

# Study in Documents

## Memories Resurrected In Context: Gender and Remembrance in Charlotte Black's Scrapbook\*

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**RÉSUMÉ** Cet article fait le point sur un spicilège compilé par Charlotte Black, une étudiante en économie ménagère qui a obtenu son diplôme du Collège agricole du Manitoba en 1925. Le spicilège, déposé aux Archives et collections spéciales de l'Université du Manitoba, comprend des cartes postales, des lettres, des invitations, des souvenirs et plusieurs photographies, ce qui permet de donner une vue d'ensemble de la vie étudiante au Collège agricole du Manitoba. Les spicilèges sont souvent dépréciés comme documents d'archives. Mais en explorant les circonstances sociales et personnelles de leurs créateurs, les spicilèges peuvent être lus d'un oeil plus critique, et l'on parvient à mieux apprécier leur pleine valeur comme documents d'archives.

**ABSTRACT** This article focuses on a scrapbook compiled by Charlotte Black, a Home Economics student who graduated from the Manitoba Agricultural College in 1925. The scrapbook, held at the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, contains postcards, letters, invitations, memorabilia, and numerous photographs; and presents a snapshot of student life at the Manitoba Agricultural College. Scrapbooks are often disparaged as archival records. But in exploring the social and personal circumstances of the creator, scrapbooks can be read more critically, and their full value as archival records better understood.

Located in the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections is a deep green scrapbook, tied with string, dated 1925. Its front cover is decorated with a cameo-and-floral design and embossed in gold with the words "My Graduation Journal." It is the scrapbook of Charlotte Scott Black. Inside is a letter from Auntie Maude of Los Angeles dated 11 May 1925. Carefully pasted onto a page entitled "Gifts and Flowers," this letter mentions a "little gift" which will "help you to carry the memories of your college life into the

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larger and fuller life you are about to enter.”<sup>1</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that the “gift” was this scrapbook, used by Charlotte to commemorate her years at the Manitoba Agricultural College, and in particular, her convocation day as a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics on 21 May 1925.

A scrapbook is in many respects very personal – a private forum for remembering. Such records, according to Catherine Hobbs, “represent a departure from the collective formality and systemic organization found in other records,” because they convey an “intimacy ... not found in other types of records.”<sup>2</sup> Like a photograph album of unknown people and places, a scrapbook’s meaning can be obscure to an outside reader. What Charlotte Black chose to preserve represents what was important to her. On closer analysis though, her scrapbook also serves to document both the society of its day and the place of its creator – a well-to-do young woman – within that society. These kinds of personal records, when studied in the context of their creation, are a rich source of primary evidence of the thought and values of a specific setting.

How are archivists to assess personal sources such as scrapbooks, diaries, account books, and intimate letters? Riva Pollard has pointed to a lack of archival literature about the appraisal of private records, while pointing out that much can be learned from Hans Booms, Terry Cook, and Helen Samuels, in that archivists must consider “the context, motivation, and functions within which and to what end records are created.”<sup>3</sup> Archivists need to view multimedia scrapbooks such as Charlotte Black’s as more than ephemera.<sup>4</sup> After all, Black’s 1925 scrapbook is but an earlier version of today’s millions of Weblogs, created by individuals like Charlotte to tell their own stories, commemorate important events and people in their lives, and express their own values and feelings.

Despite appraisal quandaries, a scrapbook warrants archival attention. With careful reading, it provides a wealth of information. Flipping through its pages, one is led back to the university days of the 1920s. While Charlotte’s memories are specific to her own upbringing and experiences, the things she has chosen to remember and to record in her scrapbook are informed by contemporary views of gender and the role of young women within that society. Such analyses serve to emphasize the importance that private records and, more specifically, the often-overlooked scrapbook, can have in understanding

1 University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Mss SC 89, Charlotte Black, “My Graduation Journal” [hereafter Black scrapbook].

2 Catherine Hobbs, “The Character of Personal Archives: Reflections on the Value of Records of Individuals,” *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001), p. 127.

3 Riva Pollard, “The Appraisal of Personal Papers: A Critical Literature Review,” *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001), p. 149.

