

# In Search of Ruth Home

## The Untold History of Museum Education at the Royal Ontario Museum

Kate Zankowicz

Volume 107, numéro 1, spring 2015

Women and Education

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1050679ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050679ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (imprimé)

2371-4654 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Zankowicz, K. (2015). In Search of Ruth Home: The Untold History of Museum Education at the Royal Ontario Museum. *Ontario History*, 107(1), 60–87. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050679ar>

### Résumé de l'article

Ruth Home a développé le département éducatif du Musée royal de l'Ontario de 1928 à 1945. Elle a été un personnage très important de l'histoire du musée et, plus généralement, de l'histoire de la fonction éducative des musées de la province. Elle a joué un rôle majeur dans l'augmentation du public qui les fréquentait par le développement de programmes orientés vers ce qui était considéré alors comme intérêts féminins, et en attirant au musée des écoliers et leurs professeurs. Cet article analyse la carrière de Home pour mieux comprendre la distinction qui se faisait entre les rôles masculins et féminins dans la pédagogie des musées, et pour explorer les origines des nombreux programmes que nous associons aujourd'hui à la fonction pédagogique des musées.



# IN SEARCH OF RUTH HOME

## The Untold History of Museum Education at the Royal Ontario Museum

by Kate Zankowicz

**I**t took me years to find a photo of her. Buried in the archives of the Royal Ontario Museum, it required the sleuthing of a very dedicated technician who used some miraculous search term I could never have thought of to find it. Ruth M. Home developed the education department at the Royal Ontario Museum from 1928-1945. She was an important figure in the history of the museum, and more broadly, in the history of museum-based education in the province. She played a major role in broadening museum audiences and developed pro-

gramming that was geared towards what were then considered women's interests and worked to connect the museum to schoolchildren and teachers.

To my knowledge, this is the only photo of Home that is held at the ROM archives. Despite the fact that she founded most of the educational programs we take for granted today at the ROM, her name is virtually unknown in the museum's institutional history.<sup>1</sup>

Formed by the amalgamation of University of Toronto museums in 1914, the ROM was a conglomeration of five

<sup>1</sup> There are in fact two theses written that have considered Home's career, although neither have considered the gendered dimensions of museum education. The author is indebted to the work of Riley Moynes and Eileen Mak for their initial forays into the archives. See Riley Moynes's "Teachers and Pteranodons: The Origins and Development of the Education Department of the Royal Ontario Museum, 1914-1974" (Doctor of Education Degree, University of Toronto, 1978), as well as Eileen Mak's "Patterns of Change, Sources of Influence: A Historical Study of the Canadian Museum and the Middle Class, 1850-1950," (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1996). Home is also mentioned briefly in Lovat Dickson's *Museum Makers: The Story of the Royal Ontario Museum*. (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum).

*Opposite page: The only photo of Ruth Home held at the Royal Ontario Museum Archives, here pictured with Homer A. Thompson at a ROM archaeological dig in Fort Ste. Marie, 1941, ROM2015\_14428\_1.*

museums, devoted to the double-pronged focus of “science and industry”: Archaeology, Geology, Mineralogy, Natural History (later Zoology) and Palaeontology.<sup>2</sup> The museum was governed and funded jointly by the province and the University as well as from private donations. Perhaps due to its academic ties, the ROM was always at

odds with itself: was it a “museum for the university” or a “museum for the people of Ontario”? The women who developed and found the funding for museum education programming were at the forefront of this identity conflict.

The voices that dominate the history of the Royal Ontario Museum tend to be those of Charles Trick Currelly and other directors. Each of the five museums was appointed its own curator, many of

## Abstract

Ruth Home developed the education department at the Royal Ontario Museum from 1928-1945. She was an important figure in the history of the museum, and more broadly, in the history of museum-based education in the province. She played a major role in expanding museum audiences and developed programming that was geared towards what were then considered women's interests and worked to connect the museum to schoolchildren and teachers. This paper analyses Home's career as a means of offering insight into the early gendered dynamics of museum education and exploring the origins of many of the programs we currently associate with museum education today.

**Résumé:** Ruth Home a développé le département éducatif du Musée royal de l'Ontario de 1928 à 1945. Elle a été un personnage très important de l'histoire du musée et, plus généralement, de l'histoire de la fonction éducative des musées de la province. Elle a joué un rôle majeur dans l'augmentation du public qui les fréquentait par le développement de programmes orientés vers ce qui était considéré alors comme intérêts féminins, et en attirant au musée des écoliers et leurs professeurs. Cet article analyse la carrière de Home pour mieux comprendre la distinction qui se faisait entre les rôles masculins et féminins dans la pédagogie des musées, et pour explorer les origines des nombreux programmes que nous associons aujourd'hui à la fonction pédagogique des musées.

whom sat on the committee of directors.<sup>3</sup> Currelly was the curator of the Museum of Archaeology from 1914 to 1946, and was given the first full-time yearly salary of \$1,000, the only paid director.<sup>4</sup> Although Currelly was Director of the Archeological Museum of the ROM (called the Royal Ontario Museum of Archeology or ROMA) he is often referred to as the “man who collected for Canada.” His autobiography, *I Brought the Ages Home*,

<sup>2</sup> See Norma E. Heakes, “Education at the Royal Ontario Museum, 1914-1975” (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1975), 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> Directors were associated with the University of Toronto as professors, with the exception of Charles Trick Currelly. They included Dr. Coleman, Dr. Walker, Dr. Bensley, Dr. Parks, Dr. Moore and Prof Dymond. See RG 25, Committee of Directors records description, ROMLA.

<sup>4</sup> The other museum men were university professors and so took the museum work on as part of their professorship. See bylaw 2 Nov 26 1912, SC 73, Box 3, Dorothea Hecken collection, ROMLA.

functions as a “founding father” myth for the museum.<sup>5</sup> The collections Currelly was able to acquire did not, however, come with interpretation or interpreter. Museum education as we understand it today did not receive institutional support in the beginning and instead relied on the passion and commitment of individual educators, many of whom, like Ruth Home, had to work to legitimize their positions within a gendered and hierarchical institution.

This paper consults archived annual reports, and committee minutes at the Royal Ontario Museum Library and Archives (ROMLA) as well as press coverage of Home’s educational work and curriculum articles and offers us glimpses of the struggles women faced in museums. Home’s career gives us a better understanding of how museum education was inscribed by issues of gender and too, the evolution of education in museums, places that Home thought should exist to “give pleasure, to amuse and entertain in the best tradition of entertainment.”<sup>6</sup> Her museum education career also tells us about the conflicting notions of who counted as the ‘public’ at the Royal Ontario Museum during this time.

This analysis will explore the feminization of museum education at the ROM and the ensuing tensions between

the museum directors and Home, each of whom had competing visions about who the museum was for. Home’s struggles were perhaps symptomatic of much broader shifts within the museum field, as education departments, largely run by women both paid and unpaid, were started up and called upon to develop programming that brought more communities to their institutions. Directors, who in the case of the ROM, were associated with the University of Toronto, had to re-think the purposes of their collections and consider a popular audience.

Home developed the education department at the Royal Ontario Museum at a time when museum education was just starting to become defined; she was the second museum “instructress” who was hired to work with schools and communities.<sup>7</sup> She founded many of the educational initiatives for which the museum eventually became known: Open Evenings, public lectures and a film series, outreach programs to schools across Ontario, Museum Days, extra-curricular activities such as Saturday Morning Club [SMC] and Summer Club as well as a Children’s Room underneath the Rotunda staircase. These initiatives were all manifestations of her educational vision to make the museum more useful for communities in Toronto and Ontario.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Trick Currelly, *I Brought the Ages Home*, (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1958]).

<sup>6</sup> See Dorothy Duncan’s “Remembering Ruth Home” in *Past Reflections: Museum Clippings, 1954-1994, Selected Articles from the Ontario Historical Society’s Museums Committee* (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1994), 12.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret MacLean was the first museum educator, a woman who began guiding groups around the museum without directorial consent possibly as early as 1915. See Gertrude Pringle’s “How Margaret MacLean Won A Niche for Herself in a Museum, by Energy, Initiative and Persistence” in Women and their Work section, *Maclean’s Magazine*, May 15, 1923, 68.

