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## The Misses Martin's School for Young Ladies Portland, Maine, 1803-1834

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YVONNE A. SOULIERE

THE MISSES MARTIN'S SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES  
PORTLAND, MAINE, 1803-1834

*During the Early Republic, education for the daughters of Portland's elite families usually included "ornamental" subjects such as needlework, music, and painting in addition to the "useful" subjects of reading, history, arithmetic, and geography. This curriculum mirrored that of fashionable schools for young ladies in New York, Philadelphia, and, of course, Boston. The "Misses Martin's School for Young Ladies," opened in 1803 by the English "gentlewoman" Penelope Martin, instructed girls in "useful" and "ornamental" subjects while also offering Portland's best families the added cache of sending their daughters to a British-style boarding school for training as "proper" young ladies. Yvonne Souliere's essay sets the Misses Martin's school in the context of education in Maine in the early nineteenth century and points to the importance of these types of schools for elite families interested in both educating and socializing their daughters. Yvonne Souliere works for the Division of Academic Support at the University of Southern Maine.*

Like other early nineteenth-century towns and cities along the east coast, Portland, Maine had retained a close relationship with England and with British culture. Many Portland-area families had emigrated to this area from Essex, Middlesex, and Suffolk Counties in Massachusetts, and their families had originated in counties of the same name in England.<sup>1</sup> These kinship



This miniature of Penelope Martin was probably painted when she was in London attending her Aunt Low's school. The image shows a fashionable young lady of the 1780s with plumed hat and empire-style dress. (*In the style of George Englehart, watercolor on ivory in gold mount, prob. London, 18th century. Courtesy Portland Museum of Art.*)

ties survived the loyalist-patriot split of the Revolutionary War, especially among the mercantile and shipping families. Besides kinship and deep-rooted cultural traditions, a further connection was economic. Historians of the Early Republic agree that

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strong mercantile interests bound Northern merchants and shippers tightly to their British counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Consistently, through all the turmoil and change characterizing the years of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and despite a growing nationalistic spirit, the cultural orientation of Portland's upper class remained distinctly British. In 1803 this group of people welcomed the opening of a local school for their daughters which would be overseen by a woman who was British-born and British-trained.

As the nineteenth century began, in major cities all along the Atlantic seacoast, more and more middle and upper class families were putting some of their money to use raising literate daughters. These same families sought a balance between academic learning and social training. They were convinced as true republicans that "sons of liberty" who began their learning at their mothers' knees were owed a solid start in life. They were also convinced that their daughters, republican mothers-to-be, should learn the social graces needed to ornament their future husbands' homes and lives. By their patronage of the Misses Martin's School for Young Ladies in Portland and similar establishments elsewhere, this segment of the population implicitly agreed for a few decades on the British-style boarding school as the best means of achieving these goals and by the score they sent their daughters to schools like this one. This situation changed by 1830, but in 1803 when the Misses Martin's School opened, it offered area residents a convenient equivalent to distant British-style schools in the Boston area and in southern New England. At their school, Penelope Martin and her sisters would attempt to mold the willful daughters of New England wealth into "proper" (and marriageable) young ladies.<sup>3</sup> The environment in which this desired transformation was to take place owed its principal features to Penelope Martin's British birth and rearing and, in particular, to her own genteel boarding school experience in London during the 1780s.<sup>4</sup>

### **Education for Girls, c. 1800**

Portland, Maine had become a prosperous commercial

town by 1800, its patterns of economic and educational development paralleling those of similar New England seaports. When the Martin sisters moved their home and school from North Yarmouth to its first Portland location in 1804, public education, although required by law in this town as throughout New England, was spotty in its availability and protean in its forms. The standard sequential public school system open to both sexes was still several decades in the future.

As early as 1647 the Massachusetts Bay Colony had required towns with fifty or more families “to support free and common schools; and also grammar-schools, when the towns were so large as to contain 100 families.”<sup>5</sup> At the time, the legislature had not established specific criteria for the form of these schools. As the schools developed, however, certain conventions appeared: “Common” education came to mean the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic at basic levels to students who had first learned to read their ABCs either at home or in a dame school. “Grammar” or “academical” education meant English grammar, geography, higher mathematics, and often French, music, surveying, and navigation, all of which were offered in both town-supported and private schools. “Classical” education meant the additional study of Hebrew, Latin, Greek, rhetoric, history, and philosophy – “natural, mental and moral,” usually in a private, tuition-supported school.<sup>6</sup>

Despite repeated assertions by nineteenth-century commentators and historians that early town schools were open to all children, contemporary evidence qualifies these assertions.<sup>7</sup> First of all, education was consistently more available to urban than to rural children, a bias built into the population requirement of the 1647 statute. Next, the early town schools required by law were in fact established as what were then called “grammar” schools, providing a level of schooling well beyond that offered in modern “grammar” schools. Students who came to these schools were expected to arrive with the ability to “read in the Psalter.”<sup>8</sup> In these town schools, students would then learn to write and compute. Nineteenth-century Portland historian Edward Elwell notes tersely: “The public schools were not

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intended for nurseries, but institutions for learning.”<sup>9</sup> Children unable (for whatever reason) to acquire the rudiments were thus excluded from town schools. Many children who did qualify for the schools must have been instructed in their homes, but during the later eighteenth century, a growing number of urban children learned their ABCs at so-called “dame schools,” which offered education to the point of reading literacy for both boys and girls.