4 Jim Burant, “Ephemera, Archives, and Another View of History,” *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995), p. 191.

a given period. In first exploring the social and personal contexts of the creator, such neglected records can be read more critically, and their full value as archival records can be better understood.

### **Social Context**

Archivists place a great deal of importance on provenance and the context of creation for the records we appraise, describe, and make available for researchers. This context, however, extends beyond the creator to the society they knew. An awareness of such wider contexts influencing the scrapbook's creation enables a more thorough reading of archival records, and furthers our understanding of these records.

Charlotte Black began her post-secondary education at the Manitoba Agricultural College shortly after the end of the First World War, a period of social turmoil in Canada: in 1919, Charlotte's last year in high school, the General Strike had erupted in Winnipeg. An increasing number of women, representing nearly fourteen percent of undergraduates in Canada by 1920, attended university.<sup>5</sup> These institutions aimed to "mould ... the character of students."<sup>6</sup> Despite social unrest, images of the liberal flapper and a new emerging youth culture, "student life in the 1920s was more frequently characterized by seriousness, morality, intimacy, and compliance with authority."<sup>7</sup>

Given the opportunity for higher education, Charlotte chose the Home Economics program of the Manitoba Agricultural College. A Royal Commission had advocated in 1902 that an Agricultural College be established in association with the University of Manitoba. This college would be composed of two departments: agriculture for young men and home economics for young women. It was not until 1910 that the Department of Household Sciences was established. Describing the courses offered in that first year, Ethel Playfair Harrison stated:

We were in love with the courses offered. We studied foods and nutrition and the art of serving meals to the staff and press. In clothing classes we learned the construction of garments, drafting patterns and making hats. Laundry was a very important subject because there were few dry-cleaning plants. We had instruction in horticulture, wood-turning and window-glazing. Through meat-cutting demonstrations, we became familiar with the various cuts of meat. Studying Shakespearean plays with Professor Sproule

5 Beth Westfall, "Learning Women: Women in the University," in Agnes Grant, Beth Westfall, and Bonnie Proven, eds., *Learning Women: A Collection of Essays* (Brandon, 1990), p. 2.

6 Paul Axelrod, *Making the Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada during the Thirties* (Montreal and Kingston, 1990), p. 12.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

was a delight, especially when we had the privilege of seeing the same plays performed by the famous Forbes-Robertson himself.<sup>8</sup>

Constrained by its original Tuxedo location, the Manitoba Agricultural College moved in 1912 to the present site of the university in the then-distant suburb of Fort Garry, on the banks of the Red River. The first diplomas in Home Economics were granted in 1913. A degree program was inaugurated in 1915 and six students graduated with Bachelors' degrees in Home Economics in 1918. Four years later, the Bachelor in Home Economics became a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics.

The Home Economics program was designed to be a "type of education designed for women's special needs."<sup>9</sup> With the advances in science and technology, some thought mothers were no longer able to provide their daughters with the knowledge necessary to run a modern household.<sup>10</sup> Home Economics education was "rooted in the basic sciences, arts and humanities and [was] designed to produce graduates capable of taking an intelligent interest in community and world affairs."<sup>11</sup> It was an education aimed to produce better wives and mothers.

Though classes for the Department of Home Economics were separate from the male-oriented agriculture courses, the students were not isolated from one another. According to Phyllis Rankin, a member of the 1929 graduating class:

The Residence [Taché Hall] was the hub of the small campus shared by Agriculture and Home Economics students in the early years. It provided living quarters, dining facilities, swimming pools, gymnasias, and an auditorium under one roof. It was at the dining room (the Oak Room) that first contact was made with the "other" faculty (the opposite sex).<sup>12</sup>

The students acquired "knowledge of the special role women play in our society as homemakers and voluntary workers in many areas of social welfare."<sup>13</sup> In a letter Charlotte pasted into her scrapbook, a psychologist explained to Charlotte that her "role ... [was] to raise humanity to better things."<sup>14</sup>

8 University of Manitoba School of Home Economics, *Home Economics 1910–1960. Fiftieth Anniversary: School of Home Economics* (Winnipeg, 1960), p. 7.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 J.M. Bumsted, *The University of Manitoba: An Illustrated History* (Winnipeg, 2001), p. 70.

