalist ministers in New England in the early nineteenth century. These Congregationalists based their theology on the work of Jonathan Edwards, a preacher who lived and worked during the First Great Awakening over fifty years prior.<sup>21</sup> At the turn of the century, Congregationalists and other evangelical groups reconstructed Edwards as the father of the colonial awakening, and they republished many of his works with commentaries as a means of legitimizing or repudiating various religious ideologies.<sup>22</sup> Edwards was thus remade as a historical authority whose works shaped the religio-historical landscape of the Second Great Awakening. For Mary Lyon in particular, one specific work by Edwards—*A History of the Work of Redemption*, posthumously published in 1799—played a major role in shaping her understanding of history, which in turn influenced Mount Holyoke Female Seminary.

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<sup>20</sup> Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002): 6-7.

<sup>21</sup> Conforti, "Edwardsians, Unitarians, and the Memory of the Great Awakening": 33.

<sup>22</sup> Conforti, "Edwardsians, Unitarians, and the Memory of the Great Awakening": 36-38.

At first glance, *A History of the Work of Redemption* reads as an extensive retelling of the Bible, beginning with the fall of Adam and Eve and ending in the future with the end of the world and Christ's triumph over Satan.<sup>23</sup> Yet Edwards' aim was not to rewrite the Bible, but rather to contextualize the events it described. Several pages into the work's introduction, Edwards summarized its primary aim in the sentence, "The Work of Redemption is a work that God carries on from the fall of man to the end of the world."<sup>24</sup> His book sought to demonstrate how God had influenced the course of historical events in order to protect and prepare his loyal believers for Christ's coming, as well as to punish those who deviated from Christianity. This theme is visible in how Edwards described the rise and fall of various ancient empires, in particular the Roman Empire. Edwards claimed that God facilitated the rise of the Roman Empire, writing:

Now it was the will of God, that his Son should make his appearance in the world in the time of this greatest and strongest monarchy, which was Satan's visible kingdom in the world; that, by overcoming this, he might visibly overcome Satan's kingdom in its greatest strength and glory, and so obtain the more complete triumph over Satan himself.<sup>25</sup>

Edwards did not consider another reason for the rise of the Roman Empire. Only God, not other historical actors or social systems, decided how historical events played out. In a similar vein, Edwards linked the Roman Empire's later acceptance of Christianity to God's will, saying God purposefully sent a vision to Roman Emperor Constantine to convert to Christianity as a means of delivering the then established Christian Church from persecution.<sup>26</sup> Acts and decisions made

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<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption: Containing the Outlines of a Body of Divinity, in a Method Entirely New*, vol. 553, Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints (Ann Arbor: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1799): 17.

<sup>24</sup> Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*: 5.

<sup>25</sup> Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*: 201.

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*: 301-302.

by individuals do not factor into Edwards' vision of history. God's choices, not individual human actors, made history.

*A History of the Work of Redemption* focused on God's role in historical events over individual actors because it conceived of history through a different lens. Edwards wrote from the framework that the past and the present were guided by similar values and belief systems, wherein time passed and the world changed, but the people that lived in it did not change on a fundamental level.<sup>27</sup> This notion of history was not unprecedented. The particular form of history Edwards drew on—providential history, in which historical events were determined and guided by God's will—had precedents in works dating back to the Middle Ages.<sup>28</sup> While such conceptions of history had become outdated by the nineteenth century when his work was republished, Edwards' theology was accepted because it reaffirmed human struggles as part of longer trends of upheaval brought on by divine influence. Historian Joseph Conforti, in an article about Edwards' influence on Lyon and New England society, writes:

Edwardsean social ethics and the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, far from being disembodied doctrinal positions, were rooted in a traditional moral economy of restraint and self-denial that was under assault from an emergent capitalist commercial order. Edwardsean social ethics seem to have appealed to individuals, including many women, who were on the margins of or disturbed by the new commercial economic order.<sup>29</sup>

While Edwards' version of history did not address the economic, social, and political changes impacting people's lives in the early-nineteenth century, it did contextualize those changes as part of the long battle between God and Satan, reducing complex social change motivated by individual actors and their cultural context down to the product of divine intervention.

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<sup>27</sup> Terry Cook, "The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape," *The American Archivist* 74, no. 2 (2011): 603.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Davies, *Empiricism and History, Theory and History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 10-11.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph A Conforti, "Mary Lyon, the Founding of Mount Holyoke College, and the Cultural Revival of Jonathan Edwards," *Religion and American Culture* 3, no. 1 (1993): 78.

Furthermore, by reaffirming traditional values through his theology and history, Edwards offered individuals a way to adapt to a new social order through the lens of religious norms.

*A History of the Work of Redemption* also included room for newer conceptions of history, which emerged in the decades following the French Revolution. Scholars frequently pinpoint the French Revolution as a major turning point that radically redefined notions of the past and present. By tearing down the historical monarchy and establishing a democracy, the Revolution disrupted an image of history as following a linear path dictated by tradition, precedent, and divine will.<sup>30</sup> People across Europe and the United States questioned how the Revolution could be possible when it deviated so sharply from the values and belief systems of past generations. The Industrial Revolution and the post-napoleonic rise of nationalism deepened perceptions of a divide between the past and present as historical tradition and precedent gave way to new ideologies and social orders.<sup>31</sup> Over the course of the nineteenth century, scholars began to reinterpret history as a continual process of change and progress in which the past was radically different from the futures it laid the ground for. As historical scholarship changed, the role of individuals and the cultures they belonged to in shaping history became much more pronounced.

While Edwards' work portrayed God as the primary influence behind historical events, the last chapter of his work in particular offered room for interpreting the role of the individual in making history. The last section of the book describes the future of Protestant Christianity and how Christians would bring about the millennium, a thousand-year period of utopianism in which the entire world would be converted to Christianity and live in harmony before the Last Judgment. Edwards wrote:

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Harvard University Press, 2004): 16-17, 32.

<sup>31</sup> Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*: 48; Cook, "The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country": 603.



This pouring out of the Spirit of God, when it is begun, shall soon bring great multitudes to forsake that vice and wickedness which now so generally prevails, and shall cause that vital religion, which is now so despised and laughed at in the world, to revive. The work of conversion shall break forth, and go on in such a manner as never has been hitherto...God, by pouring out his Holy Spirit, will furnish men to be glorious instruments of carrying on this work; will fill them with knowledge and wisdom, and fervent zeal for the promoting the kingdom of Christ, and the salvation of souls, and propagating the gospel in the world.<sup>32</sup>

Though Edwards focused on the role of God in “furnish[ing] men to be glorious instruments of carrying on this work,” he indirectly centered individual actors as the means to bring about the millennium. God motivated individuals to serve Christianity, but the onus still fell on the individual to act. In the context of the nineteenth century, as perceptions of history changed, people like Mary Lyon were able to negotiate between the providential history Edwards espoused and new histories centering human agency.

### *Edwardsean Influence on Mount Holyoke*

Mary Lyon’s love for *A History of the Work of Redemption* is well remembered. In her recollections of Lyon’s teaching, Fidelia Fiske, a member of the Class of 1842 and a missionary to Persia, described how, “We can see her even now with Edwards’ History of Redemption in her hand, and seem to feel that we are again seated with her in that first reading-room of the seminary, listening to the story of the wondrous plan for saving man.”<sup>33</sup> In a speech for the celebrations of Mount Holyoke’s 25th Anniversary, the President of the Board of Trustees Dr. Kirk recalled, “Next to the Bible, with her stood the “History of Redemption” by a kindred spirit. This she so prized, because it exhibits Christ’s purpose and providence in the world’s great

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<sup>32</sup> Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*: 366-367.

<sup>33</sup> Fidelia Fiske, *Recollections of Mary Lyon: With Selections from Her Instructions to the Pupils in Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary* (American Tract Society, 1866): 103.

history.”<sup>34</sup> Lyon also sponsored a subscription for a new edition of the book at the same time as she raised funds for the Seminary.<sup>35</sup> Edwardsean values thus had a substantial impact on Lyon’s perception of religion and its role in history, which in turn shaped the structure of Mount Holyoke Seminary as Lyon encouraged students to serve as educators and convert others to Christ.

Lyon drew on the Edwardsean idea of disinterested benevolence, defined by scholar Patricia Mangan as, “the idea that one must love others over one’s self and thereby place the common interests of mankind above one’s personal interests.”<sup>36</sup> Mount Holyoke was founded on this principle. One of Lyon’s primary goals for the Seminary was “not only to increase the number of educated ladies, but to enforce on them the obligation to use their talents for the good of others, especially in teaching.”<sup>37</sup> Mount Holyoke graduates were expected to use their education to benefit others, not to further their own lot in life. The ideology of Republican motherhood dominant in Lyon’s time, which constructed American women as culture-bearers meant to teach their children virtue and citizenship, also meshed well with Lyon’s focus on disinterested benevolence and the need to educate future generations.<sup>38</sup> The message of education and disinterested benevolence found fertile ground at the Seminary, as in the first twenty-five years of its existence, over 127 of Mount Holyoke’s 964 graduates worked as teachers at the Seminary alone.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary* (South Hadley, MA: S. Bowles & Co., printers, 1862): 19-20

<sup>35</sup> Conforti, “Mary Lyon, the Founding of Mount Holyoke College, and the Cultural Revival of Jonathan Edwards,” 73.

<sup>36</sup> Patricia Hart Mangan, “Instantiating Vision at the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary,” *The Journal of Religious History* 40, no. 1 (March 2016): 107-108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9809.12276>.

<sup>37</sup> Lyon, *Mary Lyon, Documents and Writings*: 220-221.

<sup>38</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*: 10-11.

<sup>39</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial*: 171.

The doctrine of disinterested benevolence spread beyond the field of educating American children. Edwards' promise, in the last chapter of *A History of the Work of Redemption*, that "the work of conversion shall break forth" combined with his discussion of disinterested benevolence to center missionary work and converting others to Christianity.<sup>40</sup> Mary Lyon was especially intent on converting all nonbelievers who attended Mount Holyoke. She organized annual religious revivals at the Seminary, had students profess whether or not they believed in God, held weekly meetings to convert nonbelievers, and more.<sup>41</sup> Her efforts were in line with the beliefs of other Evangelical Congregationalists at the time, who saw conversion to Christianity as spiritually beneficial for non-believers.<sup>42</sup> In regards to missionary service, Lyon heavily supported the missionary cause. Her only work published in her lifetime was *A Missionary Offering* (1843), in which Lyon described in Edwardsean terms "an approaching crisis in the kingdom of Christ, such as is never known among the affairs of men," and stressed the need to support missionary organizations by putting economic support for such organizations before one's personal needs.<sup>43</sup> Lyon herself donated heavily to missionary organizations, in particular the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), whom she deeply admired. As she wrote in *A Missionary Offering*, "If I am permitted to behold but one more public scene of moral sublimity, let that be another annual meeting of the American Board."<sup>44</sup> At Mount Holyoke, Lyon established a missionary library in the Seminary building, which included

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<sup>40</sup> Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*: 366-367.

<sup>41</sup> Mangan, "Instantiating Vision at the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary": 114-115.

<sup>42</sup> Mary Kupiec Cayton, "Canonizing Harriet Newell: Women, the Evangelical Press, and the Foreign Mission Movement in New England, 1800-1840," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, ed. Connie Anne Shemo, Barbara Reeves-Ellington, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, *American Encounters/Global Interactions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 71.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Lyon, *Missionary Offering, or, Christian Sympathy, Personal Responsibility, and the Present Crisis in Foreign Missions* (Crocker & Brewster, 1843): 14.

<sup>44</sup> Lyon, *Missionary Offering*: 17.

numerous missionary publications and related texts, and also encouraged students and teachers to donate whatever they could to missionary organizations.<sup>45</sup>

The Second Great Awakening saw the formation of multiple missionary societies, particularly in New England.<sup>46</sup> However, missionary organizations and supporters often adopted prejudiced, racist viewpoints. This derived from the logic of their ideologies: by conceiving conversion to Christianity as spiritually beneficial for non-believers, Christians presumed other religions were inferior. Furthermore, evangelicals believed conversion would civilize and improve cultures they interpreted as cruel, superstitious, degrading, and savage: that is to say, conversion could assimilate non-Christians to Anglo-Saxon culture and values.<sup>47</sup> Their beliefs were supplemented by colonial policies at home. By the nineteenth century, the United States already had a long history of decimating indigenous tribes on the basis that Native Americans were savage and unsuited to live in white American society.<sup>48</sup> While Protestant Christians did not actively advocate for colonial violence, they did view colonial rule in a generally positive light. They believed European colonial powers had the potential to end violence in the regions they occupied, as well as protect its citizens from unconverted heathens who were presumed to be violent and uncivilized.<sup>49</sup> Only colonial expansion, supplemented by missionaries spreading Christianity, was believed to bring peace. The underlying assumptions connecting peace and civilization to white Europeans and their traditional values went largely unquestioned.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Conforti, "Mary Lyon, the Founding of Mount Holyoke College, and the Cultural Revival of Jonathan Edwards": 80.