Throughout New England, dame schools were kept mostly in homes and were frequently run by widows as their means of livelihood. For example, a list of Portland schools appearing in the *Portland Gazette* in 1810 names eighteen “Women’s Schools for young Children.”<sup>10</sup> Educational historian Lawrence Cremin describes these schools as providing “a quasi-domestic environment under the direction of a quasi-maternal teacher.”<sup>11</sup> Cremin affirms the existence of these schools until their function was taken over by town (i.e., modern “public”) primary schools by the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

When students at the dame schools had learned to read their ABCs and simple words, some of them moved on to the town-supported schools. Unfortunately for the female scholars, most of the earlier town schools in New England were grammar schools run by men for boys. Maine historian Louis Hatch defines early grammar schools as those “from which students as they were ‘judged ripe’ might be received into the college.”<sup>13</sup> From Hatch’s definition, the intent and the practice of those who began and controlled these schools is clear: to limit attendance at the grammar schools to males; females at the time did not attend college. When girls were eventually permitted into town schools, at first they were usually limited to attending either early in the morning before the “real” students, the boys, arrived, or late in the afternoon when the boys had left.<sup>14</sup> On occasion, schools also were open to girls in the summer months, when the boys did not attend.<sup>15</sup>

Kenneth Lockridge’s study of literacy in colonial New England corroborates and explains this situation. Toward the end of the colonial period, male literacy had become “nearly

universal" in New England, "but female illiteracy remained quite common and women were always at a distinct disadvantage in obtaining basic education."<sup>16</sup> Since the town-supported schools in Congregationalist New England existed primarily to ensure a supply of students for the colleges, from which many emerged as literate men trained for the pulpits of the state-sanctioned church, these schools dealt with girls only peripherally, if at all. Thus, while Lockridge found that in 1750 literacy for men in New England (irrespective of economic class) was running at about 80 percent, at the same time literacy for women was only about 45 percent.<sup>17</sup> Lockridge concludes from his data: "The relative inertia of women's literacy was the result of intention on the part of this culture. Women were discriminated against because they were women...."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the major justification of this cultural norm lies in the fact that the domestic work expected of women at this time infrequently required writing, so though many females may have been taught to read, they were usually not taught to write.<sup>19</sup>

Only after the Revolution did the situation begin to change, largely as the notion of "republican motherhood" gained acceptance in the general population.<sup>20</sup> Education for girls profited from the growing conviction that they should become "wiser wives and better mothers."<sup>21</sup> In the 1780s, new educational theories reflected the changing political and social attitudes: "the argument for women's education centered on their social usefulness as daughters, wives and mothers."<sup>22</sup> Mothers began to be considered responsible for the moral as well as the intellectual formation of those male children who were rightful heirs of the "Sons of Liberty." Only girls who had been educated to a level well above that in vogue before the Revolution would be equal to the sacred task of providing a solid, "virtuous education" for their children, especially their sons.<sup>23</sup>

### **Penelope Martin's Origins**

Twentieth-century acquaintance with Penelope Martin begins with letters she wrote from London during the 1780s. Glimpses of Penelope as a young adult can also be seen in Abigail

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May's diary of a lengthy visit to Portland in 1796, and Penelope's life as a schoolmistress is chronicled in her own manuscript written in the 1820s.<sup>24</sup> A fairly clear image emerges from combining the information in these texts.

Born in England in April 1773, Penelope Martin was the daughter of a genteel mother and a merchant father.<sup>25</sup> In 1783 William Martin left London for Boston with his wife Elizabeth and five of his children: Catherine, Samuel, Lydia, Nathaniel, and Eliza. Two other children, Penelope and her brother William, were left behind to finish their education in England: Penelope at her Aunt Low's boarding school in London, and William as apprentice to an attorney.<sup>26</sup>

While at her aunt's school, the young Penelope wrote often to her family.<sup>27</sup> Martin's surviving letters offer hints regarding the cultural base from which Penelope's later life developed. First, deference to and respect for family, social, and institutional hierarchies evident in the letters would later inform Penelope's career as schoolmistress.<sup>28</sup> Next, the letters document that, in addition to practicing orthography and composition, Penelope also did fine needlework, studied French, and became proficient at the piano during her years at Aunt Low's school.<sup>29</sup> As she approached adulthood and emigration, Penelope reported with relish her aunt's quest for marriage partners for her students: "I hear of nothing but Weddings now, we have had three from our house in ten weeks, ours is a very luckey [sic] house I assure to get a husband, all the Girls want to come."<sup>30</sup> Years later, these elements of her school experience would be integrated into the program she devised for students at her own school.

