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“Commanding Kinship: The Role of the Family in the Spread of Antebellum Women’s Education”

HIST 58003 Fall and HIST 58004 Spring
Fall 2014 and Spring 2015

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“Commanding Kinship: The Role of the Family in the Advancement of Antebellum Women’s Education”

Senior Honors History Thesis
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Acknowledgements

A sincere thank you to all the archivists and librarians whose knowledge guided my research at the Emma Willard School Archives in Troy, New York, the Henry Sheldon Museum in Middlebury, Vermont, and the University of Notre Dame Rare Books and Special Collections in South Bend, Indiana. A special thanks to Special Collections Curator George Rugg at the University of Notre Dame for initially steering me towards the Casey Family Correspondence, and encouraging me throughout the project. An additional appreciation goes to Digital Project Specialist at Notre Dame, Sara Weber, for making the correspondence digitally available to me. Financial support for my archival research came from the UROP at Notre Dame, and in particular the American Dream Grant. I am grateful to the donors and staff who found value in my project at its early stages and funded its development.

I also express my gratitude to the history professors at Notre Dame who supported me during this project, and helped shape the history student I am today. In particular, I thank Professor Semion Lyandres, Professor Daniel Graff, Professor Patrick Griffin, and Professor Gail Bederman for supporting me during this yearlong process. Their insight contributed greatly to this project. Within this group of superior mentors, I am grateful for my advisor, Professor Catherine Cangany, whose guidance, intuition, and encouragement helped me navigate the sources and illuminate the significance of this study. Her devotion to helping me shows throughout this text.

A final thank you to my family members, and friends who act like family, for unconditional love and support. Studying Mary Casey and her kin group has not only illustrated the importance of the family to the advancement of antebellum women’s
education, but also the profound impact that my family has had on my life. In particular, I thank my parents, for I would be nowhere today without them. I hope to someday emulate the compassion, thoughtfulness, and strength they embody everyday.
Introduction

On Thanksgiving Day on December 9, 1841, Mary A. Casey, a student at the Troy Female Seminary in Troy, New York, found her thoughts steered towards her supreme source of thankfulness, her “Dear Mother.” Mary’s widowed mother and her namesake, Mary N. Casey, lived at the Casey homestead in Whiting, Vermont. Young Mary determined, “I think I cannot better spend the day [of Thanksgiving] than in talking with my mother.” Although the two women could not communicate in person, Mary was thankful that correspondence offered “such a favorable auxiliary…for a separated mother and child.” Reflecting on the love and affection she had received from the matriarch of the Casey family, Mary invoked the poetry of Joanna Baillie: “When the world looks cold and surly on us where can we turn to meet a warmer eye with such sure confidence as to a mothers.”

Baillie’s work represented one of the burgeoning styles in nineteenth-century domestic literature, which offered women guidance in domestic management in the form of sentimental poetry. Short, mawkish poems for women written by women circulated in small books and newspapers during the mid-nineteenth century, typifying women as “a uniquely sensitive, home-loving species.” Sentimental poets absorbed themselves in themes of domestic separation, such as mothers grieving dead children, wives yearning for absent spouses, and children pining for their childhood homes.

The themes of separation from kin and from home were pertinent to Mary’s own life when she left Vermont to study at Troy Female Seminary in 1841 and later to teach

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1 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, December 9, 1841, Casey Family Correspondence (hereafter CFC), Notre Dame; Baillie’s work quoted in Felicia Hemans, Records of Woman: With Other Poems, (Edinburgh: William Blackstone, 1828): 144.
3 Ryan, The Empire of the Mother, 30-1.
throughout the United States. But Mary did not just find herself in new surroundings at Troy. She also found herself in uncharted academic waters. Troy’s founder, Emma Willard, initiated one of the first curricula devoted to women’s higher education, instructing pupils only in lessons critical to the formation of their “feminine” character. To Willard this meant eliminating traditional, ornamental branches of a young woman’s education, such as needlework, and instead encouraging her students to learn subjects important to their personal and intellectual growth. As Willard defined it, Troy students were learning to move beyond traditional female roles of mother and home educator. Many of these women, like Mary Casey, used their time at Troy to prepare themselves to move away from their families and households and, ultimately, to teach. Mary was in good company: during the first fifty years of Troy Female Seminary, an estimated forty percent of the students pursued teaching as a career. These teachers were sent off throughout the country, and especially to the South, transplanting and adjusting the Troy model to their own schools. In embarking on their teaching careers, separated from family and home, women like Mary Casey had to contend with regional differences in notions of femininity and religion.

This study considers how family, region, and gender influenced the Troy education model. Rather than thinking of the themes of family, region, and gender as separate entities, these concepts interweave throughout every chapter of this study, with certain themes playing a leading role in each chapter while others lurk in the background. The study primarily consults the Casey Family Correspondence, a robust collection of 192 letters written between members of Mary A. Casey’s nuclear family between 1841 and 1868,

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housed at the Hesburgh Library’s Rare Books and Special Collections division at the University of Notre Dame. Mary’s letters make up most of the correspondence, and thus, a study of her life drives this investigation, although her younger sister Louise is also under study. What the family’s letters make clear, however, is that the entire Casey family, men and women alike, participated in Louise and especially Mary’s professional trajectories. All five of Edward and Mary N. Casey’s children were raised on the family’s farming homestead in Whiting, Vermont. Their two daughters, Mary A. and Louise, attended Troy Female Seminary during the 1840s. Upon leaving Troy, both daughters became teachers and transmitters of the Troy education model, working at plantation schools in North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, and Kentucky. The sisters worked both alongside one another and separately to fulfill Mary’s longstanding aim to found her own school. This dream became a reality while in Winchester, Virginia, where Mary A. Casey met, married, and entered into business with her husband, Robert W. Newman. Together, the couple opened a female seminary out of their home, employing members of the Casey family as educators. The tradition did not end there. According to the 1880 federal census, the couple’s only child, Mary B. Newman, also became a teacher. Thus, focusing on Mary A. Casey’s life provides a perfect case study for understanding the long-term personal and professional consequences of the Troy education model on a kin group that spanned the Mason-Dixon Line in the antebellum period.

Historian Anne Firor Scott has conducted the most in-depth study of women educated at Troy Female Seminary. Scott seeks to trace Troy graduates’ roles in the dissemination of feminist values during the first fifty years of the Seminary (1822 to 1872). To accomplish this end, Scott examines the formation of the Willard Association for the Mutual
Improvement of Teachers, founded in 1837 by Troy’s founder, Emma Willard. Scott posits that this formal, professional network of Troy-educated women resulted in the creation of schools modeled on the “Troy idea” throughout the United States. Although the majority of Troy-educated teachers cited in Scott’s study opened schools with their husbands in the same vein as Mary Casey, Scott’s investigation neglects the role that the family played in spreading and also modifying the Troy model.6

This women-centered approach echoes the classic method scholars have employed to study the nineteenth-century women’s movement. Scholars have tended to focus on how the formation of women’s groups and reform societies helped women extend their sphere from the private realm of the home to the public realm of politics and business. In doing so, scholars have ignored the fundamental relationships between men and women, as members of the same family.7 When family history has merged with women’s history, the results have been narrow, whether geographically (such as Mary P. Ryan’s Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865, which focuses on one county) or thematically (such as Jane H. Pease’s A Family of Women: The Carolina Petigrus in Peace and War, which focuses only on the female members of one kin group). This study differentiates itself from these previous investigations by broadening their methods. It traverses both the Northern and Southern regions of the United States and contemplates how

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men and women in the family impacted the spread of women’s education, by analyzing relationships between parent-child, husband-wife, and siblings.

This study also takes into account the broad definition of “family,” and considers how kin, both real and fictive, influenced Mary Casey’s professional trajectory. Historians are tempted to consider the family as a natural and invariable set of relations. For example, Carl Degler’s *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* defines the family as “a relation between a man and a woman and their offspring.” By employing a less traditional definition of the family, this study considers how changing conceptions of antebellum motherhood, and also fictive kin, influenced the dissemination of the Troy education model.

The well-known texts on Troy Female Seminary concentrate on the Troy education model’s foundation in what historians like Linda Kerber have termed “republican motherhood,” a post-Revolution philosophy that women’s most important task was to instill civic virtues and responsibilities in their children. Most of these studies see Troy’s founder, Emma Willard, as the embodiment of that ideal. However, as Mary Casey’s reminiscence of her mother’s warmth and confidence suggests, by the time Mary attended Troy in the 1840s, motherhood represented more than instilling morals and virtues in the young. Republican motherhood had given way to “imperial motherhood,” a concept coined by scholars to reference antebellum mothers’ caring natures and their authority over their domestic

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Empires. Imperial motherhood’s influence can also be found in one of the other most fulfilling relationships of Mary’s life: her close friendship with Lucretia Willard, Emma Willard’s daughter-in-law and her successor as principal of Troy. Lucretia’s sweet disposition and command over Troy Female Seminary reminded Mary of her own mother at home in Whiting. This study argues that Lucretia formed a fictive, yet real in feeling, kinship with Mary, which affected her for the rest of her life. As Mary continued on with teaching after Troy, she contemplated both of her “imperial mothers,” and even emulated her own school after Lucretia’s administration.

The investigation into Mary Casey’s life begins with Mary’s arrival at Troy Female Seminary in 1841. The impacts of family and gender emerge at the forefront of the first chapter, which analyzes how Mary developed an extension of her kin network at the Seminary. Chapter One asserts that Mary’s move from home in Vermont to school in New York was an easy transition for Mary because Troy principal Lucretia Willard fostered a relationship with her that mimicked a mother-daughter bond. Although this kinship was fictive in nature, her relationship to Lucretia established an enduring tie between Mary and the Seminary, which would manifest itself in Mary’s modeling of her own teaching career after concluding her Troy education.

In Chapter Two, Mary leaves Troy at the end of 1843 and enters into the teaching profession at plantation schools in North Carolina. Family, region, and gender perform leading roles in this examination of how Mary’s real and fictive kin influenced her interaction with regional networks in the South. Chapter Two posits that Mary combined

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Southern cultural norms of womanhood with those modeled at Troy in defining herself and her teaching curriculum. Mary’s experience in the South had a permanent effect on her teaching career, shaping her conception of womanhood and teaching throughout the rest of her profession. When Mary founded her own school with her husband in 1855, she transported the values of the “Southern belle” into her marriage and disposition.

Chapter Three follows a transformation in Mary’s approach to her teaching profession, arguing that the death of her younger brother galvanized her to view her professional calling in religious terms. This chapter maintains that the evangelical Protestantism that marked the Second Great Awakening served as a tool for Mary to integrate her entire family within her educational mission of founding her own school. As a reward for her good work on earth, Mary expected that her nuclear family would reunite in heaven. But as she discovered with gender norms, religious norms also differed from North to South. Part of fulfilling her religious vision meant detaching herself from church life and religious networks in the South, and instead, maintaining close ties to the faith instilled at home and at Troy.

The study concludes during the late 1850s with Mary’s establishment of her own school out of her home in Winchester, Virginia, alongside new additions to her family, her husband and their daughter. In this final chapter, the influences of family, gender, and region coalesce when exploring Mary’s leadership position. This chapter argues that when founding her own school, Mary both modeled her school’s operation on Troy Female Seminary, but also diverged from the Troy model. For example, Mary and Robert worked alongside one another and shared administrative duties, just as Lucretia Willard and her husband, John Willard, had done. Yet unlike Troy, which was distinctly unaligned with any particular
Protestant denomination, Mary and Robert infused their seminary with their Baptist beliefs and advertised their seminary as a Baptist institution. Mary’s position at the height of her power relied upon her kin, both real and fictive, and the past experiences she had had over the course of her profession.

Because this study is rooted in the family, it deliberately begins and ends in the home. Mary’s story appears on some level as a circular narrative, because it commences with the Casey family homestead in Whiting, Vermont, and culminates in Mary and her husband’s home in Winchester, Virginia. However, the seemingly identical positions Mary held at the start and end of her life mask an important transformation. The person Mary was at the beginning of her story was remarkably different from the one she was at the end; at the conclusion of her life, Mary was not simply fulfilling the traditional female role of mother and home educator. Rather, in opening her own school out of her home with her husband, Mary assumed a multitude of roles, playing educator, wife, sister, co-principal, and eventually mother. Thus, Mary used the “home” as a site to further her career and power.

Nowhere is Mary’s advancement more visible or salient than when she and her husband opened their own school. At the height of her power as an educator, Mary had redefined what constituted a traditionally “female” space from within the home itself. At Winchester Female Seminary, she saw herself both within the household and in her half of the schoolroom, while her husband attended to “business out of doors” and in his half of the schoolroom.¹¹ Thus, the classroom operated as a third, shared space and responsibility, both within but also separate from the home. Instead of operating according to traditional male and female roles, Mary and her husband took on, in part, coinciding duties that they fulfilled while working alongside one another.

