

“To Share its Advantages and its Honors.”

## The History of Women Entering Tufts University and the Development of Jackson College

### Introduction

“There is no question in my mind that Tufts weakened its grip on many things vital for its virility and healthy growth when its doors were opened to women.”<sup>1</sup> This anti-coeducationalist sentiment was expressed by a Tufts alum in a letter to then President Frederick W. Hamilton on January 16, 1908. The writer was not alone in this view. Tufts, an all-male institution when founded in 1852, became coeducational in 1892. Like many schools across the United States, Tufts struggled to navigate cultural tensions surrounding the admission of women. These tensions were related to the perceived moral and educational impacts for both male and female students. During a time of divergent and evolving cultural norms, successive administrations wrestled with differing views on admitting women to Tufts, colloquially known as the Hill. Despite grumblings from the male students, Tufts’ admittance of female students in 1892 initially appeared to be a success. However, this was short-lived. The school faced financial challenges due to declining male enrollment and the cost of creating coeducational facilities. Additionally, cultural opposition to coeducation persisted. As a result, Tufts resegregated for the stated purpose of saving The College of Letters<sup>2</sup> from becoming a “girl’s school.”<sup>3</sup> During this period, the male student body opposed coeducation at Tufts while President Capen championed its implementation, a reality that led to its collapse under the succeeding Hamilton administration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jackson College Box. Correspondence and reports re: admitting women to Tufts -1892. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>2</sup> The College of Letters was the precursor to the current School of Arts and Sciences.

<sup>3</sup> Russel Miller, “Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952,” n.d., 1986.

## A School for All ... Men

When Tufts College opened its doors in 1854, it adopted an unusually inclusive model as it encouraged applications from qualified individuals regardless of their race and religious background.<sup>4</sup> However, this inclusivity did not extend to gender. The all-male status of Tufts was immediately controversial. In 1855, the Massachusetts Universalist Convention<sup>5</sup> was already pressuring the university to open “to both sexes alike, and ... [to award] its honors according to proficiency in study, irrespective of sex.”<sup>6</sup> But the college took no decisive action regarding coeducation. Instead, Tufts privately wrestled with the question as it tried to determine if anti-coeducationalist bias and the added cost of making the school coeducational were more pressing than the mounting external pressures to admit women.

Concerns about women entering the university setting were not unique to Tufts. Although more institutions opened to women following Oberlin College in 1837, the public debate on women’s place in education remained a contentious issue.<sup>7</sup> When Tufts welcomed its first class, it did so during growing discussions about women’s intellectual and physical abilities to pursue higher education.<sup>8</sup> Following the Civil War many colleges faced declining enrollments and sought to maintain their numbers by admitting women. By 1870 thirty percent of colleges were coeducational.<sup>9</sup> In addition to coeducational institutions, separate all-women’s colleges were providing women with access to higher education separate from men. Feminists did not consider

---

<sup>4</sup> Miller. *Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952*, n.d., 1986, 164.

<sup>5</sup> This was a convention of Universalists leaders to discuss issues and questions surrounding universalists organizations in the state of Massachusetts.

<sup>6</sup> The Massachusetts Universalist Convention quoted by Miller.

<sup>7</sup> Jill Conway, “Perspectives on the History of Women’s Education in the United States” 14 (1974).

<sup>8</sup> Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, “Putting the ‘Co’ in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present,” *Journal of Human Capital* 5, no. 4 (December 2011): 377–417, <https://doi.org/10.1086/663277>.

<sup>9</sup> Goldin and Katz.

these all-female colleges to be as good as the male schools, but the public found them more palatable.<sup>10</sup> Three of the early women's colleges, Mt. Holyoke, Wellesley, and Smith, opened in Massachusetts in 1875. These schools proved that women were intellectually capable of excelling in higher education.<sup>11</sup>

The existence of women's colleges, however, complicated the question of admitting women to all-male schools. Coeducation was often a foregone conclusion in areas with only one school and limited resources. However, in areas with multiple schools, such as Boston and New York, cultural and economic questions of what was best for men, women, and colleges persisted. Many preferred to send their sons to all-male institutions and daughters to all-female institutions to ensure a morally sound environment.<sup>12</sup> Others were not convinced that women's colleges offered the same quality instruction as male institutions. Instead, they sought coeducation to ensure their daughters received education on par with their sons. In areas with multiple colleges, such as Massachusetts, parents could choose between separate or coeducational colleges for their children. The wealth of options required all-male institutions to consider economic factors when deciding if they would be best served by remaining single-gender or becoming coeducational.<sup>13</sup> Tufts would directly face these questions almost immediately after its opening.

### The Great Co-Education Debate

Initially, Tufts avoided taking a clear stance on coeducation, despite being prompted to confront the issue by a female application in 1856. There is no record of any response to the

---

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women* (Yale University, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Miller Solomon.

<sup>12</sup> Linda C. Morice, *Coordinate Colleges for American Women: A Convergence of Interests, 1947-78*, vol. 63, n.d.

<sup>13</sup> Goldin and Katz, "Putting the 'Co' in Education."

prospective students' inquiry. Instead, Tufts declared that "the doors of the College were closed to women solely on account of, and in deference to, the backward state of public opinion."<sup>14</sup> A further prohibitive factor was the question of finances. As expressed in a letter written by Dr. Miner<sup>15</sup> in 1889: "I think it can safely be said that at present the college is not likely to be opened to women for the want of the necessary funds enabling thereto."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the question persisted and began to engage student interest. Articles in the student newspapers, the *Tufts Collegian* and the *Tuftonian*, encouraged student debate on the issue.