Though few and scattered in time, Penelope Martin's eleven letters preceding her emigration make clear several aspects of her personality. First, she was intelligent and witty, frequently revealing a sense of humor when writing to her sister Catherine. Next, Penelope had acquired polish and sophistication from spending her formative years in a cosmopolitan center.<sup>31</sup> Also, she accepted marriage as the appropriate goal for young ladies, teasing Catherine about her prospects with "the Yankies."<sup>32</sup> Her sense of "proper," appropriate behavior was also



firm. For example, although she judged a precipitate marriage-on-the-rebound of one young man as improper, she also cautioned Catherine not to speak of it to him, making even clearer her understanding of what comments were permissible from a woman to a woman, but not permissible from a woman to a man.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the seventeen-year-old writer of the later letters was independent, having passed eight years of her life in a female-dominated household of which she may sometimes have been in charge.<sup>34</sup>

### **Portland-area Resident**

By 1790, the year of Penelope's arrival in Maine, William Martin had spent some years in Boston, become a naturalized citizen, and moved to Broad Cove in North Yarmouth, Maine (now a part of Cumberland Foreside).<sup>35</sup> The adjustment that this sophisticated London Miss made to the abrupt and complete change in her lifestyle occasioned by joining her family in North Yarmouth remains undocumented. The next view of her comes through the eyes of Abigail May, a Boston visitor to Portland in the summer and early fall of 1796. Her journal, written in the form of letters to her younger sister Lucretia, who stayed at home in Boston, reveals an articulate, cultured, fun-loving young woman.

Although caught in a social whirl of visits, assemblies, balls, and outings with friends during her time in Portland and obviously not very restricted in her comings and goings, Abigail May recorded a realistic self-assessment, given neither to sentimentalizing nor to aggrandizing her own place in her world.<sup>36</sup> What becomes clear to readers of the journal, however, is that Abigail's attachment was strongest not to the Martins, but to other girls in her circle, about whom she has more to say, with whom she spends the most time, and whose presence she seems always to enjoy. She betrays this attitude outright when she expresses a reluctance to make her initial visit to the Martins in North Yarmouth: "I plead [sic] my many engagements but Kitty [Catherine Martin] urged my going in Penelope's behalf and uncle seem'd to wish it so I said yes."<sup>37</sup> Again, her eagerness to

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leave at the end of that same visit draws her attention from Penelope at the spinnet to the window instead: "Penelope play'd enchantingly but I could not avoid looking out of the window for the chaise."<sup>38</sup> Finally, after meeting Mr. and Mrs. Martin in town she says, "I could not get away."<sup>39</sup> Abigail sums up her reaction to the Martins by saying that "they make too much of me," hinting that perhaps she would prefer somewhat less notice from this family.<sup>40</sup>

Abigail May's 1796 stay in Portland and her faithful daily record of its events provide an outsider's impressions of the Martin family at a time when Penelope and her younger sister Eliza were at eminently marriageable ages. All three sisters, however, spent the remainder of their lives unmarried. The May diary offers intriguing hints that the Martin sisters' own consciousness of their social status may have set up class barriers to their marriage with neighbors or acquaintances. However, a major contributing cause to their spinsterhood may well have been economic.<sup>41</sup> By 1803 William Martin found himself facing financial disaster. In her manuscript penned in the 1820s Penelope discreetly describes her father's status at the turn of the century: "Our dear Father's situation, from having been advantageous and independent, was now from a variety of Losses and disappointments, becoming ineligible...."<sup>42</sup> According to Penelope herself, William Martin decided in 1803 that the best way to improve family finances would be for his already- older daughters to forego their now-limited possibility of marriage connections and instead to do their "Duty" to save the family from further financial embarrassment by opening a boarding school. The deciding factor apparently was that "above all...it promised to make the declining years of our dear Parents more comfortable."<sup>43</sup>

Penelope describes herself at the time as "feeling scarcely adequate to the undertaking," but "having been eight years in a boarding school...somewhat habituated to it."<sup>44</sup> Her ambivalence toward the family's changed circumstances is obvious as she writes about how she felt:

[U]ncertain how such a Seminary would succeed in this part of the Country...the resources of knowledge, the spirit of Government, and the sacrifices it demanded, assuming an appalling character, to those, who had for some time laid aside their Schoolbooks, their School discipline, and who had been educated with *far* other views that [sic] those of instructing, or becoming subject to the caprices of Youth.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the sense of regret and frustration underlying those words, Penelope and her sisters accepted their family duty, acceded to their father's wishes, "resolved to venture it," and opened their school.<sup>46</sup> They would continue this work through thirty years, about 700 of New England's daughters passing through their care before an unexpected family legacy would permit them to retire in 1834.<sup>47</sup>

### **Penelope Martin's Philosophy of Education**

From about 1774, advertisements for English-style boarding schools such as the Martins' had appeared in newspapers of larger American cities, so potential clients were familiar with the type of education the Misses Martin's School would offer their daughters.<sup>48</sup> Parents entrusted their young daughters to the Martins to be trained for the duties and privileges they could expect as wives of prospering merchants, shippers, traders, clergy, and professionals "occupying highly respectable situations in life."<sup>49</sup> Penelope's own awareness of the pre-adolescent developmental stage is apparent in words she chose for this notice which appeared in the *Eastern Argus*, Tuesday, March 1, 1831:

#### *MISS MARTIN'S SCHOOL*

Miss P. Martin proposes to recommence her SCHOOL the last Monday in March...Her principal object is to receive Misses as boarders, either from this, or any other town; *from eight years old to fourteen, being that interesting period when youth are*

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*most susceptible of impressions—when instruction is instilled into the mind with most facility and success, when such habits are formed as are pleasing and generally permanent...Miss MARTIN'S system of instruction...embraces all that is calculated to enlarge the understanding, develope [sic] and strengthen the mind and form the character.*<sup>50</sup>

The stated purpose of the school was that of “endeavoring to improve the rising Generations.” To achieve this purpose, “delicacy, Neatness, and good order” were “ever recommended and practised in the Seminary.” Penelope Martin expected her early scholars to practice “respectful address, willing subordination...respect to superiors in age, and experience....”<sup>51</sup>

This approach satisfied the needs of early nineteenth-century parents seeking to train their daughters in a manner they perceived as appropriate. In a letter to a friend in 1801, Daniel Davis (at the time a Maine lawyer and later Solicitor General of Massachusetts) described his feelings concerning his own daughter Louisa's education this way: “She has enough [education], and too much to make her exactly what I wish her to be. I mean only that her thirst [sic] for reading, will probably obstruct the attainment of those amiable, condescending, and endearing manners, without which a woman is, in my estimation, but a poor piece of furniture.”<sup>52</sup> The Misses Martin were thought by Davis to fulfill the educational goals he sought: Helen Davis, younger sister to Louisa of the letter, appears as a boarder on the school list.<sup>53</sup>

A letter to her father from Eliza Tallman of Bath, written about 1815 while she was a student at the Martin school, offers the student's point of view. The letter also reveals the relationship of the school's philosophy to parental expectations:

I hope I shall meet your expectation, and be a good Girl. I feel that I am sometimes very far [from] what I ought to be, and hope as I grow older I shall realize more the necessity of improvement, and establishing good principles, which Miss Martin says is the only foundation for

happiness, as it softens the temper and makes us appear amiable to every beholder, which I should like to do, but then I must expect to take great pains and trouble.<sup>54</sup>

Judging from the continued operation of the school in Portland for thirty years and its voluntary closing, Penelope Martin's educational goals clearly contributed to its success. Obviously, parents who sent a succession of four, five, or six daughters here were satisfied with the instruction offered. Also, when some of these students became parents themselves, their remembrances of Miss Martin's led them to send their daughters to the same school.