¹¹ Mary A. Casey and Robert Newman to Mary N. Casey, January 30, 1856, CFC.
This study makes a number of interventions. First, as Chapter One and Chapter Four argue, Mary’s education at Troy inspired the co-administrative model she would later adopt. The image of Troy’s married business partners, Lucretia and John Willard, negotiating administrative duties at the Seminary remained with her. After all, when Mary attended Troy, “home” and “school” were nearly interchangeable due, in large part, to Lucretia Willard’s affectionate and commanding authority over the Seminary. Through this fictive kinship that developed between Lucretia and Mary, Mary formed a familial and enduring tie to Troy and modeled her own persona as an educator on Lucretia’s. When corresponding with the Caseys from Winchester Female Seminary in 1855, Mary referred to the community of boarding students, teachers, housekeepers, and servants as her “family.”12 As Lucretia Willard had demonstrated to Mary, the line between home and classroom was so nebulous as to be somewhat nonexistent, and in turn, so was the line circumscribing Mary’s place within the “woman’s sphere”—this project’s second intervention. The case of Mary Casey demonstrates how men and women were negotiating what constituted male and female roles from within the home and from within the family. By investigating how Mary Casey’s kin, both real and fictive, impacted the dissemination of the Troy model, this study challenges the focus on the women’s networks through which scholars have viewed the history of women’s higher education.

Third, this study proposes that the family deserves a prominent position within the greater story of the development of women’s higher education. When Mary Casey called the employees and students of Winchester Female Seminary her “family,” she illustrates that scholars’ classic approach to understanding the history of women’s higher education has been insufficient. Examining the intertwining influences of family, region, and gender on

12 Mary A. Casey and Robert Newman to Mary N. Casey, April 16, 1855, CFC.
Mary A. Casey’s life exemplifies the role the family played in mobilizing the educational mission during the pre-Civil War era. Mary Casey’s kin and fictive-kin networks trumped other kinds of networks that she might have encountered, whether gendered, professional or religious. Mary A. Casey used her family ties to push the boundaries of womanhood firmly into the classroom.
CHAPTER 1: FICTIVE KINSHIP

Two weeks after she left home, Mary Casey wrote to her mother to report her safe arrival at Troy Female Seminary in June 1841. Although Mary no longer lived in the Casey home in Whiting, Vermont, she assured her mother that she need not worry about her. Describing her new bedroom at the Seminary, Mary shared that “Mother’s old acquaintance Mrs. Emma Willard rooms opposite our door.” It is likely that Mary’s mother, Mary N. Casey, knew Emma Hart Willard from nearby Middlebury, Vermont (just ten miles north of Whiting), where Willard resided from 1807 to 1818 with her husband, a Middlebury physician, John Willard. While in Vermont, Willard taught at and administered the renowned Middlebury Female Academy.\(^\text{13}\) Not only did the school’s founder live across the hall from Mary, but Nancy Hinsdale, Emma Willard’s cousin and the Vice-Principal of the Seminary, roomed next door. Emma Willard’s sister-in-law, the widowed Lucy Hart, lived on the other side of Mary’s room. Mary reminded her family that Hart’s daughter, Lucy Hart Norton, was, “so they say,” a second cousin to the Caseys, related on their mother’s side. Surrounded by some of the Seminary’s established figures, Mary urged her mother not to worry, because if she were to fall ill, there were “kind friends enough to take care of me.”\(^\text{14}\)

The type of personal connection that brought Mary Casey to Troy was not uncommon in antebellum female seminaries. During the move from home to school, many families tried to smooth the transition by sending daughters to schools within the family circle. Families might choose an institution attended by the mother or, as in Mary’s case, a school within the

\(^{13}\) Hanmer, Wrought With Steadfast Will, 19-28.

mother’s friend and kin networks.\textsuperscript{15} And yet, after that initial letter home to her family, all references to her mother’s connections to Troy vanish from Mary’s correspondence. Mary, in other words, does not seem to have forged her own ties to Emma Willard or Lucy Hart. And yet, over a year into her Troy education, Mary wrote to her family that “This old Sem. seems like a home to me after all.”\textsuperscript{16} This chapter contends that over the course of her two years at Troy, Mary Casey established her own network—a fictive kin network—whose importance would supersede those early ties.

Mary’s likening of her school to a “home” (entities that were nearly interchangeable for her) arose from the relationship she formed with Principal Lucretia Willard, who co-administered Troy with her husband, John Willard, during the years of Mary’s education. In this chapter, I argue that Lucretia fostered a familial connection to Mary, even if this bond was fictive in nature. While Mary only mentioned Emma Willard and Lucy Hart in her first letter, she included her principal in every one of her correspondences from Troy. Lucretia’s embodiment of what scholars have identified as the mid-nineteenth-century conception of “imperial motherhood” not only helped Mary find her own place at Troy. It also fostered in Mary an intimate and enduring tie to Troy, and provided her with a model that she followed as she embarked on a teaching career of her own.

**Lucretia Willard: Imperial Mother**

Troy students were unfailingly positive about their interactions with Lucretia Willard, noting the principal’s warmth and affection. One student described Lucretia’s “ready

\textsuperscript{16} Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, October 5, 1842, CFC.
sympathy and sweet motherliness.” Trudy J. Hanmer surmises that Lucretia Willard’s reputation as nurturing and motherly was simply the result of the presence of her ten biological children at the Seminary. Although Lucretia’s visible role as a mother is important, Mary Casey and other students’ experiences suggest that, in fact, students not only witnessed but personally experienced Lucretia’s motherliness, a particular maternal ideal that historians refer to as “imperial motherhood,” which describes the mid-nineteenth-century conception of mothering, which emphasized women’s nurturing, sentimental, and altruistic natures.

Historian Nancy M. Theriot describes the development of “imperial motherhood” as both rooted in and divergent from the previous maternal ideal, Republican motherhood. While Republican motherhood developed just after the American Revolution as a means of encouraging women to participate in politics by instilling Republican virtues in the next generation of citizens, imperial motherhood arose amidst a changing social order, especially with regard to the structure of the family. By 1830, separation in the family, both socially and geographically, became an American norm as more sons and daughters moved away from home before and after marriage. In light of the growing number of disconnected and separated family networks, Mary P. Ryan explains that nineteenth-century authors on domesticity became increasingly concerned with the maintenance of kinship ties. The ideology of imperial motherhood offered a solution. No longer was it a mother’s task simply to educate and form her children’s characters. Now she was to do so through a prescribed maternal personality. Domestic literature from the antebellum period instructed women to

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19 Ibid.
create an alluring home by her “‘pure and lofty feeling,’ ‘charm of manners and conversation,’ and ‘cheerful temper.’” Authors often articulated this captivating notion of motherhood through metaphors and descriptions of women as “light.” For example, the “good wife” offered “clear light of truth, of peace, and of virtue;” a mother was likened to a “sunbeam.” Through this sweet and self-giving behavior, mothers would create an enduring bond between themselves and their children, surviving no matter how far their children wandered.

Troy pupils used these same terms and feelings to describe Lucretia Willard. They admired and loved their female principal for her warmth and kindness, possibly the same type of nurturing they received from their real mothers at home. One Troy student described Lucretia as a “sunbeam,” and another student remembered the way that “the very notion of her name is to arouse all the better feelings of our nature as we reflect on her calm dignity of manner, her wise self-control, her never-wearying kindness.” Mary Casey, too, described Lucretia’s kindness, telling her mother, “Mrs. Willard becomes more lovely the more I know her- every amiableness of disposition without considering her intellectual attainments knowing they are great.” Although she admired her female principal for her commitment to higher education, which Mary also sought to achieve for herself, Lucretia’s caring and charming personality was equally, if not more, attractive to her. As Mary’s own comparison

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20 Ryan, The Empire of the Mother, 37.
21 Margaret Graves, Women in America, 53; Lydia Sigourney, Letters to Young Ladies, 12; both quoted in Ryan, The Empire of the Mother, 37-8.
22 Ryan, The Empire of the Mother, 46.
23 Eliza Hunt Arthorp to Emma Willard Scudder, May 9, 1892, Emma Willard School Archive; Jane Burritt to William P. Brown, May 28, 1836, ibid; both quoted in Hanmer, Wrought With Steadfast Will, 154-5.
24 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, December 9, 1841, CFC.
between Seminary and the Casey family homestead implies, thanks to Lucretia’s maternal tendencies, Troy felt like home.

**Troy: Lucretia Willard’s Maternal Empire**

In addition to prescribing mothers’ warmth and affection towards their children, imperial motherhood, like Republican motherhood, ascribed home as women’s designated space. One contemporary writer likened the home to “The Empire of the Mother,” conveying mothers as the sovereign rulers of their households, where they could develop a profound and lasting tie with their children.⁵ Mary’s experience suggests that Lucretia Willard’s “empire” did not only constitute the home, but comprised the Seminary as well. Although Lucretia served as Troy’s co-principal with her husband, John, Mary understood Lucretia to reign at the Seminary, and in particular over Mary’s finances.

Historians who have written about Troy indicate that Lucretia and her husband and co-principal, John Willard, followed traditional male and female norms. In these scholars’ estimation, John typically assumed responsibility of the school’s financial matters. He corresponded with pupils’ kin about bills and distributed money to students for their personal shopping, medical, and transportation costs.⁶ Yet, Mary Casey’s experience demonstrates that, on the contrary, it was Lucretia who oversaw at least one student’s finances. Chapter Four will argue how this complication of traditional male and female roles at Troy inspired Mary to operate her own school with her husband in a similar way. However, it is valuable here to demonstrate that when interceding in Mary’s finances, Lucretia asserted her authority over Mary’s affairs and acted as one of Mary’s kin.

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⁵ Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother*, 18.
⁶ Hanmer, *Wrought With Steadfast Will*, 166.
While Mary attended Troy, her family finances were in disarray. She expressed concerns in her letters home about the Caseys’ debts, worrying that the family would become “broken down.” Most indicative of her family’s financial instability was the fact that Mary attended Troy under the arrangement of “instruction on credit.” The instruction on credit policy at Troy enabled families under financial stress to pay a young woman’s tuition in installments. Any outstanding debts upon graduation would be paid out of the student’s salary once she was sent out to teach. This payment arrangement was in place since Troy’s founding, allowing young ladies of diverse financial backgrounds the privilege of a Troy education, as long as those of limited means agreed to work off what they owed by teaching. Although Mary’s tuition was entirely covered under her payment arrangement of instruction on credit, finances remained a worry over the course of her education. These concerns arose when she lacked supplies, received unexpected tuition requests, and, at the end of her education, needed to pay for travel expenses related to reaching her teaching situation in the South. However, in all of these scenarios, Lucretia Willard assisted Mary, sometimes of her own volition and sometimes because Mary asked for her help. From the correspondence and scholarship on Troy, it is unclear whether Lucretia’s command of Mary’s financial affairs overstepped John’s realm or whether finances were the couple’s shared duty. Either way, Lucretia’s role in Mary’s finances had a profound effect on Mary’s relationship to Lucretia and, in turn, to Troy.

During the first year of Mary’s schooling, Lucretia reassured her struggling student that when she needed financial support, her fictive mother would provide for her. Mary seems to have needed others’ financial assistance several times over the course of her time at

27 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, September 13, 1841, CFC.
Troy. She expressed on several occasions to her family that she was not equipped with the proper supplies and clothing, such as in December 1841, when she had to borrow five cents from her roommate, which had been an embarrassment.\textsuperscript{29} In another letter, Mary told her family, “There is not a scholar in the school that dresses as poorly as I do…I want to appear as well as the \textit{generality}.”\textsuperscript{30} Having proper attire was important to Mary, as her female principal closely monitored students’ adherence to Troy’s guidelines and expectations with regard to comportment and dress. Lucretia patrolled the Seminary with careful observation and corrected pupils’ misconduct with candor. Mary told her mother and siblings how “Mrs. Willard takes great pains to improve the manners of the young ladies,” and how her principal “notices particularly the manners of her pupils and their appearance and if it is not what it should be she tells them.”\textsuperscript{31} Lucretia employed a vigilant eye to correct pupils’ behavior, but this did not prevent her from sympathizing and recognizing Mary’s occasional inability to abide by Troy’s dress code.

Lucretia was particularly compassionate towards Mary on this front in June 1842, when Mary’s need for money and supplies became so great that she complained to her brother Daniel that she had “not a \textit{whole} pair of shoes.”\textsuperscript{32} At this time, Mary revealed to Daniel that she had been “obliged to get some things of Mrs. W.”\textsuperscript{33} Given that Mary was a student on a financial aid policy, Lucretia was aware and mindful of the Casey family’s finances. Her decision to share supplies conveyed her consideration of Mary’s circumstances: she would not punish her for them. By intervening when Mary’s family could not, Lucretia

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{29} Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, December 9, 1841, CFC.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, June 25, 1841, ibid; Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, December 9, 1841, ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, June 3, 1842, ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\end{footnote}
made clear that Mary’s needs were of priority to her. When Mary’s actual kin were unable to assist, Lucretia stood in the Caseys’ place.

In situations like these, Lucretia communicated her own role as the proper supervisor of Mary’s financial affairs—not her husband. Mary too preferred to confide in Lucretia over Principal John Willard when administrative concerns arose. For example, in November 1843, a month before Mary graduated from Troy to teach in the South, Mary wrote home to her family, distressed because John Willard had confronted her and demanded an unexpected tuition payment. Hurt and frustrated by John’s brazenness, Mary reminded her mother and siblings that the family had made the monetary agreement with “Mrs. Willard,” not John Willard.34

Mary felt that Lucretia was the rightful overseer of her finances, and she went to great lengths to maintain the arrangement. She concocted a plan to circumvent John and, significantly, she recruited the rest of the Casey family to collaborate with her. She instructed her mother and eldest brother to write her on the first two leaves of paper, enclose the tuition money, and then write to Lucretia on the third leaf. Mary was to then take this third part of the letter directly to Lucretia, thereby ensuring that the money traveled to its proper destination. However, to Mary’s dismay and disapproval, her intricate plan shattered when John Willard, and not his wife, opened the door to the Willards’ room when Mary knocked upon it. Although she could do nothing but present the letter and tuition to her male principal, Mary at least requested that they be turned over to Lucretia. She later expressed her sentiments of revulsion towards John, recalling as he took the money “as greedily as any one

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34 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, November 10, 1843, ibid; Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, December 4, 1843, CFC.
who receives *filthy lucre* itself.”  