## Feminization of Museum Education as Feminism?

The difficulty of defining women's work in museums stems from the confusion of terms within women's history in general. Scholars have often aligned women's social and cultural activism as exemplary of acts of maternal feminism, a notion that claimed that "women's special role as mother [gave] her the duty and the right to participate in the public sphere." To characterize all women's work in museums as maternal feminist, however, harms the specificity of women's ideological positions within different cultural institutions, and circumscribes how they themselves interpreted their activities.<sup>8</sup> While some women who worked in

museums may have seen themselves as the 'mothers' of all children by virtue of their class privilege, women's work in education involved multiple generations and often diverse groups of women in terms of age and class background.<sup>9</sup> Women, like Ruth Home, who had had a college experience, may have identified with the common culture and a feeling of social responsibility that was imbricated within their collegiate experience as young women.<sup>10</sup> Historians who have examined Toronto's history of co-education at the undergraduate level, such as Sara Burke, have noted how concepts of femininity were fluid and categories of acceptable gendered behaviour were reworked and redefined within the privileged and masculinized spaces of the university.<sup>11</sup> This insight could also be

<sup>8</sup> See Linda Kealy's Introduction of *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada 1880s-1920s* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1979), 7. 'Feminism', a term used by the 1890s, refers to "a perspective that recognizes the right of women not only to an increased public role, but also to define themselves autonomously." See also Carol L Bacchi's "First wave feminism in Canada: The Ideas of English Canadian Suffragettes, 1877-1918," in *Women's Studies International Forum* 5:6 (1982), 575-83 to describe reform suffragists' attitudes towards women's domestic roles and to distinguish them from 'feminists' who argued for women's autonomy (p. 581). For more current discussions about 'first wave' feminisms see the introduction to *Documenting First Wave Feminism* ed. Nancy M. Forestell and Maureen Moynagh (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> For more on upper class women and social 'mothering,' see Molly Ladd Taylor's "Defining Maternalism in U.S. History," *Journal of Women's History* 5:2 (Fall 1993), 113.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Diana Pedersen's "'The Call to Service': The YWCA and the Canadian College Woman, 1886-1920" in Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid eds., *The Social History of Youth, University and Canadian Society*, (Kingston, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1989), 187-215. For more about University of Toronto female graduates and their emphasis on volunteer service and social reform, particularly in the context of the Canadian settlement house movement and the creation of social work as a profession, see for example Cathy James's "A Passion for Service: Edith Elwood and the Social Character of Reform" in Elizabeth Smyth and Paula Bourne, eds., *Women Teaching, Women Learning: Historical Perspectives* (Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education, 2006), 105-130, here 114. As Catherine Gidney has demonstrated in her work on professional women on Victoria University Campus in the early twentieth century, women's work in education can be seen as an intersection of maternal feminism and their professional lives: "space they created for themselves and for other women." See Gidney, "Feminist Ideals and Everyday Life: Professional Women's Feminism at Victoria College, University of Toronto, 1900-40," in Catherine Carstairs and Nancy Janovicek, eds., *Feminist History in Canada: New Essays on Women, Gender, Work and Nation*, ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 98.

<sup>11</sup> See Sara Burke's "New Women and the Old Romans: Co-education at the University of Toronto, 1884-1895" in Sara Z Burke and Patrice Milewski eds., *Transitions in Schooling: Readings in Canadian His-*



brought to bear on women who implemented educational programming in Toronto's museums and galleries, who often had connections to academia by virtue of their museum work, their own scholarly work, or from their personal lives.

Scholars such as Nancy F. Cott also have questioned the limitations of a term like 'social feminism,' particularly because it presumes that all action that involves women and 'women's interests' as *de facto* feminist, and does not reflect the varied range of women's political and social activities.<sup>12</sup> For Ruth Home, the professionalization of museum work, an ideological tenet now associated with second-wave feminism, led to a series of workshops that she developed for museum workers in her later years.<sup>13</sup> However, not all women working in museums may have shared the need to professionalize. Museum educators did not necessarily all occupy the same social position in terms of their salary and the frequency of their employment; the young college students enlisted as arts instructors at the Art Gallery of Toronto for

example, may not have felt the need to legitimize their presence in the gallery in quite the same way as Home, who actively created and managed educational programs.

The challenge of labelling women's action within museums, galleries and exhibitions is also related to periodization. Does maternal feminism necessarily apply to the women of the 1930s, '40s and '50s? Archival research suggests that women who worked at the ROM were equally influenced by internationalism during the interwar era and beyond. Home and her assistant, Ella Martin, wrote articles that aligned the ideals of internationalism and global cooperation with museum education in the post-World War II era. Women who worked within museums and galleries during the 1930s and '40s were affected by internationalist rhetoric, what Home's teaching colleague Lillian Payne referred to as teaching students to become "more internationally minded."<sup>14</sup> This notion of museum education was also exemplified by arts programming that

---

*tory of Education* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 166-79, particularly 177.

<sup>12</sup> Home for instance worked with John Alford, the head of Toronto's first fine arts department at the University of Toronto, and correspondence exists with other university professors, who were also directors, like T.I. McIlwraith. For more on Alford, see E. Lisa Panayotidis's "The Department of Fine Art at the University of Toronto, 1926-1945: Institutionalizing the 'Culture of the Aesthetic'" in *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* 25 (2004), 100-122.

<sup>13</sup> The first museum workshop was held at the Jordan Museum of the Twenty, 14-16 May 1954. See Dorothy Duncan's "Remembering Ruth Home" in *Past Reflections: Museum Clippings, 1954-1994, Selected Articles from the Ontario Historical Society's Museums Committee* (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1994), 12. For more on the connections between professionalizing and feminism, see Nancy Cott's 1989 article "What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism;' or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History" in *The Journal of American History* 76:3 (December 1989), 809-829, here 826. Cott rightly points out that anti-suffrage leagues united in the name of 'women's needs' and were certainly not feminist.

<sup>14</sup> Payne taught an average of four classes a day for 21 years until her death in 1949. This made for 450,000 students during her career, see *Toronto Telegram*, February 16 1949. According to the Star this number was 350,000. See "Has Taught 350,000 Pupils in 14 Years at Museum: Miss Lillian Payne is Only Teacher of Her Kind in Canada," *Star Weekly*, September 26, 1942. From "Payne" Biography vertical file, Toronto District School Board Archives.

would ensure the ‘civilizing’ of children who could be groomed to be peace-loving, culturally tolerant adults.<sup>15</sup> While little has been written about Canadian feminism in mid-century and its connections to internationalism, museum education was developing at a time when ideas of interconnectivity and global human rights issues were front-of-mind in society as a whole. While women who believed in internationalist tenets were diverse in their political orientations, as it has been particularly proven in an American context, internationalism had reverberations in museum education in Ontario that have seldom been analyzed.<sup>16</sup>

As Home’s experience at the ROM demonstrates, museums were also a complex space in which to exercise female autonomy; often they had institutional structures that privileged those who obeyed hierarchical power relations within existing organizational structures. As other work within the field of gender and education history has made clear, women have consistently shaped and changed educational practices from within educational arenas that were so-

cially construed as locations of white male privilege.<sup>17</sup>

### Home’s History

Ruth Home (1901-1965) was born in Welland, Ontario, to Thomas and Mabel Home. She read English and History for her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto and received a Masters in Political Science in 1924, a considerable feat for a female student at the University of Toronto. She then began her career as head librarian at the High Park Library in Toronto.<sup>18</sup> As an undergraduate student at University College she was actively involved in the dramatic arts, and acted in plays at Hart House Theatre.<sup>19</sup> She, along with her sister Margaret, was also active in the University Women’s Club.<sup>20</sup> When the Royal Ontario Museum hired Ruth Home to be what was sometimes called a “lecturer” or an “instructress,” she was 27 years old and the museum educator profession was a relatively new category of employment. For her part, Home had already held a teaching job at Smith College in Northampton MA, where she was enrolled for her PhD, which she did not

<sup>15</sup> See for example Norah McCullough, arts educator at the Art Gallery of Toronto’s piece “Education for Peace” in *The Canadian Forum* (September 1946), 133-34. McCullough, like her contemporaries believed that art education was a road to “international understanding and good will.” See “Asks Art Be Considered a Road to International Goodwill” in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 17 June 1947, 3.

<sup>16</sup> See for instance Grace Victoria Leslie’s “United for a Better World: Internationalism in the US Women’s Movement, 1939-1964 (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> See Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice, eds., *Gender and Education in Ontario: An Historical Reader* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 1991), vi.

<sup>18</sup> “Training Ladies in Library Work: School Conducted by Education Department Begins Sessions,” *Globe*, 7 September 1922 found in “Home, Ruth Mabel,” University Records, A 73-0026/154 (64), UTARMS.

<sup>19</sup> From Doris Newton Shiell file, University Records, A1973-0026/413(65), UTARMS, with thanks to archivist Karen Suurtamm.

<sup>20</sup> See “Women’s Daily Interests at Home and Abroad” in *Toronto Daily Star*, 8 December 1930, 26; she assisted with an exhibition of posters put on by the Women’s Club, as did her sister.

finish.<sup>21</sup> While details about her personal life are scarce, the correspondence that does survive reveals her to be a strong-willed woman while at Smith, who despite her homesickness, often attended college dances and “robbed the nursery by dancing with [freshmen] from Dartmouth.” Home was conscious of how her academic position intimidated men and she noted that said freshmen subsequently “tightened up” when they discovered she was faculty.<sup>22</sup> On one such occasion, she referred to one fellow as “the prize of the evening...the Shrimp—a red-head shrimp” whom she teasingly “exploited.”<sup>23</sup> Home’s letters to her family offer evidence of an acerbic, independent mind; she was suspicious of the male faculty at the women’s college, whom she charged with being generally maladjusted, “lost”, “slightly bewildered” and “surrounded by females.”<sup>24</sup> She also complained about “the girls”, presumably her students, who were “well nigh impossible to talk to” because they “answer[ed] entirely in monosyllables.”<sup>25</sup>

She referred to particular female colleagues as women who were “luxuriating in [their] emancipation, but apart from that very interesting” suggesting that she did not easily identify with other female graduate students, at least not while she was in her twenties.<sup>26</sup>

Ruth Home was just one of many women who made a living and who were faced with a challenging workplace. She taught at the Royal Ontario Museum throughout the 1930s, a time when many young, single women were employed in Toronto. In 1931, one in every four wage earners was a woman; and by 1941 the proportion had risen to nearly one in three.<sup>27</sup> While it’s difficult to know who Home was as a museum educator and as eventual head of educational programming, oral testimonies with retired staff people offer some clues. They remembered her work to bring communities to the museum in almost epic terms. Dorothy Burnham (née MacDonald), who worked in the textile department at the

<sup>21</sup> She held an instructor position for one year (1924-1925) in the Economics and Sociology Department, while taking courses in sociology. A letter from F.H. Hankins, then Chairman of the department, to William A. Neilson, president of Smith College mentions Home’s sudden indecision. “She first accepted, then declined, only to change her mind once more.” Hankins had already offered the post to another candidate, Miss Mildred Hartsough, at that point. The Office of the President, William A. Neilson files, “Economics & Sociology Department, 1917-1939,” Box 45, Folder 10. April 15, 1925. Smith College Archives, with thanks to Nanci Young, College Archivist.