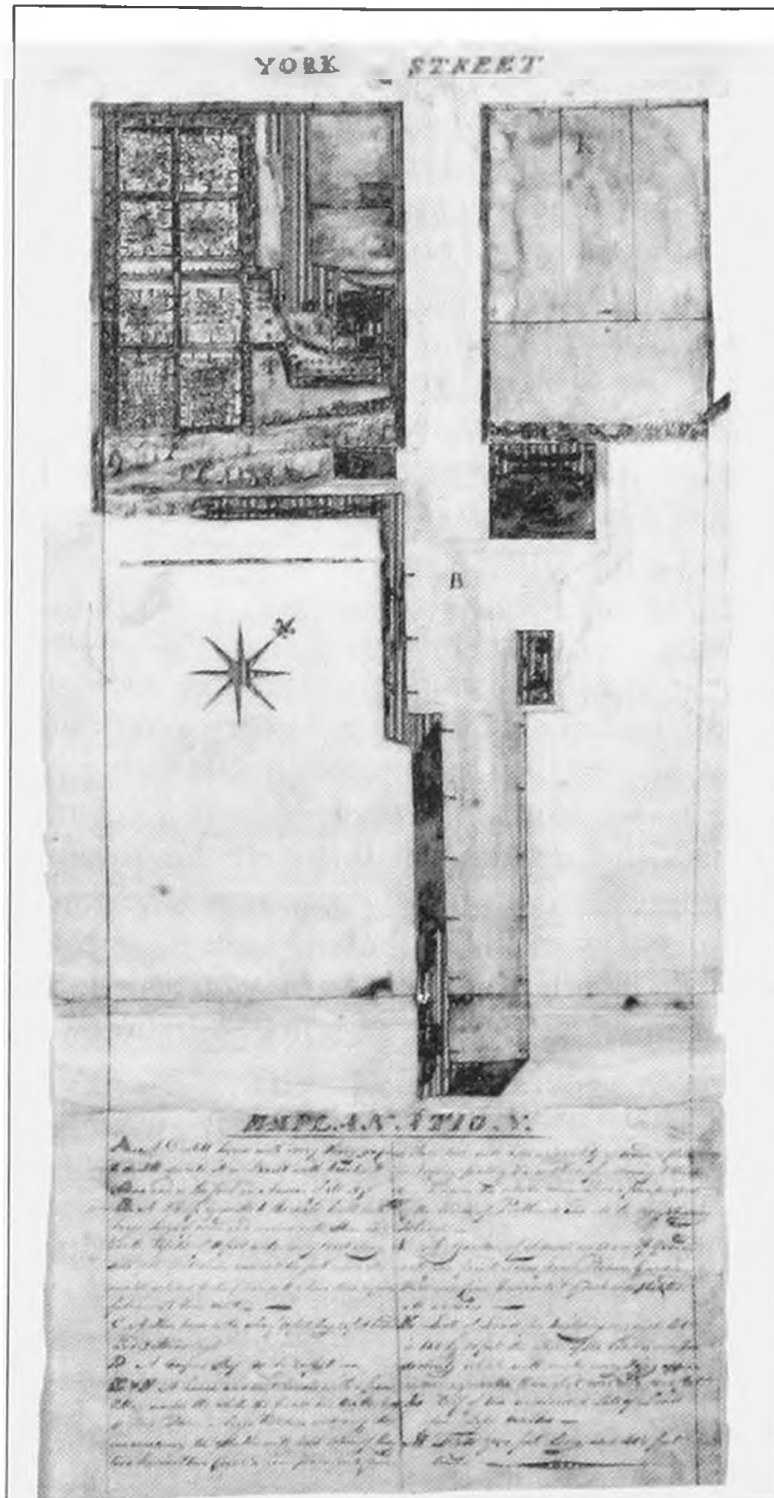
### **The Martin School Curriculum**

Contemporary English-style boarding schools offered instruction in belles-lettres, including "history, geography, biography, natural history, astronomy, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, travel stories."<sup>55</sup> Penelope Martin's own schooling at Aunt Low's in London had included the "useful" arts of reading, composition, and orthography. "Ornamentals" included fine needlework, attendance at cultural events, and the practice of instrumental music.<sup>56</sup> The base on which all these arts rested was manners.<sup>57</sup> The Martin school mirrored these offerings:

[W]e...have instructed in all the branches which are usually taught...always recommending more the useful, than the ornamental yet paying a suitable attention to the french language, Music, painting, and embroidery....<sup>58</sup>

In the same letter to her father mentioned earlier, Bath's Eliza Tallman also left a description of the student day and the academic studies she pursued at the school about 1815:

I rise at seven and retire at nine, my studies are Geography, Arithmetick, Parsing, Spelling, Bible lessons, Reading, Music, &c. I have been through the Geographical Catechism and begun to commit to memory another book on Geography. I



The Misses Martin moved their school to the Captain Thomas Robison house in 1805. This plan of the property, drawn in 1802, shows Robison's extensive holdings before his return to Ontario. The house in which the Martins ran their school is at the upper left corner of the plan set among gardens that stretched down to Portland harbor. (*Unidentified artist, "Plan of Ann Street, Portland," pen and ink and watercolor on paper, Portland, Maine, 1802. Courtesy Maine Historical Society.*)

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have advanced in Arithmetick as far as simple Division. I spell in Walkers pronouncing Dictionary in order that I may learn to speak correctly which I think is of great consequence. I have lately begun to Parse english grammar. I attend much to my reading in the Bible as well as in other books. I am going on with my Music and have 17 tunes. I hope I shall be able to play you a song when you come home.<sup>59</sup>

The general study areas detailed in this letter parallel those considered appropriate for the male-oriented grammar schools of the time. In particular, the Bible lessons Eliza mentions here, "a regular study on Saturday" at the Martin school, were also common in boys' schools.<sup>60</sup> Reinforcing the Bible studies, "on Monday the [Martin School] pupils were questioned in regard to the texts and sermons they had heard at church on the Sabbath."<sup>61</sup> Such studies had been integral to the town schools since their inception and continued to be characteristic of most schools until public schooling became secularized later in the century.

Penelope Martin's expertise as teacher of the "ornamental" branches is visible in extant needlework done by her students. Two silk and paint embroideries attributed to Martin students are featured by embroidery expert Betty Ring in a 1988 issue of *The Magazine Antiques*. Both works reveal a level of skill attainable only with many hours of practice preceding their execution.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Martin School Sites**

As the years passed, the Martin school did not escape change. National events impinged on the Portland community and on the school in the form of the Embargo of 1807, the ensuing War of 1812, and another decade or so of boom/bust economy that followed the earlier military turbulence. Affected by these changes, some families lost fortunes in a short time and were forced to adopt changes in their lifestyles, sometimes precluding boarding schools for their daughters.<sup>63</sup> In reference

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to the decade just ended, Penelope Martin wrote in 1821: "This was a period of trouble in this part of our Country, when the Embargo, war and domestic disappointments in business, prevented many from sending their daughters to boarding School."<sup>64</sup> She continues: "In 1812 being requested to admit day scholars, we added only a few at first, but afterwards, as the number of our boarders lessened, we increased them...."<sup>65</sup>

Portland's economic seesaw over the years was reflected not only in the proportion of boarders to day scholars at the school but also in the moves the Martins made during the school's years of operation. The original location in North Yarmouth was intended from the start to be temporary: "We opened our Boarding School in North Yarmouth with the intention of removing to Portland in the Spring following."<sup>66</sup> When the school did move to Portland in 1804, its first location was on Spring Street in a house belonging to Mr. J. Boyd.<sup>67</sup> After a year, the Martins leased a house which had been built by the recently deceased Captain Thomas Robison, and was described by Martin as "very large,...convenient, pleasant, retired, and possessed [of] a delightful garden, which proved salutary and agreeable to our Scholars."<sup>68</sup> Built in 1788, the house had "two parlors[,] 8 bed Rooms, a large Kitchen and many other conveniences."<sup>69</sup> The interior was finished with wainscoting and frieze paneling, a staircase arch, and fine cabinetry. The property also included a large stable at the York Street end and a garden with fruit trees on the harbor side.<sup>70</sup> At the time, Commercial Street did not exist, and the waters of Portland Harbor lapped the edges of the garden.