<sup>46</sup> Conforti, "Edwardians, Unitarians, and the Memory of the Great Awakening": 33.

<sup>47</sup> Cayton, "Canonizing Harriet Newell": 71.

<sup>48</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930*, 1st ed. (Cornell University Press, 2003): 46, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1287f39>.

<sup>49</sup> Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Difference in the British Empire, c. 1840-95*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012): 138.

<sup>50</sup> Cleall, *Missionary Discourses on Difference*: 140.

*A History of the Work of Redemption* reinforced racial prejudices rather than questioning them. Edwards frequently described non-Christian peoples as manipulated by Satan, a portrayal that justified Protestant hostility towards other religions while highlighting the superiority of Christianity. Notably, in reference to indigenous tribes in North America, Edwards explained non-European peoples' movement to different parts of the globe as a tactic by Satan to "get them out of the way of the gospel."<sup>51</sup> Similarly Edwards painted the foundation of Islam as Satan's attempt to create a kingdom to battle Christianity at the end times.<sup>52</sup> His focus on conversion thus took on an assimilationist tint, as his conviction that "the gospel shall be preached to every tongue, and kindred, and nation, and people, before the fall of Antichrist," and "that it will soon be gloriously successful to bring in multitudes from every nation," called for missionaries to not just convert heathens to Christianity, but assimilate them to white Protestant culture.

Taken altogether, disinterested benevolence, racism, assimilation, and missionary service entwined to create an image of missionaries sacrificing themselves in foreign lands for the greater good of Christianity and future generations, as they worked to convert and civilize pagans and thus bring about the millennium. At Mount Holyoke Seminary, where Lyon and other teachers encouraged students to live and act according to Edwardsean benevolence, missionary work and the perception surrounding it had particular appeal. This appeal was enhanced by women's changing gender roles in religious contexts. As evangelical women gained social acceptance for organizing outside of the home—so long as that organizing did not outwardly conflict with their traditional domestic roles—so too did female missionaries gain societal freedom to act beyond the household.<sup>53</sup> Female missionaries moved out of traditional domestic spaces to serve as guides for heathen women and children, who often resided in spaces closed off

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<sup>51</sup> Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*: 50.

<sup>52</sup> Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*: 320.

<sup>53</sup> Boylan, *The origins of women's activism*: 8, 12.

from men such as zenanas or harems.<sup>54</sup> While female missionaries were still expected to maintain Anglo-Saxon family and domestic structures and prevent indigenous cultural beliefs from “corrupting” the household, they took on newfound roles as educators teaching non-Christian women to assimilate to Eurocentric standards of female piety, benevolence, and godliness.<sup>55</sup>

### *Institution Building in the Archive*

In 1862 Mount Holyoke Female Seminary celebrated its first twenty-five years as an institution. To commemorate the event, Mount Holyoke’s leadership transcribed the speeches and other events of the day and published them in a book, titled *Memorial: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary*. By creating the book, the Seminary created an archive representing the Seminary’s awareness of the event’s historical significance and desire to preserve it in the form of a written text. Additionally, the speeches recorded in the book document how Christian faith and devotion to God were made integral to Mount Holyoke’s identity, as speakers emphasized faith as more important than other aspects of the Seminary’s significance.

The book opens with a speech from Reverend Kirk, the President of the Board of Trustees at the time. Kirk’s speech heavily focused on the life of Mary Lyon and how she had translated her religious values to the seminary. At the beginning of his address, he said:

By the zeal, energy, courage and good sense; nay, rather the faith and prayers of an obscure woman; nay, rather by the good hand of God upon her, this Seminary had then taken its place as one of the great educational Institutions of our country. And while its

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<sup>54</sup> Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910,” *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 2 (September 1982): 357, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1893823>.

<sup>55</sup> Cleall, *Missionary Discourses on Difference*: 27; Cayton, “Canonizing Harriet Newell”: 82.

aims, its forms, its methods had been censured, even ridiculed by persons in high positions, she who founded it, regarded it as no less than a symbol of Christianity, and an exponent of some of its sublimest principles.<sup>56</sup>

From the speech's opening, Kirk linked Mount Holyoke's success as an educational institution to its Christian values. Although the Seminary had been criticized and censured, Kirk saw its Christian faith as the reason for the institution's survival and endurance.

Kirk focused on Mary Lyon's Christian devotion and benevolence throughout his speech, emphasizing her dedication to God and work to convert students. He described Lyon as the sort of person who "remind[s] you always of the Lord himself."<sup>57</sup> In a later section, Kirk referred to Lyon as "a pastor...preaching five sermons a week, bringing the whole range of doctrine and motive from the Word of God directly to affect every mind and heart."<sup>58</sup> Mary Lyon, in Kirk's mind, represented all the values that made the Seminary a valuable institution. As he put it, "just in proportion as it [Mary Lyon's spirit] ceases to control the Seminary, the value of the Seminary to the world is diminished."<sup>59</sup> Mount Holyoke's historical significance was translated through its Christian values and devotion, as represented in the life and spirit of Mary Lyon herself. So long as the Seminary remained faithful to its Christian values and its students continued to spread Protestantism both at home and abroad as they served as teachers and missionaries, the Seminary would remain historically significant.

While Kirk did acknowledge Mount Holyoke's significance as one of the first institutions offering an education for young, rural women, he similarly presented that significance through the lens of Protestant Christian values. Describing Mary Lyon's early efforts to found the Seminary, he said, "On this point [female education] she took her stand; not as a champion for

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<sup>56</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial*: 11-12.

<sup>57</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial*: 17-18.

<sup>58</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial*: 43.

<sup>59</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial*: 24.

the rights of her sex; but as a Christian philanthropist looking to the welfare of society; as a modest, genial woman, distinctly seeing that the world needs thoroughly, christianly educated women.”<sup>60</sup> He identified the sorts of women Lyon wished to create, saying, “She wished to send forth neither masculine, pedantic, self-conceited nor worldly women; but such women as should adorn their country, and be a blessing to the church and the world.”<sup>61</sup> These statements present Mount Holyoke’s historical significance as a pioneer for women’s education through the mediating lenses of Christianity and Republican motherhood. Kirk reconstructed Mary Lyon’s progressivism in founding Mount Holyoke as part of a Christian duty to mold young women into proper Christian Americans who would serve their country and their God through their work.

At the end of Kirk’s speech, he addressed Mary Lyon’s devotion to the missionary cause, and included a quote from her in his speech: “Miss Lyon said, “only while our Seminary retains that spirit will it live and prosper. It was founded to advance the missionary cause.”<sup>62</sup> Missionary work, as an integral part of both Jonathan Edwards’ and Mary Lyon’s vision of the millennium, became a foundational aspect of Mount Holyoke’s historical significance. Numerous Mount Holyoke students graduated and went on to serve as missionaries at home and abroad. The Anniversary Records stated that 72 students had gone on to serve as foreign missionaries since the Seminary opened, while the number of home missionaries was “large but cannot be accurately ascertained.”<sup>63</sup> Students believed that, by choosing to serve as missionaries, they could help bring about the millennium and thus further God’s plan for humanity. Their perceived mission translated into Mount Holyoke’s early archival holdings. Mount Holyoke’s community constructed the Seminary as a profoundly religious body that trained its students to serve God

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<sup>60</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial*: 26.

<sup>61</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial*: 35.

<sup>62</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial*: 56.

<sup>63</sup> Mount Holyoke College, *Memorial*: 171.



and bring others to Christianity, and in so doing downplayed the Seminary's importance as an educational institution for women. Conversion, whether within the walls of the Seminary or in a foreign country, was made central to Mount Holyoke's historical significance.

## CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS A MISSIONARIES COLLECTION

In 1922, a man named Sylvester Bliss gifted a page of sheet music to Mount Holyoke. The sheet music had previously been in the possession of his mother, Eunice B. Day, a Mount Holyoke graduate of the Class of 1847. The sheet music was for a song titled, “The Missionary Call” which had been sung over sixty years prior at a missionary reunion in 1859. The chorus, written from the perspective of a Christian called to serve as a missionary, states: “The voice of my departed Lord, “Go teach all nations.” Comes on the night air and awakes mine ear. Thro’ ages of eternal years, I’ll ne’er regret. That toil and suffering once were mine below.”<sup>64</sup> The lyrics, and the circuitous path the sheet music took to both leave and return to Mount Holyoke’s archive, illustrate how the Seminary’s earliest archival collections developed and the ideological intentions behind their development. The lyrics sought to deepen the religiosity of listeners and expand interest in evangelical work by exalting missionary work as among the greatest sacrifices a Christian could make: surrendering their lives, health, and happiness to answer God’s call to help others. In the context of the reunion where the song was sung, the lyrics not only glorified the missionaries attending the event, but also strengthened Mount Holyoke Seminary’s

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<sup>64</sup> RG 29, box 15, folder 8, Mount Holyoke College Missionaries Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.  
<https://aspace.fivecolleges.edu/repositories/2/resources/324>.

institutional presence as a deeply pious body and supporter of the missionary cause. Lastly, the song served to commemorate both the reunion and the missionaries present, and in so doing acted as a type of archive that could testify to the event and the piety guiding all individuals involved.

The preservation of the sheet music, as with other documents from before the 1880s in the Missionaries Collection, operated on three levels: to deepen and spread Christian faith and influence, to strengthen the Seminary and ensure its longevity as an institution, and to archive evidence of the Seminary's religious and evangelical work and impact. These three archival motives acted in tandem with one another, rather than separately. They all served a common goal: to establish Mount Holyoke as an institution with longlasting value to future generations of students and the world at large. In other words, they created an image of Mount Holyoke Seminary's historical significance as an institution dedicated to Christian faith and the work of conversion.

Yet Mount Holyoke's archive was not created systematically by teachers and staff at the Seminary, but rather by networks of individuals who saw value in preserving documents and objects for future needs, whether those needs were short- or long-term needs. In its earliest state, the Missionaries Collection was a diffuse body of objects and documents representing the need for conversion and the power of Christian faith both at home and abroad. The Collection, which was collected and curated by a variety of individuals—students, alumnae, teachers, trustees, and others—was created through a collective archival process, as individuals rather than the institution decided what had value for the future. One of its earliest archival collections, the Missionary Cabinet, was created through these networks as missionaries sent items from the cultures they worked with back to the Seminary. However, the collected materials, and the

missionary cabinet in particular, evince how Mount Holyoke denigrated and excluded others, as missionary alumnae attempted to assimilate other cultures and races to Eurocentric Christian norms.

### *The Early Archive and Archival Histories*

If you search for the definition of the term “archive” in the Oxford English Dictionary, the first two dictionary results define it as, “a historical record or document so preserved” and “a place in which public records or other important historic documents are kept.”<sup>65</sup> As suggested by these definitions, the notion of an “archive” is indelibly intertwined with perceptions of history and its study. Mount Holyoke, wavering between providential history and history rooted in individual agency, constructed its early archive in a variety of ways as these two visions of history conflicted.

To place Mount Holyoke Seminary in a larger historical context, the view of history as guided by similar values and beliefs as the present had substantial ramifications for the preservation of ancient artifacts, ruins, and records. Since the past and present were viewed as similar, items were not preserved for their historical value, but for their conceived relevance to scholarship, artistic movements, government administration and establishing noble lineage and authority. Ruins of castles and ancient civilizations were particularly susceptible to loss and decay, as they were construed as human works that had naturally succumbed to time and were in the process of being reclaimed by nature. Because this process was seen as natural and even inevitable, ruins were not viewed as worth preserving or conserving in their original state.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> “Archive, n.,” in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed November 12, 2022, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/10416>.

<sup>66</sup> Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*: 98-99.

Old books and records from before the nineteenth century occupied a similarly tenuous position as artifacts. Since the early days of the book trade in the fifteenth century, sellers and buyers believed that a book's contents and continued relevance mattered more than its age.<sup>67</sup> Even prior to the advent of the printing press, looking to the monastic producers of text before the fifteenth century, monks would often scrape parchment pages to free up extra room for writing if the page's contents were found to be outdated.<sup>68</sup> As such, old books were frequently recycled for their base materials. Antiquarian collecting, or purchasing books primarily for their age and not their contents, only became common in the eighteenth century. Even then, they were not purchased for their historical value, but as a way for private collectors to distinguish their collections.<sup>69</sup> Prior to the eighteenth century, buyers also preferred to purchase the most recent editions of preserved older texts instead of the originals, especially in scholarly and institutional collections.<sup>70</sup> In sum, the conception of history up until the nineteenth century meant that old objects of all kinds were not valued as historical, and what would be preserved today was instead discarded.

