

## Historiography and Theory

**Review Article – Margriet Haagsma: *Colliding Cultures and Fading Ideals: Discrimination against women in early 20th century Classical Archaeology***

**Alan Kaiser. *Archaeology, Sexism and Scandal. The long-suppressed story of one woman's discoveries and the man who stole credit for them.* pp. 272 with ill. 2015. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. ISBN 978-1-4422-7524-9, paperback \$28.**

### Introduction

This well-researched and very readable book tells the story of a young woman who started her professional career in Classics and Classical archaeology in the late 1920s when she enrolled as an undergraduate student in the Department of Classics at the University of Alberta, where I currently teach.<sup>1</sup> It charts how, after obtaining her BA, Mary Ellingson (née Ross), was admitted as a graduate student in archaeology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1931. There, she wrote an MA and PhD dissertations on the terracotta industry in Olynthus, based on the excavations in which she participated in 1931 under the guidance of the famous and distinguished David Moore Robinson, professor of archaeology and director of the Olynthus project. The author of this book, Alan Kaiser, professor in archaeology at the University of Evansville where Mary Ross-Ellingson taught for many years, became inspired to tell her story by leafing through her bequest to the university after her death. It consisted of a scrapbook, which had been sitting on a shelf in his department and in which she reports her experiences during the 1931 season at Olynthus in text and images. Based on this treasure trove of photographs and letters to family, Kaiser discovered a long known but inconvenient truth: that Mary Ross-Ellingson's MA thesis and part of her PhD were published under Robinson's name as volumes VII and XIV in the Olynthus series without giving credit to the real author.

Kaiser researches Mary Ross's experiences and contextualizes them by analysing her career and those of her fellow students. Despite the rather

sensationalist book title and the lack of a broader historical context, he paints a relatively nuanced picture of the male dominated culture of academia in North America in the mid-20th century which allowed very few pathways for women to make a career. The author expected to expose Robinson as a serial plagiarist, but concluded that – in reality – the picture is more complex. He describes Robinson as a typical excavation director of his time; a demanding personality, used to getting things done his way, sometimes taking credit for work carried out under his supervision, but also a fierce protector of his students. Though he himself was accused of being an unexperienced archaeologist, he also possessed the ability to produce an immense body of scholarship in a relatively short amount of time that was truly his. Kaiser ends his book with these two questions: why would David Robinson, an already established, powerful and prolific scholar, have felt the need to take credit for work that was not his? On the other hand, why did Ellingson, whose work was plagiarized, maintain a friendly relationship with Robinson over the years and only marginally referred to her work as genuinely her's?

Both questions prove difficult to answer. Kaiser identifies an important mismatch between Mary Ross-Ellingson's expectations of career possibilities for women and the changing realities of the academic world around her, a disparity that many women must have experienced in the early 1930s (p. 96). But he does not explain its background fully.<sup>2</sup> This review intends to complement the author's research by giving context to highlight this disparity; the Department of Classics at the University of Alberta in the 1910s and 20s, where Ellingson spent an important formative period in her life, was a stronghold of early feminist ideas and ideals. What do we know about Mary Ross-Ellingson's cultural background, persona and her educational program that would explain the absence of any action towards the injustice that befell her? And how can we extrapolate from this to gain more insight into the narrow boundaries within which women manoeuvred the male dominated field of Classical archaeology during this period and later?

### Mary Ross-Ellingson

Helen Madeline Mary Ross was born on 21 September 1908 in Edmonton, Alberta.<sup>3</sup> She was the

<sup>1</sup> The Department of Classics merged with the Department of History in 1993. The new department was aptly named the Department of History and Classics.

<sup>2</sup> Kaiser 2015, 96.

<sup>3</sup> Kaiser reports that the personal file of Mary Ross-Ellingson at the University of Evansville mentions that she was born in 1906. Registration cards of Mary Ross from the years 1925-1930 in the archives of the University of Alberta, written in Ellingson's own handwriting, consistently mention the date 21 September



**Figure 1.** Mary Ross in Olynthus. Mary Ross Ellingson, Alex Schulz, George Mylonas, Gladys Davidson (left to right in foreground); J. Walter Graham (behind wall) and unidentified workmen having lunch in Room C of the House of the Comic Actor, at a depth of .80 cm. Published with the permission from the University of Evansville.

only daughter of Holland W. Ross and May (Lilly) Ross, née Dean. She had one younger brother named John.<sup>4</sup> Her grandparents on both sides were among the first settlers in Edmonton; an obituary of her grandfather John Ross, who passed away in 1929, reports that the Ross family settled in Edmonton in 1897.<sup>5</sup> Of Scottish descent, John Ross was involved in real estate, construction and cattle trade and his business was located at Namao Street in the centre of town, north of the North Saskatchewan River. Her grandparents on mother's side were of Scottish and Irish descent; Edward Dean and his wife had founded a farm near Edmonton.<sup>6</sup> Mary's father took over the real estate business and the family must have done well; in the 1920s they lived in a house at 9907-106 street in between the new provincial legislature building and Jasper Avenue.<sup>7</sup>

1908. (acc.nrs 21-01-22, 21-03-50, 23-31-51, 23-34-17, University of Alberta Archives). Alberta census records from 1911, 1916 and 1921 confirm her age (data retrieved from: <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx>, accessed 14 June 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Census records of 1911, 1916 and 1921, accessible at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> *The Daily Colonist*, 7 May 1929. Accessed via [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) 14 June 2018.