After about two and a half years in this location, the Martins "were obliged to remove, which we accordingly did to the large brick house built by E. Storer; here we lived upwards of 9 years."<sup>71</sup> This three-story brick house, built by merchant Ebenezer Storer in flush times (1801), was located on the corner of High and Danforth streets. The bank holding the mortgage foreclosed as a result of losses Storer suffered while the non-intercourse legislation of 1806 was in effect. The Martins leased the house from the bank, running the school successfully here until Port-



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land lawyer John Mussey purchased the property from the bank (on whose board he sat) in 1817.<sup>72</sup>

The last move, this time to the site that would be the location of the school for almost half of its existence, was to the Daniel Tucker house on India (then King) Street. The Tucker house had been built in 1796 and a chaise house added to the property in 1797.<sup>73</sup> The move was announced in the *Eastern Argus* on July 1, 1817:

The Misses MARTIN,

Take this method of informing their friends in the District of Maine and the public in general who may be unacquainted with their change of situation, that they have removed from their late Dwelling House in High Street, to the House formerly owned and occupied by Dan'l Tucker, Esq., in King Street, where they continue their establishment of a BOARDING SCHOOL as usual....<sup>74</sup>

The initial Portland location of the Misses Martin's School on Spring Street placed it in a respectable area of the town, convenient to both the wharves (for students who traveled to the school by boat) and the commercial and residential districts of the town. Leasing the substantial Robison property after 1805 implied the success of their school venture. The next move, to the Storer mansion in 1807, reflected the Martins' still uncertain financial situation, since they were "obliged" to leave the Robison property (because they were not in a position to buy it) and lease (not buy) the Storer house. At the same time, they were in a considerably more secure financial position than was Ebenezer Storer, the former owner of the newly-leased house, whose financial failure was so profound he let the bank foreclose on this house so recently built (1801) for his young bride.<sup>75</sup>

The final move to the Tucker house confirmed the success of the school as a financial venture; the Martins now had sufficient means to buy a property. Although King (India) Street, on which the Tucker house was located, was a respectable area of large, older homes, the newest and most expensive dwellings

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were being built at the western end of the city. Thus, the Martins' resources in 1817 reflected substance, but not wealth in terms of the school's final location.

In relation to the other private schools then operating and to the growing number of newly established academies throughout the state, a distinct contrast exists in terms of the Martin school's physical characteristics. Many of the private day and evening schools were run by young men who hired whatever large room or hall was available at the time.<sup>76</sup> In the case of the academies, most were located in rectangular buildings constructed specifically for instructional purposes. Those academies with boarding students usually began operation with the boarders scattered in private houses, and centralized the students in residence halls if the institution proved successful and the funds became available. For example, just west of Portland, the trustees of Gorham Academy (chartered 1803) oversaw the construction of a two-story, fifty by forty foot building, complete with cupola and bell.<sup>77</sup> North of Portland, the two-story main building for North Yarmouth Academy (incorporated 1814) was planned to be forty feet long by twenty-eight feet wide.<sup>77</sup> To the east, in Lincoln County, Wiscasset Academy trustees (chartered 1808) voted to build a brick building, "forty by thirty feet, and with two stories." To the south, trustees of Thornton Academy in Saco (chartered 1811) planned construction of a building described as "forty-two feet in front, and thirty feet wide, one story...."<sup>79</sup> Not one of these academy buildings was constructed with living space for students or teachers included. This pattern holds true for other academy buildings erected in Maine during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In contrast, the Misses Martin's School for Young Ladies was always located in buildings constructed as dwellings and not in structures built for instructional purposes alone. Instruction took place under the same roof as did daily life, and the boarders lived with their teachers. Such an arrangement offered advantages for accomplishing the school's instructional goals: lessons could easily be integrated with domestic matters and the Martin sisters provided constant exemplars of the expected behaviors.

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At its inception, the Martin school was innovative in local education, offering as it did the chance for daughters of Maine's wealthy families to become educated in the British manner; to develop an appropriate "finish" without having to travel to the established schools in distant Philadelphia, New York, or those schools in or near Boston. The Martin School developed a strong enough cachet among the elite of the East Coast to draw some of its pupils from as far away as St. John, New Brunswick to the north and Philadelphia to the south.<sup>80</sup> This school was not unique, and it was not the first boarding school for girls in New England. However, it was the first successful and enduring school of its kind in Portland.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>William Willis, *The History of Portland* (1865; reprint, Somersworth, N.H.: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1972), 772-773.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Sellers, Henry May, Neil R. McMillen, *A Synopsis of American History*, 4th ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing, 1976), 85-98. James Truslow Adams, *New England in the Republic 1776-1850* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1960), 209.