In this scenario, Mary not only conveyed her dislike of John, but also her confidence in and reliance on Lucretia. If things had gone according to plan, the transaction of Mary’s tuition payment would have remained between her biological and fictive family members. Mary trusted her female principal as one of her own kin.

As Lucretia’s financial support and kindness demonstrated, Lucretia worked to encourage and meet Mary’s needs over the course of her education. But at the end of Mary’s schooling, it became clear that Lucretia’s concern for Mary’s wellbeing was not restricted to Troy’s walls. As Mary prepared to accept her first teaching position in North Carolina at the end of 1843, Lucretia counseled her to pay for her own traveling expenses, to avoid appearing dependent upon her future employer, one Mr. Avent. With Lucretia’s advice in mind, Mary asked her family for help. She disliked for Mr. Avent to think she was “unable to get there without his assistance.” However, given the Casey family’s financial struggles, her mother could not cover the expense. Mary realized that if her family could not pay for her journey to the South, she would have to rely on John and Lucretia Willard to advance the money. She was not optimistic that she would receive their aid. In a letter from November 1843, Mary explained to her family that receiving a loan was improbable because John Willard did not believe the school could not make the payment at the time. John’s hesitation may have been just, because, in fact, the only years that the school suffered financially were 1843 and 1844, although its losses in the former year were negligible.

Despite his initial refusal, John Willard came around to Mary’s request. In a letter from December 1843, Mary informed her family that the Willards not only ultimately

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35 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, November 10, 1843, CFC; Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, December 4, 1843, CFC.
36 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, December 23, 1843, ibid.
37 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, June 3, 1842, ibid.
provided Mary with a loan, but also did “all in their power” to ensure her safe and convenient departure from Troy, even arranging for a driver and sleigh for her, so that she might travel in comfort.\footnote{Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey and Louise Casey, February 4, 1844, CFC.} The Willards’ ultimate decision to support Mary indicates that, in this case, John likely acquiesced to his wife’s demand. Lucretia’s insistence that Mary not appear too dependent upon her future employer trumped John’s reluctance to spend money on Mary’s behalf.

Chapter Four argues that Lucretia’s assertiveness with her husband impacted Mary’s own marriage. But the Willards’ choices to loan Mary money and attend to her comfort are of significance here because they conveyed to Mary that her own wellbeing at the outset of her teaching career was important to the institution and to them. Lucretia had intervened in the Casey’s finances before, by giving supplies and overseeing her payment arrangement over the course of Mary’s education. Yet, her intercession at the end of Mary’s schooling not only continued an established pattern. It also tightened the familial bond between the two women. By overriding her husband’s opinion, Lucretia indicated to Mary that her Troy family would not abandon her, even as Mary ventured away from her Seminary home. Mary’s actual kin members might have been unable to support her, but Lucretia demonstrated that she would stand in their place and act like family.

**Conclusion**

Upon leaving Troy for North Carolina, Mary reflected on her departure and remembered that Lucretia offered her “a great deal of motherly advice.”\footnote{Ibid.} It is significant that, as Mary left the Seminary, she identified her principal’s guidance as “motherly.”

\footnote{Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey and Louise Casey, February 4, 1844, CFC.}
the course of Mary’s education, Lucretia demonstrated that her role at Troy was not just to school and administer, but also to be a mother figure, a natural extension of her amiable and compassionate personality, and an example of the mid-century ideology of imperial motherhood. But Lucretia’s identity as one of Mary’s fictive kin stemmed not just from her personality, but also from the command she assumed of Mary’s finances, especially when the Caseys could not offer their help. In the absence of Mary’s mother and siblings in Whiting, Lucretia had substituted as a trustworthy and sympathetic authority during Mary’s education.

It is of additional significance that in her letter from North Carolina, Mary recognized that she could “never forget” Lucretia’s kindness. The ultimate objective of imperial motherhood, to create an intimate and enduring bond between mother and child, had been accomplished. Lucretia had left an indelible mark on Mary’s life. Already geographically separated from Troy, Mary reminisced from North Carolina about her former principal’s “kinship” and kindness, eager to remain a part of Lucretia’s Troy family. And she would. As demonstrated in subsequent chapters, when real kinship ties became absent or unavailable, Mary turned to her fictive kinship with Lucretia, who would provide not only motherly support, but also a model that Mary would strive to follow in the years to come.

\[41\] Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey and Louise Casey, February 4, 1844, CFC.

\[42\] Ryan, The Empire of the Mother, 46
CHAPTER 2: Testing the Boundaries

Flowers and evergreens donned the dining hall of Troy Female Seminary on May 1, 1847. Louise Casey, Mary’s younger sister and a student at the school, witnessed music and refreshments flow throughout the room, as a magnificent procession of Troy students welcomed a crowd of invited guests. The line of pupils wearing white dresses and laurels moved towards the front of the room. They carried baskets of flowers and strewed the blossoms about the audience. The train of young women traveled to the royal court, ruled by the students’ elected queen. The queen reigned on her throne, and she shared her station with her king, page, cardinal, maid of honor, and flowers girls, all of whom she had nominated. It was May Day, and the queen was the center of attention.43

May Day celebrations were not an uncommon practice at female seminaries during the antebellum period. The practice served to praise and perform society’s ideal of femininity. As the women in Troy, NY processed through the hall on May Day, Troy students embodied the Northern standards of nineteenth-century womanhood. Garbed in feminine attire and accessories, such as pristine white dresses and flowers, students emphasized their womanliness and adherence to female virtue and purity. The event served to celebrate the first day of May, the coming of spring, and the change of seasons. Clean white dresses and fresh flowers proposed signs of renewal at this moment of women’s authority.

On the face of it, students seemed to be complying with proper “feminine” standards, but challenges to the conventional order were alive within the ceremony. The May Day celebration at Troy, orchestrated by the school’s principal, Lucretia Willard, also represented an inversion of the traditional hierarchy, temporary to some audience members, but more

43 Louise Casey to Mary A. Casey, May 2, 1847, CFC.
permanent to others. To outsiders visiting Troy for the event, the May Day Ceremony suggested the image of a topsy-turvy day, when women ruled for a scant twenty-four hours. In a seemingly harmless and playful way, notions were temporarily turned on their heads before a public audience. All of the guests recognized the queen’s power as imaginary. Order would be restored as the sun set, and life would return to its normal state. Students took off their costumes, removed flowers and evergreens from the dining room, and the party atmosphere disappeared.

From an outsider’s perspective, May Day represented a temporary inversion of societal gender norms, but for Troy students and faculty, the resounding meaning of the May Day Ceremony was more permanent. It represented the culture fostered within the seminary, which celebrated the power of femininity unique to their institution. Women at Troy were learning to move beyond traditional female roles of mother and home educator, and encouraged to teach, from which they could derive a sense of female authority. These teachers were sent off throughout the country, and especially to the South.\textsuperscript{44} Separated from family and home, teachers, like Mary and Louise Casey, would have to adjust to regional differences in both femininity and women’s education, and Mary’s experience in particular illuminates how Troy women coped with this culture shock. Scholarship on female teachers from the North who came to the South in the pre-Civil War era remained attached to the traditional, conformist views taught at their Northern institutions. Mary’s experience at Troy and in the South differed from this interpretation. The spirit fostered within Troy encouraged students to both adhere to norms of femininity, but the Troy educational experience gave students a site of authority outside of women’s traditional purview: the classroom. Inspired

\textsuperscript{44} Hanmer. \textit{Wrought With Steadfast Will}, 131. Over 60\% of Troy graduates who went on to teach assumed positions in the South.
by her family members, both real and fictive, Mary adapted to life as a teacher below the Mason-Dixon Line by espousing Southern conventions of femininity and blending them with the commanding cult of womanhood modeled at Troy.

**Regional Differences in Womanhood and Women’s Education**

The tradition of the Southern lady produced a challenge for Mary Casey as she established herself in North Carolina and continued to communicate with her family in Whiting, Vermont. During her first year in the South, Mary reported to her mother and sister on the qualities of a Southern belle. “She must be pretty, play the piano *well*, dance gracefully, walk gently, know enough of the news of the day to be interesting, in company be sufficiently acquainted with the science of the etiquette to show that she is use to good society and there all hail! Attentions are lavished beaux a plenty.”45 This playful, elegant perception of femininity, which Mary adopted over the course of her time in the South, did not fit easily with the industrious, modest concept of womanhood she had modeled and seen modeled in the North.

The aristocratic social structure shaped Southern norms of femininity. Catherine Clinton explains that womanhood in the South was comprised in part of a “cult of chastity,” in which a lady embodied the virtues of purity. She was white, untainted, and unrivaled. In the slave society of the South, women’s honor served as one manner by which white slave owners justified their own position at the pinnacle of the hierarchy and also as a means to underline racial boundaries. By making women seem so virtuous as to be unattainable, white

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45 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey and Louise Casey, January 26, 1845, CFC.
men sought to control whom had sexual access to white women. Thus, a planter’s place within the social structure hinged upon his wife and daughters’ unscathed reputations.\textsuperscript{46}

Given the Southern lady’s importance in the maintenance of the South’s social structure, women’s education there served to distinguish young ladies from the generality. For the most part, higher education was only available to white women of the wealthy planter class in the South. A well-educated daughter, a mark of good breeding and refinement for Southern families, was a marvel to be displayed before a public audience. Schooling offered a venue for women to hone and perform their artistic and linguistic talents, such as in the home for visitors or at public ceremonies. Moreover, ladies’ education served as a means to ensure that their daughters fared well on the marriage market. In an 1850 article in the journal \textit{Southern Index}, one opponent to the establishment of female schools grumbled how “the warmest defenders of such [female] schools are those prudent mamas whose only care is marriage for their daughters.”\textsuperscript{47} By parading and displaying a young woman’s talents before her social circle, young ladies could earn the title of “accomplished,” and in turn, influence the selection of their marriage partners.\textsuperscript{48}

The public dimension of women’s education in the South contributed to some of the most striking contrasts between Northern and Southern women’s educations. Educators of Southern belles prepared women to demonstrate their educations and worth before a public audience. For example, although the modern languages were not considered a core subject at


\textsuperscript{48} Farnham, \textit{The Education of the Southern Belle}, 28-31, 88.
Troy, Southern ladies regularly pursued the study of French, Spanish, Italian, and German. Southern women learned French first and foremost. One planter stated, “‘No lady is well bred who cannot converse and correspond in it.’”\(^{49}\) Knowledge and fluency in foreign languages signified refinement and cultivation, and also that one possessed the means to pay for a quality education. In conversation, women could demonstrate themselves as well educated and well bred. The arts also presented a lady with an opportunity to exhibit her talents. At Southern social gatherings, parents often requested their daughters to sing, dance, or display their drawings and paintings.

Another marker of a woman’s fine breeding in Southern families was her knowledge of the classics. A classical education signaled the cherished quality of a Southern man or woman: gentility. Whereas Southern women’s education incorporated classical languages into the curriculum to distinguish a Southern lady as civilized, cultured, and as a woman of means, Northern female institutions regarded the classics as a “masculine” subject, and Latin and Greek were generally not prevalent among female students’ courses.\(^{50}\) However, in an attempt to create a curriculum that rivaled the typical male course of study, Emma Willard instituted Latin at Troy, making Troy one of the first female seminaries in the North to include Latin within its curriculum. During her schooling, Mary wrote home to her mother about her course options and the possibility of studying Latin. Although Lucretia Willard acknowledged that Latin was “seldom studied by young ladies,” she encouraged Mary to enroll in the course, reminding her that her education did not have to conform to the typical “female” curriculum and encouraging her to believe that she was capable of undertaking a traditionally “masculine” subject. This chapter contends in the subsequent section that Troy’s

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\(^{49}\) John Randolph to Lucy, June 21, 1805, Peter Lyons Collection; quoted in Clinton, “Equally Their Due,” 51.

\(^{50}\) Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 30-1.
progressive curriculum aided Mary as she merged her Troy education experience with her subsequent surroundings.

When confronted by regional disparities in standards of femininity and women’s education, Mary Casey, as advised by Lucretia Willard at Troy, sought to please her Southern employers and adhere to Southern norms. As discussed in Chapter One, prior to Mary’s leaving for North Carolina, Lucretia Willard had trumped her husband’s hesitancies to loan Mary her travel expenses. Lucretia worried that if Mary had to ask her future employer, one Mr. Avent, for the funds, she might appear too dependent on him. In this same discussion Lucretia cautioned Mary not to “offend” Mr. Avent by seeming too Northern, which might “influence a Southerners’ [sp] mind not favorably toward” her. Lucretia’s advice seems to have affected the way Mary conducted herself in the South, because her first letter to the Caseys from North Carolina in 1844 expressed her desire to please her hosts, who were clearly pleased with her: “The family is very pleasant and seems to think what I say and do is right.” Mary was conscious of how her words and actions might be perceived by her host community, and she wished to meet the expectations of her new environment.

Lucretia’s counsel remained with Mary over the course of her career, guiding not only her actions, but also those of her brother. When Mary’s brother, Daniel, came to visit her in North Carolina in 1847, Mary gave him a version of Lucretia’s wisdom. Worried that Daniel’s political beliefs might offend her employer, a certain Mr. Harrison, Mary advised her brother to be careful of what he said because Mr. Harrison was a “strong loco fico,” and it was best for Daniel to express neutrality on politics.