<sup>6</sup> This information comes from *The Medicine Hat Daily News*, 28 July, 1939, announcing the engagement of Mary Ross to Rudolph Conrad Ellingson <https://newspaperarchive.com/medicine-hat-news-jul-28-1939-p-4/> accessed 14 June 2018.

<sup>7</sup> The address is mentioned on the registration cards of Mary Ross for the years 1925-1930. (For access nrs See note 3. Archives University of Alberta).

In 1925, when she only just had turned 17, Mary Ross enrolled as an undergraduate student in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Alberta. She graduated in 1931 and was accepted as a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland where she would be supervised by professor David 'Davy' Moore Robinson. She joined the excavations at Olynthus, which Robinson directed, in the spring and summer of that same year. After finishing her MA in 1932, and before starting her PhD, Mary Ross moved back to Canada where she was hired by Mount Royal College in Calgary as lecturer between 1932 and 1938. She moved back to Baltimore in 1939, finished her PhD and met and married her future husband Rudolph Conrad Ellingson. The newlyweds moved to Evansville, Indiana, where Rudolph Ellingson had found a position, and by 1940, Mary Ross-Ellingson was hired by the University of Evansville, first as a temporary adjunct professor and later as chair of Archaeology at the Evansville Public Museum. Starting a family interrupted her professional career in 1945, but by 1960 she was hired under a contract and from 1963 onward as permanent faculty, making full professor, teaching mainly courses in Latin, retiring in 1973.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Kaiser 2015.



Mary Ross-Ellingson passed away in 1993 bequeathing part of her estate, including her scrapbooks, photographs of the Olynthus excavation as well as letters, to the University of Evansville. She also left part of her estate to the University of Alberta. Correspondence from 1993-1995 between Mary Ross-Ellingson, her heir and our Classics caucus charts the establishment of the Mary Ross-Ellingson Graduate Scholarship.<sup>9</sup>

### Mary Ross's Edmonton

At the beginning of the 20th century, Edmonton was a 'boom town' in a young and thriving new 'boom province'. Known as 'Rupert's Land' from 1670 – 1870, the area that would become eventually Alberta was purchased by the Dominion of Canada in 1870 and incorporated in the North Western Territories in 1882 as a district named after Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, fourth daughter of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, married to the then Governor General of Canada. It became a province in 1905. By then, treaties had been negotiated with the First Nations,<sup>10</sup> two Metis uprisings had been dealt with, and a new railway network had been put in place, providing the opportunity for settlers from the east and elsewhere to try their luck at farming or in business at a place where the first permanent buildings was the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Edmonton established in 1795. Long before Fort Edmonton was built, this area - located close to a territory with great opportunities for hunting and trapping - had been in use for millennia as a location of contact and exchange by Indigenous peoples.<sup>11</sup> Known as amiskwacîwâskahikan<sup>12</sup> and Omahkoyis,<sup>13</sup> the space was first incorporated as a town and in

<sup>9</sup> The Mary Ross-Ellingson Graduate Scholarship was endowed by the late Mary Ross-Ellingson and her husband Rudolph C. Ellingson. The prize is awarded annually to an outstanding student in a graduate degree program in History and Classics whose research focus is in classical archaeology. I thank my colleague Dr Jeremy Rossiter for providing me with the original documentation.

<sup>10</sup> The treaty that includes Edmonton is Treaty 6, signed between the Canadian government and the Plains and Wood Cree, the Assiniboiné and communities near Fort Pitt and Fort Carlton in 1876. It allowed the native population the use of land, agricultural and other resources, but not landownership, a contentious concept lost in translation. The misleading language, opportunistic attitudes and general disinterest of local governments had profound consequences for the indigenous heritage of the region and the living conditions of its peoples.

<sup>11</sup> The British settlers' name for the Hudson's Bay fort was reportedly named after Edmonton, Middlesex, England, birthplace of two early employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. Aubrey, M. K., (Ed.) 2004. *Naming Edmonton. From Ada to Zoie*. City of Edmonton, Edmonton.

<sup>12</sup> The Cree name for the area, meaning 'Beaver Hill House'. [https://www.edmonton.ca/programs\\_services/for\\_communities/amiskwacy-history-series.aspx](https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_communities/amiskwacy-history-series.aspx), accessed 15 June 15 2019

<sup>13</sup> This is the Blackfoot name for the area, meaning 'Great Lodge.'

**Figure 2.** The 1929 Registration card of Mary Ross at the UofA, indicating the courses in archaeology she took with William Hardy Alexander and Greek with Geneva Misener. Published with permission from the University of Alberta Archives.

1904 as the city of Edmonton, which was chosen as the capital of the new province in 1905.

The influx of people necessitated improvements in the province's infrastructure through the construction of new amenities. The University of Alberta was created in Alberta's new capital in 1908 and land was bought south of the river in an area known as Strathcona for future university buildings. On 23 September 1908, the first forty five students, among them seven women, enrolled and were taught by five faculty members.<sup>14</sup> Classics was offered from the onset, and its first professor, Dr. William Hardy Alexander, better known as 'Doc Alik',<sup>15</sup> was a competent scholar and popular instructor. He chaired the Department of Classics for 30 years and was one of Mary Ross's instructors from 1925-30.

<sup>14</sup> Schoeck, Ellen, 2006. *I Was There: A Century of Alumni Stories about the University of Alberta, 1906-2006*. University of Alberta Press 1906-2006. Edmonton, University of Alberta Press.