13 *Home Economics, 1910–1960*, p. 22.

14 Black scrapbook.

### Individual Context: Charlotte Scott Black

Charlotte Scott Black was born in 1902 in Nelson, British Columbia, where her father, Francis Mollison Black, a Scottish immigrant, was the district manager of P. Burns & Co., a meat-packing business. Other members of her family included her mother, Margaret Elizabeth McIntosh Black, and older siblings Donald and Marjorie. Her younger sister Elinor was born in 1905, just a few days before Charlotte contracted polio. Though Charlotte did recover, it was years before she could walk again. In 1909 the family moved to Calgary. Over the winter of 1912–1913, all but Francis Black moved to Edinburgh where Donald attended George Watson's College and the girls attended the corresponding Ladies College. In 1913 Margaret Black and her younger daughters returned to Calgary, while Donald and Marjorie continued their education in Edinburgh, returning to Canada only after the First World War had begun. In 1918 Francis accepted a new job as treasurer of United Grain Growers Limited, and relocated the family to Winnipeg, where they made their home at 27 Kennedy Street. Charlotte completed her education at Kelvin High School before starting her Bachelor of Science in Home Economics at the Manitoba Agricultural College in 1920. In 1922 the United Farmers of Manitoba formed the new provincial government, and Francis became Treasurer and Minister of Telephones. Charlotte's brother Donald pursued a medical degree, then married and left for Formosa (now Taiwan) to conduct medical missionary work. Elinor too pursued a medical degree, though as a woman in medicine at that time she faced numerous hardships. She overcame those obstacles and became not only a well-respected doctor in Winnipeg but also a professor at the University of Manitoba. Details of Marjorie's life are few, though she may have moved to Baltimore.

According to *Brown and Gold*, the University of Manitoba yearbook, Charlotte's activities while at the Manitoba Agricultural College included periods as president of the Student Christian Movement Committee and as class president. She was also recognized as "a successful debater."<sup>15</sup> As well, she was a "conscientious supporter of the social and literary committees and afternoon teas."<sup>16</sup> After graduating from the Manitoba Agricultural College, Charlotte left Manitoba to teach in British Columbia. Whether through choice or circumstance, Charlotte did not follow the path expected of women of her class and remained unmarried. Instead she continued her education and pursued a professional career. In 1937, she briefly attended King's College of Social Science in London, England before beginning a Master's degree at Columbia University. In 1941 she took a position at the School of Home Economics at

15 *Brown and Gold* (Winnipeg, 1925).

16 *Managra*, vol. XVIII, no. 5 (March 1925), p. 16.

the University of Washington. When the University of British Columbia established a Department of Home Economics, Charlotte joined this faculty in Vancouver, becoming head of the Department in 1946. The Department soon became its own school and Charlotte was named director in 1951, a position she held until her retirement in 1965. She died in May 1979.

### **The Form: The Scrapbook**

The scrapbook is sometimes seen as a troublesome medium for archivists, not as understandable at a literal level as letters or as enticing as photographs, and infuriating when yet again filled with newspaper clippings of royal visits. Charlotte's scrapbook is bulging with "postcards, letters, invitations, memorabilia and photographs."<sup>17</sup> A pink gauze-like material pokes out from between the pages. Such multimedia records present frustrations for archivists. It is by no means evident how we are to describe and preserve a record that contains written text and photographs, as well as published clippings, flat (or flattened) objects, and artistic decoration, borders, and labelling.