Appropriately, the earliest "modern" archive emerged in Revolutionary France when the new government established the Archives Nationales in 1793 as part of the cultural, social, and nationalist policies of the state.<sup>71</sup> The records the archives kept were meant to redefine and glorify the new nation, reconstructing its history as belonging to the people instead of to the monarchy, and in doing so constructed a national history meant to define France as a whole.<sup>72</sup> In the wake of the French Revolution, as European people were forced to re-conceptualize what

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<sup>67</sup> Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *The Library: A Fragile History*, First US edition. (Basic Books, 2021): 222.

<sup>68</sup> Pettegree and Weduwen, *The Library*: 36.

<sup>69</sup> Pettegree and Weduwen, *The Library*: 222-223.

<sup>70</sup> Pettegree and Weduwen, *The Library*: 230.

<sup>71</sup> Cook, "The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country": 616.

<sup>72</sup> James M. O'Toole and Richard J. Cox, *Understanding Archives & Manuscripts*, Archival Fundamentals Series. II (Society of American Archivists, 2006): 50-51.

history meant, their perception of historical preservation transformed. Ruins and artifacts were reconstructed as the remains of former historical disasters motivated by religious, economic, and political shifts, rather than the natural results of time and decay. This reconstruction motivated historical preservation as people worked to save these items from prior neglect, as well as use them to reconstruct the past and learn how people lived in previous centuries. Rising nationalism further influenced preservation, as ruins became evidence of national histories.<sup>73</sup> Such trends in historical preservation, combined with the growth of empiricism in the nineteenth century that venerated facts, statistics, and the scientific method, led to not just more active collecting of ancient records and artifacts, but also to establishing institutions where they could be classified and displayed.<sup>74</sup>

Mount Holyoke did preserve elements of its past in line with new ideas about historical preservation, as represented by various books published by the institution and various members of its community: Hitchcock's *The Power of Christian Benevolence* and the book published for the Seminary's Twenty-Fifth Anniversary are two such examples of Mount Holyoke archiving its past for future generations. Yet the Seminary tended to preserve specific documents related to major figures and major events in the institution's history rather than documents representing daily life at the Seminary. Mount Holyoke's trustees created *The Power of Christian Benevolence* specifically to commemorate the life of Mary Lyon, while the Anniversary book commemorated the Seminary's first major milestone.

The composition of the missionaries' collection as it is today reflects the institution's archival focus on major figures and events: while there are fifteen boxes total in the collection,

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<sup>73</sup> Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*: 96-104.

<sup>74</sup> Cook, "The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country": 603-604.

one box contains nearly all of the documents dated to the Seminary's first fifty years of history.<sup>75</sup> The documents primarily focus on daily life at the Seminary, not major figures or events. Other documents that do reference specific events, like the aforementioned sheet music, reflected how attendees and performers acted and expressed themselves ideologically, instead of focusing on the event itself and its importance. Several of the documents also include notes mentioning they were gifted to Mount Holyoke in the twentieth century, again highlighting how the Seminary did not initially view these materials as worth preserving. Besides the sheet music donated in 1922, the collection also includes a book listing donations to missionary causes between 1841 and 1844 that was donated in 1969.<sup>76</sup>

Mount Holyoke Female Seminary had two different archives in the nineteenth century. One archive, represented in books and other documents published by Mount Holyoke's trustees and leadership, was developed systematically by the Seminary and looked more like earlier archives that preserved documents for their continued relevance rather than historical value. The other archive, represented by the documents preserved in the Missionaries' Collection, was created and curated less systematically by a variety of individuals connected to the Seminary. Students, alumnae, teachers, trustees, and other individuals created and preserved documents with archival significance for the Seminary, creating an informal network of individuals who together archived documents otherwise overlooked by the institution in its early years.

Looking at the Missionaries Collection's contents from prior to 1887 in more depth, the collection includes seven books of subscriptions, which cover donations made from 1841 to

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<sup>75</sup> RG 29, box 15, Mount Holyoke College Missionaries Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.

<sup>76</sup> RG 29, box 15, folder 1, Mount Holyoke College Missionaries Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.  
<https://aspace.fivecolleges.edu/repositories/2/resources/324>.

1902.<sup>77</sup> These books all list donations students and staff made to missionary causes, including both the name of the donor and the specific amount they donated. The Collection categorizes these books under one of two types. Four of the seven, described as books of subscriptions for foreign missions, only include lists of donations. The other three are titled “Benevolent Contributions”, and include donation lists as well as entries for various school years describing how many students confessed to having “no hope in Christ”—that is to say, they did not believe in God or were not devoted Christians—and how many were converted by the end of the year.

The creator of these records is not named or addressed in any of the books, and it is unclear who used these books and for what period of time. Even so, the books served archival purposes. They evidenced the Seminary’s deep-set religiosity and dedication to converting others to Christianity by recording the community’s efforts to convert the unbelieving, as well as the numerous donations students and staff made to missionary causes despite their low financial means. By recording both the donations made to the missionary cause and statistics of successful conversions, the books represented Mary Lyon’s promise that, “This institution has been built for the Lord, that it might be peculiarly his own.”<sup>78</sup> Lastly, the act of recordkeeping was and still is performed because records have value for the future. The books of subscriptions are particularly relevant here, as they created an archive so the institution could keep track of its financial situation. The archive was created in reference to short-term needs, as financial records of donations would become outdated in a few decades, but the books were an archive nonetheless. The individual who created the records, both of conversion rates at the Seminary and lists of

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<sup>77</sup> RG 29, box 15, folders 1-7, Mount Holyoke College Missionaries Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.  
<https://aspace.fivecolleges.edu/repositories/2/resources/324>.

<sup>78</sup> Lyon, *Mary Lyon, Documents and Writings*: 211.



donations to missionary causes, thus contributed to the creation of an archive outside of the one systematically created by Mount Holyoke's leadership.

The Missionaries' Collection also includes a book of autograph memorials from missionary reunions at the Seminary that occurred from 1859 to 1887. The book contains numerous autographs from missionaries present at the reunions, with some signatures also including notes from the signers in English or another language. By collecting signatures, the book's unnamed creator engaged in a form of archival collecting that sought to commemorate the event through the signatures. Some autographs, instead of being written directly in the book, have been cut out of other documents and pasted in the book, more explicitly linking the book to a desire to collect and preserve for future reference and remembrance.<sup>79</sup> The book further connected the creator to Christian missions and faith as they interacted with people viewed as sacrificing their lives for God. It testified to the religious atmosphere the Seminary cultivated to help ensure its continued survival and relevance. Overall, the book of autograph memorials again represents an archive that sought to document Christian faith and commemorate an event and interactions that the book's creator found especially meaningful and worth remembering in the future.

The items discussed so far form an archive created in reference to events occurring at Mount Holyoke Seminary. None of these items discuss events or ideologies held by missionary alumnae serving abroad in the nineteenth century. While the archival holdings from before the 1880s in the collection today center Mount Holyoke and its sponsorship of missionaries, that was not always the case. Missionary alumnae sent numerous gifts back to their alma mater throughout the nineteenth century, including a number of objects now considered archeological

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<sup>79</sup> RG 29, box 15, folder 9, Mount Holyoke College Missionaries Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.  
<https://aspace.fivecolleges.edu/repositories/2/resources/324>.

or ethnographic in nature. Mount Holyoke's staff took these items and assembled them into a display called the Missionary Cabinet. This cabinet's holdings formed one of the first deliberately curated archival collections at Mount Holyoke.

*The Missionary Cabinet: The Other on Display*

In June 1883, Ellen P. Bowers wrote a letter in the Seminary Journal about the goings-on at Mount Holyoke. The beginning of her letter described several recent gifts to the college, including:

She [Dr. Adaline Kelsey, a graduate of the class of '68] brought us some very valuable bronzes - vases, incense-burner, mirror, twenty-five hundred and two thousand years old, and, most interesting of all, a tablet supposed to be three thousand years old, known to have been for one thousand years in the possession of the family from whom it was obtained, and representing the oldest form of worship in China of which we [have] knowledge.<sup>80</sup>

Bowers' description of the tablet, particularly its age and what it represented in terms of historical knowledge and religious history, points to her pleasure and gratitude for receiving such a gift. Bowers also explained how Dr. Kelsey procured the bronzes from their previous owner, saying, "Whatever induced the owner to part with such a venerated object? Slavery to opium! But he did not know that it was to go into the hands of a foreigner, or to leave the country."<sup>81</sup> While Bowers appeared to sympathize with the previous owner and their struggles, she did not appear to regret receiving the bronzes, nor did her letter express any disgust or concern with the questionable means through which Dr. Kelsey obtained them. At best, Bowers' letter reads as blasé about the health and future of the bronze's previous owner, as well as unconcerned with the

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<sup>80</sup> Printed Journal Letter 15: June 16, 1883, rg22-s01-b02-i024. Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, USA.

<sup>81</sup> Printed Journal Letter 15.

morality of Dr. Kelsey's actions. The benefit of the bronzes to the Seminary outweighed the ethics of how they were acquired.

Dr. Kelsey obtained the bronzes while serving as a medical missionary in China for the Presbyterian Missionary Society.<sup>82</sup> She was not the only missionary alumna to send items back to Mount Holyoke. Many missionaries gifted objects from the cultures and societies they worked in to their alma mater. Over time, Seminary faculty took these objects and organized them in the Missionary Cabinet, a collection of various objects collected by missionary alumnae from all over the world organized according to the geographic region each object originated in.<sup>83</sup> These objects ranged from ethnographic objects such as spoons, pens, clothing, and jewelry, to books, maps and photographs, and rocks and minerals. At some point, the objects were added to the Missionaries Collection as Mount Holyoke developed an archival space in the twentieth century, and in 2003 they were moved to the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum (MHCAM), where they are still kept today.<sup>84</sup> A number of these objects are searchable in the museum's digital collections, and can be found by searching for the phrase "missionary cabinet."

Notably, many of the objects from the missionary cabinet in the MHCAM's records have sparse provenance and catalogue records. Provenance, defined as information about an object's ownership history and how new owners acquired it, or alternatively where an object was found or recovered, is listed as unknown for many items from the cabinet.<sup>85</sup> For example, the record for MH 2003.26.19—a spoon from South Africa—lists the spoon's maker as unknown, and does not

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<sup>82</sup> Adaline D. H. Kelsey papers, MS 0850, Box 1. Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, USA. <https://aspace.fivecolleges.edu/repositories/2/resources/326>.

<sup>83</sup> Anna Cheney Edwards, *Catalogue of Cabinet of Articles Sent by Missionaries to Mt. Hol. Fem. Sem. All before 1892*, n.d., Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.

<sup>84</sup> Receipt, RG 29, box 11, folder 4, Mount Holyoke College Missionaries Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, USA.

<sup>85</sup> Shelley Sweeney, "The Ambiguous Origins of the Archival Principle of 'Provenance,'" *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 43, no. 2 (May 2008): 193–194, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lac.0.0017>.

include a date or range of dates when the spoon was made or when it was sent to Mount Holyoke. The only evidence as to its provenance is in a narrative inscription on the spoon's handle that reads, "Koffir Spoon. S.G. Ripley", with S.G. Ripley presumably the name of the missionary who gifted it.<sup>86</sup> A catalogue of items in the Missionaries Collection, written in the 1890s, offers slightly more information as to the provenance of the item. While it does not include any useful dates establishing when the spoon was made and sent to the Seminary, its presence in the catalogue as item #23 under the "Zulu" category establishes it was created and sent to the Seminary before 1892.<sup>87</sup> Even so, the lack of information included in the catalogue from the 1890s suggests why the MHCAM's records are so sparse: the missionaries sending the objects and the faculty arranging them into a collection did not consider information about how and when these objects were acquired to be important.

While the sparse records for the koffir spoon initially appear somewhat innocuous, the lack of information becomes much more concerning in relation to other objects from the cabinet. MH 7.V.M. is a whale tooth necklace from Hawaii, also called a *lei niho palaoa*. Similar to the koffir spoon, the MHCAM has little information about the necklace. The necklaces' maker and source and date of acquisition are listed as unknown, though the record does note that it was probably acquired in 1844.<sup>88</sup> The record also does not include any contextual information about what the necklace is and its significance to Hawaiian culture. Searching for "lei niho palaoa" on Google brings up results from other museums with similar necklaces in their collections. The Brooklyn Museum's record, for instance, describes the necklace as "an important symbol worn

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<sup>86</sup> Spoon, MH2003.26.19, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, [https://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=&t=objects&type=ext&f=&s=&record=250&culture=african&op-earliest\\_year=%3E%3D&op-latest\\_year=%3C%3D](https://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=&t=objects&type=ext&f=&s=&record=250&culture=african&op-earliest_year=%3E%3D&op-latest_year=%3C%3D).

<sup>87</sup> Edwards, *Catalogue of Cabinet of Articles Sent by Missionaries to Mt. Hol. Fem. Sem. All before 1892*.