<sup>15</sup> Schoeck 2006: 52.

The University Act, signed in 1906, showed a remarkable sensitivity to the cause of women, as during that time women had no voting rights and were not even legally recognized as 'persons' yet. It stipulated that women should be admitted to the university on an equal basis as men. Various early faculty members, among which 'Doc Alik,' later joined by Dr. Geneva Misener, professor in Classics and the first female professor at the University of Alberta, enthusiastically pursued more dynamic roles for women in society. True to the spirit of their young university, both Misener and Alexander were actively involved in the suffrage movement, the Equal Franchise League (EFL) in Edmonton, right before the Great War.<sup>16</sup>

It was in this context of promise, opportunity, development, camaraderie and economic fortune that Mary Ross was born and spent the first 25 years of her life.

### Mary Ross's years at the University of Alberta

Her University of Alberta registration cards identify Mary Ross as a member of the Christian Science movement, though, only once, her 1926 registration card mentions 'Methodist' as her religious affiliation. With her Scottish ancestry, the Methodist connection may not surprise, but the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Edmonton was a newcomer in the province's myriad of religious backgrounds connected to incoming groups of settlers in the early 20th century. Founded in 1905, the Edmonton branch still maintains strong affiliations with its mother church in Boston, where this spiritual movement was started by Mary Baker Eddy in the late 1800s. Baker Eddy advocated a more 'primitive' form of Christianity, which takes God's word literally as the appropriate medicine for body and soul. Rather than relying on modern medications, the church encourages healing by reciting bible scriptures, texts written by Baker Eddy, and sharing personal stories related to the healing practices promoted by the Church in loosely arranged liturgies. The manner of worship must have starkly contrasted with the highly structured services of the first Methodist church in Edmonton, which in 1925 amalgamated with the local unions of two other denominations, Presbyterian and Congregational, into the United Church of Canada.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps it was this change that made Mary Ross, and her family, move away from 'the old faith,' and embrace a more spiritual form of belief. We can surmise that the rapidly gained popularity of the Christian Science Movement in North America at the time was closely related to an upbeat spirit of novelty in newly settled urban areas.

Upon entering the University of Alberta in 1925, Mary Ross was initially an honours student in the Department of Modern Languages studying French but switched to an honours degree in Classics in her second year. Her registration cards mention the courses that she enrolled in: besides taking the mandatory science courses, she took French, Philosophy, Greek and Latin poetry and prose and Ancient History. In the last two years of her BA, Mary Ross received specialized education in archaeology and in 'Greek private life,' directed reading courses specifically designed for her and taught by Alexander.<sup>18</sup> Clearly this last course made her familiar with the excavations at Olynthus which had started in 1928.

The archives at the University of Alberta have limited information on Mary Ross herself, as well as Drs Alexander and Misener, whose archives may have never been filed but we may assume that the latter two knew Mary Ross's later supervisor, David Robinson. Geneva Misener had finished her PhD at the University of Chicago in 1903 and her time must have overlapped with that of Robinson, who finished his PhD there in 1904. It is not clear how William H. Alexander knew Robinson, but the two must have been acquainted for a longer time. Alexander must have been an important mentor to Mary Ross; not only did Mary Ross secure a position as graduate student at Johns Hopkins under Robinson at the recommendation of Dr Alexander, he also wrote to Robinson to ask him to endorse Mary Ross for a position at Mount Royal College in Calgary, Alberta in 1932.<sup>19</sup>

During her years at the University of Alberta, Mary Ross was a member of the *Wauneita* club, a society for female students. The seven first female students initially founded a society called Seven Independent Spinster (S.I.S.) and vowed to never marry so that they could escape a predicted lifestyle and make a career.<sup>20</sup> Its name was later changed to the *Wauneitas*,

<sup>16</sup> Carter, S., 2016. Geneva Misener and W.H. Alexander: University of Alberta Classics Professors and Women's Suffrage Activists, 1914 – 16 [https://womensuffrage.org/?p=22770#\\_edn3](https://womensuffrage.org/?p=22770#_edn3) accessed 15 June 2019. I thank Professors Sarah Carter and M. Ann Hall for generously providing research notes on Drs Alexander and Misener.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/welcome-united-church-canada/historical-timeline>. Accessed 30 June

2019.

<sup>18</sup> As mentioned on the 1929 registration card of Mary Ross (access nr 23-34-17r).

<sup>19</sup> This is a letter owned by Barbara Peterson, the daughter of Mary Ross-Ellingson, of which the University of Evansville has a copy as stated in Kaiser 2015: 108.

<sup>20</sup> This did not materialize as most members of the S.I.S. and *Wauneita* did not marry and were effectively excluded from making



**Figure 3.** Photo of one of Mary Ross's professors, William Hardy Alexander (front row, left), on the occasion of Emmeline Pankhurst's visit to Edmonton in 1916. Published with permission from the British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria.

which its members believed to be the Cree word for 'kind-hearted, but.'<sup>21</sup> All women admitted to the University of Alberta automatically became a member through initiation and in its early years the society organized debates, musical performances, social gatherings and helped in providing aid during the Great War.<sup>22</sup> In the years between 1914 and 1916 the society held suffrage meetings, sometimes with Drs Misener and Alexander as speakers.<sup>23</sup> The *Wauneita* club, Dr Misener's position as advisor of women students, and both her and Dr Alexander's past in the suffrage movement must have played a formative role in Mary Ross's education and it is worthwhile to look further into their careers, their outlook on life and the impact they had on their students.