The first issue of the *Tufts Collegian* in 1874 addressed the issue of coeducation in an article entitled "Shall Women be Admitted to Tufts?" This article summarized the events of the Massachusetts Universalist Conventions held in October 1873 and 1874. At these conventions, Mrs. E.M. Bruce<sup>17</sup> presented a preamble calling for coeducation at Tufts based on supportive remarks made by President Miner. She also presented four resolutions -- disclaiming responsibility for public opinion on the issue, arguing that Universalists were pioneers in practicing coeducation, stating that not making Tufts coeducational was a denial of Universalist ideals, and urging Tufts to make provisions to accept women in the near future.<sup>18</sup> In response, President Miner was careful to emphasize that he and Tufts had taken no official position on coeducation. After arguments were presented for and against these resolutions at the 1874 Convention, the *Tufts Collegian* reported that all resolutions were rejected except for the last,

---

<sup>14</sup> A Tufts University statement on the issue as quoted in Miller, "Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952, 167."

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Miner was president from 1862 to 1875 and was now a member of the board.

<sup>16</sup> Jackson College Box. Correspondence and reports re: admitting women to Tufts -1892. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>17</sup> While Mrs. Bruce did not have any direct connection to Tufts she was a universalist and the university began as a universalist institution.

<sup>18</sup> Tufts Collegian 1874. Tufts Collegian November 1874. Shall Women be Admitted to Tufts? Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

which was tabled for future discussion.<sup>19</sup> The students at the *Tufts Collegian* understood the importance of these events and dedicated significant space in their first edition to discussing the Convention amongst themselves.

Tufts did not decide on coeducation at the 1874 Convention. The cycle of obfuscation and debate carried on.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the student body covered the events of the Convention but pointedly did not express their opinion on the proceedings or advisability of coeducation. In this way, they assumed a complicated position. Through their reporting, the students made it clear that they were aware of the issue. However, there is no recorded evidence that they interacted with it in any significant manner. As such, the students did not remain silent on the question but did not insert themselves into the conversation either.<sup>21</sup>

The students' interest in coeducation was reflected in their attention to the growing debate on the issue, sparked to a large extent by the publication of the widely read book *Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance for the Girls*. The book, written by the well-respected Harvard physician Dr. Edward H. Clarke in 1873, warned parents about the dangers of higher education to their daughters.

[A] girl can go to school, pursue all the studies... it is not true that she can do all this, and retain uninjured health and a future secure from neuralgia, uterine disease, hysteria, and other derangements of the nervous system, if she follows the same method that boys are trained in... Boys must study and work in a boy's way, and girls in a girl's way. They

---

<sup>19</sup> Tufts Collegian 1874. Tufts Collegian November 1874. Shall Women be Admitted to Tufts? Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>20</sup> Tufts Collegian 1874. Tufts Collegian November 1874. Shall Women be Admitted to Tufts? Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>21</sup> One can surmise that they were potentially simply educating themselves on the issue at this early stage of the debate. It is also possible that their goal was to report on the issue without editorializing.

may study the same books and attain an equal result, but should not follow the same method<sup>22</sup>

After a careful reading of Clarke's book, the editors of the *Tufts Collegian* dutifully covered the case made by Dr. Clarke and presented their views on the merits and drawbacks of his research and arguments.<sup>23</sup> They critically did not offer any final opinion on the subject but took a neutral tone. The following week the *Tufts Collegian* writers discussed the argument in support of women's higher education as addressed in the book *Sex and Education, A Reply to Dr. E. H. Clarke's Sex in Education*.<sup>24</sup> The book, edited by feminist and advocate of women's higher education Julia Ward Howe, featured essays by prominent women such as Elizabeth Phelps, all of whom strongly rejected Clarke's arguments. Again, the editors at the *Tufts Collegian* outlined the arguments in the book and assessed their merits and drawbacks. In their writings, the student editors refrained from expressing their own opinions. Like President Miner, they instead resolved to wait for more information.<sup>25</sup> However, as more information became available, no published student opinion was forthcoming. Future generations of students would take up this lack of opinion and, after these initial publications, the issue largely disappeared from the student newspapers. Despite the administrations increasingly prevalent and public discussion, it would be ten years before the next and final mention of coeducation at Tufts made its way into the student newspaper.

#### The Capen Coeducational Crusade:

---

<sup>22</sup> "The Project Gutenberg EBook of Sex in Education, by Edward H. Clarke," accessed March 15, 2023, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/18504/18504-h/18504-h.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Tufts Collegian 1874. Tufts Collegian November 1874. the Co-Education Question. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>24</sup> Tufts Collegian 1874. Tufts Collegian December 1874. Dr. Clarke's Critics. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>25</sup> Tufts Collegian 1874. Tufts Collegian December 1874. Dr. Clarke's Critics. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

