Tradition and Transformation

A History of Educating Girls at Hathaway Brown School, 1876–2006

by

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Introduction

Imagine a group of neatly gowned, gloved, and bonneted young ladies emerging from a carriage in front of a handsome school building on Cleveland's Carnegie Avenue in 1875. It might have been autum, in which case the thoroughfare would have been bright with the yellow and burnt orange of falling leaves. It might also have been winter, which would have altered the city's landscape, but not the resolve of these five girls, whose dignified and serious demeanor must have impressed the principal. To his surprise and even consternation, perhaps, the five girls had a surprising proposition: they wished to be admitted to the all-boys Brooks Military Academy.

These young women faced more than a reluctant principal; they faced a culture and set of prejudices and values that made it extremely difficult to expect an education comparable in quality to that of boys. Yet they persevered. So highly regarded was their courage in confronting the principal with their pressing need that their names were recorded in nineteenth-century accounts of the incident. Yielding to their persuasion, John White permitted Grace Fay Hooker, Carrie M. Smith, Clara M. Lyon, Dolly Glasser, and Carrie A. Tisdale to take classes in the afternoons after the boys had gone home. In a short account, published well after the fact, an alumna slyly noted that "the boys, who heretofore had attended school in the morning only, now suddenly became very studious, and came every afternoon to study as well."[1]

The principal's concession served as the opening wedge through which Cleveland girls advanced toward becoming educated women. Since afternoon classes for girls seemed to answer a need, a separate school was established in 1876, "which should afford all the advantages of the school for boys."[2] So began the school for girls that would

become Hathaway Brown. Rather than fading away like so many private schools of that era, the school for girls gradually achieved a permanence and stature that no doubt would have surprised and pleased its early advocates. Ironically, the highly touted and well-financed Brooks Military Academy did not survive the nineteenth century.

Students at Hathaway Brown School have often asserted their independence and looked back on their School's history with a certain bemused satisfaction, curiosity, and pride. And why not? A girls' school whose origins came from five girls who simply "could not find any school in the city to which they wished to go" evolved in fits and starts to become one of the nation's premier independent schools and a twenty-first century model for girls' education.

During its first decade, the girls' school, known variously as the Brooks School for Girls, Mrs. Salisbury's School, and Miss Fisher's School, lacked the identity that comes with name, location, traditions, and time. Its fourth head, Anne Hathaway Brown, did more than lend her name to the School in the 1880s. She shaped Hathaway Brown's culture and strong sense of mission. She thought learning had a purpose that went beyond pure academics and expressed this notion in the motto she chose: *Non scholae sed vitae discimus,* roughly translated as, "We learn not for school, but for life." Under her tutelage, her students became literate, articulate, and determined to lead useful lives.

This book's title reflects how we have interpreted Hathaway Brown's history. For more than a century, the School evolved in a steady, unspectacular fashion, beginning as a proprietary school and achieving permanency as a non-profit corporation in the early years of the twentieth century. Under Principal Mary Raymond, it flourished, marking its fiftieth anniversary in 1926 with a capital campaign to move the School out of the congested and polluted city of Cleveland into the suburbs. Real estate and railroad tycoons Oris Paxton and Mantis James Van Sweringen donated a choice tract of land in Shaker Heights, and the prominent architectural firm of Walker and Weeks designed one of the most admired educational buildings of its era. Through the middle of the century, under Anne Cutter Coburn, it remained a traditional school for girls, preparing girls from Cleveland's social elite for the popular liberal arts colleges of that era.