<sup>3</sup>Penelope Martin Manuscript, 1821-1824, 1, Maine Women Writers Collection, Westbrook College, University of New England, Portland, ME (hereafter, "Martin Ms."). Page numbers refer to the typescript accompanying the manuscript. Penelope Martin's correspondence during this period indicates that the Martin sisters had a keen awareness of social class and their responsibilities for raising "proper" young ladies. See Penelope Martin letters in *Ornament of Grace*, Elizabeth Sweetsir Baxter, ed. (Cumberland, Maine: Cumberland Historical Society, 1991) esp. letter nos. 6, 10, and 11. Letter numbers are those assigned to Martin letters in Baxter, ed. *Ornament of Grace*.

<sup>4</sup>In 1803, the first year of the school's operation, William Martin was 70 years old, and his wife Elizabeth was 64. Their advanced age suggests that the elder Martins' role in the school's operation would have been minimal. Penelope Martin's prominence in the school's governance is clear from her own description of her parents', sisters', and brother's activities, but, also, from the assessments of others (see Martin Ms., 2-3, 5-6, 11). For example, Augustus W. Corliss suggests the identification of the school's reputation with Penelope herself when he comments that she "for many years kept a high school for young ladies, both here [Portland] and at North Yarmouth...where a thorough education was imparted." *Old Times of North Yarmouth, Maine* (1883; reprint, Somersworth, N. H.: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1977), 1044.

<sup>5</sup>As quoted in William D. Williamson, *The History of the State of Maine: from Its First Discovery, A.D. 1602 to the Separation, A.D. 1820, Inclusive*, (Hallowell, Me.: Glazier, Masters and Company, 1832), 686.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 687.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 686; Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow with Extracts from His Journals and Correspondence*, vol. 1 (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1886), 24.

<sup>8</sup>Willis, *The History of Portland*, 51.

<sup>9</sup>Edward Elwell, *Schools of Portland: From the Earliest Times to the Centennial Year of the Town* (Portland: William M. Marks, 1888), 9.

<sup>10</sup>*Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser*, 16 April 1810, p. 3, col. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), 389.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Louis Clinton Hatch, *Maine: A History* (1919; reprint, Somersworth, N. H.: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1974), 755.

<sup>14</sup>Mary Caroline Crawford, *Social Life in Old New England* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1914), 18; Walter Herbert Small, *Early New England Schools* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969), 279-89. Kathryn Kish Sklar, "The Founding of Mount Holyoke College," in *Women of America: A History*, eds. Carol Ruth Berkin and Mary Beth Norton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979), 180, reports that the selectmen of Sutton, Massachusetts, as late as 1788 went on record with a vote "not to be at any expense for schooling for girls."

<sup>15</sup>Small, *Early New England Schools*, 279ff.

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<sup>16</sup>Kenneth A. Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England: An Enquiry into the Social Context of Literacy in the Early Modern West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1974), 4.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 23, 38, 42.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>19</sup>For an informative discussion of reading vs. writing literacy and its implications for Lockridge's work, see E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," *American Quarterly* 40 (March 1988): 18-41.

<sup>20</sup>For a discussion of "republican motherhood," see Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977); Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980); Carroll Smith Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>21</sup>Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 210.

<sup>22</sup>Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 108.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>24</sup>Abigail May Journal, 1796, Ms. S-964, Maine Historical Society, Portland, ME; Martin Ms., 1.

<sup>25</sup>Martin Letters, no. 6: Feb. 1788, Penelope remarks that she will turn 16 years old in April that year. Edward Payson Payson, *William Martin, Esq., Representative to the General Court of Massachusetts, 1792-5* (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1900), 3-4.

<sup>26</sup>Payson, *William Martin*, 4.

<sup>27</sup>Martin Letters, no. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Regarding deference and respect, note especially openings and closings of Martin Letters, nos. 1, 2, 5, 7, and 11, and the manner in which Penelope refers to her elders throughout the letters. Concerning awareness of social and institutional hierarchies, see Martin Letters, nos. 9-11.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 1.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 8.

<sup>31</sup>Penelope's exposure to court life is mentioned in Martin Letters, nos. 4 and 10; her attendance at balls and other dances in Martin Letters, nos. 1 and 3; her attendance at public entertainment in Vauxhall in Martin Letters, no. 3; her knowledge of the hot air balloon in Martin Letters, no. 2.

<sup>32</sup>Martin Letters, no. 9.

<sup>33</sup>The caution to Catherine to hold her tongue concerning Mr. Scott appears in Martin Letters, nos. 8 (July, 1788) and 9 (March, 1789).

<sup>34</sup>Note Martin Letters, nos. 3 and 11, where Penelope mentions that her aunt has been sick with "the billous cholic [sic]," implying that the school continued to operate though her aunt was ill. Since no official assistant is mentioned anywhere in the letters, Penelope most likely acted in that capacity for her aunt.