### William Hardy Alexander

Born in Ottawa in 1878, William Hardy Alexander was educated at the University of Toronto where

he obtained a BA in 1899. He then moved to the University of California at Berkeley, where he received an MA in 1900 and a PhD in 1906. As was usual then, he held various positions while in his PhD program and after his degree was awarded, he and his young wife Marion Kirby moved to the University of Western Ontario where he taught Latin for two years. In 1908, Alexander took up an offer from Henry Marshall Tory, one of the founders of the University of Alberta, and started his job as one of the first four professors of the university.<sup>24</sup>

From the moment of his arrival, Alexander was an active contributor to the ideological foundations of the University of Alberta. In word and deeds, he strongly promoted access to the university for everybody, regardless of their gender and religious orientation. He proposed the university's motto: *quaecumque vera* and wrote the text for the UofA's grace in Latin.<sup>25</sup> Marion Kirby Alexander chose the UofA's colours, Green and Gold. Alexander passionately advocated there should be a healthy separation between public institutions and religion, which caused quite a stir in his early years at the UofA. In reaction to the Edmonton Ministerial Associations' proposal in April 1914, that the last half hour in schools should be spent on Bible study, Alexander gave a lecture at the People's Forum in Edmonton denouncing this plan, advocating that

a career. But this information does provide an impression of the group dynamic, and the ideals promoted by these societies.

<sup>21</sup> In reality, it is likely derived from the (Plains) Cree word 'wanēyihām,' which means 'h/she is at a loss,' 'h/she is confused, 'his/her mind is blurred'. Source: <http://www.creedictionary.com/search/index.php?q=wan%C3%A4yihām&scope=1&cwr=35848>, accessed December 2nd 2019.

<sup>22</sup> The Wauneitas appropriated native rituals and attire, perpetuating negative stereotypes of the indigenous population of Alberta. This is all the more salient since at the same time the Canadian government forbade the performance of rituals by indigenous populations by the potlatch ban, and enforced a practice of removing young indigenous children from their homes and placing them in so-called residential schools. <https://citymuseumedmonton.ca/2015/11/24/the-wauneita-society/> accessed 15 June 2019.

<sup>23</sup> The Gateway, 1 March 1912, In the Bruce Peel Library, University of Alberta, <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/newspapers/GAT/1912/03/01/19/Ar01900.html> accessed 18 June 2019.

<sup>24</sup> <http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb0580022s&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00001&toc.depth=1&toc.id=> Accessed December 2nd 2019.

<sup>25</sup> The motto is based on a sentence in the letter of the apostle Paul to the Philippians, 4, 8. In 1918, Alexander also wrote the text of hymn dedicated to the alumni of the UofA: 'The Evergreen and Gold'. It was to be sung on the melody of the Russian national anthem. It has been abandoned in favour of the current Alberta cheer.





**Figure 4.** Photo of professor Geneva Misener. Published with permission from the University of Alberta Archives.

the scriptures should be taught as 'literature' in schools rather than a prescriptive text promoting a correct moral pathway.<sup>26</sup> Alexander saw himself as a sceptic, while his colleague Frank Keeping described him as 'a left-wing liberal in religion and politics...and a very capable speaker.'<sup>27</sup> He promoted a critical view of religion and a very limited role of the church in public education, a topic on which he liked to speak in his spiritual home, the Unitarian Society in Edmonton, which he co-founded and in which he was later ordained.

Many students attended the Unitarian gatherings and a number of Alexander's talks were published in a book specifically written for students, which came out in 1920.<sup>28</sup> Alexander's views on truth

and freedom of speech certainly extended to his involvement in the suffrage movement and his broadminded ideas most certainly made their way to the UofA classrooms or to conversations he had with his students, likely including Mary Ross. Alexander remained at the UofA until 1939 when he accepted a position at Berkeley, returning to Edmonton to live with his son in 1958. William Hardy Alexander passed away in 1962. It is unknown whether he and his former student remained in contact over the years.

### Geneva Misener

Geneva Misener's remarkable and distinguished career as a scholar, teacher and humanitarian began at Queen's University in Kingston, where she graduated in 1899 with a BA and later MA in Classics, earning gold medals in Latin and Greek.<sup>29</sup> She moved immediately to the University of Chicago where she wrote a dissertation on the particle γάρ, which she defended summa cum laude in 1903. Rockford College in Chicago hired her and with scholarships from the American Federation of University Women, she was able to travel Europe, including briefly joining an excavation with Wilhelm Dörpfeld, and to spend time in Berlin. Misener became Dean of the Kenwood Institute for Girls in 1909 and spent a year at the St. John's Collegiate in Winnipeg in 1912.<sup>30</sup> She joined the UofA in 1913 as its first female professor, teaching Latin, Greek, ancient history and ancient art. Misener became the first advisor to Women Students and accepted the presidency of the Alberta Women's Association shortly after her arrival. She was a member of the UofA senate during two of Mary Ross's undergraduate years (1926-28), was a co-founder of the Canadian Federation of University Women and was appointed ladies' representative on the executive committee of the Amateur Hockey Association of Alberta, where she established the Misener Cup for female hockey teams.<sup>31</sup> Towards the end of her career, she became active in the forerunner of the New Democratic Party. Having made her home at 11013 90 Avenue in Edmonton, Geneva Misener never married, but adopted two nieces and raised them on her own while taking care

<sup>26</sup> 'University Professor makes Virulent Attack on Bible.' *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 28 June 1914: 5. Alexander's liberal views on the role of religion in educational settings must have stirred the feathers of the more conservative thinking population in Edmonton and reactions appeared of three ministers politely disagreeing with Alexander. 'City Ministers reply to Dr Alexander's Criticisms' *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 July 1914: 2.