51 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey and Daniel Casey, December 23, 1843, CFC.
52 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey and Louise Casey, February 4, 1844, ibid.
53 Mary A. Casey to Daniel Casey, July 20, 1847, ibid.
Moreover, Mary’s awareness of how her own and her family members’ beliefs might negatively influence Southerners impacted the new teacher’s curricula and behavior. Rather than reject Southern norms of femininity and women’s education, Mary adopted them, recognizing that they made her an even more desirable educator. For example, Mary met her employers’ demands and taught both French and piano to her Southern pupils. She reported to her family that she spent her mornings teaching herself French lessons and her evenings practicing piano. While in the South, she even planned to live with a francophone host family in Montreal or Quebec to improve her French.  

The Casey family’s correspondence demonstrates that Mary adopted many Southern norms of femininity for her own sake. In October 1847, Daniel accompanied Louise to North Carolina to both visit Mary and help Louise settle into her new teaching position. Daniel reported to his mother that Mary’s physical appearance had changed, and not, in his estimation, for the better: she “dresses more fancifully- talks + acts some differently rather southern-fied.” He deduced that she felt “quite scrupmtious [sp],” given her purchase of a forty-dollar gold chain with a pencil attached. Mary did not embody the image of the Northern “frugal housewife” to which Daniel was accustomed. Mary had assumed the elegance and graceful manner modeled by her Southern counterparts.

**Examination**

In July 1844, Mary conducted her first examination in the South. Public examinations were end-of-term evaluations of a student’s achievements in the classroom. Students typically gathered before school trustees and parents to display their accomplishments.

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54 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, May 8, 1847, CFC.  
55 Daniel Casey to Mary N. Casey, October 10, 1847, ibid.  
56 Ibid.
Examinations also served an additional purpose: parents and trustees attended the ceremony to ensure that the instruction offered was of the demanded caliber.\footnote{Farnham, \textit{The Education of the Southern Belle}, 89.} In other words, the ceremony functioned as a test for both Mary as a teacher and her pupils. With this consideration in mind, Mary rose to the occasion, setting the examination as a scene at the “\textit{Temple of Science},” where her North Carolina community “gathered to witness those who daily paid their offerings at the shrine of \textit{knowledge}.” The temple in this scene was Mary’s classroom, and the shrine’s benefactresses were Mary’s students. The scholars processed in white dresses into the “hallowed walls” of the classroom led by their teacher, “Miss Casey,” who donned a silk dress, blouse shawl, and a large veil covering her face. Mary took the “sage seat designed for her,” and commenced the day’s examination. Flowers, evergreens, and “nature’s richest offerings,” adorned the classroom, where “with all the dignity her \textit{august} station required,” Mary oversaw her students exhibit their academic and artistic talents. Following the examination, scholars and guests enjoyed dinner, refreshments, music, and dancing, and Mary concluded, “There was a large party here.”\footnote{Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey and Louise Casey, July 8, 1844, CFC.}

Although occurring below the Mason-Dixon Line, Mary’s examination echoed the same themes as the May Day tradition Louise would celebrate at Troy three years later, with which this chapter opened. The women who processed to the “\textit{Temple of Science}” in North Carolina abided by the same norms of “feminine” behavior. They wore white dresses and surrounded themselves with flowers. But on top of these commonalities Mary added some regional features. Embodying the “cult of chastity” popular amongst Southern planters’ daughters, Mary’s pupils represented themselves as clean, fresh, pure, and untainted. Mary conveyed a similar message through her own attire. Dressed in fine silk, Mary displayed the
elegance and refinement expected of a Southern lady. She even wore a veil over her face, which conveyed her modesty and virtue. Mary’s examination ceremony, which also adhered to Southern norms of femininity, pleased her Southern audience. Mary reported that her employer, Mr. Avent, expressed his satisfaction with the examination.  

But Mary’s costume and the classical allusions she mentioned in her retelling, such as “Temple,” “shrine,” and “offerings,” added a new layer to the examination, blending Southern gentility and honor with the education Mary experienced at Troy. By incorporating classical elements into her examination, Mary gestured towards the classical past, and in particular, the vestal virgins of Rome. These Roman priestesses assumed a noble position in Roman society by taking a thirty-year vow of virginity and service to the priesthood at the Temple of Vesta. These women epitomized female chastity and honor within the ancient city. By performing as priestesses, Mary and her scholars displayed their own purity and dignity to the community.  

The vestal virgins were not only classical allusions to female purity, but also, to female honor and dignity. From the time of the American Revolution, American women had turned to the history and literature Rome and Greece for exemplars of womanhood. This voyage back in time armed women with a multitude of classical female images, such as Portia, Minerva, and Helen. Exploring and binding themselves to the powerful women of the past emboldened American women. Caroline Winterer refers to antebellum women’s attachment to classicism as “reformist classicism,” to reference women’s employment of the ancient past to promote social agendas, such as arguments for and against slavery and an

59 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey and Louise Casey, July 8, 1844, CFC.
expansion of women’s rights.¹ Nineteenth-century writers like Lydia Maria Child and Sarah Grimké compared female oppression between the ancient and contemporary eras. In “Education of Women” (1852-1857), Grimké wrote that “In Greece women were admitted to the priesthood, enjoyed its highest dignities and were regarded with great veneration; so were the vestal virgins of Rome.” She argued that modern-day women should learn classical history to “be enlightened.”²

Yet, by re-living the classical past, Mary re-lived and also transcended her Troy experience. The May Day tradition at Troy was a ceremony that occurred just once per year, with no mention of the teachers’ involvement. Moreover, the chosen queen reigned passively over the Seminary for that day. But at the examination she organized in North Carolina, Mary, as the examiner, chose for herself a prominent role in the proceedings. While her scholars wore white dresses akin to the May Day costumes, Mary, garbed in a veil and shawl, distinguished herself from them, harnessing the honor and dignity of the vestal virgins’ high priestess. She led the students into the “Temple,” and, while they performed recitations and musical pieces, she directed the event from her “sage seat” and “august station.”³ At the examination, in other words, Mary performed her position of authority, communicating through her dress, location, and attitude that she had taken on a new, elevated, commanding place in the classroom. Channeling not just the vestal virgins, but also the spirit of Lucretia Willard, Mary conveyed to her Southern audience and in her letter recounting the event to

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³ Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey and Louise Casey, July 8, 1844, CFC.
her family at home in Whiting, that she was no longer the student, but rather an honorable and dignified teacher in the South.

Republican Sisterhood

Mary’s desire to share her Troy educational experience with others was not limited to her modeling of it to her Southern students and their families through events like the examination. Mary desired her younger siblings to share in her educational experience as well. Mary’s determination to instruct her sisters and brothers in this way calls to mind C. Dallett Hemphill’s work on the development of the “Republican Sister,” popular among northern families during the antebellum era.64 Paralleling the concept of republican motherhood, a post-Revolution philosophy that women’s most important task was to instill civic virtues and responsibilities in their children, elder “republican sisters” were charged with teaching lessons to their siblings in both academics and virtues. In this way, older sisters also served as “deputy mothers,” taking on these responsibilities to alleviate their mothers’ domestic duties, or to prepare for their own futures as mothers.65 Mary’s letters to Whiting suggest that she upheld the responsibilities of a “Republican Sister” in the Casey family, and furthermore that she continued to play this role even when absent from the family, when pursuing both a Troy education and her teaching career in the South.

No longer able physically to oversee her younger siblings’ educations, Mary communicated with her mother to encourage and manage their schooling: “I wish you to see that sister does not neglect her books, in my absence I regret not being more punctual with

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65 Ibid, 153-185.
her when there.”66 From the first term of Mary’s seminary education, she wrote to her mother instructions for Louise, Albert, and Edward’s educations: “I want the children to get a great deal of general knowledge. Get books from the town library for them to read.”67 However, sometimes Mary included more specific guidance, inspired by her Troy education, for her mother to enrich her siblings’ education. For example, she invoked her mother to purchase Willard’s Universal History, a textbook authored by Emma Willard and taught in the Seminary’s course. Mary assured her mother that it “will be an excellent work for the family.”68 By recommending the Troy textbook, Mary brought elements of her Troy education into her siblings’ home-based curriculum, providing her siblings, both her sister and her brothers, with a Troy-like experience. Thus, when Mary modeled her brothers and sister’s home curriculum after her Seminary education, Mary sought to share her Troy experience with the rest of the family even if they all could not have this education themselves.

Mary assumed her responsibility as an older sister by not only instructing her siblings in academic lessons, but also lessons in character and virtues to prepare younger sisters how to be adult women.69 While Mary was at Troy, she reiterated lessons she learned to guide Louise towards becoming “a useful and virtuous woman.”70 Mary relayed values inculcated at the Seminary to Whiting, painting a portrait of the serious, efficient and frugal Northern woman. Mary’s instructions with regards to Louise’s education were akin to the seriousness of purpose taught to Troy pupils. Mary recommended her mother to encourage Louise to focus on her studies and avoid distractions: “Let her [Louise] occupy her time reading and

66 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey and Mary N. Casey, September 3, 1841, CFC.
67 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, December 18, 1841, ibid.
68 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey and Mary N. Casey, September 3, 1841, ibid.
69 Hemphill, Siblings, 152.
70 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, December 18, 1841, ibid.
studying, instead of visiting much, or associating with the girls of the neighborhood.”

Furthermore, Mary transported lessons in frugality and thrift from Troy to the homestead in Whiting: “I think she [Louise] had better wear her straw hat without the flowers.” Mary indicated how Mrs. Willard “notices particularly the manners of her pupils and their appearance and if it is not what it should be she tells them.” Being trained in the importance of proper comportment as an educated Northern woman at Troy Seminary, Mary communicated her lessons to Louise with the frankness modeled by Mrs. Willard. Mary ensured that these lessons reached her sister, whether or not her sister imbibed them.

Yet, as Mary assimilated into the South, her instructions in womanhood to Louise changed, reflecting how Mary merged Southern norms of femininity with her conception of womanhood. In her first letter from North Carolina, she asked her mother of her sister’s comportment, “Does she [Louise] keep her person erect when she walks and her hair very shining? And teeth very white? Sis this is my advice to you!” After just one month in her Southern community, Mary had already come to recognize and admire the Southern belle’s graceful manner and polished appearance, and imparted this message to Louise. This message differed from her previous ones to Louise, which stressed academic rigor and minimal socialization with peers. The change is perhaps most stunningly captured in an 1846 letter to Louise, in which Mary urged her younger sister to avoid studying algebra, adding, “don’t confine yourself to your books too much.” Mary elaborated on why mathematics was not to be Louise’s principal concern: Louise was to “mingle in society as much as

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71 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey and Mary N. Casey, September 3, 1841, CFC.
72 Hanmer, Wrought With Steadfast Will, 140; Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, November 10, 1843, ibid.
73 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, December 9, 1841, ibid.
74 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey and Louise Casey, February 4, 1844, ibid.
75 Mary A. Casey to Louise Casey, September 3, 1846, ibid.
possible it is of more importance to you now to be genteel and possess fine and easy manners than to be versed in mathematics.” The elegant, refined ideal of the Southern lady now appealed to Mary, and her counsel to Louise not only reflected this transformation, but that Mary desired Louise to be trained in the same, melded version of womanhood that Mary was developing for herself.

Mary’s evolving messages to Louise with regards to femininity served a particular purpose: Mary envisioned Louise as a teacher in the South too. As Mary acclimated to the South, Mary began to desire that Louise share in Mary’s educational experience more than from afar. In 1847, Mary stressed the importance that Louise received a proper schooling and teacher training, because, if she did not, Mary explained, “I must look elsewhere for an assistant.” Mary’s school in North Carolina was “fuller than ever,” and Mary wanted Louise to share in her success and enjoy the same authority Mary experienced as an educator. However, not just any school sufficed for Louise’s education, in Mary’s opinion. It had to be Troy. Mary desired for Louise to receive the same training has she had had, so that Louise might share in her Troy experience. Mary was so determined for her plan to succeed that she offered to pay Louise’s tuition out of her own teaching salary. Although Mary wanted Louise to have a Troy education like Mary did, Mary remembered the embarrassment Mary faced at Troy due to her financial difficulties and being “half-clothed,” and she sought to ensure that Louise did not have to be subject to the same humiliation.

Ultimately, Mary’s plan for Louise to attend Troy and then teach in the South succeeded. Louise attended Troy in 1847, and she received a teaching position near Mary in

76 Mary A. Casey to Louise Casey, September 3, 1846, CFC.
77 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, May 8, 1847, ibid.
78 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, March 27, 1847, ibid.
79 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, May 8, 1847, ibid.
80 Ibid.
North Carolina at the end of the same year. \(^{81}\) Mary planned for Louise to attend Troy for only one year, because she urgently needed her younger sister’s assistance in the classroom. \(^{82}\) Louise’s arrival in the South not only represented Mary’s proximity to the Casey family, but also to her Troy network. Louise, a newly minted graduate, belonged to the Troy family. This dual kinship between Mary and Louise is perhaps most palpable in March 1848. For Louise’s first birthday in the South, Mary gave her a gold pencil necklace, similar to the “scrumptious” one Mary had bought for herself the previous year. For Daniel, Mary’s expensive gold pencil necklace had simply represented Mary’s turn to “southern-fied” fanciful dress. \(^{83}\)

Yet, Daniel’s observation overlooked the multilayered significance of Mary’s fashion choice. The gold pencil necklace represented Mary’s merging of her Troy experience with her new surroundings. After three years in the South, she had adopted the belief that “southern-fied” denoted “dignified.” Purchasing and donning her fine-gold necklace distinguished Mary as a woman of means and refined taste. But it also marked her intellectual talent and occupational influence as a teacher. Mary’s idea to wear the gold pencil necklace originated at Troy. Trudy Hanmer cites a student account that Emma Willard was always “drawing through her fingers a ribbon to which a gold pencil was fastened.” \(^{84}\)

As discussed in Chapter One, Emma Willard lived next door to Mary, and thus it is likely that Mary also witnessed the Troy founder adorn her characteristic gold pencil. Styling herself after the intellectually accomplished Emma Willard, Mary wore the gold pencil necklace to

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\(^{81}\) Mary A. Casey and Louise Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, December 2, 1847, CFC.