The format of Charlotte's scrapbook, entitled "My Graduation Journal," prescribed in basic respects what the owner was expected to remember. The scrapbook was designed by Eleanora Edwards and published by The Universal Press Incorporated in Chicago. The book outlines the categories that Edwards believed appropriate for graduates (possibly from both high school and university) to remember and capture for their future "walks down memory lane." Given that the introductory poem "School Day Memories" is copyrighted 1923, it can likely be assumed that this edition of the scrapbook was created for graduates in the 1920s. The scrapbook also assumes that people and events we might want to remember risk being forgotten; the introductory poem states that "as you look over their photographs and autographs, forgotten memories are resurrected and you live your school days over again."<sup>18</sup> The pages of the scrapbook were titled and earmarked for specific items. The table of contents identifies the following categories: Name, Date and School; Class Colors and Emblem; Class Motto and Yell; Class Officers; My School; My Teachers; Graduation Program; Invitations and Social Events; Gifts and Flowers; Clubs; Athletics; Interesting Events and Frolics; Senior Prom; Autographs of My Classmates; Photographs of My Classmates; Class Day; Class Prophecy; Class Play; Class History; Class Poem; Class Song; and Miscellaneous Snapshots.

Cynthia Huff addresses the use of formatted pages for memory, stating that "the printed spaces of [her] daughter's journal tell us as much about how she's socially conditioned to construct her life and her audience ... as does the lock,

17 University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, finding aid for Mss SC 89.

18 Black scrapbook.

which protects the private space of [the] diary."<sup>19</sup> Huff demonstrates that the guidelines for what should be remembered are also constructed, both by what is deliberately marked on the page, and equally importantly, by what is not. The page titles indicate what ought to be – or at least what the diary's designer expects should be – remembered. In Huff's judgment, "space is socially and culturally constructed and reflects our ideas about how we interact within a culture and how that culture influences us."<sup>20</sup> While pages in Charlotte's scrapbook were allocated for specific items, she did not necessarily have to abide by these limitations. While many of the pages were used as intended, Charlotte has taken the liberty of not using some pages, like the "Athletics" and "Prom" pages. She also rearranged some pages, and for others, disregarded the labels.

In contrast to a diary, which is mainly textual, Charlotte's, like many scrapbooks, includes a variety of media. While a diary might provide personal detailed descriptions of events, relationships and ideas, the contents of a scrapbook could be more accurately described as memory triggers. Items may be pasted into the scrapbook, but little additional information is provided about the reaction to an event or the importance of a friendship. The creator will fully understand, but for others the message may not be as clear. Deborah Chambers notes that the purpose of creating family albums is to provide "a record and celebration of children growing up, weddings, friends, relatives, holidays, picnics, Christmas, activities in the garden and scenes around the house."<sup>21</sup> Specific details, however, are much more significant for the creator of the album or scrapbook than for others unable to appreciate what is intended to be remembered. Objects such as invitations, postcards, name tags, photographs, and letters are pasted onto the blank pages of a book as triggers that hold significant meaning for the person pasting them. Although their meanings may be ambiguous to others, there is still potential for alternative readings. The textual record comprises the fragments the author has chosen to include, as well as comments and "autographs" that others have been asked to provide. Some items are more explicit than others. Some would require more knowledge about the author to comprehend them fully; without proper context, any archival significance of an image or an entire scrapbook may be lost.

Scrapbooks assemble memory triggers. In this respect they could be compared to an archival exhibit: generally an archivist cannot show an entire col-

19 Cynthia Huff, "Textual Boundaries: Space in Nineteenth-Century Women's Manuscript Diaries," in Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia Huff, eds., *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries* (Amherst, MA, 1996), p. 123.

20 Ibid.

21 Deborah Chambers, "Family as Place: Family Photograph Albums and the Domestication of Public and Private Space," in Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (New York, 2003), p. 109.

lection. Rather, a few selected examples that best highlight whatever point the archivist wishes to convey are displayed. Scrapbooks are prepared by an individual or group of individuals, and present what they wish to be conveyed. It may be that an enormous amount of effort, over a period of time, went into the creation of this record, perhaps more so than for most records found in archives. Unlike many records that can have a more literal meaning, the scrapbooks are created not only to present information but also for the specific purpose of aiding memory. For this reason, it is extremely important in understanding the scrapbook as an archival record, to understand the context of its creation. While all these factors can create problems for archivists, they also constitute a record conveying a potentially valuable and unique history.