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.uce.ca/wp-content/uploads/UCehistory.org/history\\_%20MARSH\\_text.html](http://www.uce.ca/wp-content/uploads/UCehistory.org/history_%20MARSH_text.html) accessed 30 June 2019.

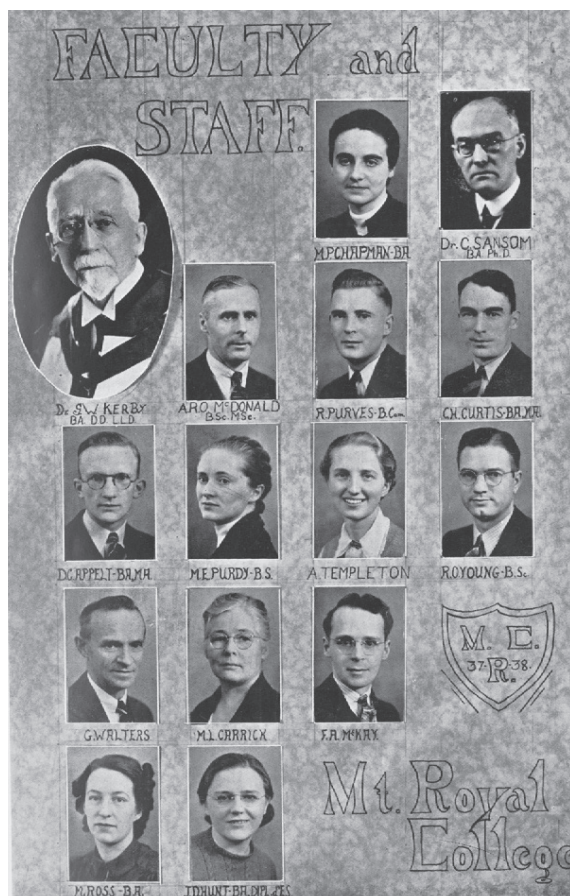
<sup>28</sup> Alexander, W.H. 1920. *College and religion, talks to College*

*Students by a College Teacher*. Boston, Richard Badger, The Gorham Press.

<sup>29</sup> Leonard, J. W., 1914-15. *Woman's Who's who of America: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Women of the United States and Canada*. New York, American Commonwealth Company: 567.

<sup>30</sup> Information assembled by Dr. M. Ann Hall for the Alberta's Women Memory Project <http://awmp.athabascau.ca/> accessed 1 July 2019.

<sup>31</sup> The whereabouts of the cup are unknown. Leonard 1915: 567 lists Misener's hobbies as walking, golf, mountain climbing and rowing.



**Figure 5.** Photo of Mary Ross (lowest row, left) in the 'Chinook' 1937-38 during her years as instructor at Mount Royal University in Calgary. Published with permission from Mount Royal University Archives and Special Collections.

of her elderly mother too, a remarkable feat for a professional woman during that time. She remained at the UofA until 1944 when she reluctantly retired. She moved to British Columbia afterwards and passed away in 1961.

From the 1910s to the 1930s, the Department of Classics had two strong and forward thinking personalities as their senior staff: professors William Hardy Alexander and Geneva Misener. Working together at the University of Alberta, they set out to shape the young community of Edmonton into a stage of equal opportunity for a broad segment of its incoming and established population.

### **Geneva Misener, William Hardy Alexander and the Suffrage Movement in Edmonton**

On 5 March 1912, Alexander spoke to the UofA's Wauneita society on the emancipation of women, explaining to the audience the Latin root of the word and dwelling upon the history of the oppression of women in the ancient world and

thereafter, professing that 'the real emancipation came from the hands of people who made no claims upon religion, but merely worked by reason.'<sup>32</sup> Maintaining contact with Alberta suffragists Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung, Alexander, his wife Marion, professor of English Edmund Broadus, his wife Eleanor and Geneva Misener, helped organize the first meeting promoting the emancipation of settler women in Edmonton on 27 October 1913.<sup>33</sup>

The Equal Franchise League became a fact on the evening of 5 February 1914 when a petition was signed with support of members of the young Edmonton Municipality. Alexander became its first president and Eleanor Broadus its first vice president. While the city of Edmonton was easy to convince, the members of the EFL faced an uphill battle dealing with Alberta's provincial government and local activists. The latter's main rationale was that voting should be limited to those who could read or write which should be dealt with first, as in their views allowing women the votes would increase the number of illiterate voters, an idea that had some support among the Calgary Local Council of Women.<sup>34</sup> Armed with extensive statistics from Ontario and Alberta, it was speaker Geneva Misener who knocked down this reasoning 'like nine pins' pointing out that illiteracy was more prevalent among boys than girls. Turning the argument upside down she effectively stated that since 'women mould citizens' women should be allowed to vote.<sup>35</sup>

The EFL aided in organizing a march to the Alberta legislature in on October 10th 1914 where a petition was presented and a request was made to meet with Alberta's Premier Albert Sifton.<sup>36</sup> After pressure mounted, Sifton eventually agreed and promised in September 1915 that the Equal Suffrage Statuary Law Amendment would be proposed and enacted in 1916, which indeed happened on April 19th of that year.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *The Gateway*, 1 March 1912.

