Transforming Women's Education

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An examination of the personnel, student body, admission and retention, and organization of Litchfield, Troy, Mount Holyoke, and Music Vale reveals both similarities and differences. Each school became well recognized as an institution of women's higher education (in the case of Music Vale, a first-class music conservatory). However, diverse cultural environments had profound effects on government, the number of staff and faculty employed, and board and tuition.

**Personnel**

Founders of the better female seminaries realized the necessity of having a board of trustees (a board of visitors at Music Vale) in order to succeed. Many of the so-called finishing schools were business ventures, managed by proprietors seeking to profit. A board of trustees, however, had a different purpose. As Emma Willard explained, “A judicious board of trust, competent and desirous to promote its interests, would, in a female as in a male literary institution, be the corner-stone of its prosperity.” While Troy and Mount Holyoke were initially placed under boards of trustees, it is uncertain when the board of visitors became part of Music Vale's organization. In 1827, hoping to counter a decline in enrollment, Litchfield was incorporated as Litchfield Female Academy and placed under the jurisdiction of ten board members. The boards that presided over Troy, Litchfield, Mount Holyoke, and Music Vale consisted of five to fourteen professional men (clergymen, businessmen, and attorneys), usually from the area of the school they administered.
early as 1836, Troy’s mayor and recorder began to appear regularly on the list as ex officio members. In addition the Troy board of trustees appointed a “Committee of Ladies,” who periodically met with Willard on school concerns. Perhaps the board decided such a committee was necessary to ensure that students’ needs were being met.

### STAFF

The number of personnel at each institution varied depending on its operating system, finances, and the availability of qualified employees. Litchfield and Music Vale began with a meager staff, Mount Holyoke opened with a slightly larger number, and that at Troy was even greater. Sarah Pierce served as administrator and sole teacher when Litchfield was established. Apparently Pierce’s two older sisters, Anna and Susan, occasionally assisted her. By the early 1800s, a half-sister, Mary Pierce, served as an assistant and took charge in Sarah’s absence. She continued in this capacity until 1814, when John P. Brace, Pierce’s nephew, joined the staff as co-principal and teacher. Mary Pierce supervised the students who boarded with the Pierce sisters and served as the school’s business manager.

As with Litchfield in its early days, Music Vale depended on Orramel Whittlesey to serve as administrator and instructor. His wife acted as domestic supervisor and financial adviser. Originally she did not favor accommodating students in their home, having a “genteel horror of boarders,” and thus denied many requests. Yet Mrs. Whittlesey became a mother-like figure to the “daughters” away from home and in return was admired by the pupils. The position of vice principal was added sometime before 1858. Sarah Whittlesey, the second daughter, filled this position for several years. Beginning in 1863, Eliza Whittlesey (Mrs. John T. Maginnis, the oldest daughter) likewise served in that capacity in addition to teaching. Six years later Whittlesey employed his youngest daughter, Karolyn, as second vice principal as well as teacher.

Mount Holyoke and Troy operated under a board of trustees who had an avid interest in women’s education and the government of the schools. Unlike Music Vale, Mount Holyoke opened after significant planning. Troy was initially founded in Middlebury, Vermont; later moved to Waterford, New York; and finally made its home in Troy.

When Mount Holyoke opened in 1837, its personnel consisted of the principal (Mary Lyon), an assistant principal (Eunice Caldwell), two teachers, three students serving as assistant pupils (teaching assistants), and a supervisor (Miss Peters) of the domestic department. Miss Peters stayed only a few months; rather than finding an outside replacement, Lyon chose two pupil
assistants, “General Leaders,” to co-supervise the work, especially the cooking. Since one of Lyon’s main purposes in founding Mount Holyoke was to provide education for middle-class women, she determined that the school would be conducted on a tight budget. Although the board of trustees gave Lyon permission to hire her own staff, she did so judiciously. Lyon served as the principal of the seminary until her untimely death in 1849. Mary C. Whitman, who joined the faculty in 1839 and became an associate principal in 1842, accepted the principal’s position but soon resigned because of failing health. At that time Mary W. Chapin, who had been on the faculty since 1843, assisted by an unnamed colleague, assumed the duties of acting principal. In 1852 the board appointed Chapin as principal, a position she retained for twelve years. Sophia D. Stoddard accepted the position of acting principal in 1865. It was common for the seminary to employ one or two associate principals, although some catalogs do not mention anyone filling this position.