### **The Content**

Graduation Day is the main event that Charlotte's scrapbook is meant to commemorate. Obviously she felt that this was a day to be remembered. It was indeed a milestone for Charlotte, as it is in any graduate's life. Yet she felt no need to record her impressions or thoughts of the event in the scrapbook, though they may have been subtly implied in her selections for the scrapbook. While many of the memories in the scrapbook extend beyond the specific day, much is included about "The Day" itself. Charlotte has chosen to remember her graduation by including the invitations for the special events that occurred that day. They indicate that the Faculty Women's Association sponsored a luncheon at the Fort Garry Hotel the day before convocation. Graduation Day, 21 May 1925, began with the convocation ceremony at the Walker Theatre at ten o'clock. Here, Charlotte and her classmates received their degrees. Graduation gowns were provided, and "The College B.S.A. hoods [were] on hand for the use of the graduates in agriculture. There [was] one B. Sc. (H.E.) hood for the girls."<sup>22</sup> Following the conferring of the degrees, the Alumni Association held a Convocation Luncheon at the Fort Garry Hotel. Afterwards, the graduates were invited by Lieutenant-Governor and Lady Aikins to Government House for a reception. Graduation day culminated with a *Conversazione* (a social gathering) at the Royal Alexandra Hotel, hosted by the University of Manitoba Students' Union. It was a day of pomp and circumstance, a day one would want to remember. The scrapbook would help with that memory.

Photographs of Charlotte's graduation day emphasize the clothing that she wore. Charlotte was, after all, a Home Economics graduate whose courses had focused on foods and clothing. As a well-to-do young woman, emphasis could be placed on fashion rather than utility. Indeed, "Clothing courses [were] designed to develop an appreciation for the socio-economic signifi-

22 Black scrapbook.



cance of clothing, a creative outlook, stressing distinctiveness and individual becomingness, and discrimination in the application of construction principles appropriate to fabric and design."<sup>23</sup> Charlotte has used a number of media to commemorate fashion and fashion-related skills in the scrapbook. She has included a selection of her stitching samples; these are labelled as keepsakes from her first year at College. She has also inserted little pieces of paper that are not pasted into the scrapbook, about the costs of the dresses she made throughout her program. Her graduation dress came to a grand total of \$18.91,<sup>24</sup> a significant amount when the average weekly salary in 1925 was \$18.60 for a production worker, and \$36.00 for supervisory and office employees.<sup>25</sup> In her fourth year, she made a suit for \$18.53. The slips of paper for dresses made in third year indicate a wool dress was made at a cost of \$14.02 and a silk dress at a cost of \$17.53. Dress-making appears to be an activity that Charlotte felt was worth remembering. As Veronica Strong-Boag has indicated, women were "routinely socialized to regard their own appearance as the key to emotional satisfaction and social standing."<sup>26</sup> While she has included photographs of a cooking class and a nutrition class (as well as one of her sewing class), she chose not to include recipes or any other items that might indicate a desire to recall food-related classes and what she learned in them.

Charlotte's emphasis on dress is reflected in other photographs inserted into the scrapbook, as well as in some pictures found in a related photo collection at the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections. A photograph, J. Robert Davison affirms, is "an historical document in its own right and, like every other historical document, it is meant to be read, all ten thousand words of it, with at least the same care and attention to detail as a letter, a diary, a manuscript or a book – line by line and word by word."<sup>27</sup> Similarly, archival photography specialist Joan Schwartz has observed: "Viewed as visual documents, created in the course of administrative and socio-cultural activity, evidence of actions and transactions, and an integral part of the organic accumulation of archives, both personal and private photographs can

23 *Home Economics, 1910-1960*, p. 21.

24 For the dress, she spent \$17.33 for the satin, \$0.35 for the pattern, \$0.38 for the thread, \$0.25 for the bias tape, and \$0.60 for the ribbon. As well she made a slip for \$3.85: \$3.39 for the fugi [*sic*], \$0.10 for the lace, \$0.24 for the hemstitching and \$0.12 for the ribbon.