\(^{82}\) Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, January 17, 1846, ibid.

\(^{83}\) Daniel Casey to Mary N. Casey, October 10, 1847, ibid.

\(^{84}\) Eliza Hunt Apthorp to Emma Willard Scudder, May 9, 1892, Emma Willard School Archive; quoted in Hanmer. *Wrought With Steadfast Will*, 155.
represent her own scholarly attainments and her membership within the Troy community. The gold pencil necklace served as both a tangible and an intangible symbol of Mary’s merging of her Troy education with regional cultural norms, which she also transmitted to Louise. Although Mary and Louise had become geographically separated when Mary left for school, Mary continued to fulfill her responsibilities as a “Republican sister.” She encouraged and prepared Louise not only for an education at Troy, but also for teaching in the South. And in March 1848, after becoming a Troy-educated teacher in the South, Louise received from her sister her own gold pencil necklace. In one stroke, Louise had become an influential, melded version of womanhood as well.

Conclusion

In her July 1844 letter recounting the examination of her students, Mary reminded her family that the veiled, dignified teacher in North Carolina was none other than “Mary Ann, yes the very same creature.” The same young girl who had once taken “pregnented [sp] walks that encircle that endeared spot ‘home’” now led processions of scholars into the classroom.85 By distinguishing the teacher who directed her classroom in North Carolina from the Mary Ann who meandered around the Casey homestead, Mary conveyed to her family that she had changed. Upon leaving Troy for the South, she had encountered new norms of femininity and new standards for women’s education. As her Troy principal, Lucretia Willard, had advised her to do, Mary sought to please her Southern hosts and abide by regional norms, thus endearing herself to them personally and professionally. Mary’s letters to her mother, her messages to Louise, and her brother Daniel’s observations about her

85 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey and Louise Casey, July 8, 1844, CFC.
changing appearance all demonstrated that Mary fashioned herself and her curricula in accordance with the comportment and education of a Southern belle.

Yet, by alluding in her July 1844 letter to *Mary Ann*, Mary wanted to assure her family that in some ways, she had not changed at all. Being geographically separated from Whiting and her Seminary home did not prevent Mary from staying tied to her kin, both real and fictive. Mary fulfilled her role as a Republican sister by overseeing her siblings’ educations. She paid particular attention to Louise, preparing her to attend Troy and teach in the South, thus lessening the geographic and professional distance between them. Chapter Three demonstrates how this proximity to kin remained important to Mary, propelling her teaching career, even when tragedy struck the Casey family network in 1848.

Just as Mary and her family remained intertwined, so too did Mary and Troy. In the spring of 1845, Mary sent a portion of her salary to Troy to pay back her Seminary tuition. Lucretia Willard mailed Mary a receipt for the payment with, in Mary’s words, “love, and regards.”

Lucretia communicated her unwavering affection for Mary, even when the two women lived hundreds of miles apart. With her Troy principal in mind, Mary continued to comport herself like a Troy teacher. Previous scholarship on Northern teachers’ experiences in the South contends that by the 1840s, the majority of these teachers alienated themselves from Southern society and remained attached to the community of Northern teachers and clergymen founding institutions throughout the South. The classical narrative posits that Northern teachers trained at institutions like Troy and Mount Holyoke clung to conservative views of womanhood, reinforcing the notion of separate spheres as they prepared Southern

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86 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, April 25, 1845, CFC.
87 Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 98.
belles to preside in the home. Mary’s experience suggests otherwise. Mary not only adopted Southern norms, but behaving like a Troy teacher also demonstrated how Mary blended traditional “feminine” conventions from the South with the commanding model of womanhood inculcated at Troy. Despite leaving the Seminary, Mary continued to test the limits of and seek a position of authority amidst the patriarchal order. Donning her gold pencil necklace, Mary carried a piece of the spirit of Troy with her, and stood at the helm of her classroom.

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CHAPTER THREE: Reviving the Educational Mission

In January 1848, Mary received tragic news: her younger brother, Albert Casey, was dead. Confounded that her healthy, ambitious sibling was no longer on earth with her, Mary immediately turned to her sister, Louise, who lived in a neighboring community in North Carolina. Facing shock and grief, the young women confined themselves to Mary’s room for at least five days. Too distraught even to teach, Mary assigned the charge of her classroom to one of her pupils. The sisters attempted to make sense of the tragedy. Albert had contracted and died of typhus while studying at Middlebury College. But in their grief, nothing could reasonably explain Albert’s passing. 89

The death of Mary’s younger brother threw the family network into more than a year of mourning and despair. Amidst this pain, Mary tried to understand her loss in religious terms. Over time she came to believe that Albert’s death functioned as a part of God’s greater plan for her. Invoking Hebrews 12:6, Mary wrote to her mother and brothers that “The Lord has been very merciful to me. I was a wanderer from my Father’s fold: He chastened me to bring me back: He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth [sp].”90 That chastening, she realized, was a means of bringing her closer to God to fulfill His will through her calling. Mary declared to her family, “To glorify God, to do Good. Is the aim of my life…My life is devoted to the cause of education.”91

This chapter argues that although Albert’s death initially paralyzed Mary with grief, it ultimately spurred her to tie herself closer to home emotionally, as she turned with renewed vigor to the religious beliefs and practices connected to her upbringing there. Mary emerged from her sorrow with a reinforced sense of self, her calling to teach, and her relationships

89 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, January 15, 1848, CFC.
90 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, ibid.
91 Ibid.
with her family members—all of which she viewed as inextricably linked. By carrying out her calling to the best of her ability, despite the geographic and cultural gulfs that lay between her and home, Mary’s reward, she understood, would be reunion with her entire family in heaven. Although scholars typically root female piety outside of the home in women’s church groups and reform societies, Mary’s experience suggests that, in her case, religious beliefs tied her not to external organizations but to her kin. Albert’s sudden and unexpected death galvanized Mary to seek even more consolation in the religious beliefs she had acquired at home and at Troy, for both earthly and heavenly ends: as a means of acquiring her own school, and of ultimately ensuring that she could spend eternity in heaven, reunited with her family.

**Regional Differences**

When Mary arrived in North Carolina in 1843 she immediately assessed the religious state of her new community. She deduced that the population seemed to be mostly Methodist, but she estimated that the “number of irreligious far exceeds the number belonging to all denominations.” Mary’s judgments reflected the doctrinal and cultural variances between Northern and Southern Protestantism in the antebellum period, especially within Baptism, Mary’s denomination. Those variances, which she does not seem to have been able to reconcile, moved Mary to isolate herself from Southern church life for the length of her stay in the South.

Living in the South was not the first time Mary had been physically distant from her home church in Whiting, Vermont. She experienced physical separation from her family’s

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92 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, Albert Casey, and Louise Casey, June 15, 1845, CFC.
church while attending Troy Female Seminary. But at the Seminary, Mary was able and
encouraged to attend a Baptist church, which allowed her to continue to ascribe to the
denominational beliefs that she had imbibed while at home. Similar to other contemporary
female Seminaries, Troy infused its curriculum and agenda with religious practices and
beliefs. Emma Willard founded Troy upon the principle that “religion and
morality...constitute the true end of all education,” and Christian lessons were to imbue all
subjects taught at the Seminary.⁹³ Furthermore, while Mary attended Troy, she enrolled in
Lucretia Willard’s Bible class and a course entitled “History of the Jews.”⁹⁴ Although other
female seminaries allied themselves with particular denominations, Troy did not. It
demanded lessons that were non-denominationally Protestant and in turn was comprised of
students of various Protestant backgrounds.⁹⁵ Although Principals Lucretia and John Willard
belonged to the Episcopal Church, the couple made no attempts to convert students to their
denomination. Instead, pupils possessed the freedom to attend services and revivals at
churches of their own choosing.⁹⁶

While at Troy, Mary took advantage of the opportunity to attend religious services
that corresponded to her own upbringing. She wrote that each Sabbath morning, students
started the day by reciting Scriptures in the dining hall, followed by a prayer led by Mr.
Willard. This group meditation prepared each student to attend the church of her choice off
campus.⁹⁷ Mary joked with her family that they would not be able to guess which church she

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⁹⁴ Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, December 9, 1841, CFC.
⁹⁶ Ibid, 192.
⁹⁷ Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, June 9, 1841, ibid.
chose to attend on Sundays.\(^98\) For Mary, the First Baptist Church in Troy was an obvious choice. Because the Caseys were Baptists, worshipping with the local Baptist congregation in Troy, New York most resembled the church to which she belonged in Whiting. Mary enjoyed Baptist services in Troy “immensely,” and felt comfortable enough there that she even asked her family to mail her letter of recommendation to the First Baptist Church in Troy so that she could become a member there.\(^99\)

Mary’s experience at the church in Troy corresponded to her religious upbringing in Whiting, but it also amplified her spiritual fervor. The religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening thrived while Mary was at Troy. Protestant ministers evangelized from pulpits across the United States, both inspiring new converts and resuscitating old believers. Mary’s residence in Troy placed her in the hotbed of the movement. Troy located in the eastern section of what became known as the “burned-over district,” the regions of New York that saw a sweep of “revival fires” and intense religiosity during the Second Great Awakening of the 1830s and 1840s.\(^100\) Reverend Charles G. Finney, a prominent leader of the movement, had visited Troy in the late 1820s to spark a series of revivals throughout the area, and Mary’s letters indicate that the spirit of Evangelicalism remained ablaze at First Baptist Church during Mary’s Troy education.\(^101\) In a letter to Daniel in November 1842, Mary raved about the congregation’s minister, whom she deemed a “workman worthy of his calling,” because she observed “an appearance of a revival” in the congregation.\(^102\) As Mary

\(^{98}\) Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, June 9, 1841, CFC.
\(^{99}\) Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, June 25, 1841, ibid; Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey, and Louise Casey, July 17, 1841, ibid.
\(^{102}\) Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, November 7, 1842, ibid.
attended church in Troy, she likely heard zealous messages from the pulpit encouraging her to dedicate her life and her life’s works to God. Revivalist preaching emphasized the necessity for active repentance and encouraged believers to resign everything to God. Ministers asked the essential question to congregants: “What shall you do to be saved?”

This question certainly remained on Mary’s mind as she launched her professional career.

Troy’s encouragement of its students to worship at churches of their choosing (and in Mary’s case at a church similar to the one in which she was raised) and the spiritual fervor of the Second Great Awakening inspired her to seek what she thought would be a similar religious environment in the South. However, unlike at Troy, when Mary attempted to engage in Southern church life and find a church in North Carolina that corresponded with her family’s beliefs, she encountered substantial doctrinal differences between Northern and Southern Baptists. Mary wrote home that she had “not found a Baptist in N. Carolina that our church would fellowship much more a church.” In fact, at precisely the same time that Mary migrated from the North to the South, the Baptist Church was facing a sectional crisis. Slavery occupied the forefront of the intra-denominational conflict, pitting Northern abolitionists and Southern ministers and planters at odds with one another. Tensions came to a tipping point in 1844 over whether or not Baptist mission societies should appoint slaveholders. Less than a year later in May 1845, Georgia and Virginia statewide Baptist meetings arranged for a specifically Southern Baptist Convention, which enacted an official division between Northern and Southern Baptists. Additional differences between Northern and Southern Baptists related to the church’s organization and relation to the state. Northern Baptists typically aligned with traditionalist beliefs, which tended to be local in character.

104 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, January 26, 1845, CFC.
Traditionalists preferred congregational independence and feared an alliance between church and state. In the opposite camp, Southern Baptists aligned with modernist views. Modernists normally favored a hierarchical church structure, and support for religious reform efforts, such as mission societies.  

As a product of Northern Baptism, Mary criticized the hierarchical organization of the Southern church in June 1845, commenting that in the South, a minister would travel thirty miles to worship because the president of his organization was up for election. Mary urged her mother and siblings to “judge what the religious state of a people must be where such is the character of their churchmen.” In the same letter, Mary concluded, “if they [Southern ministers] are a fair representation of Southern Baptists I am satisfied without hearing more.” Those words would prove prescient, as she found herself retreating from Southern church life.

The doctrinal differences between Northern and Southern Baptists may have influenced Mary’s dissatisfaction with Southern church life, but her complaints were also a response to cultural differences, and in particular, a lack of religiosity. Mary observed that in the South, church was as much a social activity as a religious one. Her troubles with the Southern church related to the lack of observance for the Sabbath. In her first neighborhood in Aventon, North Carolina, people did not worship on every Sunday, and on off-Sundays, the community engaged in “great visiting and courting time” instead. This observation extended to other communities in the South. After attending a service at her second living

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106 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, Edward Casey, Albert Casey, and Louise Casey, June 15, 1845, CFC.
107 Ibid.
108 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, November 3, 1844, ibid.
situation in Pleasant Hill, North Carolina, Mary reported that it was “very sociable company but no preaching.” Louise echoed her older sister’s complaints while she lived in North Carolina, remarking that “Sundays don’t feel like Sundays here…. ‘The sound of the churchgoing bell their valleys and rocks never heard.’” For Mary and Louise, in the South, the Sabbath, when observed, was often a social experience, differing from the earnest and dedicated observance practiced in Whiting and in Troy. Sundays in North Carolina did not feel like home.