Following Miner's resignation in 1875, Tufts' ambiguous stance on coeducation was replaced by enthusiastic advocacy under the newly appointed president Elmer Hewitt Capen. President Capen, initially as reticent on coeducation as Dr. Miner, made the first public step towards admitting women in his 1883 presidential address. In this address, he announced the creation of a Committee on the Admission of Women, a special five-person group from The Board of Trustees, of which President Capen was the chair.<sup>26</sup> This was an important step, demonstrating that the new president was seriously considering the possibility of coeducation. Although the announcement brought hope for coeducation at Tufts, President Capen dampened expectations of immediate action, stressing that, without significant donations, Tufts did not have the funds to convert to a coeducational institution. The hard and soft infrastructure required included women's dormitories, scholarships, gratuities, prizes, and more.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of the economic concerns expressed by President Capen, this public announcement set Tufts on the course of coeducation. Even as President Capen admitted to the challenges ahead, the supporters of coeducation at Tufts had a definitive statement around which to rally. Many coeducational proponents took advantage of this opportunity by publicly voicing their agreement and offering financial support. Some of them would prove critical in coeducation becoming a reality. However, such success came after a long struggle for cultural and economic acceptance, largely thanks to the significant effort expended by President Capen.

Although Capen's 1883 presidential report was optimistic, the Committee on the Admission of Women ended the year with the conclusion that the resources and facilities at Tufts were inadequate to allow for the admission of women at the time. Such a conclusion was not

---

<sup>26</sup> Russel Miller, "Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952."

<sup>27</sup> Russel Miller.

surprising as President Capen had already stated that Tufts lacked the facilities necessary to house female students and the funds to acquire these facilities. Capen, however, would not be dissuaded. He addressed the issues of finances in his 1884 presidential report and made it clear that Tufts needed substantial monetary assistance to open its doors to women. President Capen believed that the frequently cited amount of \$100,000 “was certainly needed to do this work with dignity and decency.”<sup>28</sup>

This public appeal for money would pay off by attracting growing financial support for coeducation. After his address, Mrs. Lena C. Start wrote a letter to President Capen promising to raise the \$100,00 sum with the support of a committee of alumni and women interested in seeing coeducation at Tufts.<sup>29</sup> The letter was passed on to the Committee on the Admission of Women for further consideration as they continued to investigate the potential of coeducation. As a part of their research, the committee surveyed Tufts alumni to determine their sentiments on the matter, the majority of whom were in favor under the condition that enough money could be raised.<sup>30</sup> The endorsement of the alumni brought further promise of a changing attitude that would advocate for coeducation. Despite this support, the Board of Trustees resisted, estimating that at least double the originally calculated sum of \$100,00 would be needed. Regardless of the amount needed, it was clear that Tufts would come up short. While Capen again reported a vote against coeducation in 1885, he clarified that this was not determined by principle.

That vote, however, was not intended as an expression on the part of the Trustees of their opinion on the principle of co-education, or the practicability of its adoption in Tufts College under circumstances which may yet exist. ... I am convinced that it cannot be

---

<sup>28</sup> Russel Miller, 173.

<sup>29</sup> Jackson College Box. Correspondence and reports re: admitting women to Tufts – 1892. Letters to Capen. Lena C Start. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>30</sup> President Capen quoted by Miller.



long before Tufts College will, of its own motion, take the place in the ranks of progress to which the logic of events has assigned it.<sup>31</sup>

Though coeducation was still controversial at Tufts, and the school did not have the necessary funds, the Board of Trustees now had members who had taken a definitive stance in favor of admitting women. Yet despite the administration favoring coeducation in principle, economic constraints kept them from moving forward.

The Board of Trustees' support of Capen's initiative wavered as they discovered that coeducation in Massachusetts was on the decline. They found that Middlebury, which admitted women in 1882, was the only institution in the state to become coeducational since 1874.<sup>32</sup> The declining number of institutions admitting women raised concerns that the coeducational trend was ending. Additionally, Middlebury was near closing when it became coeducational. Their switch to coeducation was not only desperate but accidental. While the university initially planned to tentatively offer some courses to women, the hearing-impaired president mistakenly believed and consequently announced that the board had decided to make the school fully coeducational. Middlebury's Trustees were unable to walk this announcement back.<sup>33</sup> Though the Tufts Trustees were not fully aware of the circumstances under which Middlebury became coeducational, they still asked if coeducation was an idea that would continue in Massachusetts.

Despite these concerns, Capen was again hopeful in his 1886 address.<sup>34</sup> However, the year was difficult for the potential for coeducation at Tufts. In addition to recognizing that the coeducational trend was on the decline, Tufts students finally made a definitive statement on the

---

<sup>31</sup> Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1873 – 1891. Capen Presidential address 1885 – 1886. UA001 Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>32</sup> Russel Miller, "Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952."

<sup>33</sup> "A Campus of Their Own," Middlebury Magazine, February 14, 2019, <https://middleburymagazine.com/features/a-campus-of-their-own/>.

<sup>34</sup> Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1873 – 1891. Capen Presidential address 1886 – 1887. UA001 Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

issue. They conducted an opinion poll and were overwhelmingly opposed. “Of the ninety-six students who voted, seventy-three expressed their opposition and only two were undecided...As one member of the Class of 1889 explained, he did not want to be driven to the desperate expedient of washing his face and putting on a clean collar every day.”<sup>35</sup> This was a critical group that showed no move toward accepting coeducation.

Even with these new concerns, President Capen continued his coeducational crusade and gradually persuaded more hesitant trustees to seriously consider ways to admit women. His annual presidential reports also played a significant role in continuing the shift toward a slow but definite acceptance of coeducation. Yet with this public shift, no recorded effort was made to convince the student body. Instead, it seemed as if student resistance and the lack of new coeducational institutions had silenced Tufts on the issue. However, this official silence was only temporary, and swift and significant progress soon followed.