The changing expectations for women as a result of the women's liberation movement precipitated the transformation of Hathaway Brown at the end of the twentieth century. Rejecting coeducation, which had been debated through the administrations of several heads of school, in 1987 Hathaway Brown hired Bill Christ, a young and dynamic English teacher, to be its new head. "We teach students to think independently and innovatively," he wrote the year after he took over, "and we strive to create at the School an atmosphere of such captivating intellectual vibrancy that the girls forever after take delight in knowledge and joy in the operation of their own minds."[3] Mr. Christ was determined to capitalize on the expanded opportunities for women. He sensed that Hath-

away Brown was on the cusp of a new era in the education of girls, especially in science and mathematics. In 2001, when a new wing of the School was completed, its soaring, glass-enclosed atrium provided a symbol of the School's aspirations for the education of women of the twenty-first century. While excellent classroom teaching remained the lynchpin around which the core curriculum was developed, Hathaway Brown looked for opportunities to stretch its students through independent study. What did not change was the intellectual adventure that epitomized a Hathaway Brown education.

A passion for learning and a capacity for self-reflection can be found in student writings as early as the 1890s. Students then had a keen sense of their own power to think and write. Publications like *Specularia,* the student literary magazine that began publication in 1892 (and became the yearbook in the 1940s), and the *HBS Review* (that dates from the 1920s) gave Hathaway Brown students a voice. These writings proved ideal sources for our history of the School. We have sought to tell the story of a unique place, populated by girls with an intense desire to learn, and of the educators who helped to guide them.

In addition to *Specularia* and the *HBS Review,* we were also unusually fortunate to find a trove of documents and photographs in the School's archives. Early catalogues and scrapbooks, as well as the minutes of the Board of Trustees after 1905, when the headmistress ceded some of her independence in return for the security of a salary, proved useful. Although most of the heads of school left few writings, Mr. Christ's eloquent letters to parents at the end of each summer proved a welcome exception. They provided us with a valuable perspective from the late 1980s to 2006. For more recent history, we also drew upon articles in the *Hathaway Brown Alumnae Magazine.*

We used these sources as a lens through which to see the larger history of the education of girls and their collective effort to examine and influence the world in which they lived. We chose not to use a chronological framework, but to present the story thematically. Though this approach produced some repetition, it was also liberating. By looking at topics related to the history of the School, such as leadership, architecture, science, the humanities and the arts, athletics, and community service, we were able to uncover common themes related to the expanded opportunities for women of the twentieth century. As Hathaway Brown evolved into a leader in educating girls, it brought forward the best from the past to mesh with the best of the present and the imagined future.
We are indebted to the work of Ruth Crofut Needham (Class of 1931) and Ruth Strong Hudson (Class of 1927), authors of *The First Hundred Years: Hathaway Brown School, 1876–1976.* When their book was published in 1977, Hathaway Brown was debating whether to become coeducational, costs were spiraling, enrollment was declining, and there was pessimism about the future of private schools. Much of Mrs. Hudson's history was based on the board minutes, a source that could not be located at the time we

were doing our research. The board minutes were rediscovered after we had completed the draft of the book. We have used them sparingly in our revisions. Hope Ford Murphy's *Educating the Independent Mind: The First Hundred Years of Laurel School* was a fine contribution not only to the history of Laurel School, but also to the history of girls' education in Cleveland.

Our interest in the history of women pushed us to consider some of the more recent scholarship in women's studies. Karen J. Blair's *Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined* seemed relevant to our discussion of girls' clubs and community service, and Nancy Cott's *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* provided us with the context for the contemporary emphasis on women in science. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz's *Alma Mater,* a book about the architecture of women's colleges, gave us insight into the School's architectural choices. Margaret Rossiter's *Women in Science* enabled us to understand the unique challenges confronted by women who sought entrée into the male-dominated scientific professions. Surprisingly, scholarship on the history of the education of girls was disappointingly sparse, though Arthur Powell's discussion in *Lessons from Privilege* gave us insight into the coeducation debates of the 1970s.