<sup>22</sup> See undated letter to family, “Sunday”, p. 3-4, in SC 5, Box 1 Home Family Papers, ROMLA.

<sup>23</sup> See undated letter to family, “Sunday”, p. 4, in SC 5, Box 1 Home Family Papers, ROMLA.

<sup>24</sup> See undated letter to family, “My dear family, Sunday”, p. 4 [np], in SC 5, Box 1 Home Family Papers, ROMLA.

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

<sup>26</sup> See undated letter to family, “Sunday”, p. 3, in SC 5, Box 1 Home Family Papers, ROMLA.

<sup>27</sup> As quoted in Katrina Srigley, “Working Lives and Simple Pleasures: Single, Employed Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929-1939” (PhD Diss. for the Department of History, University of Toronto, 2005), 28. The number of women employed between 14 years of age and over rose from 91,780 to 111,334 between 1931 and 1941. See *Census 1941* vol VII, 1, 102. See also Srigley’s *Breadwinning daughters: young working women in a depression-era city, 1929-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 19.



ROM, recalled how

we all used to turn in and help the big do's... This is going way way back when Ruth Holme [sic] used to run these special trains in of 300-400 children... for a whole day's session. And everybody in the staff would turn in and help with those 'cause there were only two or three educators in the place.<sup>28</sup>

Interviews that Barbara Hill conducted with Home's assistant Ella Martin and curator Loris Russell, as well as other sources refer to her as "an inspired teacher," "full of brilliant ideas."<sup>29</sup>

Home's graduating poem after she received her bachelor's degree, probably written by a fellow student, in the University College section of *Torontonensis*, is perhaps illustrative of a studious yet fiery character:

*You see her in the library, walled around with books,  
Or writing history essays in all the union nooks;  
And when the English groups are getting deadly dull,  
You wait expectantly for Ruth to liven up the lull.  
Sometimes she's young and child-like, sometimes old and wise.  
But in everything she says, or does, she's a terror for her size.<sup>30</sup>*

Home was passionate about a wide range of subjects—art, natural history, local history—and she was ultimately considered one of the few trained curators in the province,<sup>31</sup> but little work has been done on her foundational museum education work, which essentially laid the outlines for the profession. There are clues about the content of her educational work in the clippings of the University of Toronto alumnae files, which contain many newspaper announcements of her lectures.<sup>32</sup> While knowledge of Home's programming may be circumscribed by what writers of the Women's Pages of various local newspapers felt was appropriate to cover, it's quite clear from local press accounts that Home was dedicated to exploring domestic history and topics that focused on the home, as a means of encouraging female visitors to actively visit the museum. Home's lectures seemed to have focused on home design and the history of furniture as well as differences in households over time.<sup>33</sup> Often accompanied by slides of objects, her lectures included material culture to which people had a personal connection, such as her talk about the evolution of the bedroom suite in England or the ritualized making of an Elizabethan bed.<sup>34</sup> One of

<sup>28</sup> "Correspondence from 2002," Dorothy Burnham fonds, SC 131, ROMLA; see also Duncan MacKenzie's interview, 20 July 1981, 15.

<sup>29</sup> Dorothy Hecken's notes on her interview with Dorothy Burnham; currently missing from ROMLA, see Mak, "Patterns of Change," 146.

<sup>30</sup> *Torontonensis*, 1922, University College, University of Toronto Archives.

<sup>31</sup> See Mary Tivy's "The Local History Museum in Ontario, 1851-1985: An Intellectual History" (PhD Diss, University of Waterloo, 2006), 154.

<sup>32</sup> See Home, Ruth Mabel, A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS.

<sup>33</sup> See for example, "Miss Ruth M. Home Lectures in Museum: Elizabethan Period Furniture Subject of Public Talk" from *Varsity*, 27 February 1929, Home file, A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS.

<sup>34</sup> "Furniture Fashions Swayed by Europe: Miss Ruth Home Portrays Furniture Introductions of

her lecture series was on the development of the “home” across cultures.<sup>35</sup> She also lectured about the value of the modern museum in the home, no doubt trying to garner support for interior design courses she led at the museum.<sup>36</sup> Her lectures as an “instructress” at the ROM were regularly covered in the Women’s Daily Interest Pages of the *Toronto Star* presumably because she dealt with topics such as personal relationships and women’s issues, although her focus was often on women, in a more global sense, and their lives in ancient cultures.<sup>37</sup>

In 1934, Ruth Home took a five-month tour of museums of the British Isles, which was financed by a Canadian Museums Branch fellowship from the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>38</sup> In 1938 she was awarded a Carnegie Travel-in-Aid scholarship to study in Europe, in England and Scandinavia for two months of research on ceramics, which later resulted in a book.<sup>39</sup> Her Carnegie Fellowship financed her trip to the Victoria and Albert

in South Kensington, where she studied museum display techniques, as well as at the Courtauld Institute of Art summer school. It was often reported that this exposure led to her programming ideas.<sup>40</sup>

While the record of her specific work under the Carnegie Grant has been destroyed, it’s quite clear that Home was always interested in elevating the status of decorative arts and supporting craft-work. In the late 1920s, Home’s public lectures were instrumental in challenging deeply entrenched hierarchies between art and craft and the content she developed for them also gave her some free-lance writing gigs with local magazines, such as *Saturday Night*. She frequently wrote about feminized art forms, such as “Something About Lace: Its Origins and Development into an Art,” an article she wrote while an instructor at the ROM.<sup>41</sup> Home’s lectures were clearly meant to cater to women and their purported interest in the domestic sphere, such as her 1929 *History of the Home* lectures,

---

Charles II” from *Varsity*, 12 Nov 1935, Home file, A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS.

<sup>35</sup> “Tombs for Eternity, Homes for a Lifetime: Lecturer Tells Why Egyptian Houses were Simple and Tombs Elaborate” from the *Toronto Daily Star*, Women’s Interest Pages, 4 November 1930, 28, Home file, UTARMS.

<sup>36</sup> This was a lecture for the Withrow Home and School Club, as listed in The *Toronto Daily Star*, 11 January 1932, 20.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, “Second Spouse Taboo for Chinese Wives: Celestial Woman Holds One Husband Sufficient for Faithful Wife” in *Toronto Daily Star*, 7 November 1929, 37.

<sup>38</sup> *University Monthly*, October 1934, Home file A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS. For more on the role of the Carnegie Corporation in the development of Canadian cultural and artistic life in the 1930s-1950s see Jeffrey Brison *Rockefeller, Carnegie and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada*. (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005).

<sup>39</sup> *Saturday Night*, 22 October 1938, Home file, A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS.

<sup>40</sup> See for example “Lecturer from Museum Back from England: Miss Ruth Home has Many New Ideas on Techniques and Displays” from the *Toronto Daily Star*, 11 September 1932, 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Saturday Night*, August 1928, 13; she also wrote articles on old time instruments for MacLean’s Magazine, 12 February 1930, Home file A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS.

which was European focused and discussed Elizabethan, Georgian, Stuart and Queen Anne periods.<sup>42</sup> Object-based lectures drew parallels between the ancient world and modern domestic needs.<sup>43</sup> Throughout the month of March, 1929, she lectured on various pottery-based themes that addressed everyday histories and were designed to interest “the modern housewife”: “the story of earthenware [to the modern housewife] is the story of the first aid to cleanliness” pointing out that “the homely rite of dishwashing was a problem even in the days of King Tut.”<sup>44</sup> Her lectures were not just about the importance of the development of glaze, but were also a conscious effort to connect the past with the present.

In 1930, Home’s 4 p.m. lecture series was on furniture and old lace, and covered such topics as the Evolution of the Chair; the Ancestors of the Piano; Lace and Costume; Early Textiles and Embroideries; The Carpet.<sup>45</sup> Her lectures, which were given on every Thursday on the second floor of the ROM, focused on “everyday human interest.” One of her main aims was to “treat the origin and evolution of things with which one comes

in constant touch and this has proven to be the popular demand with the recent world wide popularity of adult education.”<sup>46</sup> This included teaching about the Chinese origin of books and printing and to examine how lace was the offshoot of embroidery on towels used by Roman matrons to wash the feet of their dinner guests. Home was clearly committed to making history relevant to her audience, here a notably female one.

Home clearly understood how to made the museum more relevant to a female audience. One of her strategies was to offer a course in home decoration, “open to the homemaker and to students of interior decoration... offering one of the finest opportunities available in the Dominion.”<sup>47</sup> Although she received approval from trustees for her proposed course on interior design in 1933, in subsequent years [1935-1938] she had to continue to beg for support from the education committee, submitting that it would be “cosmopolitan in flavour” and that “a certification of attendance” would be created for members who work at Eaton’s or Simpson’s. The latter request suggests that women who worked in de-

<sup>42</sup> “Museum Lectures: Audiences Grow” *Telegraph*, 11 November 1928, Home file A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS.

<sup>43</sup> See “Pottery Long Used but Always the Same” in *Varsity*, 22 March 1929, Home file A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS.

<sup>44</sup> “Dishwashing Presented a Problem Even in the Far Away Days of King Tut” *Star, Women’s Daily Interests*, 20 March 1929, Home file A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS.