<sup>33</sup> *The Edmonton Capital*, 17 October 1913: 12. It should be noted that the suffragists' activities focused on settler women only. See note 37.

<sup>34</sup> Norris, M., 1995. *A Leaven of Ladies: A History of the Calgary Local Council of Women*. Calgary Detselig Enterprises: 87.

<sup>35</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 February 1914: 3.

<sup>36</sup> Hall, D., 2004. Arthur L. Sifton. In Bradford J. Rennie (ed.) *Alberta Premiers of the Twentieth Century*. Regina, Saskatchewan: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina: 35. The often cited story that Sifton first demanded to know whether the ladies had washed the luncheon dishes, otherwise he would not give them his support, is probably not true.

<sup>37</sup> The legislation did not end the unequal treatment disenfranchised groups in Alberta. It initially excluded women from political office and did not cover any form of legislation for Alberta's indigenous population, most of whom were only allowed to vote in federal elections from 1960 onwards. What is

Just a few months later, the famous British political activist, Emmeline Pankhurst, visited Edmonton. A picture with her, flanked by Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy and other members of the Equal Franchise League, includes 'Doc Alik'. Throughout their university careers Alexander as well as Misener continued with their promotion of feminist causes. The latter made headlines with presentations on education for women, where she argued that marriage and a career do not need to be mutually exclusive.<sup>38</sup> In addition, she also was a strong advocate for the principle of equal work, equal pay for men and women<sup>39</sup> and established a scholarship for women students travelling abroad.<sup>40</sup>

A student of both Misener and Alexander, the young Mary Ross must have been inspired by the progressive idea advocated at her Alma Mater, that a career as an archaeologist for a woman was a real possibility. What made her decide to abandon that plan, and return to Canada to become an instructor in Classical languages, instead of spending time at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens (ASCSA) or in Baltimore to work on her PhD?

### **Colliding ideals; Edmonton, Olynthus, the ASCSA and the 1930s**

Kaiser had at his disposal a wonderful set of photographs and letters by Mary Ross that picture and describe her experiences in Greece, especially during the excavation season of 1931 at Olynthus. Together they form an account brimming with contagious enthusiasm; Mary Ross loved the excavation, got on very well with the Robinsons and the rest of the team and displayed a keen interest in village life at Myriophyto, the hamlet where the team stayed. That enthusiasm translated into many reports published in her native Alberta: 'Edmonton girls finds interest in Archaeology; brilliant Classics student directs excavation in Modern Greece' as local newspaper *The Albertan* wrote on 18 September 1931, for instance.

Kaiser does a good job in contextualizing Mary Ross's experiences as a young student and gives detailed accounts of the careers of her fellow

female students at both Olynthus and the American Institute of Classical Studies at Athens, such as Gladys Weinberg and Sarah Freeman. Stating that 'all three women had a greater chance of becoming college professors than the members of the first generation in their field', a goal Robinson expected from his male and female students, he concludes that none of them did so, at least not via the more direct career paths available to men.

If her pictures and letters are true indicators of her positive experiences at Olynthus and her work with Robinson, Mary Ross should have felt inspired to carry on her work after her first year in Baltimore. Instead she wrote to her mother that she decided she would not spend her next year in the US but would return to Canada.<sup>41</sup> Was it the economic crisis that hit the world so hard in 1929 that was part of that decision? The crisis certainly had an impact on the number of women finishing a graduate degree at post-secondary institutions as Kaiser points out and Canadian data support his observations.<sup>42</sup>

A policy of discouragement towards women found, unfortunately, an early audience in the ASCSA, the intellectual home of most American scholars and students working in Greece. Following the practice of the American Academy in Rome, the chairman of the managing committee, Edward Capps, proposed on 11 April 1931, that the school in Athens should establish a fixed ratio of fellowships between men and women, with men receiving far more fellowships than women. Capps argued that fellowships awarded to women were a waste of resources since women could not get jobs anyway.<sup>43</sup> It also did not help that some members of the managing committee increasingly expressed concern about the 'foreign' status of ASCSA fellowship recipients, many of whom were Canadians. In 1934, the managing committee passed a resolution that only students from contributing Canadian institutions were eligible for fellowships and in 1935 they banned Canadian applicants altogether.<sup>44</sup> I have not been able to find out whether Mary Ross tried to obtain a fellowship, but it is not difficult to imagine the effect of these

more, the suffrage movement was no panacea; some proponents of women's suffrage, men and women, had questionable ideas about social engineering and the status of indigenous peoples in Canada. (Devereux, C., *Woman suffrage, eugenics, and eugenic feminism in Canada*, (October 1st 2013), <https://womensuffrage.org/?p=22106>, accessed 1 July 2019).

<sup>38</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 15 April 1918: 6.

<sup>39</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 27 August 1920: 1. See also Kinnaer, M., 1991. Margaret McWilliams: An Interwar Feminist. Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press: 76-77.

<sup>40</sup> *The Globe*, 28 August, 1920: 10.

<sup>41</sup> Kaiser 2015: 108.