25 "Series E41-48: Annual earnings in manufacturing industries, production and other workers, by sex, Canada, 1905, 1910 and 1917 to 1975," in F. H. Leacy, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada*, available at <[http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/section/E41\\_48.csv](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/section/E41_48.csv)> (accessed 16 November 2005).

26 Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto, 1988), p. 86.

27 J. Robert Davison, "Turning a Blind Eye: The Historian's Use of Photographs," *B.C. Studies* 52 (Winter 1981-1982), p. 16.

be subjected to contextual analysis of their origins.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, “we must rethink the nature, production, and purpose of photographs as documents in order to achieve a contextual understanding of their use by ... individuals to ... shape collective memory, establish symbolic space, and define concepts of self and the cultural Other.”<sup>29</sup> Within the context of the scrapbook, the photographs become even more meaningful.

The annotations on the photographs Charlotte has included further illustrate her attention to dress and fashion. One of the photographs she has inserted into the scrapbook was taken in the summer of 1920. The comment on the back states: “Elinor & I on the bank of the Assiniboine [*sic*] at the Foot of Kennedy St. Summer of 1920. My H.E. graduation dress ...”<sup>30</sup> It would seem reasonable to assume she has inserted this photograph into the scrapbook as a means of remembering the dress she wore for her graduation, presumably made in her high school home economics class for her high school graduation. The photo collection also includes photographs of the dress she made for her university graduation. One of the photographs includes a typed description: “Charlotte S. Black – Spring 1925 – Graduation dress (B. Sc. H. Ec.) made in class – personally designed – white crepe-backed satin. Photographs taken by Professor Stoughton (No steam irons then).”<sup>31</sup> It seems reasonable to conclude this description was added later, directed to an audience beyond Charlotte herself, and possibly even added by someone else. Even so, it emphasizes the importance of this dress as worthy of being remembered, now not only by Charlotte, but by others as well.

One last photograph that emphasizes dress is found in the photo collection. The description on the reverse side states: “Elinor and I – winter of 21. I in dress Marj. brot [*sic*] from Edinburgh, made over for college dances!”<sup>32</sup> While stressing fashion, this also documents the social aspect of Charlotte’s university life.

Strong-Boag states that “Dances, teas and public lectures mingled the sexes for many purposes and provided the highlight of countless lives.”<sup>33</sup> These are indeed some of the events that Charlotte has chosen to remember. While many of the occasions Charlotte commemorates were limited to women, like the Lady’s Faculty Entertainment, identified as the Winnipeg Skating Club Carnival, Charlotte also chose to remember the Fourth Year’s Valentine Entertainment Party, held on 30 January 1925.

28 Joan Schwartz, “‘We make our tools and our tools make us’: Lessons from Photographs for the Practice, Politics, and Poetics of Diplomats,” *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995), p. 59.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

30 Black scrapbook.

31 University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Charlotte Black, Photo Collection, PC 99, Box 1, Fd. 3, #2.

32 Black, UMA, Mss SC 89, PC 99, Box 1, Fd. 1, #1.

33 Strong-Boag, *New Day Recalled*, p. 26.



Charlotte S. Black - Spring 1925-  
Graduation dress (B.Sc.H•Ec.) made  
in class - personally designed - white  
crepe-backed satin.  
Photographs taken by Professor Stoughton  
(No steam irons then)



*“Elinor and I – winter of 21. I in dress Marj. brot [sic] from Edinburgh, made over for college dances!” PC 99, Box 1, Fd. 1, #1.*

To commemorate this Valentine's event, Charlotte has pasted in the "Interesting Events and Frolics" section of the scrapbook a large cardboard heart with arrows pointing to two small photographs: the one is Charlotte, the other an unidentified man, possibly Agriculture student J. Gordon Fletcher, who graduated the same year as Charlotte.<sup>34</sup> Many questions spring to mind while looking at this page: Is there a reason she has chosen not to identify this man? Why did she go to the effort to decorate this page to such an extent?<sup>35</sup> For most pages she has just pasted invitations, name tags, ticket stubs. Was she trying to emphasize this event over others? This page seems particularly important in light of its decoration and colour (one of few pages where there is any sign of colour), yet the identity of the man remains uncertain. With only the scrapbook as guide, we can only speculate about her reasons: possibly his identity was not very important; perhaps the event and its happy memories were more important than the actual individual and it was the event, not the person, she wanted to remember; or, more likely, it may be she felt she would never forget his name. Notably, apart from group photographs including both male and female students, it is the only photograph of a male in the scrapbook.