<sup>88</sup> Whale tooth necklace (lei niho palaoa), MH 7.V.M., Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, [https://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=all&t=objects&type=ext&f=&s=&record=0&id\\_number=MH+7.V.M&op-earliest\\_year=%3E%3D&op-latest\\_year=%3C%3D](https://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=all&t=objects&type=ext&f=&s=&record=0&id_number=MH+7.V.M&op-earliest_year=%3E%3D&op-latest_year=%3C%3D).

by the Hawai'ian nobility to indicate their genealogical descent from the gods” that had lost much of its spiritual symbolism by the mid-nineteenth century after missionaries converted most Hawai'ians to Christianity.<sup>89</sup> The lack of information about the necklace in MHCAM's records, as well as in the catalogue from the 1890s, becomes much more concerning with the necklace's cultural context in mind, bringing up questions surrounding the necklace's acquisition and whether or not it was ethical.

The lack of provenance information for these objects, among others included in the missionary cabinet, is in part due to the historical mindset held by the Seminary faculty and students who initially received and preserved them. Their original preservers acted under different presumptions of what should be preserved and how, as well as what information about an object's history and cultural context should be recorded for posterity. Alternatively, some objects in the MHCAM today include cards or tags attached to them with contextual information about the object in question, suggesting that information about objects was recorded but was lost to decay or mismanagement. For instance, the record for MH 2003.26.33—a piece of tapa cloth from the Sandwich Islands—includes transcripts of several cards with varying descriptions of the cloth and its history, all of which claim that the cloth was “part of a dress worn by the Queen of the Sandwich Islands” and some of which note the name of the missionary who gifted the cloth to Mount Holyoke.<sup>90</sup> While the cards are still vague—the card for the tapa cloth does not address how it was acquired, and it is unclear whether the cards were created as educational aids for an audience or to help faculty manage the collection—they are evidence against the notion that records for items in the missionary cabinet were considered unimportant.

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<sup>89</sup> Necklace (Lei Niho Palaoa), X839.3, Arts of the Pacific Islands, Brooklyn Museum. <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/121093>.

<sup>90</sup> Kapa cloth; tapa cloth; bark cloth, MH 2003.26.33, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, [https://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=all&t=objects&type=ext&f=&s=&record=0&id\\_number=MH+2003.26.33&op-earliest\\_year=%3E%3D&op-latest\\_year=%3C%3D](https://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=all&t=objects&type=ext&f=&s=&record=0&id_number=MH+2003.26.33&op-earliest_year=%3E%3D&op-latest_year=%3C%3D).

Reasons for the lack of records or other information about the objects in the cabinet could also be connected to how libraries and museums operated in the 1800s. In the early nineteenth century in England and the United States, museums, libraries, and archives' roles and physical spaces often overlapped. Elite patrons saw these institutions as serving similar functions to educate the lower classes and act as visible signs of civilization and progress.<sup>91</sup> Museums and libraries in particular were seen as being mutually dependent on one another, as described by Lisa Given and Lianne McTavish in their article "What's Old is New Again": "The museum illustrates the objects of which the library tells; the library describes the objects which the museum exhibits."<sup>92</sup> In other words, museums included physical evidence of concepts and ideas described in books, while the library provided books contextualizing museum holdings. This changed over the course of the nineteenth century as museums, libraries, and archives differentiated themselves and became associated with unique functions requiring specialized training.<sup>93</sup> However, the combination of library and museum functions makes sense in the context of the Missionary Cabinet, as the Seminary had numerous books and missionary publications discussing foreign cultures. The Cabinet could have been used as an illustration of the cultures missionaries encountered without much written information included in the cabinet itself, as students were expected to turn to the library to learn more about the objects it held.

Yet regardless of whether or not the cabinet included more detailed provenance records for its contents, the use of the missionary cabinet to learn about other cultures was influenced by racism and colonization. Throughout the nineteenth century, European countries colonized the globe, in particular Africa and parts of Asia. To justify colonization and imperial rule, European

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<sup>91</sup> Lisa M. Given and Lianne McTavish, "What's Old Is New Again: The Reconvergence of Libraries, Archives, and Museums in the Digital Age," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 80, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1086/648461>.

<sup>92</sup> Given and McTavish, "What's Old is New Again": 11.

<sup>93</sup> Given and McTavish, "What's Old is New Again": 14.

countries sought to define the “Other” in contrast to Western, Eurocentric civilization. Texts, archives, and museums played key roles in establishing European dominance and asserting superiority over its colonial possessions.<sup>94</sup> Accordingly, European conquest benefitted museum collections and other social institutions as items from colonized countries were brought back to Europe and put on display.<sup>95</sup> While the Mount Holyoke alumnae who helped create the Missionary Cabinet did not directly engage in colonial governance or violence, they still benefitted from colonial systems as they worked among colonized peoples and procured items of cultural import—sometimes through ethically questionable means—and removed them from their original cultural context.

While the objects sent back to Mount Holyoke and placed in the Missionary Cabinet did serve to expose students to other cultures, the framework through which they were taught about those cultures framed non-European cultures as destined to die out. Extinction discourse, or the belief that foreign, non-Christian races were doomed to extinction, was prominent in the 1800s up to the 1930s and World War II.<sup>96</sup> It became a means of justifying imperial expansion and, in the American case, manifest destiny, as imperial powers justified the destruction and assimilation of non-European cultures on the grounds that they were bound to die out no matter what due to their “savage” customs and heathen beliefs.<sup>97</sup> While non-European cultures could be mourned and studied, their death was considered both inevitable and even necessary for Anglo-Saxon social progress. In this context, anthropology and collecting artifacts from “primitive” societies and cultures became a means for Europeans to preserve the history of other cultures before their perceived extinction.<sup>98</sup> While missionaries’ beliefs on extinction discourse probably varied, with

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<sup>94</sup> Ricardo L. Punzalan and Michelle Caswell, “Critical Directions for Archival Approaches to Social Justice,” *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 86, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 272.

<sup>95</sup> John E. Simmons, *Museums: A History* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016): 150.

<sup>96</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*: 6.

<sup>97</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*: 2-3.

<sup>98</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*: 5, 7.

some believing their work would at least save the souls of the doomed people they converted, and others believing assimilation to European culture could save non-Christians, they generally saw heathen peoples as doomed.<sup>99</sup> Either they converted to Christianity, or they would perish of their own accord.

While the Missionary Cabinet did seek to educate students as to other cultures and peoples, it did so in a larger context that posited non-European, non-Christian peoples were lesser than Anglo-Saxon Christians and doomed to die out or be assimilated. The artifacts in the Cabinet were representative not of historical continuity, of a culture and its way of life continuing from a distant past to the present, but of a perceived historical endpoint. The missionaries Mount Holyoke cultivated and sent out into foreign fields were raised in a context that claimed heathen peoples were doomed to perish because their culture and customs did not conform to that of Christian Anglo-Saxons. The objects Mount Holyoke alumnae sent back represented cultures thought to die out in due time, whether through their assimilation to Christianity or through all their practitioners dying out. While the missionary cabinet was an important step forward for Mount Holyoke's early archive, it was created to justify missionary work on the grounds that other cultures were lesser, savage, and in need of salvation or elimination.

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<sup>99</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*: 5, 143.



CHAPTER 3:  
IN THE NAME OF PROGRESS:  
THE MISSIONARIES COLLECTION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1908, Mount Holyoke unveiled a tablet commemorating the 176 alumnae who served as missionaries in the institution's first fifty years of history. The idea to create the tablet originated several years prior at an alumnae banquet. At the banquet, alumna Ellen Parsons suggested that Mount Holyoke create an object commemorating its missionaries on the grounds that, "if great colleges and universities erect memorials to their soldiers who have died on the battlefield, why should not Mount Holyoke erect a monument to her soldiers who have given their lives in the foreign mission field."<sup>100</sup> Three years later at the commemoration for the completed tablet, Ellen Parsons gave a short speech elaborating on the tablet's significance. She said:

...the ideal represented by the tablet was a living issue and never more so than to-day. The command that carried them [missionaries] to the far-away fields of labor is ringing to-day. The work must go on, others must go,—and are going. Foreign missions are bound up in the progress of civilization, with the freedom of nations. The tablet was not conceived, carried out or put up to applaud, but because the givers of the tablet are loyal

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<sup>100</sup> "Founders Days Exercises Held At Mt Holyoke College" by Springfield Reporter, November 11, 1908, RG 29, box 1, folder 1, Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.

to the past. The tablet says that these good women began a work that is not done but which must be done. Their work will fail if not carried on, the past is not sufficient.<sup>101</sup>

Parsons presented the missionaries not as representatives of the nineteenth century when they lived and worked, but as a heritage for twentieth century missionaries. While the tablet commemorated missionaries from the century prior, Parsons positioned it as representing twentieth century values of civilizational progress and internationalism. The tablet represented a moment of Mount Holyoke reinterpreting its missionary past to contextualize its missionary present, as it sought to establish precedence for the newfound ideological values characterizing its missionary service.

The missionary tablet and Parson's view of its significance to Mount Holyoke highlight the major intellectual and ideological shifts that transformed the institution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. By the late 1880s, Mount Holyoke Seminary had fallen behind the academic standards set by other colleges and universities. Its model for women's higher education, considered revolutionary when it was founded in 1837, had since lost its prestige as other women's colleges were founded and elaborated on Mount Holyoke's formula. Furthermore, by the late nineteenth century a new model for universities had spread throughout Europe and the Americas. This university model centered research and scholarship, the formation of academic disciplines, and the development of curriculums among other changes.<sup>102</sup> Mount Holyoke Seminary, which still retained many of the academic standards and regulations from its founding over fifty years before, was out of step with other higher education institutions. As its alumnae searched for careers and joined social circles, they became more and more aware of the

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<sup>101</sup> *Springfield Reporter*. "Founders Day Exercises Held at Mt Holyoke College." November 11, 1908. RG 29, box 1, folder 1, Mount Holyoke College Missionaries Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, USA.

<sup>102</sup> Davies, *Empiricism and History*: 32-33.

Seminary's depreciating educational value as they interacted with more qualified collegiate graduates.<sup>103</sup>

By 1887, the year of the Seminary's fiftieth anniversary, the alumnae took a stand on the issue and resolved that Mount Holyoke should call itself a college and establish a curriculum meeting collegiate standards.<sup>104</sup> The board of trustees responded a year later by adding a collegiate department and changing the institution's name to Mount Holyoke Seminary and College. The new department quickly swelled in number and soon rendered the Seminary program obsolete. In 1892, four years after the name change, the Seminary program only had eight applicants. The next year in 1893, a new charter officially ended the Seminary program and changed Mount Holyoke's name to Mount Holyoke College.<sup>105</sup>

The trustees and alumnae did not act alone in raising Mount Holyoke's academic standards. In 1890, they hired Elizabeth Mead as the institution's 10th president, and she made much needed changes to the College's structure and hiring expectations. She abolished old rules from the Seminary days, including the daily schedule and self-reporting system, and improved educational standards among the staff by encouraging current staff to travel and attend graduate school and PhD programs while simultaneously hiring new staff with graduate and PhD degrees.<sup>106</sup> Throughout her presidency, the College built more academic buildings and cottages for student living, in so doing moving away from the original, more restrictive Seminary building and its asylum-esque design.<sup>107</sup> When Mead left the college in 1900, Mary Woolley became president of Mount Holyoke, and she continued improving Mount Holyoke's academic standards.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*: 224.

<sup>104</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*: 223-224

<sup>105</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*: 224-226.

<sup>106</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*: 226-227.

<sup>107</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*: 230-231.

<sup>108</sup> Horowitz, *Alma Mater*: 232-233.

During both Mead and Woolley's presidencies, which encompassed the years 1890-1937, the archive took major strides forward. The 1930s in particular saw the Mount Holyoke archives take on a physical shape. During the 1934-1935 school year, Williston Library began renovations, which included building two new rooms meant to house archival documents: the Mary Cleveland Room which held documents related to Mount Holyoke history, and the Treasure Room which housed rare books and the college's manuscript archives.<sup>109</sup> The Missionaries Collection also saw major changes in this period, as the majority of documents in the collection today date from between the 1880s to the late 1930s. These documents include missionary publications, newspaper clippings, photographs, catalogue records, and other manuscript evidence signifying the variety of missionary-related materials Mount Holyoke students regularly interacted with.

As Mount Holyoke transformed from a Seminary to a College, its longheld focus on conversion and religious fervour declined and was superseded by empirical thought and progressivism. As its ideological foundation changed, the College reinterpreted its missionary past through contemporary values of internationalism and social progress. Yet even as Mount Holyoke adapted and its missionary archive transformed to reflect contemporary values, neither fully repudiated the racist discourses underpinning missionary service. The Collection portrays some evidence of conflicting ideological viewpoints regarding social darwinism and ethnocentrism, but ultimately reflects acceptance or outright endorsement of these values in the name of bringing progress and Anglo-Saxon civilization to the rest of the globe. The composition of the Missionaries Collection, by excluding archival holdings representing dissent towards racism and ethnocentrism, exemplified unquestioned ideologies of racial superiority and

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<sup>109</sup> Bertha E. Blakely, "Annual Reports for 1934-1935" in *Annual Reports 1922/23 through 1935/36* (Mount Holyoke College, 1936), LD 7085.2: 4-6.