In the nineteenth century, women students debated whether they should go to college, and they dared to apply to the first colleges that offered them an education comparable to that of men. In the early twentieth century, they wondered whether women should vote, and they sought to uplift the masses of less advantaged immigrants. In the 1960s, they worked for rights for African-Americans and campaigned against the pollution of Lake Erie. By the early twenty-first century, Hathaway Brown students were engaged as never before in tackling the problems not only of their own communities, but of the world. A host of new programs, such as the Student Research Program, service learning, and global studies added depth and variety to the curriculum.

Chapter 1 discusses the leadership of the School—how for almost a century it was shaped by the powerful personality of its headmistresses, who set the standards and guided college decisions. The hiring of the first male head of school in 1968, followed a few years later by the decision of the Ivy League colleges to accept women, proved signal events in the history of Hathaway Brown. The School then began a difficult transition, away from an internally focused institution toward one that wrestled with issues of diversity, coeducation, early childhood education, and the broadening of the curriculum to include greater emphasis on science and math. When Mr. Christ took over as head of school, he set about realizing the School's potential. "We are prepared as few institutions are to create the model of twenty-first-century education for girls and young

women—the kind of education today's girls will need to seize the limitless possibilities before them, and change the world," he wrote in 1998.[4] Under his leadership, Hathaway Brown became a nationally recognized model of excellence, known for its dedicated faculty, innovative educational programs, and talented and diverse student body.

The School's physical plant has always contributed to creating a unique atmosphere for learning. In Chapter 2, we show how the architecture expressed nineteenth-century beliefs about the need to protect and nurture girls in a home-like environment. The School was located in former mansions on or near Euclid Avenue, Cleveland's "Millionaires Row." Even after Hathaway Brown moved to a dedicated building in 1907, the School continued to stress its home-like atmosphere. A much larger classroom building and dormitory erected in Shaker Heights in the 1920s reinforced a sense of continuity, tradition, and loyalty. Though the campus in 2006 still has a comfortable familiarity, two new additions reflect the energy and vitality born of the new aspirations for women.

Opportunities to pursue challenging careers previously reserved for males are among the most dramatic changes that occurred in the history of women during the period from 1876 to 2006. One of the most striking examples is the study of science, which we examine in Chapter 3. In 1876, science was considered an almost exclusively male preserve, and as late as the 1950s, only seven percent of all professional scientists were women. This gender division was reflected in the early curriculum, with more emphasis traditionally placed upon domestic science than laboratory science. By the 1970s, more students were taking courses in physics, calculus, and chemistry. In the 1990s, Hathaway Brown launched a program that encouraged girls to do independent research with mentors at Case Western Reserve University, The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, NASA, and a variety of other science-based institutions. Students won such prestigious state and national science competitions as the Intel Science Talent Search and the Siemens-Westinghouse Competition and were admitted to some of the nation's most selective colleges and universities.

In contrast to science, which languished at Hathaway Brown until the 1970s, literature, history, and the visual and performing arts proved exhilarating to students from the nineteenth century to the present. *Specularia* became a showcase for their eloquent and sophisticated literary and artistic expression. Chapter 4 gives voice to students who shared their ideas and stories with other students, parents, and alumnae on everything from classical literature to current events.

Chapter 5 describes the students' increased participation in athletics. In the early part of the twentieth century, Hathaway Brown students eagerly engaged in new forms of athletic competition, such as basketball, baseball, and field hockey, and reveled in the opportunity to express themselves as new women in a new era. They took to the athletic fields with such fervor and intensity that educators became concerned over the dangers

of too much physical activity. In the 1920s, cordial "play days" replaced rowdy interscholastic athletic competition. Competitive sports were not completely reinstated until after the passage of federal legislation in the 1970s that required increased funding for women's sports. Suddenly educators once again saw the value of allowing girls to push themselves as hard as boys, physically as well as mentally. As participation in sports increased, support of its teams by the student body grew. This resulted in increased school spirit and the winning of several state championships.