<sup>45</sup> “Museum Lecture Course to Have Varied Interest” *Mail*, 10 January 1930, found in Home file, A 73-0026/154(64), UTARMS.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> “The course took place on Mondays and Tuesdays 5:00 pm-6:15 pm, and cost \$10.00” New Course at Museum: Miss Ruth Home to Direct Course on Home Decoration” *Telegraph*, 25 September 1938, from Home file, UTARMS. The article implies that this was the second year that this programme was being run. Norma Heakes also noted that Dorothy Haines ran a very profitable lecture series entitled “Study

partment stores came regularly to her lectures.<sup>48</sup> Currelly complained about Home's actions at directors' meetings.<sup>49</sup> He was clearly not in support of his museum being used for Home's programming, regardless of the fact that it was he who supported her initial hire as a teacher to lecture specifically in the Museum of Archaeology, "his" gallery.<sup>50</sup> One of the issues central to this conflict was a lack of clear boundaries between the domains of educators and curators; as 'new on the scene' staff whose purpose was in the midst of being created, they most likely presented a threat to directors who ultimately wanted to control educational activities. As early as 1928, directors had stated in committee minutes that educator "deportment, methods and instruction should at all times be subject to the control and approval of the Director in whose museum she is teaching."<sup>51</sup> In January 1934 the directors wrote "that the position of Lecturer-Guide in the Royal Ontario Museum should be redefined [1934]: all instruction needed to be approved by the director of that museum, and in some cases by the committee of

directors."<sup>52</sup> Later that year, Currelly suggested that Home personally be placed under the jurisdiction of the committee of directors.<sup>53</sup> An education committee was formed, made up of representatives from the board of trustees as well as directors.<sup>54</sup> Archival records show that Home's commitment to bringing in new audiences, namely children and other community members, was continuously at odds with the directors' view of the role of the museum. Home often chose not to go through the appropriate channels with the directors and often applied for permission for educational programming initiatives by applying directly to the board of trustees, where she seemed to have more support.<sup>55</sup>

According to staff interviewed, Home saw museum education "on a much larger scale than the Directors did," and often got into trouble because of her impatience and her willingness to get things done, even without director approval. She was always a "jump ahead" and "constantly challenging her masters and even questioning their right to make decisions about her work."<sup>56</sup> Norma

<sup>48</sup> Letter to Miss Helen Reynar, 25 June 1935, Ella Martin Fonds, SC 82, box 1, folder 6, ROMLA.

<sup>49</sup> Directors' Minutes, 6 December 1933, RG 25A, Book 3, ROMLA.

<sup>50</sup> Directors' Minutes, 5 January 1928, RG 25A, Book 1, Vol. III ROMLA.

<sup>51</sup> Directors' Minutes, 11 January 1928, RG 25A, Book 1, Vol. III, ROMLA.

<sup>52</sup> Directors' Minutes, 3 January 1934, RG 25 A, Book 3, Vol. V, ROMLA.

<sup>53</sup> Directors Minutes, 10 October 1934, RG 25A, Book 3, Vol. V, ROMLA.

<sup>54</sup> Educational Committee Minutes, 2 November 1934; Directors Minutes, meeting of 7 November 1934. The Educational Committee was composed of Dr H.J. Cody, Chairman, C.T. Currelly, W.A. Parks, W.C. White, also J.R. Dymond and Sir Robert Falconer, with secretary Helen Reynar. See RG 26A, Box 1 Education Committee Records 1934-1946, Index, Educational Committee Minute Book, 22 October 1934, ROMLA.

<sup>55</sup> One notable trustee was Mrs. HD Warren, the wife of a rubber industry tycoon who was active in educational initiatives across the city, including the ROM and the Art Gallery of Toronto. See Annual Report 1929 in Education Scrapbook, Vol. I, EPTLA, AGO.

Heakes, former head of the Education Department, referred to her as “ahead of her time,” with ideas that “occasionally proved embarrassing to her superiors.”<sup>57</sup>

Home’s conflicts with the directors of the museum seemed to be rooted in a conflict over who museums were actually for. Some directors believed that the museum was an appendage of the university and that public education consisted of supporting university-level academic study. Home was inspired to make the museum a place of more informal learning, as a means of attracting a more diverse public, and one that was notably female. These conflicts persisted into the 1940s. In the educational report from 1944, educating university students was still listed as the museum’s top priority, while educating the general public and small ‘special’ groups of children was at the bottom of the list.<sup>58</sup>

Home also was aware of what was happening elsewhere and actively worked with other Toronto institutions, such as the Art Gallery of Toronto [AGT] (now known as the Art Gallery of Ontario)

and the University of Toronto Extension Service, for programming opportunities.<sup>59</sup> Teachers from the AGT were also called upon to offer lectures on specific topics that were a part of ROM courses, such as the “Arts and Crafts of Eighteenth century Europe,” which called for AGT lecturers on the Rococo Spirit in Painting and in late Eighteenth Century Painting.<sup>60</sup> Home’s connections seem to have led her to future employment; she lectured at the University of Toronto’s department of Fine Arts from 1940 to 1945, well as at the Ontario College of Art in the late 1940s.<sup>61</sup> She also kept in close contact with art history educators, such as Helen Kemp Frye, who later wrote for the popular press about the craft workshops Home organized as secretary of the Ontario branch of the Canadian Handicraft Guild.<sup>62</sup>

## Open Evenings and Outreach Work

Finding employment and keeping children in school were a pressing need for most people in the city during

<sup>56</sup> Formerly in “Education” SC 73, “Ruth Home”; currently missing from ROMLA. As cited in Mak, “Patterns of Change,” 146.

<sup>57</sup> Heakes, “Education at the Royal Ontario Museum,” 15-16.

<sup>58</sup> See Report 56, 16 April 1945, RG 25B, box 1 vol. 1, 2, ROMLA.

<sup>59</sup> Education Committee Minutes, 21 May 1937, RG 26 Box 1, ROMLA. For a more detailed discussion of the connections between the Royal Ontario Museum, Carnegie funds and the appointment of Alford, as well as Bishop White, keeper of the ROM’s Chinese collections, see Martin L. Friedland’s *University of Toronto: A History* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013). Baldwin became director in 1948; ‘curator’ was the designated head until the post of director was created in 1948, see <www.ago.net/curator-director-chief-curator> (accessed 6 May 2014).

<sup>60</sup> Ella Martin Fonds, SC 82, box 1, folder 6, ROMLA.

<sup>61</sup> “Jordan Historical Museum of the Twenty: A Community Institute”, compiled by History Student Harry Classen, Brock University, 2009. Found in Appendix, Ruth Home CV, Jordan Museum of the Twenty Reference Library.

<sup>62</sup> See Frye’s “Canadian Handicrafts Abroad” in *Star Weekly*, Toronto, 12 February 1949, 8. Found in Helen Kemp Frye fonds, Victoria University Archives.



the 1930s.<sup>63</sup> Home appeared to be mindful of the ways in which museums could respond to these community needs. Prior to this time period, the museum was closed at 5pm, making it difficult for working people to visit the ROM. Home created Open Evenings, an evening of informal learning, which the trustees authorized at their meeting on 15 May 1936.<sup>64</sup> At that meeting, Dr. O'Brien stated that it had been called primarily to discuss a plan suggested by 'Miss Home' for opening the Museum one evening a month for clubs and groups of business men and women who were not able to attend lectures in the daytime. According to O'Brien, Home had applied directly to the board of trustees for approval and to find out whether the board would finance it. He stated that the board had agreed to try the experiment for several months and would meet the expense en-

tailed.<sup>65</sup> Directors openly protested the value of free open evenings for everyone, citing the cost of time, money and energy.<sup>66</sup> While this was probably due to the financial constraints of operating a museum in the midst of an economic depression, women at the Art Gallery of Toronto, for instance, were able to expand their reach with free evening programming at this time.<sup>67</sup>

Home was also remembered by her colleagues as an early developer of museum extension work. She offered recommendations for expanding offerings to out-of-town schools. Home's educational initiatives in effect ushered in a more accessible object-based learning at the museum. As the term was understood in the nineteenth century, museums' object-based learning meant choosing material that communicated information *upon sight*. This systemization of vi-

---

<sup>63</sup> In 1931, Toronto was a metropolis of roughly 631,200 inhabitants. As Katrina Srigley has underscored, although Toronto was largely a WASP town in the '30s, racial and ethnic identities as well as gender and class were factors for wage earners in the city. See Katrina Srigley's "Working lives and simple pleasures," 170. According to the Census, 'British Races' were the dominant group, (510,432), Italians (13,015), Hebrew (45,305), French (10,869), and German (9,343). Polish and Dutch citizens numbered between 4-5,000; blacks, Russians, Greeks, Ukrainians between 5,000 and 1,000 in the decennial census for the 1930s. Srigley, 70. From Canada, Bureau of the Census, *Cross-Classifications Vol IV* (Ottawa, 1931), 912. Lismer, in his book *Education Through Art for Children and Adults at the Art Gallery of Toronto* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto 1936), writes that there are about 850,000 people living in Toronto (p. 7).

<sup>64</sup> Trustees' minutes, RG 1A, Box 1, 15 May 1936, ROMLA.

<sup>65</sup> RG 26 Box 1, Education Committee Minutes, 25 June 1936, 16, ROMLA.

<sup>66</sup> Directors' minutes, meeting of 5 March 1937, RG 25A, Book 3, Vol.5, ROMLA. There were five open evenings in 1938 and one floor was on exhibition each night. Groups included University College Alumnae, Robert Simpson Company staff, Islington Young People's Club, York County Home and School Club, Boy Scouts Association, Young Men's Canadian Club, Library School, St. Clair YMCA, Zonta Club and Dr. Horwood's Music Appreciation Class. See also President's Report 1938-1939, 136-37 in Dorothea Hecken Fonds, SC 73, ROMLA. It was decided that the open evenings would be discontinued unless a minimum of \$25.00 was secured.

