

FORTY YEARS OF GRADUATE STUDY IN HISTORY AT CARLETON UNIVERSITY

In November 1996, Carleton University celebrated forty years of graduate study in History. For a university only fifty-four years old, the event demonstrated the central place History has occupied in Carleton's curriculum in the arts and social sciences. As a university in the national capital, the home of rich library and archival resources, Carleton's interest in promoting Canadian studies is appropriate.

Carleton College began in 1943 as a "sun-down college", offering evening classes in vacant high school class rooms. An un-denominational institution, it was the only university to be founded in Canada between the establishment of Sir George Williams College (1934) (now Concordia University) and the group of universities which emerged in almost every province in the 1950s. Carleton's part-time faculty was drawn from university teachers working in Ottawa during the war—men like R.A. MacKay—and from senior public servants such as J.A. Gibson. Its students were young men and women in the war-time departments and in the armed forces, any of whose university education had been interrupted by hostilities. After 1945 the College acquired its own premises in a residential district of Ottawa, hired its first full-time teaching staff and opened its doors to the veterans who were now flocking into the university.

The 1950s were heady years for Carleton. As its enrolment broadened, it became Carleton University and moved to a spacious new campus between the Rideau River and Canal on the southern edge of Ottawa. The next twenty years saw the construction of 23 new buildings to serve academic programs in the arts and sciences, engineering and specialized schools.

Graduate studies were not long in coming. History led the way in the Faculty of Arts. The department's undergraduate degree had been modelled on that of the University of British Columbia where the first two full-time members of the department, James Gibson and David Farr, had studied. The UBC Honours degree required a dissertation based on research in primary sources. This was accompanied by an obligatory course in the history of historical writing and historical method. Carleton took the same path. In the most difficult curricular test of its early years, the College had secured approval for specialist teacher certification from the Ontario Department of Education for its History honours course. The four-year degree also became the means by which a number of its holders went on to advanced study at graduate schools.

Carleton's first M.A. in History was distinctly ad hoc, being awarded before definitive regulations for graduate study in the University were worked out. A promising Honours student wished to continue his studies in Ottawa and the Department believed it had the faculty and book collection to oblige. W.D.

Atkinson, undoubtedly inspired by the publication of Ferns and Ostry's *Age of Mackenzie King* in 1955, wrote a thesis on the relations between organized labour and the Laurier administration. He began a course of directed reading and co-ordinated essays in 1956 and two years later completed a thesis. It was probably examined by A.L. Burt, a visiting professor after his retirement from Minnesota, S.R. Mealing and John S. Moir. Re-reading the thesis forty years on, one is struck by its attitude of healthy scepticism regarding the Laurier government's intentions towards labour unions and its brisk, almost breezy, style. Its author later moved to Hollywood to become a film writer.

In 1958 the Carleton calendar set down regulations for a graduate program in History in "fields in which adequate documentary materials are available". Canadian history and Canadian foreign relations were cited as promising fields for graduate research in Ottawa. Candidates came mostly from other Canadian universities although a solid core of part-time students in the early years was drawn from the Public (later National) Archives of Canada. The late W.G. Ormsby, long-time treasurer of the Canadian Historical Association, led the procession. As head of the Manuscript Division at the Archives Ormsby knew his materials and how they might be employed to explore uncharted waters. His thesis on the emergence of the federal concept in the bifurcated Province of Canada, 1839-45, was a solid contribution to our knowledge of the Union. It was later published in the Canadian Studies in History and Government series of the University of Toronto Press.

Bill Ormsby began reading and thesis preparation in 1957 and by April 1960 was ready to have his thesis examined. This proved to be an exciting occasion for the Department. J.E. "Ted" Hodgetts from Queen's University was brought to Ottawa as an external examiner while President Davidson Dunton sat in to witness this first real test of graduate work in History. Professors Gibson, Mealing and Moir were other examiners. My diary records that we gave the candidate "a thorough grilling" and were clearly impressed by his "extensive knowledge" of primary and secondary sources bearing on his subject. We awarded the thesis a mark of A although inexplicably it was not until after dinner that evening that I telephoned Bill Ormsby to give him the result! A few years later James Gibson, Brock University's founding president, lured Bill to the new institution to become the anchor of its nascent History Department. Perhaps it was his performance on that early master's examination on 29 April 1960 that won Bill the appointment.

Since 1960 the Carleton graduate program in History has moved forward steadily, both in numbers and in confidence. Staff members from the Archives formed a strong contingent of candidates: Ted Regehr (1963); Edward Dahl (1969);

the late Ed Bush (1969); Terry Cook (1970); Jay Atherton (1972). Students from other provinces, from Britain, the United States and further afield came to try their hand at interpreting Canadian materials. Many later went on in academic life: A.M.J. "Jack" Hyatt (1961); Del Muise (1964); Robin Burns (1966); Dale Miquelon (1966); William Baker (1967); David Gagan (1968); Terry Crowley (1968); Veronica Strong-Boag (1971); John Milloy (1974) and Allan Greer (1975), to name just a few. Non-Canadian M.A.'s were soon introduced, the first being awarded in 1966. Some of its holders have also moved on to further graduate study and academic careers: for example Cynthia Neville (1980); Elizabeth Rapley (1980) and John Craig (1988).

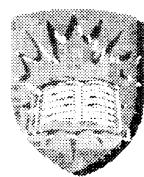
By the 1970s the program had expanded to encompass work at the doctoral level. In doing so it defined a sharper focus for its efforts. Ontario official accreditation came for the Canadian field in 1973 and for women's history without restriction to country in 1990.

Graduates with a Carleton Ph.D. in History soon made their mark. The first doctorate was awarded to Duncan McDowall in 1978. His thesis, supervised by Blair Neatby, was on F.H. Clergue and the Algoma Steel Corporation, 1901-56. It was later published by the University of Toronto Press. Bruce Elliott was awarded his doctoral degree six years later with a thesis on Irish migrants in the Canadas, 1815-80. Stanley Mealing supervised this work, which went on to become a prize-winning book published by McGill-Queen's University Press. Both these pioneers in the doctoral program are now key members in the present History Department.

Social history became a leading area of interest in the Department's doctoral program. This emphasis was reflected in the launching of the journal, *Social History/Histoire sociale* by Stanley Mealing, Marcel Trudel, Blair Neatby and Fernand Ouellet in 1968. Until 1991 the journal was closely associated with Carleton University. The field of social history has brought its share of distinction to the Department. Sara Burke's thesis, "Seeking the Highest Good: Social Service at the University of Toronto, 1888-1937", was awarded the 1995 CHA John Bullen prize for best doctoral thesis.

Carleton History graduates have fanned out into a surprising variety of occupations. Some have entered government service, others journalism, public relations, museum work, law and Indian claims research. Former students attending the 40th anniversary reunion filled a display case with business cards that showed what could be done to earn a living with the possession of a graduate History degree. As of 1996 the Carleton History Department has awarded 327 master's degrees and 28 doctorates. After forty years it is necessary for an academic department to be alert to new opportunities. But the legacy of the first 350 graduates remains, a source of pride to the faculty members who nourished and were stimulated by them. Carleton's graduates in History have made their inimitable contribution to the University, to the profession and to Canada.

David Farr is Professor Emeritus of History at Carleton University, where he joined the faculty in 1947. From 1952 to 1963 he served as chair of the History Department. This article is excerpted from a talk given at a reunion to mark the 40th anniversary of graduate studies in History at Carleton, 1 November 1996.



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