In the era before women had the right to vote or to choose traditionally male professions, many fulfilled their intellectual and social aspirations through community service, the theme of Chapter 6. The "Order of Willing Service," founded in 1901, emphasized the importance of women's active involvement in the problems of the city, particularly those caused by poverty, ignorance, and disease. In 1900, their crusading spirit led to key roles in many of Cleveland's early charitable organizations.

At mid-century, Hathaway Brown girls sought to make sense of the changing and often difficult events that surrounded them. They debated America's involvement in two world wars and the Civil Rights Movement, and took part in the deliberations of a model United Nations. After the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the School became far more involved in communicating a global vision to its students. "Twenty-first century schools, in our age of ever-intensifying globalization, must become schools without borders," Mr. Christ wrote, "expanding their horizons across oceans and cultures to promote global understanding and citizenship in both students and faculty."[5] This led to an initiative to create a Center for Global Citizenship at Hathaway Brown and a new chapter still unwritten in the School's life.

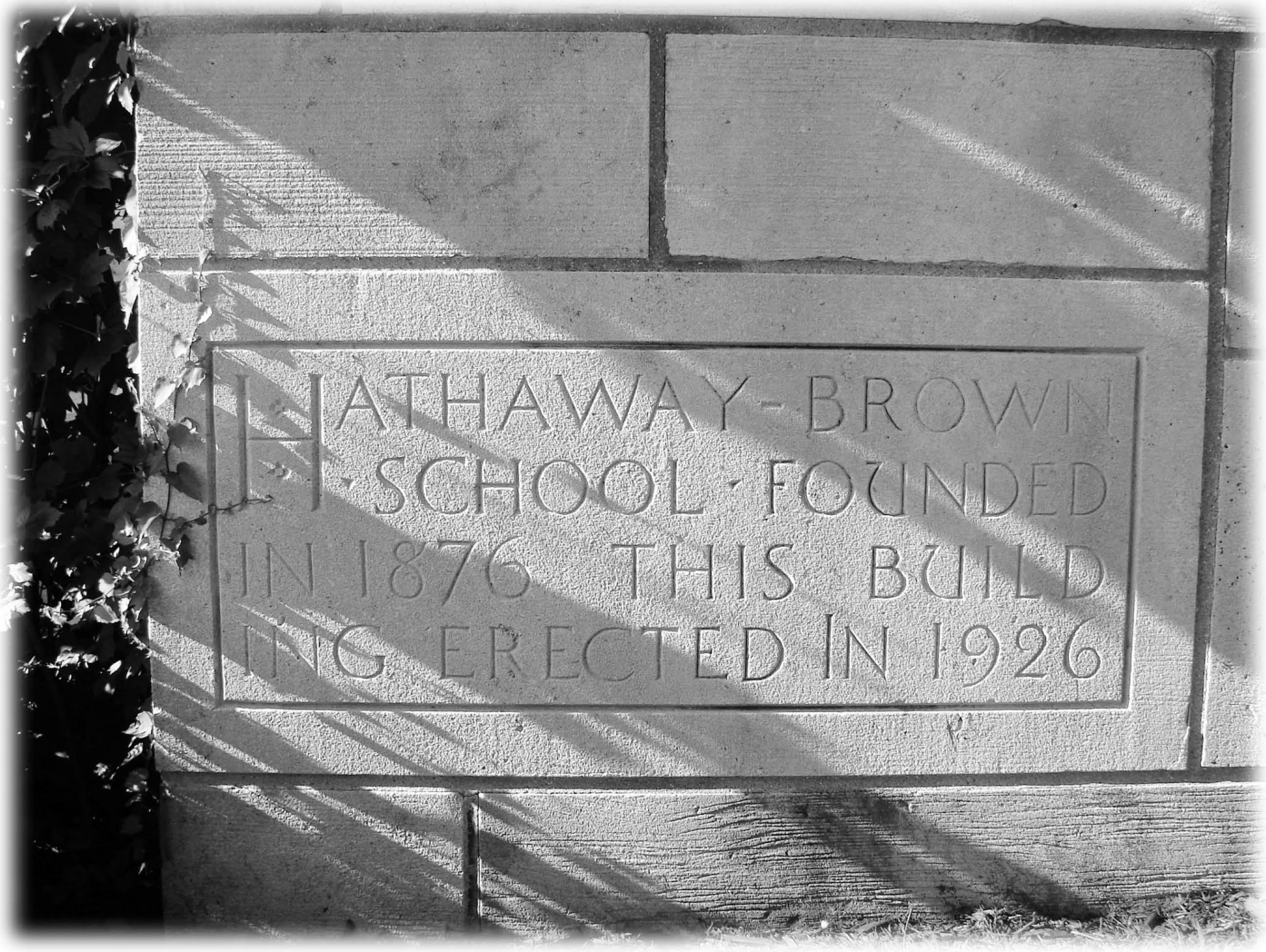
Telling the story of any institution is challenging, particularly as the narrative moves to the present. We have tried to capture the essential elements of a dynamic and evolving story. As we wrote the book, we were constantly reminded that the School was filled with dedicated teachers who defined its spirit and excellence through their daily work in the classroom. For every girl, the intellectual odyssey of a Hathaway Brown education begins there. If newer programs that are outgrowths of the School's attempt to reimagine and redesign education for the twenty-first century seem to have received more emphasis, that is because they reflect the broader trends in our society. It was simply impossible to include all the important programs and people that have contributed to making the School a model for educating girls. Our history is not *the* history of Hathaway Brown, but *a* history of the School. The omission of some dedicated faculty, who daily bring ideas to life for students, of loyal alumnae, and of hard-working staff mem-