<sup>67</sup> See Zankowicz, "In Her Hands: Women's Educational Work at the Royal Ontario Museum, the Canadian National Exhibition and the Art Gallery of Toronto, 1900s-1950s" (University of Toronto: PhD diss. 2014), ch. 4.

sion, as well as the notion, espoused by many directors that “all museum material... should be an open book that tells a story better than a description will do” was connected to the idea that objects could communicate knowledge in and of themselves to untrained observers.<sup>68</sup> While it remains to be proven that visual literacy is as democratic and accessible as early museum directors presumed, educators and those affiliated with education looked at object-based learning with much confidence, using objects to communicate concepts about the past and different civilizations, using objects to cultivate Western European art appreciation and using objects to teach students about the natural world and thereby inculcate a geographical citizenship.<sup>69</sup> Object-based learning was an essential form of *visual* instruction, although the practice of learning via engagements with objects was also understood in multi-sensory ways.<sup>70</sup>

Home coordinated mass visits from Ontario towns, often in partnership with Canadian Pacific Railway; entire train cars were filled with ROM visitors of all ages as well as families who visited the museum for the day.<sup>71</sup> Home argued in her 1939-40 report that extension work was “the most important aspect of the work of the Museum and every effort should be made to expand it even at the cost of sacrificing other activities... [it removes] the accusation of being only of service to Toronto and stimulat[es] a sense of province-wide ownership.”<sup>72</sup> She actively engaged outside communities to come to the ROM for “Museum Days.”<sup>73</sup>

Home also wrote a piece for *School*, a local curriculum resource magazine, in 1936 entitled “When Hamilton came to Toronto.” She described a two-day program wherein special arrangements were made for reduced-rate Canadian Pacific Railroad cars; the Toronto Transit Commission also provided streetcars

<sup>68</sup> William P. Wilson, director of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum to Edward Everett Ayer of the Field Museum, 16 July 1894, Field Museum Archives, as quoted in Stephen Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>69</sup> Lianne McTavish, “Learning to See in New Brunswick, 1862-1929,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 87:4 (2006), 553-81.

<sup>70</sup> It is worth noting that object-based learning in the past meant different things to different people, as it does today. It did not always connote learning by sense perception; sometimes it just meant visual learning. For Charles Trick Currelly, director of the ROM Archaeology Museum, learning from objects certainly meant being able to see them, not touch them. In 1934, he led a group from the Toronto Local Council of Women around the museum to show them Bishop White’s newly acquired Matreya wall. He maintained that “the proper way to visit the museum is to use the eyes, rather than the ears.” The group was “equipped with portable folding stools, which they carried with them, [and] the women sat down and enjoyed in leisurely fashion the large exhibits of the huge collection of Chinese treasures;” “Council Women Explore Museum” in *The Globe*, 5 December 1934, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Education Committee Minutes, 24 April 1939, 25, RG 25B, box 1, vol. 1, ROMLA.

<sup>72</sup> Report of the Division of Public Instruction 1939-1940, 2, RG 99A, box 3, ROMLA.

<sup>73</sup> SC 82, f. 6 ROMLA; See Home correspondence to Gray Coach Line chartered coaches, 25 September 1936; Bookings for Fergus, two visits from London and one from Kitchener approved (all in May). See Educational Committee Minutes 24 April 1939, 25, ROMLA.

to bring 105 students from St. Andrews, near Cornwall, and 528 students from Hamilton, whose schools had answered the ROM's invitation in the magazine. Youngsters, ideally those eight and over, were arranged in groups of 25 so that "each child could get as diversified a diet as possible—a spot of 'skeletons' or palaeontology, seasoned with Armour or the North American 'Indian' and lightened by a tour of the zoological galleries."<sup>74</sup> Apparently the children especially liked going behind the scenes to see how animals were skinned or butterflies mounted; they also enjoyed playing with sketches of people in costume. Home submitted that the museum could accommodate 400 children and 100 adults in the autumn or early spring and encouraged schools to come, assuring them that the Museum would help organize transportation and logistics. Many schools throughout the province planned school-wide "Museum Days" that were much celebrated in the press.<sup>75</sup> Staff were not always in favour of Home's outreach programming because handling the extra numbers meant pulling people from their jobs to volunteer. The directors felt the solution was to supplement the regular staff or to train part-

time staff for such occasions.<sup>76</sup> In an ironic twist, the very system that was meant to deal with expanded public offerings became a system of pay inequity that would contribute to the consistent feminization, and marginalization of women within the institution. Most of women's work at the ROM continued to be part-time, if they stayed in the education department.<sup>77</sup>

### 1937 Curricular Reform and Connecting with Schools

The 1930s saw significant curricular change in schools, and Home was an early supporter of the museum's ability to support curriculum-based learning and connecting with school teachers. In light of the economic depression, parents and educationists called for "schools for living," which integrated field trips, outdoor education and hands-on learning with mini-museums in the classroom.<sup>78</sup>

The curricular reforms of 1937 for Grades 1-6, known locally as the little Grey Book, were prepared by Thornton Mustard and S.A. Watson.<sup>79</sup> The integrated Social Studies in Ontario was a *mélange* of history, geography and civics that did not focus on memorization or

<sup>74</sup> From *School* November 1936, Vol. 25: 207-208. Found in Ella Martin Fonds, SC 82 box 1, folder 27, ROMLA.

<sup>75</sup> See for example "Students Visit Ontario Museum: Lectures Given to Pupils from Provincial Points" in the *Globe* 1 December 1936, 18.

<sup>76</sup> Directors Minutes, 5 March 1937, ROMLA.

<sup>77</sup> See "Emily," personal communication, 8 June 2011; "Johnathan," personal communication, 9 June 2011; "Ellen," personal communication, 1 June 2011; "Neel," personal communication, 7 June 2011. Pseudonyms were used to preserve anonymity.

<sup>78</sup> As described by Alice Harriet Parsons of a school in Picton ON, in "Schools for Living" in *Canadian Home Journal*, July 1939, 23.

<sup>79</sup> Mustard was employed at the Toronto Normal School and Stanley A Watson was the principal at Toronto's Keele Street Public School.

chronological understandings.<sup>80</sup> The new curriculum began with a study of 'home' and 'school'; students then moved on to study the town, province, then country, followed by other countries, and ultimately to the comparison of ancient and modern social life.<sup>81</sup> However, when the "Grey Book" came out in Ontario in 1937, it offered little instruction on how to execute the new pedagogical programme. Mustard graduated with Home at University College in 1921, and archival evidence in the education committee minutes suggests that they knew each other, as she often invited him to the museum.

Because Ruth Home was also meeting with V.K. Greer, Ontario's chief inspector of public schools, as well as consulting with Mustard and Watson about course subjects that would prepare teachers for the new social studies course during this time, she consciously aligned museum education with the enterprise or "project" method. This method centered around the idea of "purposeful activity," where teachers and students recognized a "social situation, which [was] offered by the environment and which promise[d] to give the pupils the different kinds of training that [the teacher] thinks they need."<sup>82</sup> The enterprise pedagogy, itself

"a form of cooperative self-expression," also "train[ed] the individual in group behaviour" through involved projects that taught students through experience. These lessons were to be put into practice by student committee work that organized culminating projects such as making models, putting on plays, and making exhibitions that illustrated students' answers to problems or inquiries.<sup>83</sup>

Although 'progressive education' began in Western Canada first, it was not unique to the 1930s, and could be seen as pedagogically connected to nineteenth century educational practices such as visual study. However, it is clear that Home used the language of the new curriculum potentially to ensure support of the program. While the educational philosophy of museum education is not being characterized here *in toto* as progressive education, mainly because of the issues that arise when trying to delineate a term that meant different things in different places, museum educators did connect their work with fostering social cooperation. Many museum educators, such as Home and Martin, linked the museum with international cooperation and saw the museum as a place where one could work to eradicate "cultural prejudice."<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Ontario Department of Education's *Programme of Studies for Grades 1 to 6 of the public and separate schools* (Toronto: The King's Printer, 1941).

<sup>81</sup> "Connections, Contrarities and Convolutions: Curriculum and Pedagogic Reform in Alberta and Ontario" by Lynn Speer Lemisko and Kurt W Clausen from the *Canadian Journal of Education*, 29:4 (2006), 1097-1126, here 1109; see also Ontario Programme of Studies (1941), 60 and Donald Dickie's *The Enterprise in theory and practice* (Toronto: W. J. Gage & Company Limited, 1941), 422.

<sup>82</sup> Dickie, *The Enterprise in theory*, 171.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 90, 297-99.

<sup>84</sup> See School articles, Ella Martin Fonds, SC 82, Box 1, folder 27, ROMLA; see also Saturday Morning Club pamphlet in RG 102B, ROMLA.

Internationalist models of citizenship were predicated on social harmony and furthering the understanding of different cultures.<sup>85</sup> Museum-going was also meant as a means to cultivate good taste. Martin wrote about the museum as a way to “raise the quality of life for all,”<sup>86</sup> clearly championing the accessibility of object-based learning.

