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Malcolm MacLoed, *A Bridge Built Halfway: A History of Memorial University College, 1925-1950*, Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990. pp. 376 + xxx. ISBN 0-7735-0762-2. \$35.95.

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[See table of contents](#)

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Book Reviews



Malcolm MacLeod

A Bridge Built Halfway: A History of Memorial University College, 1925-1950, Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990. pp. 376 + xxx. ISBN 0-7735-0762-2. \$35.95.

This fine example of university history is a study of Memorial's first twenty-five years. Established as a tribute to Newfoundlanders who died in WWI, Memorial was a small two-year college during most of the period covered by MacLeod. Hence the book's title, taken from a simile used by Memorial's first President: "A two-year college is, for some of its graduates at any rate, like a bridge half-way across a river." That bridge was completed only after Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949.

The quarter century examined in the book was a very difficult period in Newfoundland history. The college barely survived; indeed, only funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York enabled it to remain in operation. Today, Memorial is the largest university in Atlantic Canada. MacLeod, however, does not revel in Memorial's success. His goal in recounting the university's early history is to draw out the ways in which that history reflected Newfoundland's society and economy.

The book's great strength is its focus on students. MacLeod contacted about 15% of the College's graduates. Material from this source greatly enhances the text, especially in the chapters profiling Memorial students, college life, school spirit, and graduates' careers.

MacLeod's other major preoccupation is with the island's ties to Canada. Through discussions of the curriculum, the organization of college life, and faculty training (two-thirds of the faculty were educated in Canadian universities), he shows that even before 1949 Memorial was a well-integrated part of the Canadian college system.

Given the book's subject and MacLeod's approach, it is not too surprising to find little extended discussion of science or of research. To the basic curriculum, we are told, were added courses

in biology (1926), geology (1930), pre-engineering (1931), household science (1933), and pre-agriculture (1937). The emphasis at the college was on instruction, so faculty had little time for research. What was done tended to concentrate on Newfoundland topics, especially on marine studies and the fishery. Those interested in the science careers of pre-confederation Newfoundlanders can find more information in an article by MacLeod in *Early Science in Newfoundland and Labrador* (Avalon Chapter of Sigma Xi, St. John's, Newfoundland, 1987), edited by Donald H. Steele.

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