<sup>42</sup> Kaiser 2015: 95. The Canadian data show the same tendency: *Degrees awarded by Canadian universities and colleges, by sex, Canada, selected years, 1831 to 1973*. Retrieved from [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/sectionw/W504\\_512-eng.csv](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/sectionw/W504_512-eng.csv) Accessed 3 July 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Vogeikoff-Brogan, N., 2013. The Modern Greek Exam, 'Professor Blank's' Method, and Other Stories from the 1930s. <https://nataliavogeikoff.com/2013/10/01/the-modern-greek-exam-professor-blanks-method-and-other-stories-from-the-1930s/> Accessed 3 July 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Vogeikoff-Brogan 2013. Canadians were banned from applying to fellowships at the ASCSA until the 1950s.



proposed restrictive measures towards females and foreigners on the 'dignity and self-worth' (see note 42) of a young female student regarding her career plans, especially since she came from a background and working in an environment where women's rights and career opportunities were so strongly encouraged.

Though Mary Ross's move to Calgary to teach the Classical languages at Mount Royal University was an excellent career choice, the teaching responsibilities must have impeded the progress of her thesis and put her behind her male counterparts in the chances to secure a research oriented position in her field. As Kaiser argues well, many educated women of the 1920s and 1930s carved out alternative career paths to be able to maintain involvement in archaeology. Kaiser paints a detailed picture of the careers of Mary's friends; Gladys Weinberg married a fellow archaeologist allowing her to continue in the field, while Sara Freeman continued to work as Robinson's assistant. Unlike the 'roaring twenties', career opportunities for women diminished throughout the thirties, a situation that continued well into the 1960s. Established female careers, like the one of Geneva Misener, were not affected, but new opportunities for women remained sparse and equal pay was far from the minds of university administrators. In fact, this renewed male hegemony in academia and normalizing gender norms in the interpretation of the past was only acknowledged and challenged as part of the second feminist wave.<sup>45</sup> University employment practices improved thereafter, yet equal payment, which Geneva Misener so strongly promoted back in the 1920s, is - in 2019 - still a contentious issue.<sup>46</sup>

### Mary Ross and David Robinson

The question remains why Mary Ross did not speak up or protest when Robinson appropriated her material and made himself the author of her work.

Mary Ross may not have viewed David Robinson as the main impediment towards her career path that increasingly alienated women and foreigners. Rather, she likely continued to regard the powerful, but also frequently embattled Robinson as an important mentor who gave her the opportunity to learn about a completely different world and to work on exciting new material.<sup>47</sup> Robinson was not in favour of restricting the ASCSA fellowship applications and was known for fiercely supporting his students.<sup>48</sup> I strongly suspect that, rather than regarding Robinson as her 'enemy', Mary Ross may have sided with him in his complex relationship with the ASCSA and she may have viewed that institution - and US academia in the 1930s in general - as a multifarious network of academic relations that, as a foreign female scholar of her time, was difficult to navigate.

Mary Ross-Ellingson and the Robinsons remained acquainted until David Robinson's death, and it is hard to fathom the complexities of their relationship. The imagery on a Christmas card Robinson sent to Ellingson in 1952, with whom he corresponded frequently, may be telling.<sup>49</sup> It displays a photo of a painted portrait of Robinson, produced for the University of Mississippi, in which he sits, in robes, on a chair benevolently smiling toward the beholder. On his lap, loosely held in his hands, rests Volume VII of *Olynthus*, the publication based on Ellingson's MA thesis, opened at the frontispiece which depicts a watercolour of a terracotta found by Mary Ross-Ellingson herself in 1931. Kaiser likes to read the choice of attribute, the portrait's visual vocabulary of intellectual power and distinction combined with the fact that he sent this card to Ellingson at the time that *Olynthus* Vol. XIV was published, as a hidden apology. I rather believe that the portrait can be read as an acknowledgement and confirmation of the unequal nature of their professional relationship, concealed to both of them by the social fabric and mores of the time, but intended as a - misplaced - compliment from Robinson towards Ellingson.

<sup>45</sup> These are just a few of the many references covering the topic: Conkey, M. and J. Spector, 1984. Archaeology and the Study of Gender, *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 7, 1-38. Gero, J., 1985. Sociopolitics and the Woman-at-Home Ideology. *American Antiquity* 50 (2), 342-350. Brown, S., 1993. Feminist Research in Archaeology. What Does It Mean? Why Is It Taking So Long? In: Nancy Sorkin Rabinowich, Amy Richler (eds) *Feminist Theory and the Classics*. London & New York, Routledge: 239-271. Wylie, A., 2007. Doing Archaeology as a Feminist. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 14 (3): 209-216.

<sup>46</sup> In 2019, the University of Alberta's union voted in favour of a contentious proposal that only allows a long term compensation for female Full Professors to mitigate 'damages to dignity and self-worth.' All other female faculty were only paid a limited one time sum. <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/university-of-alberta-academic-staff-consider-pay-bump-only-for-female-professors> Accessed 12 April 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Ross displays a completely different demeanour compared to Wilhelmina Van Ingen, a promising graduate student from the US who worked with Robinson, but badly fell out with him during the excavations at *Olynthus* in 1928. Van Ingen's fiercely independent nature at her time in *Olynthus* and her later scholarly career are described and summarized in: Dessy, R., nd. *Exile from Olynthus, Women in Archaeology, Mentoring and Networking in Greece, 1927-28*. [https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/faculty\\_archives/dessy/exile.pdf](https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/faculty_archives/dessy/exile.pdf). Accessed 3 July 2019.