American exceptionalism underlying Mount Holyoke's vision of its historical significance in the international realm.

*Who Preserves History: Bertha Blakely and the Archives*

Tracing the history of the missionaries' collection is complicated by not knowing where it was physically located in its earlier history. While records of donations to the Seminary help locate when objects in the Missionary Cabinet entered the Seminary, there is no clear evidence as to where the cabinet was located or who maintained it. For the first several decades of its existence, Mount Holyoke only consisted of one building, a four-storied structure modelled off of a dwelling house that included both student and teachers' living quarters, classrooms, a library, and a dining room and kitchen, among other rooms. It is likely the Missionary Cabinet and other archives were housed there before other buildings were constructed. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, Mount Holyoke began adding other buildings that could have housed its burgeoning archive. In particular, 1870 saw Mount Holyoke complete a separate building to house its growing library, as well as hire its first full-time librarian to manage the collections.<sup>110</sup> While library records from the 1870s to the 1900s do not address archives or preservation as central concerns for its staff, the establishment of a separate library building is important to note, as the twentieth century saw the library assume responsibility for actively collecting and preserving archival documents.

In 1900, the former head librarian stepped down and appointed her successor: Bertha Blakely, a Mount Holyoke alumna of the Class of 1893. Throughout her career as Head Librarian, Blakely asserted the need to develop and preserve a robust archive to promote research and empiricism. Much of the evidence documenting the archives' location and

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<sup>110</sup> Mary O. Nutting, "Annual Reports 1870/71 through 1893/94" (Mount Holyoke College, 1900): 95-97.

treatment in the library comes from her annual reports to Mount Holyoke's president, as well as articles she wrote for the Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly and a book she published in 1952 about the history of the Mount Holyoke library from 1837 to 1937. Blakely's centrality to the development of Mount Holyoke's archive is more directly established in an Alumnae Quarterly article from 1960, which described how "Miss Blakely, as college archivist and custodian of the Mary Cleveland room for historical documents, has worked in the library continuously since her "retirement" in 1936."<sup>111</sup> The article in question commemorated Blakely's 90th birthday.

The first instance Blakely directly addressed the need to improve Mount Holyoke's archival collections appeared in her annual report for the 1904-1905 school year. Blakely wrote:

The librarian has frequent requests for material as well as for references to books and articles about Mary Lyon and the earlier and later history of Mount Holyoke. Our resources are inadequate to supply this demand, both because the ground has not been well covered and because much of what has been published is out of print. Requests for files of our catalogues, or for those of special years, and for numbers of *The Mount Holyoke* to complete files already formed, come from large libraries. The library is unable to supply many of these. Gifts of catalogues, *Mount Holyokes*, and any other documents relating to the history of the College are solicited that the library may serve a wider public.<sup>112</sup>

In previous reports, Blakely had referenced instances of students accessing archival documents for research, but this would be the first instance of her elucidating the importance of building an archive, as well as the need to treat archival documents as distinct from the library's other holdings. Her initial request for "catalogs, *Mount Holyokes*, and any other documents" to fill gaps in the library's collections speaks to a reconsideration of these items' historical significance.

The College's newfound focus on empirical research encouraged preserving more materials

<sup>111</sup> "Miss Blakely on Her Ninetieth Birthday," *Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly Winter 1960*, February 1, 1960, Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections: 173.

<sup>112</sup> Bertha E. Blakely, "1904-1905" in *Annual Reports 1901/02 through 1910/11* (Mount Holyoke College, 1911): 9, LD 7085.2.

documenting the college's history, which led Blakely to prioritize acquiring archival documents from the Seminary years that had previously been overlooked or discarded by earlier staff and librarians. However, that is not to say Blakely's collecting practices were perfect. Many years later in 1962, Blakely's successor Flora Ludington noted that, "Curiously enough our [archival] holdings of college as distinct from seminary days are spotty", suggesting that Blakely prioritized collecting archival materials from Mount Holyoke's seminary years over the college years she lived and worked through.<sup>113</sup>

Nevertheless, Blakely's early request soliciting gifts for the College's archival collections received a quick response. Several years later, in her report for 1909-1910, Blakely mentioned that the library had created a collection of books used throughout Mount Holyoke's history, including "text-books and others used in connection with the courses, hymn books used in the services, and books required for admission."<sup>114</sup> Donors included "several of the alumnae and friends of alumnae have given books for this collection," while other books in the collection "[had] been taken from among the duplicates."<sup>115</sup> Duplicates, in this case, referred to duplicates of books kept in the general stacks that were open to students and staff. Blakely explained why the duplicates were moved from open stacks to a special collection, writing, "The main object [of the new collection] is to illustrate the educational standards for the time, and the progress in method."<sup>116</sup> In other words, books once kept for their educational value were reassessed on the basis of their historical significance, then moved and preserved accordingly.

The library received numerous other gifts, many consisting of materials related to Mount Holyoke's history, over the next fifteen years up to 1917. Archival donations included

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<sup>113</sup> Flora Ludington, "1961-1962." in *1957/58 through 1963/64* (Mount Holyoke College, 1964): 4, LD 7085.2.

<sup>114</sup> Bertha E. Blakely, "1909-1910." In *Annual Reports 1901/02 through 1910/11*: 5.

<sup>115</sup> Blakely, "1909-1910." In *Annual Reports 1901/02 through 1910/11*: 5.

<sup>116</sup> Blakely, "1909-1910." In *Annual Reports 1901/02 through 1910/11*: 5.

biographical records of Mount Holyoke students who worked as foreign missionaries, alumnae records, donations of Mount Holyoke and Amherst College memorabilia from Edward Hitchcock, annual catalogues, a portrait of Mary Lyon and other artwork, early publications of the *Mount Holyoke*, letters and manuscript materials related to Mary Lyon, circulars, textbooks, newspapers and college programs, scrap books, and more.<sup>117</sup> The college's 75th anniversary celebration in 1913 further accelerated donations of archival materials as the college remembered and commemorated its history through its archive. Blakely took part in archiving the 75th anniversary for posterity, as she wrote in her report for the same year: "The librarian was Chronicler for the Seventy-fifth Anniversary and preserved copies of all the printed matter sent out in connection with raising the endowment and with preparations for the celebration."<sup>118</sup> However, the United States' entry into World War I in 1917 pushed Blakely and the library to shift focus to maintaining the general collections in the face of shortages from Europe, and archival holdings were deprioritized.<sup>119</sup>

Over ten years later, in response to Mount Holyoke's fast approaching Centenary in 1937, Blakely recorded "a growing interest in such documents, and in letters from students and teachers, and in books revealing the life and thought of the last one hundred years."<sup>120</sup> Mount Holyoke's alumnae and trustees helped to renew interest in the College's archival collections, as both the Alumnae Association and the Trustees hired researchers to write histories of the College for the Centenary celebrations. Blakely, who had identified a need for a library expansion and remodel back in 1920, became concerned with creating a proper space for archival documents as attention towards them increased. In response to the Alumnae Association hiring Sydney

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<sup>117</sup> Blakely, *Annual Reports 1901/02 through 1910/11*; Blakely, *Annual Reports 1911/12 through 1921/22*. Mount Holyoke College, 1922. LD 7085.2.

<sup>118</sup> Blakely, "1911-1913." In *Annual Reports 1911/12 through 1921/22*: 8.

<sup>119</sup> Blakely, "1917-1920." In *Annual Reports 1911/12 through 1921/22*.

<sup>120</sup> Bertha Blakely, "1928-1929." In *Annual Reports 1922/23 through 1935/36* (Mount Holyoke College, 1911): 5, LD 7085.2.



McLean as their historian in 1928, Blakely wrote, “This plan makes more pressing the need for classification, mounting, and filing of manuscripts, and early and rare printed documents in the library archives. Space is lacking for their suitable care and time for their proper management.”<sup>121</sup>

Several years later, an unnamed librarian—likely Blakely herself, as she frequently refers to herself as “librarian” in her reports and not by name—traveled to several colleges and libraries for “advice and information about the care and preservation of college archives, especially treatment of manuscripts.”<sup>122</sup> That same year, the library received a reunion gift from the Class of 1929 of \$2000 for “the mounting and binding of the collection of Mary Lyon letters, and the cataloguing and arrangement in suitable cases of other manuscript and printed records significant in the history of the Seminary and of the College.”<sup>123</sup> But while the work of classifying and arranging manuscripts was well underway, the archives were not yet housed in a specific physical space. While the library initially planned to undergo extensive renovations in 1930, a project that included adding a room for the growing archive, the beginning of the Great Depression delayed construction until the 1934-1935 school year. As the library began remodeling, it also received a \$2500 donation from a man named Newcomb Cleveland “to make the room set aside for the collection of books comprising and illustrating Mount Holyoke’s history a memorial to his sister, the late Mrs. Samuel W. Patterson (Mary Cleveland of the Class of 1893).”<sup>124</sup> Renovations also created the Treasure Room, also called the Skinner Memorial, to house rare books and the Mount Holyoke manuscript archives.<sup>125</sup> The library, with its archive now more securely housed in particular spaces designated for its upkeep, completed remodels in

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<sup>121</sup> Blakely, “1928-1929.” In *Annual Reports 1922/23 through 1935/36*: 5, 11.

<sup>122</sup> Blakely, “1930-1931.” In *Annual Reports 1922/23 through 1935/36*: 8.

<sup>123</sup> Blakely, “1930-1931.” In *Annual Reports 1922/23 through 1935/36*: V.

<sup>124</sup> Blakely, “1934-1935.” In *Annual Reports 1922/23 through 1935/36*: 5-6.

<sup>125</sup> Blakely, “1935-1936.” In *Annual Reports 1922/23 through 1935/36*: 4.

1937 in time for Mount Holyoke's Centenary celebrations. Although Blakely had retired as head librarian the year prior, she continued to assist her successor Flora Ludington and provide support, particularly when it came to the library's archival collections.

Blakely's enduring support for developing Mount Holyoke's archive derived from her connecting archives and scholarship to the needs of social progress. In May 1935, Blakely wrote an article for the *Alumnae Quarterly* where she stated:

Certainly a major need of today is intelligence to transform our human society into an order embodying the values of truth, goodness and beauty, which the human spirit has discovered, but which are not yet dominant. The development of intelligence is the product of a liberal education. The intelligent mind needs significant records of man's discoveries and experiences, his foolish and his wise experiments, his failures and triumphs, for a basis of thought on today's problems.<sup>126</sup>

Here Blakely's interest in the archive comes into focus. The archive was one of the "significant records of man's discoveries and experiences" Blakely saw as necessary for one's personal development. Only by understanding the past could students properly develop a perspective on modern problems and address them intelligently and effectively. Both the library and the archive were key elements of developing human intelligence in order to transform society and ensure its technological and moral progress.

### *Mary Woolley and the Shift to Christian Internationalism*

Blakely's focus on the need for "intelligence to transform our human society" meshed with the intellectual and ideological concerns of Mount Holyoke's then president, Mary Woolley. The two incidentally worked at Mount Holyoke for nearly the exact same period of time: Blakely

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<sup>126</sup> Blakely, Bertha E. "The Library Building: Its Extension a Response to Twentieth Century Functions." *Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly*, May 1, 1935. Rg32-s02-1935-05-01. Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections. <https://compass.fivecolleges.edu/object/mtholyoke:57832#page/1/mode/2up>.

worked as Head Librarian from 1900 to 1936, while Woolley was President of the College from 1901 to 1937. The shared ideological perspectives between Blakely and Woolley are highlighted best by a speech given at Mount Holyoke's Centenary Celebrations in 1937. Historian Mary Ritter Beard gave a speech in which she described Woolley's ideological perspective towards education, saying, "For her [Mary Woolley], education is related to the needs of society; of humanity at large now struggling in times dark and confused for a policy designed to procure for men and women human rights, human dignity, and security, amid the insensate pressure for a retreat to barbarism."<sup>127</sup> Both Woolley and Blakely perceived education as a necessary aspect of societal progress. Education ensured humanity as a whole could better understand and strive towards universal values and human rights. Without it, civilization would stall and degenerate.

As Blakely improved the College's archives, Woolley played a substantial role in redefining the College's ideological foundation and perceived historical significance. Part of Woolley's ability to do so derived from her association with Mary Lyon. In the words of Amherst College's President Stanley King, "Mary Lyon has become a symbol for the education, the higher education of women, and Miss Woolley in her lifetime has lived to see herself become such a symbol, for Mary Lyon and Mary Woolley are associated in the minds of all of us with the education of women on the college level."<sup>128</sup> Woolley's image as Lyon's ideological successor meant she had an exceptional impact on how the College redefined its history and ideological commitments, particularly in relation to its missionary history as she emphasized Mount Holyoke's internationalism and social work over its historical interest in conversion and religious revivals.

