

Chapter 11

“Ushered into the Kitchen”:



Lalia Halfkenny, Instructor of English and Elocution



At a Nineteenth-Century African American Women’s College

Jennifer Harris

Questions for Critical Reading

1. Harris challenges the reader to think more deeply about “firsts” rather than simply celebrating them. Why is this important, and what does it reveal about women’s historical experiences?
2. Halfkenny’s story is an exceptional case. What are the benefits and drawbacks of looking at exceptions to the norm?
3. Harris mentions that there are no surviving documents in Halfkenny’s own words. What are the drawbacks of using “remembrances,” such as obituaries, as the primary source of biographical information?
4. Harris traces Halfkenny’s life through her connections with different places. How do specific locations influence Halfkenny’s experiences and identity as a black woman?

List of Primary Sources

- “Three Women Sitting Before Three Windows Peering into Microscopes.” Photograph. C. 1890-1900.
http://collectionsCanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3612809&rec_nbr_list=3612809
- “Coligny College – Ladies’ College.” Topley, William James. Photograph. 1895.
http://collectionsCanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3319099&rec_nbr_list=3319099
- “Group of Black Women in Front of the YWCA Boarding House.” James, William. Photograph. 1913-1917.
http://collectionsCanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3191591&rec_nbr_list=3191591
- “Myrtle Blackwood, the First Black Woman to be Called to the Bar in Ontario.” Photograph. 1960.
http://collectionsCanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=4370151&rec_nbr_list=4370151

- “Dorchester, NB, Sept 1896.” Map. 1896.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3932677&rec_nbr_list=3932677
- “A Black Wood Cutter at Shelbourne, Nova Scotia.” Booth, William. Watercolour. 1788.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2836297&rec_nbr_list=2836297
- “Seaview Baptist Church.” Grant, Ted. Photograph. N.d.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3560729&rec_nbr_list=3560729
- “Baptist Church.” Topley, William James. Photograph. N.d.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3306601&rec_nbr_list=3306601
- “Cooking Class, Ladies College.” Topley, William James. Photograph. 1906.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3427348&rec_nbr_list=3427348
- “Ottawa Ladies’ College.” Topley, William James. Photography. 1875.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3246603&rec_nbr_list=3246603
- “Bedroom Coligny Ottawa Ladies College.” Topley, William James. Photograph. 1895.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3424424&rec_nbr_list=3424424
- “Art Group Ladies College.” Topley, William James. Photograph. 1901.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3424373&rec_nbr_list=3424373

Multimedia Resources

- African-American Firsts: Education
www.biography.com/people/groups/african-american-firsts-education
- Racism’s Long History In Quiet East Coast Towns
www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/racisms-long-history-in-quiet-east-coast-towns/article1241300/?page=all
- Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia
<http://web1.bccnsweb.com/>

- Acadia Seminary
<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=4575>
- Virginia Union University
<http://www.vuu.edu/about-vuu/history>