With continuing resistance to coeducation, Tufts briefly dropped the subject after 1886, but it was back on the agenda of the Board of Trustees in 1891, who again postponed it for further review. This time, the delay was brief. On July 15, 1892, the Board of Trustees voted to open the university to women. After ten years of pushing for coeducation at Tufts, President Capen finally triumphed. “A newspaper reporter stood outside the door of the building in downtown Boston when the Trustees filed out. “President Capen's face,” he wrote, wore a smile... 'At last,' he said, 'the die has been cast.’”<sup>36</sup> The *Boston Globe* and *Universalist* newspapers excitedly reported the news, and women immediately began to apply for admission.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Russel Miller, “Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952, 176.”

<sup>36</sup> A Boston Globe Reporter cited by Miller.

<sup>37</sup> Miller, 177.

As the Universalists celebrated the news, male students bemoaned the incoming women. These students showed that their opinion had not changed from the one expressed by their predecessors in the 1886 opinion poll.<sup>38</sup> On Class Day in 1894, the class of 1895 publicly conveyed their view. While they lamented the addition of women to the school, they were grateful to be spared from having to graduate alongside them, as shown in their class cheer. “We thank the Lord we’ve lived alone/ Without a girl upon the throne: The only class that’s now alive, the Glorious class of ‘95.”

The following year, the class of 1896 more subtly showed their lack of enthusiasm as it begrudgingly offered a cheer for the girls.<sup>39</sup> This cheer was importantly not in support of coeducation but a lackluster and reluctant recognition that women were on the campus. It was a cheer of obligation that, while not explicitly stating the men’s opposition to coeducation, made this sentiment clear. Such a cheer was an example of a subtle display of the dissatisfaction of the male students.

Classes traditionally performed these cheers in front of the Trustees, which left no room for confusion among the administration about how the students viewed their decision. Though the students before them had published carefully, likely afraid to publicly attach their thoughts to a controversial issue, these classes of 1895 and 1896 were unambiguous in the informal group setting of class cheers. Just as previous students did not engage with the coeducation question when it was being debated, these students did not offer any formal disagreement beyond these class cheers. Instead, they stayed on the sidelines as the administration welcomed coeducation to

---

<sup>38</sup> Miller.

<sup>39</sup> Miller.

the Hill but remained skeptical, even hostile, as they blocked women from many clubs and leadership positions.<sup>40</sup>

#### Easy Money and Female Ascendancy:

The Board of Trustees showed their support for coeducation by adopting it with the expectation that the school would take a temporary economic dip to pay for new facilities and recover enrollment numbers after the announcement. This action was courageous as the school's finances had been one of the primary concerns when first considering coeducation. The willingness of these same Trustees to admit women knowing they would not immediately have the necessary funds reveals both President Capen's and the Trustees' strong commitment to coeducation. Had the Trustees still opposed coeducation on an ideological level, the economic burden would offer a scapegoat for Tufts' failure to invite women onto the campus. Instead, from the point of view of Capen and the Trustees, financial concerns, although legitimate, would no longer impede the admission of women to Tufts.

Once coeducation was announced, supporters of the cause offered multiple significant donations that allowed the school to integrate women more quickly and easily. In 1893 Albert Metcalf gave the funds necessary to build a dormitory for women named Metcalf Hall. Also in 1893, Cornelia Jackson gave a \$70,000 donation to help women have equal opportunities to education at Tufts.<sup>41</sup> In a letter written in 1894, Lucy H. Stow, wife of Alumnus John Stow, offered a thousand-dollar donation as a scholarship for women.<sup>42</sup> These donations alleviated the economic burden of coeducation, specifically the administration's concern about an immediate

---

<sup>40</sup> Russel Miller.

<sup>41</sup> Russel Miller.

<sup>42</sup> General correspondence and reports co-educational 1893-1909. Letter from Lucy H. Stow June 20, 1894. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

economic downturn. As donations for women continued to pour in, the number of women at Tufts continued to increase.

As soon as the Hill opened to women, they eagerly took advantage of the opportunity. In 1893 there were 51 women out of the total 352 students enrolled in the university. The percentage of women grew rapidly, and by 1907, almost seventy percent of the class entering the College of Letters were women.<sup>43</sup> This number increased annually. By 1910 there were 166 women and 683 total students.<sup>44</sup> Within these 1910 enrollment numbers, no women had enrolled in the engineering school, though the school was open to them, while 231 men had. Most women enrolled in the, now majority-female, College of Letters.<sup>45</sup> These enrollment distributions are not surprising as The College of Letters offered courses that would most directly align with women's expected personal and professional futures at the time.

When women first entered Tufts, President Capen announced that “[w]omen have come quietly and unobtrusively into their places, and, so far as their presence in the classes is concerned, have not caused the slightest friction.”<sup>46</sup> However, the actions of the male students told a different story. They looked at their female companions with quiet disdain. Most of the men ignored the women on campus or to treated them with a distant respect. In 1896 the undergraduate newspaper subtly snubbed the women graduates by listing their names without editorial comment when reporting the Commencement proceedings.<sup>47</sup> These subtle snubs made it consistently evident that, despite President Capen's assurances, the presence of women was

---

<sup>43</sup> Miller, “Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952.”