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<sup>127</sup> Bertha E. Blakely, *The Centenary of Mount Holyoke College : Friday and Saturday, May Seventh and Eighth, Nineteen Hundred and Thirty-Seven* (South Hadley, MA: The College, 1937): 59.

<sup>128</sup> Blakely, *The Centenary*: 120.

Mary Woolley's advocacy derived from the progressive movements that swept America between the 1890s and 1920s, a period described today as the Progressive Era. The Progressive Era was a response to deep-rooted inequalities and unjust systems that emerged following the Civil War. After the war, industrialization rapidly expanded in urban centers. Technological advancements accompanied industrialization, including streetcars, automobiles, electricity, developments in construction, and others.<sup>129</sup> These changes led to economic growth and job opportunities, which in turn facilitated increased immigration from Eastern Europe and China and the shift of rural populations to urban centers.<sup>130</sup> However, inequalities ran rampant. Wealth inequality became more and more apparent throughout the late nineteenth century. By 1900, one percent of the US population owned 87% of the wealth, while over twelve percent—or one eighth of the population—lived in poverty.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, industrialization and technological advancement made cities more dangerous environments, issues exacerbated by government corruption and a lack of oversight. Many utilities, transit systems, and other features of public life were owned by private enterprises, and these businesses frequently bribed government officials to overlook shady practices and not implement reforms or regulate business' practices.<sup>132</sup> As such, poor urban families struggled in subpar living and working conditions while businesses exploited them for their money and labor.

While rural and urban working people protested and demanded change throughout the late nineteenth century, their calls for reform began to have a more significant impact on government, social, and economic policy in the 1890s and onward. While progressivism in the period took on many different forms as people questioned how to best address society's

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<sup>129</sup> Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s-1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007): 20.

<sup>130</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 15, 23.

<sup>131</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 7.

<sup>132</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 25-26.

problems, reformers generally agreed that ideas about limited government and personal responsibility for one's lot in life had grown outdated and no longer made sense in industrializing, urban spaces where people had far less control over their circumstances and environment. Rather, if citizens acknowledged their responsibility to help others and worked together—in other words, if they developed a collective social morality—they could reform society.<sup>133</sup>

Women's organizations in particular advocated for progressive reforms throughout the period. Even though their goals and scope differed, their work frequently brought members into contact with struggling communities in cities, especially poor women and children.<sup>134</sup> Women's organizations came to construe justice for women, children, and families as fundamental to producing a socially just democratic society, and in turn either altered their organization's original intent or formed new organizations to advocate for urban reform<sup>135</sup>. Throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, women's experience in reform movements moved them into public spaces and politics as they applied their gendered experiences to societal issues and called for the foundation of public welfare institutions and services.<sup>136</sup> Gendered experience also played a key role in moving the woman's suffrage movement forward, as suffrage organizations appealed to women by claiming the vote would allow them to pass reforms benefiting their families and communities<sup>137</sup>.

Mount Holyoke, as a women's college with a historical precedent for encouraging altruism, charity, and self-sacrifice in its student body, encouraged its students and alumnae to act as agents of social change and reform alongside other women in other social locations. As

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<sup>133</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 28.

<sup>134</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 42.

<sup>135</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 42, 46.

<sup>136</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 88.

<sup>137</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 133.

philanthropy and reform became more central aspects of Mount Holyoke's identity, teachers and students alike recontextualized the institution's history through the ideological lenses of progressivism. In a speech from the 75th Anniversary celebrations in 1913, titled "Mount Holyoke's Part in Social, Religious and Philanthropic Movements as a Seminary", Marion Gaylord Atwell described Mary Lyon as "the original woman progressive."<sup>138</sup> Atwell continued, "She and her successors in that pioneer period were essentially prophets and apostles of the modern social service."<sup>139</sup> Lyon's focus on disinterested benevolence became evidence of how Mount Holyoke had always centered progressive, service-oriented ideologies. As Atwell noted later in her speech, "the Seminary taught that the end of living is service for others-in the little world of personal relationships and the larger world of human kind", reconstructing the religious-minded ideology of disinterested benevolence as a way of building collective social responsibility.<sup>140</sup>

As the College community redefined Mount Holyoke's past in relation to social work and progressivism, Mary Woolley played a particular role in recontextualizing the goals of its missionaries. At the Centenary celebrations, Woolley gave a speech titled, "Mount Holyoke in the International Field", in which Mount Holyoke's missionary alumnae featured prominently as Woolley recounted the history of Mount Holyoke's international influence. Yet Woolley's speech did not touch on how missionaries sought to convert people to Christianity. Instead, she described how, "a host of Mount Holyoke alumnae, conspicuous and inconspicuous, have helped to further world understanding." While her statement was technically true, it eschewed mention

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<sup>138</sup> Bertha E. Blakely, *The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary* (South Hadley, MA: The College, 1912): 60.

<sup>139</sup> Blakely, *The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary*: 60.

<sup>140</sup> Blakely, *The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary*: 61.

of nineteenth century missionaries' assimilationist intent in order to reconstruct the alumnae as promoting international relations through their service.<sup>141</sup>

Woolley's speech also focused on the social and educational work missionaries had done in various fields. She argued, "'These missionaries were first of all educators" and "In every country to which the alumnae went, they were founders and builders of schools. No channel of Mount Holyoke's influence has been wider, deeper or more constant than this of education."<sup>142</sup> Woolley did not mention how these schools were founded to convert students to Protestant Christianity, only mentioning it tangentially when arguing that Mary Lyon founded Mount Holyoke with an international vision in mind: "It [Mary Lyon's vision] interpreted "salvation" in terms of the individual rather than of the world-wide family, but its understanding of what is essential to the realization of internationalism is singularly akin to that which the world is approaching."<sup>143</sup> Woolley's speech exemplified how the College sought to define its missionary enterprise as based in internationalism and social work while obfuscating the nuances of millenarianism and civilizational assimilation that characterized nineteenth century missionary service.

*What Goes Unsaid: Missionary Race(ism) in the Archive*

Even though Woolley's speech was about internationalism, it rarely addressed the role of race in international relations. While she highlighted the work Mount Holyoke missionaries had achieved in various countries, she rarely described the impact of their work in reference to the people of those nations, nor the racial relations between missionaries and the communities they served. The closest she came to discussing Mount Holyoke's stance on race was when she

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<sup>141</sup> Blakely, *The Centenary*: 39.

<sup>142</sup> Blakely, *The Centenary*: 34-35.

<sup>143</sup> Blakely, *The Centenary*: 40.

described how the College's student body had become "cosmopolitan" since World War I. After listing the many countries of origin students had come from, Woolley noted, "I have omitted our first cousins, English, Canadian, Scotch, whom we have welcomed, for they hardly seem to belong within the designation of "foreign.""<sup>144</sup> While she did not explain how she decided which nationalities were and weren't "foreign", her phrasing deliberately distinguished Anglo-Saxon nationalities from others. English, Canadian, and Scotch students belonged to the Mount Holyoke community in a way other nationalities, through their categorization as "foreign", did not.

Woolley's evasion of race in her speech is particularly notable considering how discourses about race proliferated in the United States throughout her presidency. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, immigrants from Eastern Europe and Asia flooded into the United States, provoking anti-immigration sentiments among native-born Americans who saw immigrants as a threat to democracy.<sup>145</sup> In response, Congress passed numerous laws restricting immigration throughout the period, including the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, and in 1903 approved naturalization requirements centered on assimilating and civilizing immigrants before granting them citizenship.<sup>146</sup> Additionally, the United States had begun expanding territorially at the turn of the century, annexing both Hawaii and the Philippines in 1898. In regards to the Philippines, both President McKinley and his successor Theodore Roosevelt argued the Filipino people were incapable of self-governance and thus benefitted from American imperialism: an argument based on presumptions of American racial superiority.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Blakely, *The Centenary*: 39.

<sup>145</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*: 191.

<sup>146</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 107-109.

<sup>147</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed*: 203.



Both imperialism and immigration policies were influenced by the theory of social darwinism. In 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in which he described his theory of evolution based on natural selection.<sup>148</sup> Although *On the Origin of Species* did not apply Darwin's theories to human societies, other scholars did soon after. In 1864, British philosopher Herbert Spencer coined the term "survival of the fittest", reasoning that Darwinist principles could be equally applicable to human societies.<sup>149</sup> Spencer's theories influenced William Graham Sumner, who became the United States' leading Social Darwinist and first sociologist in the 1870s. Sumner applied Spencer's ideas about *laissez-faire* government, natural selection, and survival of the fittest to human society, and viewed American society and distribution of wealth as exemplary of the natural order of human society.<sup>150</sup> Spencer and Sumner's ideas found support among America's upper classes, who used social darwinism as a way of legitimizing economic inequality by claiming the lower classes—often poorer immigrants—were biologically inferior and should not be helped because it would disrupt the process of natural selection.<sup>151</sup>

Social darwinists were divided on whether or not the United States and other imperial powers should engage in imperialist policy, but their beliefs ultimately derived from a desire to justify racism and economic exploitation. Spencer, for instance, opposed imperialism on the grounds that inferior civilizations could threaten the West by tarnishing the racial purity of white society, and furthermore could receive social welfare benefits from the American government that would allow them to survive in the world contrary to the principles of natural selection.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*: 196.

<sup>149</sup> Rutledge M. Dennis, "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race," *The Journal of Negro Education* 64, no. 3 (July 1, 1995): 244, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2967206>.

<sup>150</sup> Dennis, "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race": 244.

<sup>151</sup> Sven Beckert, "Democracy in the Age of Capital," in *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 211-212.

<sup>152</sup> Dennis, "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race": 244.

Two other Social Darwinists from the late nineteenth century, Karl Pearson and Benjamin Kidd, argued imperialism was beneficial to both colonizer and the colonized, as it brought civilization to inferior races and ensured the colonizer's political and economic survival.<sup>153</sup> In general, the United States accepted social darwinism and used it as a basepoint to justify national interests, as in the cases of immigration policy and colonizing Hawaii and the Philippines. Social darwinism was useful precisely because it offered a framework through which politicians, upper classes, and other interest groups could justify policies based in racism and European superiority.<sup>154</sup>

Mount Holyoke, by presenting its missionary past and present as centered on progressive values and internationalism, implicated itself in the racial discourses of the day. Missionary work was tied up in questions of race, colonialism, and imperialism, whether or not Mount Holyoke was willing to address that reality. Furthermore, missionary organizations found social darwinism to be a useful tool in justifying missionary involvement in other countries. Though missionaries did critique imperialism and notions of Western superiority, particularly in the 1920s and 30s following World War I, they often fell back on social darwinism and ethnocentrism when they felt the missionary enterprise was threatened. Ultimately, missionaries assumed Christianity was superior to other religions, and social darwinism was a powerful rhetoric to buttress that presumption. Mount Holyoke, with strong connections to both the past and present of missionary work, chose to quietly accept these racist rhetorics rather than repudiate them.

Mount Holyoke's Missionaries Collection represents the College's acceptance of social darwinist and ethnocentric ideas in the early twentieth century. The majority of documents in the collection date from the 1900s to late 1930s and include a variety of missionary publications,

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<sup>153</sup> Dennis, "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race": 245.

<sup>154</sup> Dennis, "Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race": 244.

such as newspaper clippings, missionary newsletters and leaflets, letters, and more. Although these documents include some evidence of conflicting ideological viewpoints regarding social darwinism and ethnocentrism, the majority accept and rely on these ideologies as a way of justifying missionary activity and their goal of bringing progress to the world. The composition of the Missionaries Collection thus exemplified acceptance of and belief in ideologies of racial superiority and American exceptionalism that underlay Mount Holyoke's vision of its historical significance in the international realm.

Because there are too many documents dated to the 1900s through 1930s in the collection to discuss each one in depth, I will focus on a selection of documents that either mention Mount Holyoke or one of its alumnae, or are connected to Mount Holyoke in another capacity. For context, in the 1920s, the chairwoman of the Central Committee for the United Study of Missions Lucy M. W. Peabody led a campaign to raise money to provide permanent buildings for colleges in India, China, and Japan.<sup>155</sup> These institutions were referred to as the Seven Women's Colleges in the Orient in the campaign materials. Mount Holyoke became part of the campaign when it became a sister college to the Woman's Christian College being established in Madras, India.<sup>156</sup> As such, I will focus on several documents related to raising funds for these colleges even if they do not mention Mount Holyoke on the grounds that Mount Holyoke was part of the campaign's advertising.