Dissatisfied with Southern Baptist church practices, Mary ultimately decided that the place she could find the most similarities to her religious upbringing was in isolation, removed from Southern religious life—a decision she remade and re-explained to her family in her letters each Sunday. In this way, she avoided attending church for years at a time, suggesting in her letters that services in the South corrupted her relationship with God: “The young people here go to church to visit, and not to listen to the word of God I have done that too many times myself, but I hope the Lord has forgiven me.” Instead, Mary preferred to stay at home on Sundays, finding that “the only enjoyment that remain[s] for me is books and solitude.” Mary viewed reading her Bible and prayerful meditation as more fulfilling spiritual pursuits than joining neighbors to worship. But by rejecting Southern church life, Mary did not just shun local religious customs. Instead, Mary bound herself more tightly to her family, and to the religious upbringing she had experienced at home. For example, Mary was anxious to continue to belong to her church in Whiting. She even wrote home to ask that

109 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, March 27, 1847, CFC.
111 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, ibid.
112 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, September 16, 1848, ibid.
113 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, ibid.
her membership there be honored, even though circumstances prevented her from being physically present.\textsuperscript{114} Mary’s conscious isolation of herself and, by extension, her conscious reinforcement of her religious life at home demonstrate how important both Mary’s kin network and its beliefs continued to be to her, even after she had moved across country.

**Educational Mission**

In March 1848, two months after Albert’s death, Mary reflected on her brother’s life and the special influence he had on her educational mission. It was Albert who had encouraged Mary to move away from home and attend Troy. Mary reminisced about how the two of them had spent hours in their youths dreaming about renovating or building a new home for the family in Whiting. However, Albert convinced Mary that she was not the member of the family to see to this goal through. Rather, he had urged her to envision herself away from Whiting, telling her that she “must go to school.” Mary recalled that Albert “always entered very much into my views and opinions.”\textsuperscript{115} As Mary reminisced about home and her relationship to her departed brother, she took comfort in memories of his influence, proclaiming that God “has not taken that brother from me to leave me desolate.”\textsuperscript{116} Rather, Mary viewed Albert’s death as part of God’s particular plan for her, compelling her to consider the importance of her vocation as a teacher, which in turn provoked her to seek even more solace in the religious beliefs she had inherited from her family networks at home and at Troy. In short, in the wake of Albert’s death, Mary began to understand both herself and her educational mission in religious terms.

\textsuperscript{114} Jean Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985): 11; Mary A. Casey to Daniel Casey, January 17, 1846, CFC.

\textsuperscript{115} Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, March 27, 1848, ibid.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
In a July 1848 letter to her mother and brothers, Mary quoted John 18:11: “‘The cup that my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?’”\(^{117}\) Six months had passed since Albert’s death and, still mourning him, Mary felt overwhelmed by both her deep suffering and the future’s uncertainty. Albert’s death served as a reminder that her life was ephemeral as well. These ruminations compelled Mary to consider her vocation as a teacher. She declared, “My life is devoted to the cause of education and if it is spared I hope to aid its progress.”\(^{118}\) Prepared to embrace both the hardships and blessings her educational and spiritual mission might encounter, Mary embraced her calling, viewing her separated from home, religion, and family in religious terms: “wandering” in a “wilderness” toward the “promised land” of her own school, a goal which gave her teaching profession divine authority.

Mary conveyed her religious understanding of her educational mission by likening herself to the Israelites. Like them, Mary experienced a nomadic existence during her teaching career. Typical of other members of her profession in the antebellum period, she changed schools frequently and moved among different communities in the North and South.\(^{119}\) During her first three years in North Carolina alone, Mary taught at three different plantation schools and lived with three different families. This constant moving and resettling into new teaching positions contributed to her feelings of being an isolated “wanderer,” Biblical imagery that her family would have understood.\(^{120}\) Mary further connected her career to Scripture by using religious language to describe the rural South. She compared a

\(^{117}\) Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, CFC.
\(^{118}\) Ibid.
\(^{119}\) Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 113.
\(^{120}\) Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, ibid.
church in Georgia to a “little ‘Bethel’ in the wilderness.” The notions of wandering and living in the wilderness were pervasive enough in Mary’s communications that her family adopted her language as well. In August 1848, Louise, who lived in a neighboring community in North Carolina, wrote to her mother and brothers that Mary “has been in the woods long enough, she is getting tired of country life.” Again in November, Louise commented on Mary’s possible plans to leave one teaching situation for a new one: “She says before she ‘wanders’ she will let you know.”

Mary also compared the end of her earthly mission to the Israelites’ experience. She believed that if she continued to trust Him and obey His call, God would fulfill His promise for her: a school of her own. Upon leaving North Carolina in 1848, Mary travelled between positions at various schools in the North and in the South, with the objective to found her own school in Kentucky. After settling into a temporary position in Columbus, Georgia in 1850, Mary wrote to her family, pleased about the seemingly simple communication between Georgia and Kentucky, “Perhaps I shall get to the promised land at last.” By connecting her educational mission to the experience of the Israelites, Mary conveyed that she understood that, whatever difficulties lay ahead, her mission to teach and establish her own school as an assignment from God: “Praise His name that I am counted worthy to suffer: to glorify God, to do Good. Is the aim of my life.” By working for God, Mary would not only gain her own school. She would also receive her ultimate reward in heaven: reunification with her family.

121 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, June 16, 1850, CFC.
122 Louise Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, August 1, 1848, ibid.
123 Louise Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, November 9, 1848, ibid.
124 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, April 5, 1850, ibid.
125 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, ibid.
Two months after Albert’s death, Mary shared with her mother and siblings her hope that the family would be together again in heaven: “O that we may all meet there a family in *heaven* is my humble prayer.”¹²⁶ Common amongst nineteenth-century evangelicals, Mary understood her family alliance in spiritual terms. For example, Mary wrote her brother, Daniel, in August 1846 to thank him for his advice and financial support, asserting that she “cannot endure the thought that that spark kindled on the domestic altar should ever be extinguished.”¹²⁷ The antebellum church reinforced ties between kin, giving them a spiritual meaning. When families increasingly experienced geographic separation, the church connected separated kin by imagining a heavenly reunion.¹²⁸ Mary harnessed this religious understanding of the spiritual family and found comfort in the thought that all of the Caseys would be together once again.

This desire to reunite the family in heaven motivated Mary to continue her educational mission, in spite of Albert’s death. A year after the tragedy, Mary reflected that she could have never predicted the pain she would experience over the course of those twelve months: “Little did I think one year today that I should now *be here*: an afflicted one.”¹²⁹ However, Mary was determined to be uninhibited by her grief. She continued, “But who can unravel the invisible future: another year may bring still greater changes in our family relations but let us be prepared that when we are called we may meet that brother in *heaven*.”¹³⁰ Mary found solace in the thought that something good might come after this time of sorrow. She directed her attention towards her own calling to teach and honor God, and she beckoned her family members to consider their own callings. Rather than abandoning her

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¹²⁶ Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, March 27, 1848, CFC.
¹²⁷ Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, August 1, 1846, ibid.
¹²⁹ Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, ibid.
¹³⁰ Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, ibid.
educational mission when tragedy struck the family network, Mary reflected on these ties and recognized how her role in the classroom might strengthen the “domestic altar.”

Conclusion

During the summer of 1848, six months after Albert’s death, Mary felt inspired to expand her educational mission. In a letter to her mother and siblings, Mary avowed that her life was devoted to the cause of education, and declared “I don’t think I can accomplish that [cause of education] as well in my present situation as I could in a larger school where my influence would be more extensive.”131 With regards to changing her teaching situation, Mary expressed her intentions to request advice from none other than her old mentor and surrogate mother, Lucretia Willard.132 Less than a year later, Mary traveled back to Troy alone to seek counsel from Lucretia. Thus, as Mary’s religious understanding of her education mission developed, she continued to view Troy as instrumental to it. Albert, who had once been a source of counsel and inspiration to teach, could no longer offer her support. Given Albert’s absence, Mary solicited the advice of Troy, another source in her kin network, and just as critical in shaping her views and opinions.

Mary did not only seek Lucretia’s advice while in Troy. She met with a Baptist minister, Elder Baldwin, and returned to the First Baptist Church in town, an eastern extension of the “burned-over district,” the regions of New York that saw intense religiosity during the Second Great Awakening of the 1830s and 1840s.133 While Mary had attended Troy, First Baptist had been caught up in the fire of the revivalist movement, and her return

131 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, CFC.
132 Ibid.
to the First Baptist Church in Troy represented a reinforcement of her own religiosity. During her Troy visit, Mary participated in a covenant at First Baptist, in which she resigned herself to act according to God’s will and to the Baptist faith, drawing herself closer both to God and to the beliefs and practices she shared with her family.\footnote{134}{Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, and Edward Casey, May 3, 1849, CFC.}

Mary’s itinerary suggests that while she was in town, she not only considered her female principal’s advice, but also attempted to discern, through Baptism, what God had in store for her as a teacher. Mary’s spiritual and professional advisors counseled her to put establishing her own school on hold because of a cholera outbreak in what she viewed as her “promised land” of Kentucky. Chapter Four discusses how Mary placed her trust in their hands and followed this advice, staying close to Troy not only philosophically, but also geographically, situating herself in a position at a school in Elbridge, New York.\footnote{135}{Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, and Edward Casey, May 3, 1849, ibid; Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey and Daniel N. Casey, August 22, 1849, ibid.}

Scholarship on the antebellum women’s movements typically posits that religion served as the means by which women formed female networks and practiced influence outside of the home. Historians argue that religious rhetoric and notions of womanhood that encompassed piety and spirituality served to unite women in endeavors like these.\footnote{136}{Cott, “Young Women and the Second Great Awakening”, Mattingly Well-Tempered Women.}

However, this study reveals that religion had a different effect on Mary Casey: it in fact brought her closer to her kin network, both real and fictive. Mary’s isolation from Southern church life and her use of religious rhetoric after Albert’s death illustrate that Mary bound herself even more tightly to her family and her family’s religious beliefs and practices. When physically separated from her kin network, Mary employed religion as a means of both staying connected to home and propelling herself outside of the home and into the classroom.
CHAPTER FOUR: Return to the Home

In April 1855, Mary Casey, and her future husband, Robert W. Newman, opened the doors of Winchester Female Seminary in Virginia to young ladies from throughout the country who sought a quality education. In so doing Mary fulfilled her longtime dream of opening her own school, fueled by the sense of religious and educational purpose she came to feel after the death of her brother, Albert. Working alongside one another before they married in July 1855, Mary and Robert employed teachers, housekeepers, and servants to help operate the Seminary, and they boarded 25 of the school’s 60 students in the Newman home.

In an April 1855 letter to her kin in Whiting, Vermont, Mary confided that she was very busy with her administrative role, but took delight in her flourishing institution and the people within it, referring to the members of the Seminary community as her “family.”

Mary’s choice to use the word “family” carried multiple meanings. In one respect, “family” referred to the twinning of Mary’s kin ties from Whiting and her professional network within her new school. After all, the first three teachers employed at the Seminary were Mary herself, her husband-to-be, Robert, and Mary’s sister and fellow Troy alumna, Louise. Mary may have also viewed the atmosphere within Winchester as familial because, in many ways, she modeled her administration after that of her adoptive mother, Lucretia Willard. Following Lucretia and John Willard’s example, Mary worked alongside her own husband, Robert, and the couple shared administrative duties. However, like John and Lucretia, Mary and Robert’s co-administration model did not adhere to traditional male and female roles with Robert tending to the business outside of the school, and Mary managing

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137 Mary A. Casey and Louise Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, and Edward Casey, April 16, 1855, CFC; Ancestry.com, Virginia, Select Marriages, 1785-1940
matters inside the institution. Rather, Mary asserted herself in Winchester’s external business affairs.

The founding of Winchester Female Seminary demonstrates the continued centrality of family, both real and fictive, in Mary Casey’s life. This finding challenges previous scholarship on the growth of women’s educational institutions during the antebellum period, which attribute the establishment of new schools like Winchester to the success and power of professional networks of seminary-educated women. Winchester, this line of argumentation goes, owed its existence entirely to Troy. Although Mary Casey certainly subscribed to the Troy educational model and shared Troy’s attitudes about women’s intellectual abilities and the importance of a good education, Winchester did not simply replicate the Troy model. Rather, it represented both returns to and departures from its predecessor. The constant and guiding principle in Mary’s life, and at her school, was not Troy. It was her family.

Mary’s Education Network

Scholars have defined the Troy educational model in many ways such as its emphasis on intellectual achievement, the curriculum’s comprehensive inclusion of the arts and sciences, and its promotion of women’s engagement in civil society. But what they have deemphasized is the family dimension of that model. Just as Mary’s kin group and the Winchester teacher group overlapped substantially, so too did it at Troy. Looking at Troy faculty during its first fifty years illustrates how the school’s founder Emma Willard employed many of her relatives to work at the Seminary. In 1840, the year before Mary enrolled at Troy, the Seminary had nineteen faculty members. Thirteen of the teachers were former students of the Seminary, and six of the nineteen teachers were blood relatives of

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138 Kelley, Learning to Stand and Speak, 87.
Emma Willard. The Seminary staff in 1860 looked remarkably similar with eleven alumnae and four blood relatives working amongst a group of nineteen teachers. Moreover, when Emma Willard chose a successor at Troy, she selected her daughter-in-law, Lucretia. Thus, Mary followed this underappreciated part of the Troy example when fashioning an education network of her own.