For many women, university life was a way to meet a future husband. One father, quoted in the 15 November 1927 issue of *Maclean's*, stated: "They say you know that when a girl finishes that course [i.e., household science], she gets her M.R.S."<sup>36</sup> The aim of a home economics education was "to help families live successfully and happily and to accept their social and civic responsibilities."<sup>37</sup>

In fact, the very foundation of the home economic education at the Manitoba Agricultural College was to educate women "to make them more expert and competent helpmates."<sup>38</sup> The Report of the Agricultural College Commission 1902, commissioned by Premier Roblin to consider the founding of an agricultural college, stated:

Society depends for its character upon the home, and the home for its quality and power upon the competence and culture of women who have charge of it. And when one considers the educative power of the home and its environment and of the homemakers upon the earliest years of youthful life, and when one considers how dependent

34 This was determined by comparing the male students with the Valentine's photograph.

35 Another possible explanation for this page is that these hearts were prepared by a committee for the Valentine's event. While this would mean that Charlotte herself did not go to the extra effort to commemorate this event, she has still chosen to include it in the scrapbook. Further investigation into Charlotte's diaries, located at the University of British Columbia Archives, may provide an answer to this, and other questions.

36 Quoted in Strong-Boag, *New Day Recalled*, p. 25.

37 Johanna Gudrun Wilson, *A History of Home Economics Education in Manitoba, 1826-1966* (M.E. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1966), Introduction.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

upon these are the men who support such homes for their comfort and efficiency in working, the best possible opportunity for receiving education and training which will fit the women for the performance of those duties which may and undoubtedly will devolve them, should be given by the Province.<sup>39</sup>

Compared to the information Charlotte has chosen to remember about her female home economic classmates, there is very little about the male students in the Agricultural Department. While there are pages and pages of “autographs” and comments from Charlotte’s female colleagues, very few male classmates wrote much, if anything. The main record of any association with the male counterparts at the College is in the photographs Charlotte has chosen to include in the scrapbook.

One such photograph is the formal photograph of the entire 1925 class, taken in their second year. Another photograph is of the same class, but in their first year. The more informal photographs are more revealing. One photograph shows the male and female students posing outside a building. Charlotte in this instance has chosen not to identify the location or the people.

Some of these photographs show group activities that included both male and female students. One photograph, with the caption “Us 25 kids and our guests,” dated February 1924, shows the students dressed in costumes, perhaps for a stunt night. It also shows how gender restrictions could be flexible for certain occasions: Charlotte’s skirts would usually have been longer. While commemorating these events through photographs, little information is provided about the actual events and those who attended. The same can be said about the two photographs showing the entire class out in the woods for dinner. The individuals are not identified, only that the event was “The whole class, Nov. 25.”<sup>40</sup> Were these photographs included because they were events that involved the agricultural students or were they happy memories with her female classmates that just happened to include male classmates as well?

One of the most explicit ways Charlotte has chosen to remember her fellow students is through the inclusion of biographical sketches that appeared in the March 1925 edition of *Managra*, a journal published by the students of the Manitoba Agricultural College. All the home economics and agricultural students were described. Charlotte has taken these double sided-pages, and glued them to the scrapbook in such a way to allow both the front and the reverse sides to be read. Thus, Charlotte has preserved for memory specific details about all her classmates, including herself. She has also chosen to include the biographical sketches of all the degree graduates from the Manitoba Agricultural College, not just her female classmates. An interesting occurrence to note, however, is the last page of the male student biographies. This page

39 Ibid.

40 Black scrapbook.



*Photograph from scrapbook. Second Year. Mss SC 89.*

included three biographical sketches on one page, and Charlotte has chosen to cut these and paste them into the scrapbook in a different order. What was her reason for doing this? The student she placed at the bottom was J. Gordon Fletcher, who was possibly the student from the Valentine's page. Only speculation links the two acts (which may be unrelated, but will we ever know?). Regardless, these biographies also serve to commemorate Charlotte's classmates and friends from the College.