To begin, in 1912, the Congregational Woman's Board of Missions published volume 57 of their magazine "Life and Light for Woman." This issue was the Mount Holyoke Anniversary

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<sup>155</sup> Rui Kohiyama, "No Nation Can Rise Higher Than Its Women': The Women's Ecumenical Missionary Movement and Tokyo Woman's Christian College," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, ed. Connie Anne Shemo, Barbara Reeves-Ellington, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, American Encounters/Global Interactions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 219.

<sup>156</sup> "Report of the Building Fund Committee" (Joint Committee on Women's Christian Colleges in the Orient, December 1923): 11-13. RG 29, box 4, folder 3, Mount Holyoke College Missionaries Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, USA.

Number, published the year before the College's 75th anniversary. The majority of the articles are about Mount Holyoke alumnae from the past seventy-five years and their work in missionary fields. The articles are not just representative of the racist language and ideologies permeating missionary publications at the time, but also represent how Mount Holyoke's community utilized such rhetoric to construct Mount Holyoke's historical significance in relation to missionary service.

The magazine opened with an explanation for the issue's focus on Mount Holyoke. While the unnamed writer noted several reasons for the Mount Holyoke theme, including that many readers were former or current students at the College, they ended by remarking,

...best of all reasons, however, is the fact that among our missionaries on the field have been and still are scores of women who have transplanted the ideals of their *alma mater* into many of the dark places of the world because they have found those ideals suited to the best development of the awakening girlhood of the world, under the touch of God's transforming power.<sup>157</sup>

Women's status in other countries was a prominent theme in missionary publications, particularly those published by women's branches of missionary organizations. Evangelical Protestants in the period regarded women's status as a sign of American national accomplishment, and often linked treatment of women to other countries' national progress. Social darwinism, which claimed that Protestant treatment of women was evidence that Anglo-Saxons were more evolved than other races, fueled such perceptions and rationalized missionary service abroad.<sup>158</sup> By linking Mount Holyoke ideals to Protestantism and women's development in "the dark places of the world," the

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<sup>157</sup> *Life and Light for Woman*, October 1912, 409. RG 29, box 1, folder 1, Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection, Mount Holyoke Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.

<sup>158</sup> Brumberg, "Zenanas and Girlless Villages": 367.

article implicated the College in spreading progress based on social darwinist views of other races' inferiority and mistreatment of women.

Later articles in the issue, the majority of which were about educational institutions founded by Mount Holyoke missionaries, also reiterated ideas about American exceptionalism and social darwinism to legitimize the missionary enterprise. In the article, "Alice Gordon Gulick in Spain", Elizabeth Gordon wrote about the value of Gulick's school to Spain as a whole: "The Spaniards, through these girls, are shown the value of true Christian culture in individual and in family life. A Spanish editor voiced the convictions of many thinking men when he said, "The regeneration of Spain must begin with the education of her women.""<sup>159</sup> Gordon reiterated the discourse that Protestant Christianity had liberated its women and was thus superior to other religions. Furthermore, the West, or countries like the United States and Great Britain, represented itself as democratic, law-governed, and socially and technologically advanced. As these countries sought to differentiate themselves from quickly developing Asian and Eastern European countries, they identified themselves more and more with Christian values, even as they developed secular discourses for human rights detached from religious belief.<sup>160</sup> Gordon's article conflated Christian faith and Westernization, arguing Christianity was a key element of social and political progress without which the Spanish people could not develop and evolve.

The article "Mother and Daughter," by Grace Knapp—a Mount Holyoke alumna of the class of 1893 who taught at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in Bitlis, Turkey from 1893 to 1913—more explicitly denigrated other religions and the Turkish people as harming social

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<sup>159</sup> Elizabeth Gordon, "Alice Gordon Gulick in Spain," *Life and Light for Woman*, October 1912, 419. RG 29, box 1, folder 1, Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection, Mount Holyoke Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.

<sup>160</sup> Alastair Bonnett, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics, and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 27, 29.

progress, particularly in regards to women's rights and education.<sup>161</sup> Knapp wrote about Bitlis Seminary, describing how teachers "take girls from homes of incredible ignorance, from an environment most stultifying to mind and moral sense" and "surround them with the atmosphere of love and aspiration...they breathe into them the breath of life."<sup>162</sup> Language associated with women's intellectual deprivation, lack of access to the Bible, and inferior access to educational opportunities was common in missionary publications, and presented Christian missions as emancipatory in that they brought such opportunities—associated with Protestant Anglo-Saxon superiority and development—to desperate women.<sup>163</sup> Knapp's reliance on social darwinist rhetoric to make her point was made all the more clear by her describing the Armenian people as the "Yankees' of the Orient" in order to explain why the surrounding community adapted to the Bitlis Seminary so quickly.<sup>164</sup> Social darwinism had long presented Anglo-Saxons as at the top of a hierarchy of races, with other races ranked at varying levels of inferiority.<sup>165</sup> It is unclear what specific model of racial hierarchy Knapp drew on in making her comment, but regardless, Knapp turned to social darwinism to offer an explanation for why this specific group of people adapted so well to Bitlis Seminary and its Christian values, while still denigrating the mass of Turkish people she claimed raised their daughters in ignorance.

Lastly, "Life and Light for Woman" included an article from Kate G. Lamson about "The Educational Trend in Japan," which struggled to both praise Japan's rapid economic and technological development while still arguing the country needed Christian missionaries to ensure its future progress. Lamson began her article with a summary of Japan's evolution based

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<sup>161</sup> Grace H. Knapp Papers, Mount Holyoke College, Archives and Special Collections, South Hadley, MA.

<sup>162</sup> Grace Knapp, "Mother and Daughter," *Life and Light for Woman*, October 1912, 420. RG 29, box 1, folder 1, Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection, Mount Holyoke Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.

<sup>163</sup> Brumberg, "Zenanas and Girlless Villages": 355-356.

<sup>164</sup> Knapp, "Mother and Daughter": 420-421.

<sup>165</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*: 2.

on its technological development, which serves to highlight how racial discourses had changed since the nineteenth century. Lamson wrote that the Japanese people did not intend “to abandon that which is the nation’s birthright or specially adapted to its distinctive needs”, only to adopt and assimilate various institutions and technologies from other nations and cultures that seemed suitable to Japan’s needs.<sup>166</sup> Missionaries no longer regarded cultural assimilation or extinction as the key tenet of missionary work, but rather judged those cultures on the basis of ethnocentrism. Those cultural institutions that fit with Eurocentric moral values could remain, while those that went against Eurocentric values were judged and considered contrary to national progress.

Lamson was primarily concerned with Japan’s religious environment and struggled to articulate why Japan still needed Christian missionaries. She could not rely on the argument that Christianity would ensure women’s emancipation and education, as Japan had already instituted universal and compulsory education.<sup>167</sup> Lamson instead claimed that only Christianity could ensure Japan’s technological and moral development. She wrote, “If not thoroughly permeated by the spirit of Christ and solidly built on the foundation other than which no man can lay, they [the Japanese] will fail” in regard to Japan’s continued progress in the world.<sup>168</sup> Throughout the rest of her article, Lamson presented Christianity as a necessity for Japan’s moral development, but her argument was laden with uncertainty. Shortly after describing the death of the emperor and the present ruler’s call for people “to develop righteously and morally as they have not yet done”, Lamson said, “Christian schools will probably be sought as never before.”<sup>169</sup> Her use of the term “probably” speaks to Lamson’s anxiety, as she struggled to explain why Japan needed

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<sup>166</sup> Kate G. Lamson, “The Educational Trend in Japan”, *Life and Light for Woman*, October 1912, 427. RG 29, box 1, folder 1, Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection, Mount Holyoke Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.

<sup>167</sup> Lamson, “The Educational Trend in Japan”: 427.

<sup>168</sup> Lamson, “The Educational Trend in Japan”: 427.

<sup>169</sup> Lamson, “The Educational Trend in Japan”: 428.

missionaries without relying on arguments based on American exceptionalism and the West's superiority to less advanced countries.

Skipping forward eight years, the Missionaries Collection includes the article, "The Importance of Being a Girl" from 1920, written by a woman named Ernestine Evans to solicit funding for the Women's Christian Colleges in the East. Evans' article is exemplary of the racist, social darwinist rhetoric often used in missionary publications. Such is clear from the second paragraph of her article, which said:

"Not important. Only a girl." It is like a refrain running through Oriental life for thousands of years, and that is how the vast mass of men in the Orient still feel about women and women's affairs. Nevertheless, in cities where Western influence has been felt and among the few far-sighted statesmen of the East, a different view is held. The woman question is acknowledged as the most important question in the development of Oriental democracy. The new Asia can travel no faster than its women.<sup>170</sup>

Evans drew on rhetoric that presented female missionaries as liberated Christian women from the West coming to free their oppressed heathen sisters in the East to highlight the point that the Christian West's treatment of women was exemplary of Anglo-Saxons' more evolved political and racial status.<sup>171</sup> In particular, Evans' drew on imagery presenting non-Christian women as socially invisible through the phrase "Not important. Only a girl," an idea that underlined American women's belief in their own elevated social and cultural role as pillars of virtue and piety.<sup>172</sup> Overall, Evans' opening paragraph relied on constructing women's different cultural and social position in the Middle East and Asia as evidence of the inferiority of their cultures

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<sup>170</sup> Ernestine Evans, "The Importance of Being a Girl," 1920, 3. RG 29, box 4, folder 3, Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection, Mount Holyoke Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.

<sup>171</sup> Susan Haskell Khan, "From Redeemers to Partners: American Women Missionaries and the 'Woman Question' in India, 1919-1939," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, ed. Connie Anne Shemo, Barbara Reeves-Ellington, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, American Encounters/Global Interactions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 142.

<sup>172</sup> Brumberg, "Zenanas and Girlless Villages": 360.



compared to Protestant Western culture, and provoked sentiments of American superiority and ethnocentrism in her readers to encourage them to donate and thus facilitate the spread of white Christian values and beliefs.

Evans then drew on imagery of transition and unrest in Asia, describing “the revolution in China, the rise of a violent national spirit in India, the seething industrial unrest of Japan” in strong negative terms that failed to address how these movements—in particular, the revolution in China and the growing nationalism in India—emerged as a response to imperial domination.<sup>173</sup> Evans continued to denigrate these social movements on the grounds that they left women behind, writing, “I feel as if the men were rushing, or rather, being inevitably pushed, into modern ways, and the women left behind on the old side of the river.”<sup>174</sup> Evans claims were profoundly untrue. Hindu reformers and nationalist leaders in India, for example, made women’s rights a question of concern both before and during World War I, and a nationwide women’s movement emerged among India’s middle-class after the war and directed nationalist sentiments in favor of women’s suffrage and education.<sup>175</sup> As mentioned in Kate Lamson’s article from 1912, Japan had had compulsory, universal education for children in place for years before Evans wrote and published her article. A questionnaire distributed in Japan in the 1920s even found that Japanese Christian educators saw Christian schools as inferior to national and public schools.<sup>176</sup> Evans’ claims about women in these countries were not based in fact, but in sentiment, a desire to maintain her readers’ sense of racial and civilizational superiority based on American women’s putatively higher social status.

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<sup>173</sup> Evans, “The Importance of Being a Girl”: 3.

<sup>174</sup> Evans, “The Importance of Being A Girl”: 3.

<sup>175</sup> Khan, “From Redeemers to Partners”: 145-46.

<sup>176</sup> Kohiyama, “No Nation Can Rise Higher Than Its Women”: 223.

Evans continued to critique India, Japan, and China on the grounds of their religious beliefs. She wrote, “There is not an Oriental religion that does not postulate her inequality with man, and her subservience to him” and that “In contrast to Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism and Buddhism, the Christian view of life has brought to women in the East a message of infinite hope.”<sup>177</sup> Her focus on domestic oppression and power inequalities between men and women, as well as her connecting other religions to hatred of women, were common themes in missionary publications that had developed a hierarchy of religious beliefs with evangelical Christianity at the top and “heathen” religions like Islam, Hinduism, and others at the bottom.<sup>178</sup> The religious hierarchy strongly correlated with racial hierarchies based in social darwinism, another way in which American readership could see themselves as superior to other races and cultures on the basis of their religion.

Evans’ article was not representative of the missionary movements’ agenda in the 1920s and 1930s. Historian Susan Haskell Khan, writing about American women missionaries’ relationship to the nationalist cause in India, found that American missionaries began challenging degrading images and stereotypes of Indian women as they sought to maintain Christian education’s relevance in India. American missionaries worked to present themselves as allies to Indian women rather than racially superior, an image that aggravated audiences back home who continued to denigrate Indian women and their reform movements.<sup>179</sup> In a larger scope, the women’s foreign mission movement declined in the 1920s and 1930s as missionaries’ changing agenda clashed with the racial ideologies of their supporters back home, decreasing

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<sup>177</sup> Evans, “The Importance of Being A Girl”: 4.

<sup>178</sup> Ian Tyrrell, “Woman, Missions, and Empire: New Approaches to American Cultural Expansion,” in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, ed. Connie Anne Shemo, Barbara Reeves-Ellington, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, American Encounters/Global Interactions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 48; Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages”: 355, 360.