At Winchester, Mary employed her kin network to recruit employees and pupils alike. When Mary wrote to Whiting about her Winchester “family,” there were three teachers at the institution: Mary, her husband, Robert, and her sister, Louise. When Mary sought to expand this teaching cohort, once again, she looked to her kin. In need of a music and vocal teacher, Mary asked her mother to contact her Uncle Benjamin, whose daughter, Martha, seemed to be the perfect fit for the position—with a bit of training. Mary suggested that Martha prepare for employment at the Seminary by first enrolling at a female seminary: “If Uncle Benjamin will send cousin Martha to Brandon or somewhere else where she can take music lessons three months so that she can play accompaniments to her songs I will employ her.”

Winchester’s vitality depended on a steady stream of paying income of customers, and Mary employed her kin network to recruit students as well. In October 1855, Mary alerted her mother that she was looking to admit six girls into her teacher-training program. Mrs. Casey not only selected some potential candidates. She also facilitated communication between Mary and the prospective students. Mary seems to have approved of her mother’s choices: two months later, Mary wrote that she “shall look for the girls next

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139 Hanmer, Wrought With Steadfast Will, 129, 169.
140 Mary A. Casey and Louise Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, and Edward Casey, April 16, 1855, CFC.
141 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, and Edward Casey, October 17, 1855, ibid.
Furthermore, during the 1855-56 school year Winchester’s first year of operation, Mary taught one of the Casey family’s neighbors, Phebe Needham. It is clear that Phebe had a special relationship with Mary and her family members. While Phebe was a student at Winchester, Mary corresponded directly with Phebe’s mother, Jane A. Needham. She also included news of Phebe in her letters to her own mother, reporting in January 1856 that “Phebe is well,” anticipating that Mary N. Casey would pass on the message to the Needhams. This personal attention to Phebe’s wellbeing arose from Phebe’s connection to Mary’s brother, Edward, whom Phebe would marry later that year. When Mary engaged her family and her mother’s friend network to develop Winchester, she echoed her own educational upbringing. After all, it was her mother’s kin and friend networks that had first brought her to Troy.

Mary’s recruitment of students and teachers from Whiting and from within her family reveal something of her professional status: her neighbors and kin recognized her as a respectable teacher. However, Mary’s reputation expanded through and beyond her kin group. By the time Mary opened Winchester, she had garnered a prestigious standing as an educator, in particular, amongst men. Prior to Winchester’s opening, Louise corresponded with her family about an interaction she had had with Elder Thomas, a Baptist minister starting a school in nearby Brandon, Vermont. Thomas inquired after both Louise and Mary’s teaching plans. Louise later explained to her mother, “He wished that Mary and I would come to Brandon and help build up that school.” At the time of this exchange in September 1854, Mary and Louise had already arranged to work at Winchester, but Elder

142 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, Edward Casey, and Phebe N. Casey, August 18, 1856, CFC.
143 Mary A. Casey and Robert W. Newman to Mary N. Casey, January 30, 1856, ibid.
144 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey, September 15, 1856, ibid.
145 Louise Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey and Edward Casey, September 6, 1854, ibid.
Thomas’ request to hire the Casey sisters attests to their growing reputation as schoolteachers.

This was not the first time that Mary’s professional reputation preceded her. Six years earlier in 1848, four years into her career in North Carolina, Mary wrote to her family to inquire about Stephen Rande. A friend of the Casey family, Stephen had visited the Casey homestead in Whiting, and, afterwards, wrote to Mary to seek a teaching recommendation. Mary did not know Stephen well, because, as she told her mother and brothers, “I am entirely ignorant of his character or scholarship.” Yet, Stephen knew of Mary’s reputation. Recognizing what a recommendation from Mary, a Troy-educated woman and a teacher with four years of experience, might mean to his own professional networking, Stephen Rande, a man, requested a woman’s professional endorsement. Scholars typically study the Troy professional network as a uniquely female association. However, Elder Thomas’ desire to hire Mary and Louise and Stephen Rande’s recommendation request both demonstrate that by the time she and her husband had opened Winchester Female Seminary in 1855, Mary had constructed a national network, stretching from her old home in Whiting, Vermont to her new home in Winchester, Virginia, comprised of men and women who sought and could attest to Mary’s expertise.

**Being Mrs. Newman**

Mary forged her own education network by borrowing from the family model present at Troy. But examining Mary’s role within Winchester Female Seminary elucidates how the other chapters of Mary’s life, such as her time in the South and her focus on spiritual

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146 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel Casey, and Edward Casey, July 3, 1848, CFC.
147 Scott, “The Ever Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary 1822-1872.”
contemplation, also affected her career trajectory. Mary’s identity as a teacher derived from the different experiences she had over the course of her profession, and the authority she had claimed from those experiences. Although Mary’s choice to become “Mrs. Robert W. Newman” might seem to conflict with her robust identity as an educator, in reality, her marriage encapsulates the different chapters of her life: her devotion to education, her experience in the South, and her religiosity.

Despite being detailed on many other subjects, Mary’s letters offer little insight into the qualities she sought in a spouse. But one scenario from 1846 suggests that a commitment to education stood at the forefront of her priorities. While teaching in North Carolina, Mary reflected on a particular Southern man who had expressed interest in her: “I had much rather marry a poor educated man I could fancy than a rich blockhead.” Robert W. Newman, who was college-educated and associate principal at Winchester High School in Virginia, exemplified the intellect she desired in a husband. Mary and Robert married in July 1855, but Mary’s letters suggest that the couple met as early as January 1855, when she wrote to her family about a “gentleman of her acquaintance” that would help Louise get from her situation in Danville, Virginia upstate to Winchester. The couple’s decision to open a school together reflects this mutual interest in education, but also, conveys that Robert and Mary envisioned themselves working alongside one another, just as Lucretia and John Willard did. Not only did Robert represent the intelligence and devotion to education that Mary sought in a spouse, but his views towards a married couple’s ability to share occupational responsibilities also corresponded with the model she had witnessed at Troy.

148 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, November 9, 1846, CFC.
150 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, January 18, 1855, ibid; Ancestry.com, *Virginia, Select Marriages, 1785-1940*
Furthermore, Mary’s spouse reflected another aspect of her life that she continued to pursue and refine: Southern decorum. Robert came from an old, Virginia family, and was born and attended college in that state. During the antebellum period, the overwhelming majority of Northern teachers who came to work in the South married Southerners. Mary was one of this majority. As Chapter Two detailed, during Mary’s first years in the South, she became enamored with the notion of a “Southern lady” and integrated the elegance and grace typified by her Southern counterparts into her definition of womanhood. At Winchester, Mary maintained a refined and dignified appearance reminiscent of Southern gender norms. Although she had not married a “rich blockhead,” Mary dressed fashionably rather than economically. In an April 1855 letter to the Caseys in Whiting, Louise remarked that she had purchased “a summer dress of the same material as [her] Sister’s silk-tissue though not as expensive.” As a co-principal in Winchester, when Mary purchased clothing, she chose to display her ability to purchase items of higher, more refined value rather than exhibit her ability to find a bargain, suggesting a departure from the image of the Northern “frugal housewife”—a value to which her family seems to have subscribed. Scholarship on nineteenth-century women’s dress maintains that high fashion, such as fine silks and crinolines, was a means for women to perform femininity, allowing them to be imaginative, and, to an extent, deviate from the conservative and conventional image of nineteenth-century womanhood. By purchasing expensive silks, Mary did not portray herself according to Northern norms of femininity with which she grew up, but instead, she

152 Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 112.
153 Mary A. Casey and Louise Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, and Edward Casey, April 16, 1855, CFC.
conveyed to her students and to her husband in Virginia that she too was a “Southern lady”
of refined and expensive taste.

Records also indicate that Mary identified with Robert religiously as well. The
spirituality that Mary found central to her education mission also pervaded Robert’s views.
Robert expressed his motivations for opening Winchester as “the greatest and most desirable
reward, after all that is thought & said of pecuniary gain, is the certain consciousness of
having labored to improve time & talents to ‘honour & glory of God.’”155 Like Mary, Robert
considered his professional career tied to his religiosity. The couple’s understanding of their
religious and educational missions as inextricably linked compelled the couple to affiliate
Winchester with the Southern Baptist church, reflecting both Robert and Mary’s religious
upbringings. An article in “American Baptist Memorial” magazine praised Winchester
Female Seminary for “exerting a most beneficial influence” over its pupils.156 This Baptist
influence was integral to Winchester’s operation. Louise commented that one Sunday Mary
had accompanied “the young ladies to Sabbath school.”157 Unlike at Troy, where students
had the freedom and independence to attend any church of their choosing, Winchester seems
to have allied itself with a particular Southern Baptist church, one that (despite Mary’s
misgivings about the denomination) must have at least somewhat aligned with her beliefs.
Furthermore, the Newmans’ promotion of Winchester as a Baptist institution reflected
Baptism’s growing popularity during the first half of the nineteenth century. Baptism was
one of the most rapidly growing faiths in the antebellum United States, and was reaching
people through popular religious press, such as tracts, pamphlets, magazines, and

155 Mary A. Casey and Robert W. Newman to Mary N. Casey, January 30, 1856, CFC.
156 Rev. B. Manly Jr., The American Baptist Memorial, A Statistical, Biographical, and Historical
157 Mary A. Casey and Louise Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, and Edward Casey, April
    16, 1855, ibid.
newspapers. Mary’s choice to depart from the Troy model and to align Winchester with the Southern Baptist church reflects the couple’s desire to identify Winchester with a popular faith and infuse their particular religious beliefs into their joint education mission.

**Mary at the Head of Her School**

Mary’s choice to marry Robert exemplifies how Mary transported the different chapters of her life- her Troy education, her experience in the South, and her revived religious fervor- with her to Winchester. However, when operating Winchester Female Seminary with Robert, it seems that Mary channeled the style of administration she witnessed between Lucretia and John Willard at Troy. On face value, Mary seems to have channeled scholars’ traditional interpretation of the Willards’ division of labor at Troy. On paper Mary separated her own duties at Winchester as “in the house, and in my part of the classroom” and Robert’s duties to “the business out of doors, and to his part of the school room.” Such neat categorization seems to have been more rhetoric than reality, however. According Mary and Robert’s letters to the Caseys, Mary does not seem to have limited her authority to the home and designated classroom space. Rather, Robert seems to have deferred to Mary’s authority in matters reaching far outside the home—an apportionment of responsibility that allies closely with the Willards’ actual practices Lucretia Willard, as Chapter One demonstrated, routinely superseded her husband’s financial authority where Mary Casey was concerned.

One manner by which Mary perpetuated the Troy model was implementing her own form of “instruction on credit.” This practice had reflected Emma and Lucretia Willard’s

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159 Mary A. Casey and Robert W. Newman to Mary N. Casey, January 30, 1856, CFC.
sensitivity towards young women’s limited finances, giving them a way to both attend school and support themselves or their families. Mary chose to enact it at Winchester as well. As referenced above, in October 1855, Mary wrote to her mother about six Whiting girls seeking teacher-training from Winchester Female Seminary. Bringing these students to Winchester consisted of “terms” similar to the ones Emma and Lucretia Willard offered to pupils at Troy. Mary enrolled the young ladies at Winchester under the condition that they would go on to teach, repaying their tuition from their teaching salaries. She confided to her mother that although such payment schemes were essential, they did have financial consequences for the school: “I think they will not have to remain [in the program] more than a year, and [then] they can then teach [on their own], but if they can pay $25 or $50 [toward their tuitions now] I should like it very much, and it might be well for them for they will not have so much to pay afterwards.”

Mary’s decision to enroll the students from Whiting demonstrates how she emulated Troy’s policy of instruction on credit. But furthermore, the fact that this was her decision highlighted how Mary modeled Lucretia Willard’s conduct as an administrator. In arranging the Whiting girls’ tuition payments, Mary undoubtedly thought of her own experience at Troy in the 1840s, when Lucretia Willard had lent Mary money to help pay for clothing and travel expenses, despite the Seminary’s financial troubles. Although John Willard had been reluctant to offer Mary the loan, his wife insisted, and it made all the difference for Mary. Twelve years later, when Mary told her mother to send the Whiting girls in 1855, Winchester was in a similar situation, facing financial uncertainties. Like John Willard, Robert W.

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160 Hanmer, *Wrought With Steadfast Will*, 126; See Chapter One for a discussion of instruction on credit.
161 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, and Edward Casey, October 17, 1855, CFC.
162 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, and Edward Casey, October 17, 1855, ibid.
163 Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey and Daniel Casey, December 23, 1843, ibid.
Newman, co-principal of a fledgling institution, was unwilling to extend the students credit. In a letter to Daniel Casey in December 1859, Robert complained retrospectively to his brother-in-law about Winchester’s finances. Although Robert wrote four years after Mary had agreed to educate the Whiting girls on credit, he still expressed resentment over the “bargain,” and regretted taking in “the New England girls to educate and board.” He and Mary, he acknowledged, had accepted the students “at a crisis in the market,” and Robert was certain that the school “must have lost some” money in the arrangement. Robert’s resentment towards schooling and boarding the Whiting girls suggests that, harkening back to the way that John Willard acquiesced with his wife’s determination to support Mary, Robert Newman deferred to his wife’s opinion to accept the Whiting girls, although he continued to grumble about it for at least four years. Despite Robert’s doubts and uncertainties about educating the young ladies, Mary’s judgment trumped her husband’s hesitations, even in retrospect. Possibly because of the same familial connection Lucretia felt towards Mary, Mary defied her husband’s opinion and extended financial support to the young ladies from her hometown and within her mother’s kin network. Mary imitated not only Troy’s method of instruction on credit, but also Lucretia Willard’s approach to co-administration, emboldening her to exert control over matters beyond her “designated role” when the well-being of her kin, whether real or fictive, was at stake.