<sup>44</sup> Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1873 – 1891. Capen Presidential address 1893 – 1894. UA001 Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>45</sup> Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1891-1912. Hamilton Presidential Address 1909-1910. UA002. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>46</sup> Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1873 – 1891. Capen Presidential address 1893 – 1894. UA001. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>47</sup> Miller, “Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952.”

causing significant friction. Administrators and alumni began to fear that men would be driven out of Tufts, and it would become “a girl’s school.”<sup>48</sup>

A rapid growth in the number of female students and the slow increase in the number of male students alarmed the Trustees and alumni. Moreover, women performed at an impressive level and won most honors and awards. As a result, the male students vilified the female students for their academic success. Men felt discouraged from putting in as much effort due to women receiving academic awards as they believed women were stealing their honors.

Though women did not enter the University until 1892, by 1896<sup>49</sup>, women were being inducted into Tufts Phi Beta Kappa<sup>50</sup>. At first, this seemed to cause excitement as the keynote speaker Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson started his speech by saying, “Mr. President, Brethren of the Phi Beta Kappa, and I am glad to be able to say for the first time, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Phi Beta Kappa.” However, in one short year, excitement changed to concern. In 1899 a letter from alum Clark Lindorf directly expressed this, asking if “the implication seems to be plain that the quality of our boys is deteriorating or is it that the girls are exceptionally brilliant?”<sup>51</sup>

Such a sentiment of alarm did not go unnoticed by the male students. The Tufts Weekly<sup>52</sup>, in February of 1899, reported: “The anti-coeducationalist has another ground for argument. It has been stated on good authority that one man and four women in the Senior class will be admitted to Phi Beta Kappa.”<sup>53</sup> The male students at the university did not want to

---

<sup>48</sup> Tuftonian 1874. Tuftonian November 1874. The Co-education Question. UP001. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>49</sup> The class of 1896 was the first class to graduate women.

<sup>50</sup> The Tufts chapter of Phi Beta Kappa not founded until 1892.

<sup>51</sup> Phi Beta Kappa. Letter from Clark UA025. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>52</sup> At this time, there were no women editors working for the Tufts weekly.

<sup>53</sup> Tufts Weekly. Tufts College, Mass. February 22, 1899. <https://newspapers.tufts.edu>

compete with the women for academic honors, which became an argument against coeducation. As women were still viewed as a new and intrusive presence on campus, their growing numbers and success were seen as crowding out the men for whom Tufts was initially meant. In response to this question, a Tufts alumnus suggested an amendment to the Phi Beta Kappa constitution that would require the nominations of men and women in equal numbers.<sup>54</sup> Though this proposed amendment was never passed, it demonstrated that the fear of women excelling beyond the men motivated the administration to limit their opportunities.

Tufts was not alone. Other schools were dealing with these issues. “Wesleyan, for example, was founded in 1831 as a men’s college and embarked on an experiment in coeducation in 1872... Of particular concern to male students was that women won a disproportionate number of academic honors (a situation Middlebury also faced when it became coeducational) ... In view of these arguments, the Trustees decided in 1909 to make Wesleyan a men’s college.”<sup>55</sup> In 1890, Colby College abandoned its nineteen-year coeducational experiment for much the same reason, with an alumni magazine stating: “This trickle [of entering women students] became a flow, and the flow became a flood. By the turn of the century, the worst fears of the men who had originally opposed coeducation had come true—female students not only outnumbered men but were out-performing them in the classroom.”<sup>56</sup> The University of Rochester would also switch from coeducation to a coordinate system in 1914 as the women grew to represent almost half of the student population and to win departmental honors and be on

---

<sup>54</sup> Phi Beta Kappa. Proposed bylaws Delta Chapter of Massachusetts May 19, 1900. UA025. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>55</sup> Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*.

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Miller Solomon.

the honor roll at a higher rate than the men.<sup>57</sup> In stark contrast to the warnings given by in 1874 Dr. Clarke, women in schools throughout the Northeast were not only able to keep up with their male classmates but often surpassed them, demonstrating their academic prowess. This female success gave rise to enrollment concerns for these colleges. Universities in communities without competing educational options could admit female students with little risk of male students seeking educational opportunities elsewhere. In communities with other choices, universities like Tufts risked losing male enrollment to competing all-male universities.

While women had equal access to courses at Tufts and many other coeducational institutions, they were expected to remain “quiet and unobtrusive,” as President Capen described them. As historian Linda Morice explains: “Although the number of colleges open to women grew significantly after 1870, female students existed on the margins in coeducational schools.”<sup>58</sup> The anti-women culture fostered by the male students forced the women to be viewed as an invasive and alien force by their classmates. As a new minority on campus, their very presence attracted attention and concern. They quickly became targets and scapegoats for their male peers. The sentiment of the male students was critical in informing the administration’s attitude against women remaining at Tufts. Trustees began to fear that the women would drive out the men and that the College of Letters would become a girls’ school. Such a result would go directly against university’s goal to be predominantly male with women also able to get a Tufts degree. The Capen administration did nothing to address the mounting discontent of the male students and the fears of the Trustees and alumni. This issue came to a

---

<sup>57</sup> Christine Margaret Mary Lundt, “From Coeducation to Coordinate Education and Back Again: A History of Gender in Undergraduate Education at the University of Rochester, 1900--1961” (Ph.D., United States -- New York, State University of New York at Buffalo), accessed March 1, 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304647253/abstract/A5E862817CFB42F1PQ/1>.