<sup>179</sup> Khan, “From Redeemers to Partners”: 150, 157.

missionaries' donors and supporters and lessening missionaries' influence abroad.<sup>180</sup> That being said, such changes to the female missionary movement do not appear to be represented in the Missionaries Collection. Other documents related to the campaign for the Women's Christian Colleges in the East continued to use racist rhetoric presuming American missionaries' superiority to the women they claim to support. Mount Holyoke, as a sister college to the College being built in Madras India, was directly implicated in the ideology utilized in such publications.

The Report of the Building Fund Committee, issued by the joint committee on Women's Christian Colleges in the Orient in December 1923, is yet another publication that relied on racist ideologies to curry support for the campaign. While the report's described goal for establishing the Woman's Christian College in Madras does not rely on such ideologies, writing that "The aim of the college is to train future leaders among women, in a country which needs so sorely the strong help of enlightened women in education, medicine and social reform", the intent behind founding other colleges was more explicitly racist.<sup>181</sup> When describing the need for the Vellore Medical School in Vellore, India, the report presented women's treatment as such:

It being universally accepted by Hindu and Moslem alike in India that woman is destitute of soul or of virtue, woman of the higher castes are, as a rule, immured for life in the zenana, or harem, in what Kipling calls worse than a penal confinement. Do not imagine these child-wives as Oriental beauties living in luxurious delight; they are, for the most part, poorly and plainly clad; they sit on mud floors in the darkest and dirtiest apartments in the Indian establishment. They are ignorant, apathetic, and forced by the very logic of the situation to gossip and intrigue.<sup>182</sup>

The focus on the zenana and harem—two places that, in missionary publications, symbolized women's enforced isolation from the world—presented the Christian colleges and the

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<sup>180</sup> Khan, "From Redeemers to Partners": 157.

<sup>181</sup> "Report of the Building Fund Committee": 11.

<sup>182</sup> "Report of the Building Fund Committee": 27.

missionaries leading them as the saviors of heathen women.<sup>183</sup> The presentation of the women in these spaces as “child-wives,” a term often used to imply sexual degradation and the early loss of adolescence, added to this image.<sup>184</sup> The paragraph relied on constructions of non-Christian inferiority, whether by constructing images of violent non-Christian men without moral guidance or helpless non-Christian women reduced to their base instincts, to generate support for Vellore Medical School.

While other sections from the report were not as racist as the section about Vellore Medical School, they still relied on images of Christian superiority and missionaries as saviors to legitimize the goals of the colleges. For instance, the section about Yenching College in Peking, China claimed, “Christianity came to China. It dared to say that the women in China mattered as much as the men, and opened schools for girls to prove it. It proved it so well that the government proceeded to start girls’ schools...”<sup>185</sup> The section implied that, without Christian missionaries, neither China nor its women would have developed, and that both groups should be thankful for Christian involvement.

An undated leaflet titled “Building for the Women’s Union Christian Colleges in Asia”, again soliciting donations for the Colleges and with a tear-off slip for a check included, repeated such rhetoric. The leaflet provocatively described the colleges as “the greatest educational movement in the world today”, and claimed the colleges were part of “the new world in the making. No nation can rise higher than its women. A democracy cannot exist with an illiterate, enslaved womanhood.”<sup>186</sup> In the central panel of the leaflet, the same terminology is repeated to

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<sup>183</sup> Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages”: 357-358.

<sup>184</sup> Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages”: 363-365.

<sup>185</sup> “Report of the Building Fund Committee”: 14.

<sup>186</sup> “Buildings for the Women’s Union Christian Colleges in Asia,” n.d., RG 29, box 4, folder 3, Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection, Mount Holyoke Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.

describe India's women as "enslaved and degraded."<sup>187</sup> Even as the campaign promised to elevate women in Asia, it did so by falling back on ideologies stemming from social darwinism that claimed non-white races and non-Christian religions were inferior to white American Protestantism.

That is not to say all articles in the Missionaries Collection relied on racism to advocate for social work and educational opportunities in other countries. An article in the collection from July 1903, written by a woman named Isabel C. Barrows and included with a set of documents addressed to Mrs. A.C. Edwards—or Anna Cheney Edwards, who was the first associate principal of Mount Holyoke Seminary from 1883 to 1888—described the American College for Girls in Constantinople in more egalitarian terms. Barrows described how at the College "sectarianism is unknown, and though the Bible is studied for its history, its poetry, and its noble aspiration and inspiration, it is used in no way to offend the feelings of the young women belonging to the Moslem and the Hebrew faith."<sup>188</sup> That Barrows downplayed the role of the Bible in instruction, and explicitly clarified that the College did not intend to "offend the feelings" of its Muslim and Jewish students or otherwise denigrate non-Christian religions, is worth noting. She presented the American College's mission as centered on "the formation of character and lofty ideals," not on conversion to Christianity.<sup>189</sup> She did not rely on imagery based in social darwinism, American exceptionalism, or racism to advocate for the College or express its importance to the surrounding community. The College's importance was based on its cosmopolitanism and character-building efforts, not the idea that Christianity would ensure progress, democracy, and social evolution.

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<sup>187</sup> "Buildings for the Women's Union Christian Colleges in Asia," n.d.

<sup>188</sup> Isabel C. Barrows, "The American College for Girls in Constantinople," July 4, 1903, RG 29, box 14, folder 2, Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection, Mount Holyoke Archives and Special Collections, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA.

<sup>189</sup> Barrows, "The American College for Girls in Constantinople."

Yet Barrows' article is one of very few, compared to the rest of the collection. The majority of documents in the Mount Holyoke Missionaries Collection consistently return to social darwinism, American exceptionalism, and Christian superiority as a means of legitimizing the missionary cause, while far fewer criticize those same ideologies. The Collection's representative bias in favor of such ideologies points to the intent behind its development. Mount Holyoke may not have supported racist ideologies publicly, especially as it curated its self-image as a progressive, cosmopolitan institution dedicated to social work at home and abroad, but the ideological bias in its Missionaries Collection represents the College's willingness to accept such ideologies in the name of spreading progress and Christian values. To repeat Ellen Parsons' words about the goal of the missionary tablet, "The tablet was not conceived, carried out or put up to applaud, but because the givers of the tablet are loyal to the past."<sup>190</sup> In loyally remembering and continuing the work of its missionary past, Mount Holyoke chose to continue its legacy of racism and Christian superiority rather than critically reevaluate and repudiate it.

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<sup>190</sup> "Founders Days Exercises Held at Mt Holyoke College", Springfield Reporter.

## CONCLUSION

Following Mount Holyoke's Centenary celebrations in 1937, interest in the archive dwindled. At the end of the 1936 school year, Bertha Blakely stepped down as Head Librarian and handed her position over to Flora Ludington. While the college's Centenary proved fruitful for its archives in establishing both a space to house it and incentivizing numerous archival donations and gifts, the following years saw a slow decrease in the archives' prominence in the library's annual reports. By the 1949-1950 school year, the new head librarian Flora Ludington completely stopped mentioning the state of the archival collections, and primarily referred to them by mentioning Blakely's work in the archives.<sup>191</sup> It would take another notable event in the college's history, Mount Holyoke's one-hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary, to both reignite interest in college history materials and push the library to refocus on the state of the collections<sup>192</sup>. The library again saw an increase in archival gifts, and moved to collect materials related to Mount Holyoke's history after it converted to a college. As Ludington noted in a 1961-1962 report, "Curiously enough our holdings of college as distinct from seminary days are spotty"<sup>193</sup>.

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<sup>191</sup> Flora Ludington, "1949-1950" in *1949/50 through 1956/57* (Mount Holyoke College, 1957), LD 7085.2: 16.

<sup>192</sup> Flora Ludington, "1960-1961." in *1957/58 through 1963/64* (Mount Holyoke College, 1957), LD 7085.2: 6.

<sup>193</sup> Ludington, "1961-1962." In *1957/58 through 1963/64*: 4.

The physical archive's spotty history in the period following the Centenary speaks to the library's struggle to run an archive on top of its regular duties purchasing new books, handling student and faculty research concerns, and maintaining the collections in the general stacks. Bertha Blakely's death in July 1962, alongside the resignation of Virginia Spencer, a cataloguer who had handled much of the housekeeping needed to maintain the archival collections since 1955, after the 1964-1965 school year, worsened the load.<sup>194</sup> The library needed an official archivist to both manage its collections and consolidate them into a single space. In the early 1970s, the library hired Elaine Trehub as its first official archivist, who took on the task of cataloguing, organizing, and preserving Mount Holyoke's archival collections.<sup>195</sup>

At this point, more research is needed to fill out the history of Mount Holyoke and its archive in the mid to late-twentieth century. Focusing on the Missionaries Collection, it contains no objects dated from the 1940s through 1960s. Items from the 1970s up to the present are included and primarily consist of scholarly works analyzing missionaries and missionary work in the nineteenth century. The reasons for the gap in accessions from the mid-twentieth century, and why and when new accessions began, still need to be explored. Additionally, future research should consider how Mount Holyoke's relationship with religion and its missionary past changed over the course of the nineteenth century, particularly following World War II as the backlash against fascism and Nazism led many to question race-based theories such as social darwinism, and how that changing relationship affected its Missionaries Collection.<sup>196</sup>

Mount Holyoke has experienced dramatic changes since its founding over 180 years ago, as it adapted from a Seminary focused on Christian faith and missionary zeal, to a College

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<sup>194</sup> Anne C. Edmonds, "1964-1965" In *1964/65 through 1971/72* (Mount Holyoke College, 1972), LD 7085.2: 11-20; Ludington, "1962-1963" in *1957/58 through 1963/64*: 1.

<sup>195</sup> Elaine Trehub, "College History Annual Reports, 1965/66 through 1974/75" (Mount Holyoke College, 1975), LD 7085.2.

<sup>196</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*: 6.



remaking its image as a cosmopolitan, empirical institution, to the diverse and heavily queer community it is today. Yet its history remains omnipresent: it is mentioned in Convocation and Commencement speeches, depicted in advertising materials featuring Mary Lyon's image, and inscribed on commemorative plaques in college buildings. The past, and the ideologies both good and bad that shaped it, cannot be ignored, even as the College attempts to evade, recontextualize, and move past it.

The Missionaries Collection includes a document with particular relevance here: a poem titled "The Missionary Tablet", written by Mount Holyoke student Louise Snowden Porter and published in a book of poems titled "Mount Holyoke College Verse" in 1937. Porter's poem opens with the verses, "To be forgotten is a common thing / A peaceful thing, not irksome to the dead. / And not to be forgotten is to live, / Ever and ever pantomiming all / It pleased life to perform. But cruel it is / To mock remembrance with a name alone / Held hostage to indifferent time."<sup>197</sup> The poem is about memory and forgetting, as Porter described how the ghosts of missionaries are revived as their names are inscribed on the missionary tablet, but are also reduced to their very names as future generations forget their struggles and the religious motivations that guided them. At the end of the poem, Porter wrote, "Blot out the names, and let the ghosts go free, / Sighing across the mountains to their graves / Where spirits rest and fear no further change."<sup>198</sup> To Porter, it is better to let the past be forgotten than to reduce missionaries to little more than a name.

While "The Missionary Tablet" considered the role of memory and forgetting in relation to remembering the religious values and goals of past peoples', its message has some utility for the present. Mount Holyoke, by recontextualizing its history to omit mention of its missionary

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<sup>197</sup> Louise Snowden Porter, "The Missionary Tablet," in *Mount Holyoke College Verse*, ed. Ada L.F. Snell (Oxford University Press, 1937): 88.

<sup>198</sup> Porter, "The Missionary Tablet": 90.

past and the ideological values it entailed, "mock[s] remembrance with a name alone", as Porter so put it.<sup>199</sup> Its missionary history, represented in the Missionaries Collection among others, is a contentious piece of Mount Holyoke history as it evidences the racism, American exceptionalism, and white Christian superiority that characterized Mount Holyoke's relationship to the missionary enterprise. But to ignore that past in favor of remembering only select pieces is equally problematic. As we draw on the past to understand and shape the present, we must confront the past and its values as they were instead of ignoring the parts we find uncomfortable. Returning to Sonya Stevens' Convocation speech in 2017, Stevens said, "On this campus, I often feel the truth of Mary Lyon's words when she said, "this is an affecting spot to me. The stones and brick and mortar speak a language...", and that we must here "learn to sit with energy."<sup>200</sup> So too must we learn to sit with the energy of Mount Holyoke's history, its good and its bad, if we want to properly learn from the past's mistakes and continue to move forward.

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<sup>199</sup> Porter, "The Missionary Tablet": 88.

<sup>200</sup> Sonya Stevens, "Convocation 2017 | Mount Holyoke College," September 5, 2017, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/news/news-stories/convocation-2017>.

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