Conclusion

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164 Robert W. Newman to Daniel N. Casey, December 15, 1859, CFC.
165 Ibid.
Perhaps Mary’s most salient departure from the Troy example occurred in 1858, when she gave birth to daughter, Mary B. Newman.\textsuperscript{166} The consequences of such an event were enormous. Winchester Female Seminary closed that same year, and Robert accepted a principal position that April at Hartford Academy, a state institution near Baltimore, Maryland.\textsuperscript{167} With Robert’s burgeoning professional success and Winchester no longer in operation, Mary felt comfortable taking a break from teaching and devoting herself fully to her daughter. In her letters to the Caseys, Mary rejoiced in how “little Mary” was growing and playing with her mother’s clothing. Once again, family was the chief factor in Mary’s decision-making. Furthermore, Mary reported to her family, “Mr. Newman is prospering in his school and we are pleasantly situated”.\textsuperscript{168} Mary’s distinction between Robert’s position in his school and “little Mary” and Mary’s living situation suggests that the couple was separated in 1858. It is possible that the couple faced marital issues, especially given that in 1868, the couple lived apart from one another again.

Yet, Mary’s decision to take a break from her school duties illuminates how, in many ways, Mary imitated her adoptive, “imperial mother” at Troy, Lucretia Willard. Mid-nineteenth-century domestic literature prescribed the “imperial mother” to “make home her whole world.”\textsuperscript{169} In 1858, with Winchester closed and boarders out of the home, little Mary became both the center of Mary A. Newman’s world and her principal educator. Mary had modeled herself after Lucretia Willard at Winchester by asserting her authority as a co-

\textsuperscript{166} Year: 1880; Census Place: Watertown, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: 542; Family History Film: 1254542; Page: 2C; Enumeration District: 420; Image: 0448.
\textsuperscript{168} Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, Edward Casey, Phebe N. Casey, and Louise Casey, November 30, 1859, CFC.
\textsuperscript{169} Ryan, The Empire of the Mother, 37.
principal for the wellbeing of those related to kin. In a similar fashion, Mary was willing to relinquish her position at the head of her school and take time off from teaching when she deemed it necessary for her family. Even when Mary seemingly departed from the Troy model, she emulated the love and affection Lucretia showed her over the course not just of her career, but of her life.

Previous scholarship on Troy has concentrated on how the professional network of graduates transported the school’s values nationwide.\textsuperscript{170} Although helpful for studying how schools modeled on the Troy example sprang up in the Southeastern United States, this approach does not fully explain how copies of the Troy model came about, and does not at all address the rise of variations on and departures from that model. Analyzing how Troy graduates worked within the Troy professional network overlooks the intricacies and realities of women’s experiences during the antebellum period. After all, as the case of Mary Casey demonstrates, Mary was not only Troy-educated, but also a daughter, sister, wife, and mother. She could not separate herself from these roles even as she pursued her professional path in education. However, Mary’s experience also proves that she also could not separate her call to be a teacher from her call to be a mother. In 1858, Mary joked with the Caseys how little Mary “has learned several letters and I presume would have known them all by this time if I had taken pains to have her, but she is not two years old yet and I think there is time enough.”\textsuperscript{171} Even as a mother, Mary had teaching and education on her mind—and not just related to her daughter. Mary’s next and final surviving letter discloses that in 1868, when

\textsuperscript{171} Mary A. Casey to Mary N. Casey, Daniel N. Casey, Edward Casey, Phebe N. Casey, and Louise Casey, November 30, 1859, CFC.
little Mary was ten years old, Mary returned to the teaching profession, perhaps anxious to
model for her daughter what her fictive mother, Lucretia Willard, had modeled to her.
Conclusion

On September 7, 1868, Mary Casey Newman launched her own school out her home in Peekskill, New York. In the midst of preparing her classroom, arranging rooms for boarding students, and mothering her ten-year-old daughter, Mary’s thoughts turned to her family. She paused long enough to draft a letter to her older brother, Daniel, and his wife, Carrie Needham Casey. Proud to announce her school’s inauguration, Mary beamed, “My school commences today I have a prospect of a very good school. I have the patronage of some of the most respectable and wealthiest people here.”172 Opening a school in Peekskill represented a new and significant chapter in Mary’s life. Unlike at Winchester, where Mary and Robert shared the seminary’s responsibilities, Mary oversaw her school in Peekskill without Robert’s assistance. Mary’s letter from 1858 had distinguished how Robert and Mary lived apart, and Mary’s letter to Daniel in 1868 revealed a similar situation. In 1868, Mary explained that while she and little Mary prospered in Peekskill, Robert had left New York and resided in the Baltimore area; the Newmans’ separation suggests that the couple continued to confront marital problems. At Peekskill, Mary Casey Newman commanded her home and school alone.

Although standing alone at the helm of her school, Mary continued to rely on her family, both real and fictive. Mary had been separated from her mother, Mary N. Casey, for nearly the entirety of her career, and in 1868, this distance seemed greater than ever. Mother Casey had died at the age of 79 from an illness in June of that year.173 Mary Casey Newman reminded Daniel “That aged form [of our mother] has gone from our sight and we long we

172 Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey and Caroline N. Casey, September 7, 1868, CFC.
shall follow her to the spirit land.”\textsuperscript{174} The matriarch of the Whiting homestead, who had once bound the Casey kin group together, was no longer on earth. Yet, Mary confided to Daniel, “I think of her very often.”\textsuperscript{175} Mary had not forgotten the “Dear Mother” on whom she had depended for the course of her life.

As Mary Casey Newman contemplated her mother’s life, she might well have considered the moment when, in 1830, her father, Edward Casey, died, leaving his wife widowed with five children (including ten-year-old Mary), bearing the authority of the Casey homestead on her own. In 1868, Mary Casey Newman faced strikingly similar circumstances, given her separation from her husband, Robert, and her responsibility to her own ten-year-old daughter, Mary B. Newman. In the three months after her mother’s death, Mary turned to her memories of the Casey matriarch, remembering her as a source of strength and inspiration, which helped Mary assume command of the Newman home and start her own school. However, Mary sought solace not only in the memory of her departed mother from Whiting, but also in the spirit of her fictive mother at Troy, Lucretia Willard. After all, Mary now stood at the helm of her home and her own school, just as Lucretia Willard had done. Twenty-five years after leaving Troy Female Seminary, Mary conflated the maternal influences in her life and embodied both of her mother figures. As had been the case for the course of Mary’s entire life, her call to teach originated from the “home,” and in particular, the “sure confidence” of both of her mothers.\textsuperscript{176}

Real and fictive kinship powered Mary Casey’s education and career. Chapter One demonstrates that Mary’s relationships with Troy’s founder, Emma Willard (a fictive

\textsuperscript{174} Mary A. Casey to Daniel N. Casey and Caroline N. Casey, September 7, 1868, CFC.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{176} This phrase appears in Joanna Baillie’s poem quoted in Felicia Hemans, \textit{Records of Woman: With Other Poems}, 144.
kinship) and its vice principal, Nancy Hinsdale (real kinship) brought her to the Seminary in 1841. Although initially important, these family ties ultimately proved less meaningful to Mary’s career trajectory than the new bond she formed with her principal, Lucretia Willard. Mary recognized qualities in Lucretia that reminded her of her own mother at home, as Lucretia represented the quintessential “imperial mother,” reigning over her domestic and educational empire with love and affection, just as Mary N. Casey did. Over the course of Mary’s education, Lucretia fostered an intimate and enduring bond with Mary, simulating a mother-daughter relationship. Although this kinship was fictive in nature, the tie between Mary and Lucretia was genuine enough to persist over the course of Mary’s life. The strength of the two women’s relationship not only manifested itself when Mary returned to Troy in 1849 to seek Lucretia’s counsel, but also in the ways Mary replicated Lucretia’s example in her own home and classroom after graduating from Troy.

Chapter Two posits that when Mary left Troy at the end of 1843 for a teaching position at a plantation school in North Carolina, she continued to cling to her Troy educational experience when encountering regional disparities in norms of femininity and women’s education. Within an aristocratic and slave society in the South, the “cult of womanhood” celebrated women’s purity and honor as a means to define racial and class boundaries. Education of the Southern belle served to preserve wealthy white women’s untainted and dignified femininity, and focused on preparing women for the public stage and marriage market. Confronting gender and education ideals that differed sharply from those of the North, Mary did not ascribe entirely to the conventions of her Southern community. Instead, she attempted to reconcile these regional differences in herself and in her curriculum by simultaneously adopting Southern norms and incorporating them into her Troy
educational experience. The blending of these ideals is perhaps most evident during Mary’s first examination in the South. Bringing classical elements (a Southern tradition) into the ceremony (a version of which took place at Troy), Mary performed as a high Roman priestess and converted her classroom into a “Temple,” demonstrating herself as pure and honorable, but also as a woman of power and authority. She further demonstrated her developing conception of womanhood through playing the role of “republican sister” to Louise. Desiring Louise to share in the same educational experience and authority as a teacher that she enjoyed, Mary both prepared and paid for her to attend Troy in 1847. After one year under Lucretia Willard’s tutelage, Louise joined Mary as a teacher in the South, bringing Mary’s Troy and Casey networks even closer in proximity physically, intellectually, and professionally.

Louise’s immediacy to Mary became more valuable than ever when the sisters received news of their brother Albert’s sudden death from typhus fever in January 1848. Albert, who had been a student at Middlebury College in Vermont, had inspired Mary to pursue her own path towards a higher education and attend Troy. Chapter Three traces the effects of Albert’s death on Mary, prompting her, in the spirit of the evangelical Protestantism that characterized the Second Great Awakening, to re-evaluate her professional calling in religious terms. She discerned that reaching God’s “promised land” would take the form of founding her own school. And by fulfilling her professional responsibilities to the best of her ability, Mary believed that her entire nuclear family might be rewarded and reunited with Albert in heaven. But as she discovered with norms of femininity, religious norms also differed from North to South. Displeased with the religious practices and beliefs in the South, Mary sought to remain attached to the Baptist faith instilled at home and at
Troy, isolating herself from Southern religious networks and tying herself even more firmly to her family.

Mary not only maintained religious ties to her family members as she worked to found her own school, but also professional ties, the subject of Chapter Four. The interlacing of Mary’s kin and professional networks became most palpable when Mary established her own school in 1855 in Winchester, Virginia. It was here that she met, married, and entered business with her husband, Robert W. Newman. The couple co-administered and operated the female seminary out of their home, working alongside one another in the same manner as Lucretia and John Willard at Troy. Similar to the composition of Troy, Mary and Robert employed and recruited teachers and students from within Mary’s family network. However, Winchester did not correspond entirely with the Troy education model. When Mary founded her own school with Robert, the couple integrated their own beliefs and practices into the Troy model, such as advertising Winchester as a Baptist institution rather than as non-denominationally Protestant. Mary’s choice to marry Robert Newman, a school principal, Southerner, and devout Baptist, represented the importance of each of the various pieces of her life (including Troy, her relocation to the South, and the renewal of her religiosity) on her professional trajectory. The way these various pieces culminated in the person of Robert W. Newman, who arrived at the pinnacle of Mary’s career, demonstrate how instrumental her kin, both real and fictive, and the past experiences she had had were to her success as an educator.

The story of Mary Casey Newman is significant in several ways. Scholars identify Troy Female Seminary and Emma Willard as the cornerstones of women’s higher education. Troy’s impact on Mary and the inspiration it provided her to start a school on her own is
unmistakable. Yet as historians have traced Troy’s progressive curriculum’s influence on the advancement of women’s education during the antebellum period, they have overwhelmingly focused on how Troy’s alumnae, as a professional group, broadened the antebellum “women’s sphere.” Although this argument is an important one, the case of Mary Casey Newman illuminates the women-centered approach has overlooked an essential participant in the women’s education movement: the family. For Mary Casey Newman, her relation to her kin network, whether real or fictive, trumped her membership in regional, religious, or other professional networks. No matter Mary’s surroundings, the beliefs and practices inculcated in her homes in Whiting and at Troy steered her, more than any other influence, first to seek a prominent position in the classroom, and then to help her attain and then maintain it, whether through financial, emotional, or physical support.

Mary’s correspondence ends abruptly with her 1868 letter from Peekskill. What Mary’s next generation of kin learned from their mother is left to supposition, but an 1880 census may shed some light. Twelve years after writing her final surviving letter to Daniel, Mary was 59 years old, widowed, and living with her daughter. By that year, Mary Casey Newman no longer taught and had turned her energies to “keeping home.” Despite retirement, Mary’s educational mission had not disintegrated, and the home continued to emanate the call to women to teach, because Mary B. Newman, now 22 years old, was “teaching school.”

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178 Year: 1880; Census Place: Watertown, Middlesex, Massachusetts; Roll: 542; Family History Film: 1254542; Page: 2C; Enumeration District: 420; Image: 0448.
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