When Emma Willard moved her school to Troy, New York, she decided upon the personnel necessary for the seminary to operate efficiently. The faculty and staff consisted of a principal, vice principal, business manager, and physician, along with domestic superintendents, teachers, and assistant teachers. Dr. John Willard (Emma’s husband) served as the business manager and school physician until his death in 1825, after which Emma assumed the responsibility of business manager in addition to her duties as principal. Emma Willard served as principal from 1821 to 1838, except for 1830 when her sister, Almira Hart Lincoln, held this position during Willard’s sabbatical in Europe. Around 1829 Willard sought assistance in administering the school and engaged Lincoln as vice principal. In 1832 Lincoln was replaced by Nancy Hinsdale and Sarah L. Hudson. In 1838 Willard relinquished her position as principal to her son, John, and his wife (Sarah L. Hudson, whom he had married in 1834). Theodosia Hudson (sister of Sarah Hudson Willard) was hired in 1841 to assist Nancy Hinsdale, who continued as vice principal until 1851.

INCREASE IN STAFF AND FACULTY

The number of staff and faculty increased at each institution in order to keep pace with rising enrollment and changes in curriculum. Litchfield and Music Vale continued to have the smallest faculties; Troy had the largest, although Mount Holyoke was close behind. The largest number of teachers at Litchfield, recorded in 1825, was five: Sarah Pierce and John P. Brace; Mrs. L. E. Brace, an assistant; drawing teacher Mary W. Peck; and music teacher George R. Herbert. A paucity of documentation makes it difficult to
determine when Whittlesey began to hire other teachers at Music Vale. Each of the Whittlesey daughters, Eliza, Sarah, Jennette (“Nettie”), and Karolyn (“Katie” or “Kate”) served on the faculty at various times. In 1851 Eliza was the only other instructor besides her father. Six years later, however, there were five teachers called “assistants” (apparently not students, as referred to at other institutions), and in 1869 (when Music Vale had its largest faculty) there were six teachers in addition to the principal and the first and second vice principals (see fig. 3.7 for a faculty photograph).

During Lyon’s tenure at Mount Holyoke (1837–1849), the number of teachers, including Lyon, ranged from four in 1837 to nineteen in 1844, with an average of thirteen to sixteen. Following Lyon’s death in 1849, the number of teachers varied from sixteen to twenty in 1857 and increased to twenty-two or twenty-four between 1859 and 1865. In 1828 Troy employed thirteen teachers and officers. By 1847 there were eighteen teachers and two domestic instructors. As of 1865 there were twenty-eight teachers, including two principals and one vice principal.

In order to maintain high standards, the principals were selective in their choice of teachers. Although Lyon was a devout Christian and emphasized more religious training than was provided at Litchfield, Troy, or Music Vale, she did not require any specific religious affiliation of the faculty members other than that they should be Christians. Likewise, Mount Holyoke employed only women as full-time teachers. Troy and Litchfield hired both men and women, while Whittlesey was the sole male teacher at Music Vale. Whittlesey required his teachers to have an advanced education; most had several years of teaching experience. Lyon and Willard preferred to hire teachers they had trained to teach the academic courses. When Willard moved her seminary to Troy, a number of teachers accompanied her, most of whom she had instructed, along with “accomplished” professors who taught the modern languages, painting, and music. At that time it would have been financially prohibitive to employ educated male professors to teach all subjects. The two teachers employed during the first year of Mount Holyoke were graduates of Ipswich Female Seminary in Ipswich, Massachusetts; thereafter Lyon chose Mount Holyoke graduates as teachers. She selected only those who had been good students, dedicated to the seminary, capable, and eager to work.

**ASSISTANT TEACHERS**

In order to meet the demand for teachers, Litchfield, Mount Holyoke, and Troy chose some of the best students to serve as “assistant teachers” in addition to attending their own classes. In the early years of Litchfield, Pierce began to have some advanced students teach music, art, and needlework,
courses in which she lacked proficiency. Mount Holyoke appointed current students to serve as teaching assistants, who often taught such subjects as vocal music, drawing, Latin, and French. Some years there were as many as four teaching assistants, while other years only one or two; in 1856 and 1862 there were none. Additional students were chosen as “Candidates for Teachers.”