<sup>48</sup> See the discussion on Professor 'Blank' by Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan. And Barbara McManus' comments. <https://nataliavogeikoff.com/2013/10/01/the-modern-greek-exam-professor-blanks-method-and-other-stories-from-the-1930s/> Accessed January 15 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Kaiser 2015: 165-166, fig. 6.1

## The journey towards publication

It speaks volumes about the reluctance towards openness and self-reflection in the field of Classical Archaeology in North America that Kaiser initially encountered many difficulties in getting this book published. Publishing houses initially all rejected it, often based on negative reports of anonymous reviewers. These reports implied, or even argued explicitly, that some episodes in the history of Classical archaeology were so sensitive that they best remain unwritten. The manuscript thus landed on the shelf, gathering dust for years.

But the initially fruitless efforts towards publication also reveal an even more disturbing reason for initial negative attitudes towards sharing Ellingson's story. In chapter 7, Kaiser is candid in his disclosure how the, sometimes, unassailable positions of power established by past male professors in the field span many decades and remain palpable long after they passed away. The author describes a confrontation with academics mentored in Robinson's tradition and reports how they argued that he would 'embarrass Classical Archaeology' if he would present a lecture on the topic of David Robinson's publication of Mary Ross-Ellingson's work.<sup>50</sup>

Contact with Mary Ross-Ellingson's daughter revived Kaiser's project and the author needs to be commended for his perseverance in seeing his work eventually appear in print. Once a willing publisher was finally found and the story came out, the positive reactions quickly outshone the initial negative ones; the book has received many positive reviews. In these reviews, we read that many young colleagues adopt a more constructive attitude; one that requires a critical look at one's own past education and position in the networks of knowledge and power in which so much scholarship is embedded.<sup>51</sup> Stories like those of Mary Ross-Ellingson need be taken to heart as they serve as reminders that our field has come a long way, but also that we need to continue to be aware that the tides can turn quickly.

<sup>50</sup> Kaiser 2015: 184.

<sup>51</sup> See the many reviews on the publishers website: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781442230033/Archaeology-Sexism-and-Scandal-The-Long-Suppressed-Story-of-One-Woman's-Discoveries-and-the-Man-Who-Stole-Credit-for-Them>, accessed 16 June 2018. See also Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan's informative blog with additional contextual information based on the archival material in the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, *Tales of Olynthus, spoken and unspoken* <https://nataliavoikeoff.com/2015/10/01/tales-of-olynthus-spoken-and-unspoken/> accessed 16 June 2018.

## Conclusion

Having grown up in a privileged 'settlers' environment with new inflowing ideas on religion, education and social order, Mary Ross must have welcomed the golden opportunity to work with Robinson on the terracottas of Olynthus. Coming from Edmonton, Canada, where the effects of the economic crises only just had become palpable, her initial experiences in the field were overwhelmingly positive, but her professional perspectives did not align with the increasingly restrictive measures towards foreign and female scholars in US and later also Canadian academia. It most certainly did not help Mary Ross-Ellingson's career that her own supervisor and mentor published a large part of her work, painstakingly assembled, analysed and written as an MA and PhD thesis, under his own name.

Robinson's dual role as both supporter and consumer of female scholarship should be embedded in a larger social framework of changing power relations in the 1930s, a time of economic decline accompanied by social and political entrenchment that bears a striking resemblance to our current day and age. Under economic pressure there is a cumulative tendency to reform social institutions, such as institutions of learning, including work practices and workplace organization. These reforms are embedded in a network of power relations aimed at creating modes of control to produce 'disciplined' individuals that will work in line with a pattern of perceived 'normality'.<sup>52</sup> Work and study are therefore 'disciplinary activities that [have] processes built into [them] that aim at the maintenance of individual behaviours and attitudes'.<sup>53</sup>

Normalizing gender roles are a well-known part of such processes. The restrictions on fellowships for women and foreigners at the ASCSA, for instance, were justified with an economic argument in a discourse that not only denied women and foreigners to be part of such decisions, but which had the goal to *put them in their place*. Many other academic institutions in the US and Canada followed the same pattern of exclusion, indicated by the declining numbers of new female academic employees in the 1930s and a decline in numbers

<sup>52</sup> Foucault, M., 1978. *The History of Sexuality* Volume 1: An Introduction. New York: Pantheon Books. Foucault, M., 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

<sup>53</sup> Guizzo, D., and W. Stronge, 2018. Keynes, Foucault and the 'Disciplinary Complex': A Contribution to the Analysis of Work (working paper). *Autonomy* (March 2nd 2018): 2-18.

of female graduate students.<sup>54</sup> The initial problems Kaiser had with publishing this book because ‘some stories can better be left unwritten’, can be placed in a similar dynamic; power systems aimed at maintaining the status quo and protecting the reputation of institutions, tend to produce realities free of a burdensome past.

Sharing microhistories such as those of Mary Ross-Ellingson, as Kaiser has done, help us to recognize these processes. We live in economically volatile times and in societies that are becoming increasingly socially and politically entrenched. To successfully continue to strive toward ‘decolonizing’ Classical archaeology, and create career pathways for all who wish to pursue a livelihood in Classics and archaeology regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin colour and socio-cultural background, we need to be reminded, time and again, of those whose careers were undermined or cut short, and why.

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<sup>54</sup> [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/sectionw/W504\\_512-eng.csv](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/sectionw/W504_512-eng.csv), accessed July3, 2019. Axelrod, P., *Making a middle class: student life in English Canada during the thirties*. Montreal and Kingston, McGill and Queen’s University Press: 21.