Strong-Boag observes that women in the 1920s had "a network of female associations in which girls from their earliest moments would move."<sup>41</sup> These female associations are very apparent in Charlotte's scrapbook. She wanted to remember them. The closeness of her friendships is evident in some of the comments written by classmates. One classmate, Marjorie Peto, wrote: "Let not distance sever your friendships here, especially the one rooted in room 321. Your loving wife, Pete."<sup>42</sup> Somewhat cryptic to us, this comment would have evoked specific memories for Charlotte, memories now lost. Regardless of that, a close friendship is evident, part of the network of female associations Strong-Boag has shown as important to women at this time.

41 Strong-Boag, *New Day Recalled*, p. 9.

42 Black scrapbook.



*Photograph from photograph pages inserted at back of scrapbook. "Pete and Charlotte." Mss SC 89.*

Remembering the group collectively, as well as individually, was also important to Charlotte. She has included numerous group photographs. As well, however, her classmates are commemorated individually through a combination of photographs, autographs, and written comments from friends. On many of the "Autographs of Classmates" pages, where classmates have signed their names, Charlotte has also pasted photographs identifying the individuals portrayed. Among the pages of photographs inserted at the back of the scrapbook, Charlotte has taken great care in putting together a page showing, one would assume, her closest classmates from her third year: Rhea, "Pete,"





*Photograph from scrapbook. Charlotte's Classmates. Mss SC 89.*

“Kirk,” “Strat,” Dorothy, and Jen. Other photographs depict a strong sense of camaraderie between the girls, something not seen in the photographs of the male students. Charlotte wanted to remember the friendships she made at the Manitoba Agricultural College, and has done so through the use of numerous photographs and “autographs.” Such a commemoration serves to highlight the importance of female associations to Charlotte and her society.

### **Conclusion**

Charlotte's scrapbook provides only a glimpse of university life in the 1920s. Much is excluded. This reflects not only personal choice, but also, to a certain extent, the society in which Charlotte lived. Though she did not receive the scrapbook until graduation, it houses an accumulation of items Charlotte had collected over a number of years. Different means are used to remember different things: name tags and written descriptions for pre-graduation day events; invitations for Graduation Day; photographs, biographical sketches, and written comments from classmates. The fact that Charlotte had saved some of these prior to receiving the scrapbook indicates a desire to remember these events, regardless of the scrapbook. Perhaps she intended to purchase her own at some point. Thus, she had intended to remember these things in some way or another, so it could be considered serendipitous that she received the scrapbook as a gift. Its form is a combination of prescribed categories and free choice in deciding what to include. Charlotte could choose what was



*Photograph from photograph pages inserted at back of scrapbook. "Us 25 Kids and our guests – February '24." Mss SC 89.*



*Photograph from photograph pages inserted at back of scrapbook. "Classes '23 and '25." Mss SC 89.*

included, but she operated largely within the confines of the book, guided by what the pages said she ought to incorporate. In Charlotte's scrapbook, we are able to identify the importance of dress, the value of a female network of friends, and the ambiguity of male–female relationships.

One thing seems certain: there is a growing call within the profession (and

from outside) for archivists in a postmodern era to listen more attentively to the voices of the marginalized, to those not connected with or representing powerful institutions and interests, to those who are not famous or well-known. By embracing the postmodernist approach to history and archives, it is possible "to emphasize the diversity of human experience by recovering marginalized voices."<sup>43</sup> Their lives, feelings, and stories also have value and should constitute a greater part of archival holdings. While these values may not be as apparent – or well-articulated by the archival profession – in traditional text-based sources, these stories exist and await a thorough contextualized reading by archivists and other researchers.

43 Terry Cook, "Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives," *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001), p. 17.