<sup>58</sup> Linda C. Morice, *Coordinate Colleges for American Women: A Convergence of Interests, 1947-78*.



head in 1905 with Capen's resignation, after which Frederick Hamilton (1905-1912) took over the position of University President.

Ready, Set ... Not Yet

Capen's departure in 1905 and the beginning of the Hamilton administration marked a turning point in Tufts' views on coeducation. In 1907, at the end of Hamilton's first year in the presidency, he expressed his concern that the coeducational condition was discouraging men from coming to Tufts, saying in his presidential address:

The fact is that the College of Letters is growing very slowly, and if we take out the women and consider only the men admitted, it is not holding its own.... A very careful study of the situation convinces me thoroughly that the cause is to be found in our system of co-education. ... The fact simply is that the average young man of college age does not want to go to a co-education institution. We may regret this feeling as much as we like, and we may be amazed as possible at what we should call its utter unreasonableness, but it exists and because it exists, it must be reckoned with. It is not possible for Tufts College to conquer it or to reason the masculine youth of New England out of it. If the present state of affairs continues to exist, the College of Letters, which we older graduates know and love at Tufts College will become a girl's school, and that sooner than most of us realize."<sup>59</sup>

With this speech, President Hamilton brought the growing fear of Tufts becoming an all-women's school beyond the president's office and into public view. In doing so, he advocated for the creation of a coordinate school in which women could receive a Tufts education without officially enrolling in Tufts. This was the most drastic measure Hamilton could take to limit the presence of women on The Hill. Because the university had accepted the monetary gifts of Albert Metcalf and Cornelia Jackson with the agreement that they would put these funds towards women's education, they were unable to return the institution to an all men's school without

---

<sup>59</sup> Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1891-1912. Hamilton Presidential Address 1906-1907. UA002. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

creating a separate space for women.<sup>60</sup> The plan was to separate women who would learn in their own lecture halls, dormitories, chapel, and have their own dean but would still get the benefits of a Tufts education.<sup>61</sup>

Once completed, Hamilton's new system was projected to segregate men and women into separate schools overseen by the same Board of Trustees. Hamilton presented this suggestion as the most pragmatic response to the concerns about coeducation. However, his firm belief that men and women should hold different places in society shaped his rejection of coeducation. This belief is evident in his opinion on women's suffrage. As he would write in a 1908 letter to the *New York Times*, "I see no particular reason why women should be called upon to assume the burdens and responsibilities of citizenship... Woman's suffrage is almost certain to be one of the coming developments of democracy in spite of the follies of its advocates."<sup>62</sup> Regardless of the motivating factors, he received significant support from the Tufts community.

Letters from Tufts Alumni quickly flowed into Hamilton's office, congratulating him on his decision. Alumni who, as students, withheld their views on coeducation in the student newspapers, now boldly expressed their opposition. Waldo L Cook (class of 1887), for example, reflected on his days on campus: "I knew when a student would quietly be monopolized by the women students if the way were paved without obstruction... it has been my observation that a coeducational college in the east is doomed to failure."<sup>63</sup> Additionally, these letters affirmed men's fear that women would turn Tufts into a girl's school. Tufts alum Daniel Branson wrote:

---

<sup>60</sup> Russel Miller, "Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952."

<sup>61</sup> Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1891-1912. Hamilton Presidential Address 1909-1910. UA002. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>62</sup> Hamilton Records. Correspondence. Hamilton Letter in Response to NYT. December 11, 1908. UA1.004. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>63</sup> Jackson College Box. Letters to Hamilton. Letter from Waldo L Cook. October 9, 1907. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

“I can give cases of young men who would not come to Tufts because of coeducation.”<sup>64</sup> This sentiment was echoed by Tufts alum James Burnham who wrote: “I have had three young men in line for Tufts. Each one has decided to go elsewhere because of co-education”<sup>65</sup>

Armed with alumni support, Hamilton set out to turn Tufts into an all-men’s institution with a coordinate college to provide education to women. Following his announcement, Hamilton created a Committee on Segregation in 1909 to review the issue. Just as President Capen had done in examining the viability of coeducation, President Hamilton began the segregation process by gathering the opinions of different Tufts groups. In April of 1910, the Committee surveyed the faculty and concluded: “Each and every one so consulted gave it as his opinion... that the interests of *both* men and women would be best served by a segregation of the sexes... We could not learn that there is, at present, a professor who now feels that coeducation at Tufts has proven so satisfactory in its results that it should be continued.”<sup>66</sup> The shift favoring coeducation was turning back on itself. From the perspective of the male students and the Trustees, the women on the Hill had done too well. As they continued to threaten to diminish the potential for male success and to drive out male students, it was not only the students and President Hamilton who voiced alarm. Even the professors, who had once welcomed women to Tufts, were calling to end the practice.