bers cannot diminish the value of their contributions to the life of the School. They are essential to the School's future and past.

The association of the authors with Hathaway Brown School began ten years ago when Virginia Dawson wrote an article on the early history of the School that appeared in *Hathaway Brown Today*.[6] In collaborating on the book project, we jointly conceived its organization. Virginia Dawson drafted the introduction and Chapters 1 and 6 and Mark Bowles researched and wrote Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5. Since the book could not be published as planned in 2001, in 2006 Virginia Dawson rewrote the book, particularly chapters 2 and 4, and added new material to bring the book up to date. During the revision of the book, large sections of text were transferred between chapters to tighten them and eliminate repetition. In the process, we renamed the book *Tradition and Transformation* to emphasize its central theme. One of our dilemmas was the use of courtesy titles in the book. We decided to use them rather than the more common usage of last names after the first reference.

During the rewriting phase, Virginia Dawson worked with English teacher Terry Dubow, Director of Hathaway Brown's Writing Center. Without him, this book would never have been published. His enthusiasm, insights, and thoughtful critique proved invaluable in sharpening the book's main arguments and in correcting omissions. He also helped to gather images and worked with the book's designer, Diana Barry, to produce a volume we hope is both readable and handsome. We would also like to acknowledge the foresight and perseverance of Suzanne Williams Stratton-Crooke (Class of 1957), former director of planned giving. She was the project's advocate, convinced that the School's history provided important lessons for the present. She also was instrumental in making sure the School maintained its extensive archives so future generations of students could appreciate how the School evolved. Mrs. Hudson and Susan Faulder, a former teacher and writer for the *Hathaway Brown Alumnae Magazine,* were also staunch allies of the project. Other faculty and alumnae graciously allowed us to interview them and shared their insights into the unique community of excellence that defines Hathaway Brown. They are listed in the acknowledgements at the end of the book.

We would also like to thank Ann Sindelar at the Western Reserve Historical Society for access to its rich collections, particularly the unprocessed papers of Walker and Weeks, and Kenneth Rose at the Rockefeller Archive Center for information on the Brook's Military Academy and Miss Mittleberger's School.


HATHAWAY-BROWN
SCHOOL·FOUNDED
IN 1876 THIS BUILD
ING ERECTED IN 1926