Pupils at Music Vale who had done exceptional work and possessed leadership skills served as student officers: superior, premier, and monitress. Twice a year the pupils nominated the superior and premier officers, subject to Whittlesey’s endorsement. He selected those for the position of monitress. To further signify this honor, the superior, premier, and monitresses wore special regalia. The number of student officers apparently varied according to the number of teachers, size of the student body, and number of qualified students to fill these roles. In 1857, for example, in addition to six faculty, a superior, premier, and four monitresses were chosen, while in 1869 there were nine teachers but only three student officers: superior, premier, and monitress. It seems probable that having fewer student officers can be attributed to a decrease in the student body, undoubtedly a result of the Civil War. In 1857 the number of each was the same, but in 1863 and 1869 the number of students was one-third that of the faculty.

**TEACHERS’ RESPONSIBILITIES**

Teachers had demanding loads. In addition to academic teaching at Mount Holyoke, for instance, each teacher was required to perform extra duties such as hearing recitations, supervising the study and reading rooms, doing library and domestic work, monitoring hallways or the visiting room, teaching calisthenics, and helping to care for students in the sickroom. If capable of teaching drawing or singing, these were added to her load. The number of extra duties and hours varied weekly, ranging from 17 to 58 1/2 per week. Perhaps the number of academic classes increased during the weeks her additional duties were reduced. Some teachers also had charge of a “section” of pupils and received an extra forty dollars in annual compensation.

There was a large turnover among the faculty at Mount Holyoke. Marriage, health issues, and heavy workloads forced many to leave their positions temporarily or even permanently. Mary Q. Brown, who joined the faculty in 1850, wrote to her mother shortly after the school year had begun concerning the demands of her job: “I know my health will never hold out. No one that has never tried them, can tell anything at all about the duties of a teacher here. It is a constant wear & tear, no cessation whatever.” Apparently Brown did not return the following year, as her name is not listed in the catalog.
Student Body

Each institution attracted a diverse student body depending on its location, expenses, courses offered, and socioeconomic status. According to tradition, Litchfield opened in 1792 with 1 student; Music Vale had 2, Troy, 90, and Mount Holyoke, 116. The peak enrollment at Litchfield occurred in 1816 with 157 students, after which attendance began to decline. Mount Holyoke experienced its highest enrollment in 1847 with 235 students chosen from over 500 applicants, while the largest enrollment at Troy occurred in 1853 with 414 students. The student body continued to grow at Music Vale until the Civil War; the average number of students was 80, and some years there were as many as 100 pupils. It was common for the schools to receive more applications than they could accept; often they had to put students’ names on waiting lists. Mount Holyoke requested that students apply to the principal around the first of October preceding the beginning of the next school year. Students making later applications risked refusal for lack of room. The general character and educational background of each young woman, as well as the timing of her application, were taken into account; those denied for lack of room were given priority the next year. By at least 1851 Music Vale applicants were advised to make written applications to the principal; they would be notified when a vacancy occurred.

GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

Only Mount Holyoke did not accept day scholars in addition to boarding students. One of the most remarkable features of Litchfield was the number of nonresident students. A majority of the students beyond Litchfield had associations with people in the town or in the state: many came because they could board with relatives or friends; others had a parent or relative who had attended the academy or Judge Tapping Reeve’s law school; and some had brothers currently enrolled in the law school. Distinguished local names proved helpful in attracting daughters from other elite families. Because of the town’s nationwide reputation, by 1802 only 11 percent of the student body was from Litchfield; 25 percent came from outside the state. Students came from Connecticut, New York, Georgia, Massachusetts, and the islands of West Indies. Eventually the school attracted young women from nearly every state in the Union as well as from Upper and Lower Canada, Ireland, and the West Indies.

Like Litchfield, most of the students attending Music Vale came from outside Connecticut. As Whittlesey’s reputation spread beyond the local
communities, Music Vale attracted young women from a wider geographical area, including the Carolinas, Kansas, Kentucky, Nova Scotia, and the West Indies. In its heyday, nearly one-half of the students were “genteel beauties from the south.” Although Troy drew pupils from every part of the nation, Canada, and the West Indies, a large number were often day students. Of the 222 students enrolled in 1831, for example, 103 were from Troy. Young women attending Mount Holyoke came from across the nation, including the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), American Indian reservations, and foreign countries (Canada, India, Turkey, Ceylon, China, Borneo, and Holland). Most of the student body, however, came from rural New England and the state of New York; nearly one-half of the pupils were from Massachusetts.