Museum educators, beginning with the ROM’s first, Margaret MacLean, had often connected with teachers; Home strengthened the idea of the museum as the space to support teachers in activity-focused curriculum.<sup>87</sup> She gave lectures to teachers as supplements to the new course in social studies introduced in 1937 and offered paying lecture courses for teachers in ceramics, the modern house and social studies.<sup>88</sup> These lectures were sponsored by Dr. Douglas McArthur, the deputy minister of education, and Dr. Goldring, the chief inspector of Toronto schools. In her *1937-1938 Annual Report for the Division of Public Instruction* she stated: “This, to me is a great advance on anything we have done before. If the Museum can get the teach-

ers to look to us for visual aids, we shall have increased our usefulness to the community tremendously.”<sup>89</sup>

While there is no record that Home referred to the enterprise method, she did mention the laboratory style of teaching and visual instruction, as well as the “project method” in directors’ meetings.<sup>90</sup> In 1942, for example, minutes of an education committee meeting noted that Home had made plans for an exhibition at Easter

demonstrating the value of the Museum in the project method of education, as outlined in [her] report... it was agreed that Miss Home could confer with Professor Homer Thompson, who was curator of the classical collection of the ROMA as well as a teacher in the Fine Arts department at the university, in the preparation of the exhibit of material suitable for teaching Ancient History; and that Miss Home should go ahead with her plans to assemble other material for the exhibition.<sup>91</sup>

Home’s pedagogical initiatives, such as the SMC, the Summer Club and the Children’s Room programming, all emphasized principles of enterprise that may have been inspired by Donald

<sup>85</sup> Department of Education, *Programme of studies for the elementary schools* (1942), 33.

<sup>86</sup> Ella Martin Fonds, SC 82, Box 1, f. 29 “Three-Dimensional Learning,” OMA Newsletter 1976, n.p.

<sup>87</sup> Educational Committee Minutes, 24 April 1939, 35. Found in RG 26A, Box 1 Education Committee Records 1934-1946, ROMLA. See also Education Minutes 9 April 1940, 29: “Miss Home asked permission to arrange a conference with Mr. Greer [sic], Dr. Aitken, Mr. Watson, Dr. Phillips, Mr. Stephen and the principal of the Normal School about work with teachers [which] was approved.”

<sup>88</sup> Educational Committee Minutes, 24 April 1939, 25. RG 26A, Box 1 Education Committee Records 1934-1946, ROMLA.

<sup>89</sup> See Division of Public Instruction Records, Annual Report 1937-1938, RG 99A, Box 1, ROMLA.

<sup>90</sup> The laboratory method involves the “use of special equipment and rooms to solve problems in a scientific manner”, the project method is a “a plan intended to make pupils rely on their own effort and natural ability... a special purposeful activity... the building stones of an enterprise, etc.” See *Social Studies*, published by the Ontario Teachers’ Federation. (Toronto, 1955), n.p.

<sup>91</sup> Educational Committee Minutes, 6 March 1942, 17, ROMLA.



Dickie's curriculum, which featured themes such as "How People Live in the World," first within the home, then in "different kinds of homes," and then in Canada, the Empire and the world. The enterprises for the curriculum were thus taken up in museum education: food, home, clothing, work, recreation and transportation were considered to be universal themes that connected children to the past. Home's programming ideas bore striking similarities with Dickie's internationalist emphasis, the idea that "there are many different forms of society that must learn to live peaceably together" and which emphasized peaceful cooperation.<sup>92</sup>

Home brought in teacher candidates from normal schools and forged networks with teachers throughout her career at the ROM, often communicating with Superintendent C.C. Goldring. Goldring, the superintendent of schools for Toronto in 1937-38, declared that 85 per cent of public school teachers encouraged their classes to undertake enterprises. However, as education historian George Tomkins has noted, this may have been mostly true for urban school districts, such as the Toronto District School Board, who would have had access to more materials.<sup>93</sup> While Tomkins submits that educationists worried that much enterprise learning became "product" not "process," Home seems to have

embraced progressive pedagogy within the museum and played an active role in teaching the pedagogy to teacher candidates. For example, minutes from a directors' meeting on 4 October 1943, list the normal schools with which Home worked. The summer school at the Ontario College of Education had spent one afternoon at the museum in July; the Toronto Normal School had been at the museum two afternoons; and out-of-town normal schools, such as the Peterborough Normal School, had made plans with Home for visits.<sup>94</sup>

In her 1936 piece for *School*, entitled "The Museum and the School," Home began by divulging that cuts to provincial funding for visual education in the museum had resulted in curtailing children's activities; she argued that the museum could be used to support curriculum in a variety of areas. Home stated: "there is ample visual material for correlation and collaboration with every aspect of the school curricula, natural science, social studies, literature, music, art and health. The only exception is arithmetic." She explained that: "Such nouns as papyrus, bark-cloth... and cuneiform tablets are best explained by the objects themselves... ten years ago we might have had to explain the necessity of visual aids, but now education is so completely one with the laboratory technique."<sup>95</sup> Home went through the programming for the

<sup>92</sup> Dickie, *The Enterprise in theory*, 423.

<sup>93</sup> George Tomkins, *A Common Countenance: Stability and Change in the Canadian Curriculum* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1986), 198.

<sup>94</sup> RG 26A, Box 1, 4 October 1943, 39, ROMLA.

<sup>95</sup> Home, "Museums and the School" in *School* Vol. 24, (February 1936): 473-76, found in SC 82 Box 1 folder 27, ROMLA.

Grade 4 social studies, particularly the Stone Age, and described a visit: “the children divide their time between looking, drawing and discussing with a minimum of lecturing. After the children have chipped a few flints in the vain attempt to make themselves a tool and handled the objects made by pre-historic man, their appreciation of that time period is considerably increased.”<sup>96</sup> “Museums and the School” also spoke about how groups could come in to see one or two objects that they were studying in school. It thus established the informality of museum learning that could be adapted to learners’ needs; visits could be half a day or 20 minutes. “In short,” Home declared, “the museum is like a book to be started at the frontispiece, in the middle or the end, to be used casually for illustrations, to be read hastily or at leisure with much re-reading. It is an encyclopaedia, a picture book and a novel.”<sup>97</sup>

Her piece in *School* was also clearly an unabashed plea for more funding:

for the past three years groups of 400 have been successfully handled for a whole day, the Museum supplying moving pictures, gallery talks and accommodation for lunches; but now there is no money to pay lecturers, clean the galleries and rent moving pictures. Our service to the Province has been seriously curtailed because large groups meant cheap train fares... Our service to the individual child not as a member of a class has likewise had to cease. Within recent years

more and more children have come to regard the Museum as ‘fun.’ They have been coming on Saturday mornings of their own volition to spend an hour or a day—some even bring their lunches. To augment their pleasure and to direct their interests, the Museum used to organize treasure hunts, set questionnaires, foster hobbies, present moving pictures in association with objects in the gallery and engage with manual projects to correlate [with] gallery material.<sup>98</sup>

In addition, Home was interested in providing hands-on object-based learning for younger visitors, an audience that many directors had previously neglected. In 1938 she advocated for space to be set aside for a children’s room. The room would be used for introductory talks before visits to the galleries and she hoped to obtain models, maps, pictures, and objects to supplement the talks. In 1939, she suggested charging 5 cents per child for the children’s room to cover the costs of art supplies. Other activities that might be taken up were a story hour, pageants, a stamp club and a vivarium. She explained that the goal of the children’s room was “to stimulate the children’s interest in the exhibits and to teach them to observe accurately.”<sup>99</sup> In this case, the educational committee supported her and recommended that all five of the ROM’s museums cooperate with Home’s initiative.<sup>100</sup> It was established in the basement under the Rotunda staircase, and was often used for Saturday Morning Club members as

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Educational Committee Minutes, 24 April 1939, 25, found in RG 26A, Box 1, ROMLA.

<sup>100</sup> Directors Minutes, 3 November 1938 RG 25A, book 3, ROMLA.

well as children, eight years old and up, who were visiting.

## Weekend and Summer Programming

After more than a decade of fighting with the committee of directors, they, along with the board of trustees, agreed to the creation of an official department for educational programming. The Division of Public Instruction was created in 1940, with Home acting as supervisor. Under Home's Division of Public Instruction, Saturday morning programs, originally begun as a post-First World War youth club with the ROM's first educator Margaret MacLean, were initiated once more, with less of an emphasis on lectures and more on experiential learning. Run by Home and her assistant Ella Martin, the Division of Public Instruction was recognized by the editor of *School* as a "pioneering" force for visual education, a mode of learning that, contrary to its name, involved a more sensory engagement with objects.<sup>101</sup> Home also founded Summer Club, in part a re-

sponse to a rising "juvenile delinquency" rate of ten-to-twelve year olds; financial support came from local organizations and prominent individuals.<sup>102</sup> By the 1940s, many studies had connected the study of art with the prevention of delinquency and children's art practice was seen as having psychotherapeutic benefits for children.<sup>103</sup>

However, the museum approved Summer Club only after stipulating that it would not offer any financial support.<sup>104</sup> Home most likely knew she could not expect a financial commitment from the ROM. During her campaign of fundraising for Summer Club, Home received \$300 from Mrs. R.S. McLaughlin for her work in the division.<sup>105</sup> Female gift-giving then, contributed to educational programming when financial support from the ROM itself was not forthcoming. Home was also keen to continue supporting groups who could not afford admission, and created special days for students whose schools could not afford it.

Along with crafts, the Saturday Morning Club also regularly staged pag-

<sup>101</sup> See "Teaching with Objects", *School*, 32 (March 1944), 576-81. Written by special request from the managing editor of *School*, 14 December 1943 for the 1944 issue on audio-visual instruction. The editor invites Home to write a piece "since you and the Royal Ontario Museum have been pioneers in visual education in Ontario." See Ella Martin Fonds, SC 82, Box 1, f. 28, ROMLA.

<sup>102</sup> Division of Public Instruction Annual Report, 1940-1, RG 99A, Box 1, ROMLA.