Hamilton also tasked the committee with comparing the expected financial impacts of coeducation and segregation to determine which made more fiscal sense. Once again there were notable financial concerns, but these did not forestall the end of coeducation. “The initial

---

<sup>64</sup> Jackson College Box. Letters to Hamilton. Letter from Daniel Branson. October 9, 1907. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>65</sup> Jackson College Box. Letters to Hamilton. Letter from James Burnham. February 26, 1910. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>66</sup> Jackson College Box. Correspondence and reports re: admitting women to Tufts – 1892. Confidential Committee on Segregation Report. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

expense for alterations as previously outlined would be about seven thousand dollars... It is probable that the teaching force can be so organized in both Colleges that the total extra expense to both would not exceed, say, \$10,000 annually - this would include a Dean of the Woman's College."<sup>67</sup> While the cost of segregating the sexes remained significant, the financial concerns seemed to be weighed less heavily than in the discussions surrounding the feasibility of coeducation. Hamilton also avoided the years of controversy Capen faced when he made the school coeducational. In contrast to Capen's struggle to establish coeducation, segregation came swiftly and with little resistance. The primary question was whether to create a women's college or women's department.<sup>68</sup> While noteworthy, this difference was not surprising. Despite female students being allowed at Tufts, the University's Board of Trustees and professors were still exclusively men. Therefore, women did not have a platform through which to voice their opinions or be involved in the decision.

By 1910 the Trustees were more eager to end coeducation than they had been to begin it. This was partly because they anticipated enrollment would increase with segregation.<sup>69</sup> The enrollment numbers of Tufts relative to all-male institutions in the state supported this belief. Since 1892 there had been a fifteen percent enrollment dip for men at Tufts. This was not on trend with the all-male schools in Massachusetts. On average, these schools saw an increase of 43-45% from 1899-1900 to 1909-1910.<sup>70</sup> In this framework, the argument against coeducation was simply financial. Tufts needed to increase its enrollment to keep up with other Massachusetts schools. Additionally, letters congratulating Hamilton on his decision to segregate

---

<sup>67</sup> Jackson College Box. Correspondence and reports re: admitting women to Tufts – 1892. Confidential Committee on Segregation Report. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>68</sup> Miller, "Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952."

<sup>69</sup> Office of the Board of Trustees Records. Full board minutes Volume 6. Trustees of Tufts College. 1907 – 1910. UA003. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>70</sup> Miller, "Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952."

men and women revealed that alumni opposition to coeducation was reinforced by withholding financial support.<sup>71</sup> Tufts opted to establish a women's college. The Massachusetts legislature approved a petition to create a separate college for women on June 15, 1910, and Jackson College for Women officially came into effect.<sup>72</sup>

With the creation of Jackson College, it seemed that coeducation at Tufts was officially over. The fear that the women would crowd out the men forced action; all women at Tufts were automatically transferred to Jackson College, and Tufts College once again became a men's only institution. The faculty and alumni voiced their support before Jackson College was created. The male students heartily announced their approval following the official creation of Jackson College.

The Tufts Weekly on April 21 reported that "great hilarity and celebration" were the order of the day when the news arrived on the campus. A huge bonfire was quickly arranged, and the students marched around the Hill to the accompaniment of the band. At chapel the next morning the juniors who were about to be segregated filed out from the service and were confronted with a double line of men extending from Goddard Chapel to Ballou Hall. The embarrassed young ladies marched to the accompaniment of loud cheering on the part of the masculine contingent. The undergraduate newspaper even devoted an editorial to the subject of segregation and commended the Trustees for their action.<sup>73</sup>

During the Capen and Miner presidencies, male students had been cautious in sharing their thoughts on coeducation. However, this gave way to a generation of students who were comfortable publicly expressing their feelings about sharing their classrooms with women. These male students had the same fears as the faculty and Board of Trustees and were relieved at the separation. The women, however, did not feel this relief. During the first three years, women could decide whether to receive a Tufts Diploma or a Jackson Diploma. When given this choice,

---

<sup>71</sup> Jackson College Box. Letters to Hamilton. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

<sup>72</sup> Miller, "Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952."

<sup>73</sup> Miller.

most women chose to receive a Tufts diploma.<sup>74</sup> This phenomenon was also seen at Harvard's coordinate school Radcliffe in the 1890s. The female students demanded recognition of their Harvard-level coursework from Harvard itself, instead of a diploma from the newer and less respected Radcliffe that was merely countersigned by Harvard.<sup>75, 76</sup>

The coordinate system seemed to be the perfect solution to the two-competing societal concerns Tufts had been grappling with. Jackson College promised to give women a Tufts education without putting them in a mixed-gender environment. The system appeared to offer the social advantages of an all-female school while providing these women the benefits of a Tufts education. Although many female students were dissatisfied with receiving a Jackson College degree for doing Tufts work, this system addressed the concerns of the male students, alumni, and Trustees. It was also deemed the most fiscally responsible option from an administrative perspective.

#### Conclusion:

Despite the importance of the message of segregation, the creation of Jackson College changed little of the day-to-day academic functioning of Tufts. The plan to segregate classes by gender never materialized as there were not enough female students at Jackson College to warrant women's only classes.<sup>77</sup> By 1913, there was no mention of separate courses for women on the roster.<sup>78</sup> Resultantly, Jackson College meant the university continued to teach classes in a

---

<sup>74</sup> Russel Miller.

<sup>75</sup> Jill Conway, "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States."

<sup>76</sup> Perhaps the women at Radcliffe were acting on the awareness that their academic efforts were comparable if not superior to those of the men at Harvard.

<sup>77</sup> Miller, "Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952."