**STUDENTS’ AGES**

The varied ages of the student body reflected the family’s status. Those from upper-class homes tended to begin school at an earlier age and remained longer, and with less frequent periods of absence, than those of lesser means. Older students often came from less privileged homes, where limited assets allowed them to attend only brief summer sessions at town-supported schools. Many women among these students wanted to become teachers; some were already teaching in a town school. Because of their ages and experience, these pupils frequently served as assistant teachers while attending Litchfield.

There does not appear to have been a specific age for admission to Litchfield or Music Vale, and no age requirement was in place at Troy until 1865. Unlike other women’s seminaries and academies, Mount Holyoke’s minimum admission age of sixteen was comparable to that of applicants to regional men’s colleges. Pupils could be as young as six or as old as their mid-twenties when they enrolled at Litchfield Academy; the majority were between thirteen and sixteen. No documentation exists to indicate students’ ages at Music Vale. Given the intensity of the program, it seems likely that the pupils would have been at least in their teens. Although Willard’s *Plan for Improving Female Education* suggests students would not be ready to enter the seminary until about age fourteen, no age was specified in Troy catalogs until the 1865–1866 academic year, when the school required students to be at least seven years old. The average age was seventeen, though many older women enrolled, some of them young widows wanting to further their education. Mary Lyon’s objective was to educate mature young women; thus, Mount Holyoke reserved space for older pupils. In 1845 a student in the junior class wrote to a friend that many of her classmates were between twenty and
CHAPTER 4

thirty but looked older. She doubted whether more than twenty were younger than seventeen. By 1846 the preferred age limit for entrance was seventeen or eighteen. Those entering the senior class in 1860 were required to be at least eighteen. The senior class was intended for young women who could demonstrate exceptional emotional and mental maturity. In order to achieve educational benefits in this class, Mount Holyoke encouraged prospective pupils to postpone this part of their education if possible.

GENDER AND CLASS

Litchfield was unique in that it accepted male students. Since records of male pupils were not kept until 1817, it is not possible to determine exactly how many attended. After that year twelve boys were enrolled. The number of male students peaked in the summer of 1822 with twenty-six; there were only two in the summer of 1828. There were never more than five males in one term from outside Litchfield. All of the male students who came from out of town either had a connection with someone in Litchfield or accompanied their sisters to the academy.

Although Lyon founded Mount Holyoke specifically for women of the middle class, some students from the lower and upper classes did enroll. It appears that many of the students who attended Litchfield or Music Vale were from the upper-middle or upper class. While Troy catered to the upper class, it also accepted students from lower classes. Leading families of the nation were eager to place their daughters under the tutelage of Emma Willard—a woman who had attained much fame. The fathers of some of the students who attended Litchfield and Troy were judges, governors, lawyers, congressmen, ministers, physicians, or businessmen. Writing about the Troy student population, biographer Alma Lutz names daughters of several governors: Van Ness of Vermont, Cass of Michigan, Worthington of Ohio, and Skinner of Georgia, in addition to three nieces of Washington Irving (Effie, Catherine, and Sarah) and a niece of Mary Wollstonecraft. Well-known names on enrollment charts at Litchfield included the Livingstons, the Gardiners, and the Delafields, all of whom can be traced back to the “long-established pre-Revolutionary English ‘aristocratic’ or ‘manor’ families of New York State.” Without the patronage and support of prominent and well-to-do families, it is unlikely that Pierce’s school would have achieved its reputation and permanence as a foremost female institution.

No information is available regarding the economic level of students at Music Vale. Given that daughters of many families in the United States during Music Vale’s existence would have been fortunate to receive a higher
education, it seems the school must have attracted students from the upper-middle or upper classes. Further, Whittlesey’s aid in the students’ preparation and initial admittance aligned with a higher class status. He made it as convenient as possible for students to arrive at Music Vale in a notice titled “Directions for THE JOURNEY” with specific travel instructions and promised a warm welcome.64

Unlike the other educators, Mary Lyon’s primary goal was to establish an institution of higher learning for young women who, like herself, could not otherwise have afforded an education. The majority came from families who could pay only a modest sum for their daughters’ education, and such schools as Troy Female Seminary likely would not have been considered. Lyon made special arrangements to accommodate those whose finances did not allow them to pay for board and tuition. More than any other institution, Mount Holyoke succeeded in providing a higher education for young women from families whose real estate was valued at no more than three thousand dollars.65