<sup>103</sup> See Thomas Munro, Ray N. Faulkner, Hungerland Helmut and JB Smith's "School Instruction in Art" from the *Review of Educational Research* (April 1946), 163.

<sup>104</sup> Other provisos were that the attendance was to be controlled so that guarding would not be a problem, that craft activities would not be permitted in the Lower Rotunda, stools be put back after each session, and that should unforeseen problems arise, the arrangements could be cancelled, Directors' Minutes, 6 May 1942, RG 25A, Book 3, Volume 6, ROMLA.

<sup>105</sup> Board of Trustees records, Trustees minutes, 19 June 1942, RG 1A, Vol. 6, Box 2, ROMLA. Her husband was the founder and first president of McLaughlin Motor Co 1907. In 1918, he sold the company to GM and became president of GM of Canada. McLaughlin gave large amounts of money to the ROM and financed the McLaughlin Planetarium.

eants and performances, a practice that was popular in many educational venues, including the Canadian National Exhibition, the ROM and the AGT. Possibly rooted in nineteenth-century pageantry traditions, projects often focused on a culminating pageant to perform in front of parents and visitors. At the SMC, children 'dressed up' as First Nations peoples, and put on performances such as the Hopi "Indian" Project. The Indigenous cultural expressions that were mimicked in these pageants located native populations firmly in a pre-modern past, and while Home tried to ensure that the children who participated in Saturday and summer programming were diverse, enacting faux Indigenous ceremonies helped to cement ideas of "whiteness."<sup>106</sup> Programming about First Nations culture was a reoccurring theme, as was the history of farming and 'pioneer life.' The "life of the Ojibway" was a theme that the SMC took up in the 1943-44 year, and Indigenous dances were also staged, with costumed students, in the theatre. While "dressing up" as Natives was quite popular in the social studies curricula, it's difficult to know how these exercises were framed by instructors, and how the children who engaged in this performance understood First Nations culture.

As Sharon Wall has pointed out in her work on summer camps, "playing Indian" represented the "white middle class and privileged longing to identify with the socially marginal... of Canadian society... a connection to a time of pre-modern simplicity, a golden age of social harmony and calm."<sup>107</sup> In a summer camp context, "dressing up" also provided a way in which to establish the idea of "Canadian tradition" and "Canadian roots," as outdoor enthusiasts ignored their immigrant roots and "constructed themselves... as the figurative heirs of Native tradition. This helped to confer a sense of belonging in a country where their presence was really quite recent."<sup>108</sup>

Based on a SMC pamphlet that probably dates from the 1960s, the aim of the club was to make its members, who were 8-14 years of age, "more aware of the world in which they live by encouraging a deeper knowledge and appreciation of nature and by furthering their understanding of art and different cultures."<sup>109</sup> It is unclear how the children who participated in this programming interpreted it; the voices of children are seldom preserved in museums' archives. However, a few thank-you notes from the early 1960s suggest a variety of interpretations of their museum education experiences. Many students

<sup>106</sup> For a discussion of the long tradition of pageants see work such as H.V. Nelles's, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.). For more about children's historical pageants see Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), ch. 8. Sharon Wall, "Totem Poles, Teepees and Token Traditions: 'Playing Indian' at Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-1955" in *The Canadian Historical Review*, 86:3 (September 2005), 532

<sup>107</sup> Wall, "Totem Poles," 532.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 530.

<sup>109</sup> Saturday Morning Club pamphlet, nd [post-1963], from RG 102 B Box 1, ROMLA.



Figure 2: *Saturday Morning Club, Hopi "Indian" Project, 1957-8, ROM2015\_14428\_2.*

commented on how they liked it when their museum guide, Ella Martin, demonstrated the "piano that you put over a dish and played" from the Congo, or thanked her personally for "letting me hold the spear." In terms of how students understood the past, many declared that they were "glad that we don't have to use or wear things such as thoes [sic] anymore". While it is unclear what the student is referring to, the students' privileging of the present over the past is an apparent theme running through the letters. One student declared: "I liked the sculptures of Romen[sic] days very much—it shows how much better off we are with the foods

we eat than the Romens[sic] were."<sup>110</sup>

The letters also divulge clues about how diverse cultures were discussed during school tours. One student commented on how he enjoyed "the tour about African natives... When we laughed at that costume I liked the way you told us not to laugh." While it is unclear whether students were encouraged to "act" as Native stereotypes during the school tours, some students did comment on how much they enjoyed "the Indian Snake Dance." One student on a school tour commented on how she was "glad that there were Indians in the glass parts because some of them demonstrated what they do."<sup>111</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Ella Martin Fonds, SC 82, box 2, folder 1-14, written on the other side of lecture notes. Thank you notes and feedback from teachers is also found in SC 82, box 1, folder 55, ROMLA.

<sup>111</sup> Ella Martin Fonds, SC 82, box 1, folder 55, ROMLA.



Students commented on traditional ways of life in the present tense, suggesting that contemporary Native life was not a focus on school tours. They also brought particular understandings of the past to museum lessons. Then, as now, children brought their own narratives and made their own meanings in museums.

Because Home's programming was subject to the whims of individual support and considered temporary, Home had to continuously recommend to the directors that the Saturday morning program be continued, and that it could be lengthened so that children from different class backgrounds living in other neighbourhoods could participate.<sup>112</sup> She proposed to divide Toronto into three sections in order to give each child an opportunity to visit the museum once a month, the fourth Saturday to be reserved for private and outlying schools.<sup>113</sup> The local press also reported that the SMC, though just inaugurated, was "too popular, and some new arrangement will have to be worked out next winter... Average attendance was 700."<sup>114</sup> As Pearl McCarthy of the *Globe* stressed in her column about the summer programming, school disciplines were

blended at the museum.

...nothing in the museum's many departments gets entirely away from the question of design... If you are a child studying birds you may use a rainy day session to note, in museum exhibits, how feathers have been used by man [sic] in ornamental designs. The child who has been out at Grenadier Pond, studying pond life, not only gets to look at what he [sic] brought back underneath a microscope, but works his [sic] studies into a peep show.<sup>115</sup> Still a third group learns history by preparing for a Robin Hood day with archery contests.<sup>116</sup>

SMC became well known for the experiential, hands-on activities that integrated the arts with history, geography and world cultures.

### Rejecting Home

As early as 1943, the museum directors spoke of the need for a public relations officer.<sup>117</sup> In 1945 the matter was raised again, but the position was to be combined with Division of Instruction duties and other extension functions.<sup>118</sup> For the new hybrid publicity and education position they developed, the directors sought a "suitable man... to undertake the duties of Supervisor of Museum Extension."<sup>119</sup> This suitable man was

<sup>112</sup> Directors' Minutes, RG 25A Book 3, Vol. V, 5 March 1937, ROMLA.

<sup>113</sup> Education Committee Minutes, RG 26A, 21 May 1937, 20, ROMLA.

<sup>114</sup> "List 700 Students at Museum Class: New Arrangements Needed for Next Year, Secretary Points Out" from *Toronto Daily Star*, 23 June 1937, 9.

<sup>115</sup> Peep shows referred to a common craft activity: miniature displays of objects, specimens and pictures were put in small boxes, usually fitted on one end with a magnifying glass or with a cut, small opening for viewing.

<sup>116</sup> Pearl McCarthy, "Summer Clubs at Museum Attract Children and Adults" in *Globe*, 22 June 1946, 10.

<sup>117</sup> Meeting of the Subcommittee of the Education Committee, 1 February 1943, "Man to have charge of public relations", 23 December 1942, RG 26A, ROMLA.

<sup>118</sup> Directors' Minutes, 19 February 1945, RG 25A, Box 3, Vol. VII, ROMLA.

<sup>119</sup> Report 54, Memorandum Concerning the Proposed Appointment of a Supervisor of Museum



Figure 3: *Saturday Morning Club, Parent's Day 1949, ROM2015\_14428\_3.*

referred to as “a Chief to whom [Home] can turn to for advice at any time.”<sup>120</sup>

Home sent a memorandum to the education committee about her opinions on the new direction the department had taken and presented her resignation to the chairman of the board of trustees that month [April 1945]. In her place, the curator of mammology before the war, Ewart C. Cross, who had no background in museum education, was hired. Instead of her work being legitimized,

Home would have been subjected to yet another gate-keeper, who would not have adequate time to devote to education.<sup>121</sup>

Home understood the conflict as gendered, which suggests that this conflict was multi-layered. Home resented being controlled and attributed her difficulties to patriarchy embedded at the museum. Home reportedly told staff members that she had resigned because she “objected to having a man put over her.”<sup>122</sup> Other women within the museum

Extension...” February 1945, RG 25B volume 1, box 1 ROMLA; also in Directors meeting 19 February 1945, RG 25A, Box 3, Vol. VII, ROMLA.

<sup>120</sup> Director's Minutes, 17 April 1945 RG 25A, Box 3, Vol. VII, ROMLA.

<sup>121</sup> Levin has noted that this often happened to women in museums after the war; they often lost their jobs to returning officers. See Amy Levin [ed] *Museums, Gender and Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 14.