<sup>78</sup> "A Glimpse at Jackson College for Women," Online Exhibits, accessed April 19, 2023, <https://exhibits.tufts.edu/spotlight/glimpse-at-jackson-college>.

coeducational form but with separate housing and social expectations for the male and female students. Despite the cultural and fiscal pushback leading to the creation of Jackson College, Capen's vision came true. The men and women of Tufts and Jackson continued to share in their academics, despite officially being enrolled in separate institutions. Jackson College, however, remained an important social institution into the 1970s, with its own student government, clubs, and student organizations.<sup>79</sup> Tufts and Jackson College still exist as separate legal entities. However, this separation no longer plays a noticeable role in students' daily lives, male or female.

## Bibliography

---

<sup>79</sup> "A Glimpse at Jackson College for Women."

## Primary

- Phi Beta Kappa. Letter from Clark UA025. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Tuftonian 1874. Tuftonian November 1874. The Co-education Question. UP001. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Tufts Weekly. Tufts College, Mass. February 22, 1899. <https://newspapers.tufts.edu>
- Phi Beta Kappa. Proposed bylaws Delta Chapter of Massachusetts May 19, 1900. UA025. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Jackson College Box. Correspondence and reports re: admitting women to Tufts – 1892. Confidential Committee on Segregation Report. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Hamilton Records. Correspondence. Hamilton Letter in Response to NYT. December 11, 1908. UA1.004. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Jackson College Box. Correspondence and reports re: admitting women to Tufts -1892. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Jackson College Box. Correspondence and reports re: admitting women to Tufts -1892. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Jackson College Box. General correspondence and reports co-educational 1893-1909. Letter from Lucy H. Stow June 20, 1894. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Tufts Collegian 1874. Tufts Collegian November 1874. Shall Women be Admitted to Tufts? Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Jackson College Box. Correspondence and reports re: admitting women to Tufts – 1892. Letters to Capen. Lena C Start. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Jackson College Box. Letters to Hamilton. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Jackson College Box. Letters to Hamilton. Letter from Waldo L Cook. October 9, 1907. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Jackson College Box. Letters to Hamilton. Letter from Daniel Branson. October 9, 1907. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Jackson College Box. Letters to Hamilton. Letter from James Burnham. February 26, 1910. UA033. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1891-1912. Hamilton Presidential Address 1909-1910. UA002. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1891-1912. Hamilton Presidential Address 1906-1907. UA002. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1873 – 1891. Capen Presidential address 1893 – 1894. UA001 Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1891-1912. Hamilton Presidential Address 1909-1910. UA002. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1873 – 1891. Capen Presidential address 1893 – 1894. UA001. Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1873 – 1891. Capen Presidential address 1885 – 1886. UA001 Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.
- Office of the Presidents Records Reports of the President 1873 – 1891. Capen Presidential address 1886 – 1887. UA001 Tufts University. Tufts Archival Research Center. Medford, MA.

## Secondary

- Barbara Miller Solomon. *In the Company of Educated Women*. Yale University, 1985.
- Catharine Beecher. “The True Remedy for the Wrongs of Woman; with a History of an Enterprise Having That for Its Object.,” 1851.
- “Chamberlain\_Chap1\_0.Pdf.” Accessed March 15, 2023. [https://www.russellsage.org/sites/default/files/Chamberlain\\_Chap1\\_0.pdf](https://www.russellsage.org/sites/default/files/Chamberlain_Chap1_0.pdf).
- Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Kats. *College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present*, n.d.



- Daily, The Tufts. "Jackson College' Name Stricken from Diplomas." *The Tufts Daily* (blog), April 1, 2002. <https://tuftsdaily.com/archives/2002/04/01/jackson-college-name-stricken-from-diplomas/>.
- Edward H. Clarke. *Sex in Education*, 1875.
- "First Female Graduates of Tufts College | Archives at Tufts." Accessed January 11, 2023. [https://archives.tufts.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/28357](https://archives.tufts.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/28357).
- Goldin, Claudia, and Lawrence F. Katz. "Putting the 'Co' in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present." *Journal of Human Capital* 5, no. 4 (December 2011): 377–417. <https://doi.org/10.1086/663277>.
- Jill Conway. "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States" 14 (1974).
- Langdon, Emily A. "Women's Colleges Then and Now: Access Then, Equity Now." *Peabody Journal of Education* 76, no. 1 (2001): 5–30.
- Linda C. Morice. *Coordinate Colleges for American Women: A Convergence of Interests, 1947-78*. Vol. 63, n.d.
- Lundt, Christine Margaret Mary. "From Coeducation to Coordinate Education and Back Again: A History of Gender in Undergraduate Education at the University of Rochester, 1900--1961." Ph.D., State University of New York at Buffalo. Accessed March 1, 2023. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304647253/abstract/A5E862817CFB42F1PQ/1>.
- Middlebury Magazine. "A Campus of Their Own," February 14, 2019. <https://middleburymagazine.com/features/a-campus-of-their-own/>.
- Online Exhibits. "A Glimpse at Jackson College for Women." Accessed April 19, 2023. <https://exhibits.tufts.edu/spotlight/glimpse-at-jackson-college>.
- Russel Miller. "Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College, 1852-1952," n.d., 1986.
- Street, Tremont. "The Celebrated Dunlap & Co New York Hats," n.d.
- "The Project Gutenberg eBook of Sex in Education, by Edward H. Clarke." Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/18504/18504-h/18504-h.htm>.