<sup>35</sup>Payson, *William Martin*, 8.

<sup>36</sup>Abigail May Journal, 28.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>William Martin's name appears on a list of French spoliation claims in *Maine Historical and Genealogical Recorder* IX (1898): 300.

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<sup>42</sup>Martin Ms., 2. One conclusion suggested by the evidence is that William Martin was inept at managing money. The family's emigration from England in 1783 was occasioned by unspecified financial reverses and Penelope's lifestyle resulted directly from further reverses suffered by her father.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>47</sup>E. F. C., "Misses Martin," *Christian Mirror*, 7 Feb. 1860, p. 2, col. 3-5.

<sup>48</sup>Willystine Goodsell, *Pioneers of Women's Education in the United States: Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, Mary Lyon* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, Inc., 1931), 7.

<sup>49</sup>Penelope Martin, *List of Young Ladies Who Attended the Misses Martin's School* (n.p., n.d.), 2. Maine Historical Society.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 4 (emphasis added).

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>52</sup>Daniel Davis to James Freeman, 18 April 1801, *Minot Family Letters 1773-1871*, ed. Katherine Minot Channing (Shelburn, Mass.: privately printed, 1957), 97-98.

<sup>53</sup>Martin, *List of Young Ladies*, 5; Channing, *Minot Family Letters*, 139.

<sup>54</sup>William Morrell Emery, *Honorable Peleg Tallman, 1764- 1841, His Ancestors and Descendants* (Boston: Thomas Todd Company, Printers, 1935), 30.

<sup>55</sup>Phyllis Stock, *Better Than Rubies: A History of Women's Education* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1978), 99.

<sup>56</sup>Martin Letters, nos. 1-11.

<sup>57</sup>The closings of Penelope's letters make obvious her accomplishments in acquiring appropriate manners. Her diffidence regarding the information concerning Mr. Scott, for instance, makes clear Penelope's grounding in mannerly conduct (Martin Letters, nos. 8 and 11).

<sup>58</sup>Martin Ms., 9.

<sup>59</sup>Emery, *Tallman*, 29-30.

<sup>60</sup>Helen Coffin Beedy, *Mothers of Maine* (Portland: The Thurston Print, 1895), 317.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 317-318.

<sup>62</sup>Betty Ring, "Samplers and Silk Embroideries of Portland, Maine," *The Magazine Antiques* 134 (Sept. 1988): 513-525.

<sup>63</sup>George Jones Varney, *A Gazetteer of the State of Maine* (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1882), 463; Katherine H. Snell and Vincent P. Ledew, *Historic Hallowell* (n. p.: Kennebec Journal Print Shop, 1962), 19; Willis, *History of Portland*, 907.

<sup>64</sup>Martin Ms., 4.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 3. "Plan of Ann Street, Portland," Maine Historical Society. For a history of the Robison estate see *Agreeable Situations: Society, Commerce, and Art in Southern Maine, 1780-1830*, ed. Laura Fecych Sprague (Kennebunk, Me.: The Brick Store Museum, 1987), 101-103. The death of Capt. Thomas Robison in 1806 is noted by Willis, *History of Portland*, 840.

<sup>69</sup>See also *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane, Pastors of the First Church in Portland, with Notes and Biographical Notices; and a Summary History of Portland*, ed. William Willis (Portland: Joseph S. Bailey, 1849), 252, n. 1.

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<sup>70</sup>Sprague, ed., *Agreeable Situations*, 102.

<sup>71</sup>Martin Ms., 4.

<sup>72</sup>Willis, ed., *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith*, 414. Martin Ms., 4-5: "In 1817 the house in which we had resided so long, was put up for sale with several others, by the bank, and being too much out of repair for us to purchase, we prepared to move again, and having laid by a small sum, we purchased of the bank the house in King Street built by Mr. Tucker, and hither we removed."

<sup>73</sup>Willis, ed., *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith*, 411-412.

<sup>74</sup>*Eastern Argus*, 1 July 1817, p. 3 col. 4.

<sup>75</sup>Concerning the Storer house, see Willis, ed., *Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith*, 360, n.1.

<sup>76</sup>Frequent ads in the *Portland Gazette* and other Portland newspapers of the time illustrate the ad hoc accommodations for other private schools.

<sup>77</sup>Ruth Arline Wray, *The History of Secondary Education in Cumberland and Sagadahoc Counties*, University of Maine Studies, 2nd ser. 51, *The Maine Bulletin* 44 (August 1940), 28.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>79</sup>Frank Leander Staples Morse, *Secondary Education in Knox and Lincoln Counties in Maine*, University of Maine Studies, 2nd ser. 47, *The Maine Bulletin* 41 (April 1939), 21; George Addison Emery, "The Old Thornton Academy," *Collections and Proceedings of the Maine Historical Society*, 2nd ser. X (1899), 17.

<sup>80</sup>Martin, *List of Young Ladies*, 3-12. Towns of origin are indicated for many students on the Martin school list.