<sup>122</sup> As cited in Mak, “Patterns of Change,” 160; the interviews with Martin and Russell in Education, SC 73 file “Ruth Home” are currently missing.

field were also aware of the gendered implications of the museum's move. For example, Margaret Machell, the AGT's first archivist and a Canadian Museums' Association fellow who was also honoured by the Ontario Museums Association for her contributions, knew Home personally. In her article on Home's achievements, she noted that Home left the ROM in 1946, "when a man was brought in over her head to run the newly formed Division of Education."<sup>123</sup> In a final twist of irony, in 1946, with Home gone, directors finally acknowledged that "special thought should be given to the ways in which the Museum can be of service to schools."<sup>124</sup>

Home left the institution she had worked so hard to change, but often returned to the galleries in her new role at the Ontario College of Art, as a director of the Department of Museum Research.<sup>125</sup> Home also worked in the late 1940s with the Toronto branch of the Canadian Craft Guild, helping to coordinate live craft demonstrations and

local craft exhibitions. Her enthusiasm for museum work eventually became known across Ontario: she planned the Wellington County Museum at Elora, the Hiram Walker Historical Museum at Windsor, the Oil Museum of Canada at Oil Springs, United Counties Museum in Cornwall, Lennox and Addington Museum at Napanee, and the Jordan Historical Museum of the Twenty.<sup>126</sup>

As director and founder of the Jordan Museum of the Twenty from its inception in 1953 until her death on November 3 1965, Home was able to institute much of the programming for which she was fighting at the ROM, and which undoubtedly contributed to the accolades the Jordan Museum received for its "[success] in reaching the people and making itself felt as a functional force in the community."<sup>127</sup> The museum was referred to in the press as a "cultural dynamo creating among the families a sense of their own roots, and providing for newcomers ways in which they can put down roots in the community."<sup>128</sup>

<sup>123</sup> See Margaret Machell, "Ruth Home: An Extraordinary Woman for her Time" in *Muse*, 14:4-15:1 (1997), 44. Interestingly, ROM finding aid administrative history describes Home and later Martin as being under the control of the Museum board and the committee of directors until 1946, when it was decided to allow the education unit to function more autonomously within the newly-created Division of Extension. See RG 99, Division of Public Instruction fonds (1927-1957), Administrative history, 293.

<sup>124</sup> Directors' Minutes, 9 January 1946, RG 25A, Box 3, Vol. VII, ROMLA.

<sup>125</sup> As related in Ruth Home's obituary in *Ontario History*, written by her colleague at the ROM, museum educator Dorothy Drever. See "The Late Ruth Home," *Ontario History*, 58:2 (June 1966), 115-16.

<sup>126</sup> "Ruth M. Home, Enthusiast for Museums, Planned Six" from *Globe and Mail*, 3 November 1965.

<sup>127</sup> See "Jordan Museum of Pioneer History one of the most complete in Canada" by Lex Schrag, *Globe and Mail*, 25 August 1953. This piece suggests that Home served as technical advisor to the museum and was still employed as a lecturer at OCAD. The museum also boasted 600 members, despite being located in a small community. See also "Cultural Dynamo: Jordan Museum Praised," quotation from Dr. Louis C Jones, New York State Historical Association, founder of Farmer's Museum Cooperstown NY. n.d [1954] n.p from Jordan Museum of the Twenty vertical file, Jordan Museum of the Twenty Reference Library.

<sup>128</sup> "Cultural Dynamo: Jordan Museum Praised", from Jordan Museum of the Twenty vertical file,

Museum educators of successive generations were fortunate that Home was a founding member of the museums' committee of the Ontario Historical Society and devised and hosted the first museum workshop at the Jordan Museum in May 1954, a first for Ontario museum professionals.<sup>129</sup> Mounted on the wall of the upper hallway of the Jordan Museum is a framed inscription that refers to Home as an "enlightened and forceful participant [who] had a passionate belief in the vital importance of the regional museum, which could be a stimulating repository of its social history as well as a source of inspiration." Not surprisingly, Home was "largely responsible for the prompt action taken on the museum project," which was called "the best little museum in North America."<sup>130</sup> Home realized that many objects and aspects of community architecture, such as Fry's barn and a cider press from the 1820s, needed preserving. She negotiated with Mr. Torno of the Jordan Wine Company to procure his fi-

nancial sponsorship. She advocated planning a "Bygones Museum," and encouraged Torno to contact local politicians and work with the Jordan branch of the Women's Institute.<sup>131</sup> Home stressed the importance of a museum financed with company money that would be run by individuals.<sup>132</sup> Programming at the Jordan Museum featured her old associates from the ROM as speakers. Home called on Professor T.F. McIlwraith, associate director of the Museum of Archaeology, to speak about the importance of Canadian history at the first community meeting.

In 1961, Home called for an Ontario-wide master plan for museums to coincide with the Canadian Centennial so that after the celebrations "the business of museums will be better than ever, with a bright outlook for the future."<sup>133</sup> Her visions for a museum master plan, of which very little is known, were cut short by her death in 1965.<sup>134</sup> Upon her death, she was widely remembered in the popular press as one of the first trained curators of the province,

---

Beginnings, n.d., n.p. Jordan Museum of the Twenty Reference Library.

<sup>129</sup> See Dorothy Duncan's "Remembering Ruth Home" in *Past Reflections 1954-1994* (Ontario Historical Society, 1994), 12.

<sup>130</sup> "Cultural Dynamo: Jordan Museum Praised", from Jordan Museum of the Twenty vertical file, Beginnings, n.d., n.p. Jordan Museum of the Twenty Reference Library.

<sup>131</sup> See "The Jordan Museum of the Twenty: A Community Institute" by Harry Classen, May 2000, 7; also Home's Tentative Programme 25 May 1952, Meeting of the Board of Trustee Minutes, Jordan Museum of the Twenty Reference Library.

<sup>132</sup> "Museum to Preserve History of the Twenty May Soon be a Reality" from Vineland, Beginnings vertical file, n.d., n.p., Jordan Museum of the Twenty Reference Library. Home first did historical research for the wine company, when she headed her own historical research firm, Ruth Home and Associates: Research in Historical and Primitive Backgrounds, located at 332 Bloor St W. She specialized in providing historical research for advertising companies and was approached by Mr. Torno to compile a town history, currently located in the Jordan Museum Reference Library.

<sup>133</sup> As quoted in Margaret Machell's "Ruth Home: An Extraordinary Woman for Her Time" in *Muse* 14:4-15:1, (1997), 44.

<sup>134</sup> As her obituary specifies that donations were to be made to The Cancer Society, Home most likely died of cancer.



a job description that certainly did not do her educational work justice.<sup>135</sup>

## Conclusion

During her career at the ROM, Home founded many of the educational programs that have since become the signature of public programming. These included Open Evenings, lectures and film series, outreach initiatives that included partnerships with railway and bus lines to bring in communities, hands-on weekend and summer programming that centered on blended pedagogy, and teaching history and the arts through craft-based and

tional memory is surprisingly scant. Education reports and her presence in the minutes exist, but there is little recognition of her role in the development of museum pedagogy within the institution at large. For example, there is only one photograph of Home in the museum's archives. She is however, immortalized in Sylvia Hahn's medieval tournament mural in the Currelly Gallery, as one of the unnamed women who is notably facing away from Currelly, perhaps symbolic of their rather tempestuous relationship.

Little has been written about the development of museum education as it

relates to community access in Ontario. Women educators were central in providing access to diverse audiences with different learning styles that accounted for experiential dimensions of learning; these programs became central to the shift in museums as institutions as public education centres that had a social purpose. While object-



Figure 4: Ruth Home, seated fifth from right; Currelly, seated second from right. Sylvia Hahn mural, in Currelly Court, Royal Ontario Museum, author's photo.

performative activities. The Ruth Home Memorial Fund, which supports local museum workers, was established and is administered by the museums' committee of the Ontario Historical Society, but her presence within the ROM's institu-

based learning was originally intended for the more exclusionary world of academic learning, it promised barrier-free learning once adopted as practiced pedagogy in museums. In this way, the women who worked in museums and exhibi-

<sup>135</sup> "Ruth M. Home, Enthusiast for Museums, Planned Six" from *Globe and Mail*, 3 November 1965.



tions to foster multi-sensory learning broadened the educational mandates of their institutions, and played significant roles in the development of museum education and museum access programs in Ontario and in Canada at large. Many of Ruth Home's initiatives were object-based and focused on learning social histories. This pedagogical method as well as broadening of content was geared to multiple communities: family learning, teacher enrichment, outreach to surrounding towns and villages, extracurricular and after-work programming. However, this paper also acknowledges that the nature of this programming was complex. Inclusion did not extend necessarily to inclusive content; progressive education served to inculcate cultural stereotypes of First Nations, although the women enacting this pedagogy saw their work as promoting cultural understanding.

Studying Home's career offers insight into the early gendered dynamics of museum education and demonstrates the origins of many of the mainstays of programming, many of which are still in place today. The programs that essentially ushered in this change were the result of Home's educational vision: the development of museum/school relationships; outreach programs; Open Evenings;

Museum Days; the development of extra-curricular activities as well as the connection between museum education and performative learning. She knew first hand the struggle of maintaining a museum's social relevance and often wrote advice about how to establish museums. In 1954, in this journal, she wrote:

Organizing and setting up a museum needs the constant discipline of self-questioning, for the two major duties of the museum may never be lost sight of, the first being the preservation of the objects, the second being its interpretation to deepen the cultural experience of the visitor through the object. Otherwise the museum becomes a prestige teaching aid and ceases to be a museum.<sup>136</sup>

Home worked hard to ensure that the ROM was not just a 'prestige teaching aid' and her accomplishments were not without struggle. She was in fact enacting progressive curriculum in ways that have not been adequately explored by historians of education, who have often concluded that progressive education curriculum was not successful because of its lack of implementation in schools. However, museums were educational locations that afforded women educators space to develop particular pedagogical experiences in ways that ultimately defined the profession and were a testament to their own pedagogical agency.

---

<sup>136</sup> Ruth M. Home, "The Object of the Museum" in *Ontario History*, 53:3 (September 1954), 191.