Admission and Retention

There was a significant variation in the admission and retention requirements at Music Vale, Troy, Litchfield, and Mount Holyoke. Music Vale appears to be the only institution to require an endorsement validating the student’s character. Young women who were not acquainted with a current student or a member of the faculty needed to bring a letter of recommendation from a minister or leading citizen of their village as an introduction to Whittlesey.66

The length of the academic year was forty to forty-eight weeks.67 Pupils were admitted at Troy, Litchfield, and Music Vale anytime during the year, while Mount Holyoke required students to be present at the beginning of the fall term.68 Troy required its students to remain through the examination held at the close of each term, while Mount Holyoke expected them to stay through the academic year, including the public examination and anniversary exercises, unless prior arrangements had been made upon entrance.69 No student was admitted to Music Vale for less than one term. Litchfield had no such requirement; the majority of students stayed only one or two semesters, although some stayed for two to four or more years.70 Most of the pupils with the longest attendance were from the town and had enrolled at an early age. It was common for young women to transfer to other female schools. At least thirteen students enrolled at Troy after leaving Litchfield.71

Music Vale, Troy, and Mount Holyoke proposed programs with designated lengths of time for students to complete their education. Whittlesey
maintained that students attending Music Vale could complete the course in one school year. Willard purported that the allotted time for a pupil to complete her education would be three years but could extend to four or more, depending on the number of electives the parents and guardians chose for their daughters or wards to pursue. However, if a student had previously studied any of the subjects offered at the school, she might enroll in a higher class, perhaps reducing graduation time by one or two years. Mary Lyon also constructed a three-year program, which was expanded to four years in 1860. Lyon was aware that some who entered the junior class would not have the finances, time, or discipline to finish the program. Given existing views on women's education, she faced opposition in retaining the one-year requirement. She disliked the practice of a student moving from one school to another, even between schools with comparable academic standards.

Mount Holyoke set a new standard for women's higher education, requiring entrance examinations and initiating a probationary period. Every pupil had to pass comprehensive entrance examinations on all preparatory studies in order to be admitted into the junior class. Students frequently had difficulty passing these examinations and were either forced to return home or placed in a remedial class until they could demonstrate proficiency. In 1847 Emily Dickinson noted that "quite a number . . . left, on account of finding the examinations more difficult than they anticipated." She explained that Mary Lyon had increased the standard of the entrance examination to eliminate students who were not prepared to pursue a collegiate education. Dickinson continued: "You cannot imagine how trying they [the examinations] are, because if we cannot go through with them all in a specified time, we are sent home. . . . I am sure that I never would endure the suspense which I endured during those three days again for all the treasures of the world." Candidates desiring admission to the middle or senior classes needed to pass examinations on all preparatory studies and on "as many branches of the regular course as shall be equivalent to a full preparation." Each year Lyon admitted an average of twenty students for advanced standing either in the middle or senior classes. In addition, returning students were required to take examinations on their studies from the previous year. A probationary period at the beginning of the school year allowed seminary personnel to ascertain whether any students lacked discipline or maturity. Those deficient in either area were sent home for their own betterment as well as that of other students.
DOMESTIC WORK

Unlike the other institutions, Mount Holyoke students performed domestic duties to reduce tuition and to promote a family atmosphere. Lyon argued that domestic work should not be mistaken for manual labor, which was then popular among contemporary schools, yet she faced strong opposition to her plan well before Mount Holyoke opened its doors. In a letter to Hannah White, dated August 1, 1834, Lyon wrote: “You know it has become very popular for our highest and best seminaries for males, to be moderate in the expenses. . . . But how different it is with regard to female seminaries. Even at the present time, almost the middle of the 19th century, do not many value our high female seminaries according to their expenses? Is it not popular, & rather gratifying to young ladies to attend expensive seminaries when perhaps their brothers would rather glory in being able to pursue their studies at a moderate expense?” It was difficult for many to appreciate the value of higher education for women obtained at a reduced cost through housekeeping duties.

Mary Lyon concluded that domestic work would weed out problematic students: “The domestic work would prove a sieve, that would exclude from the school the refuse, the indolent, the fastidious, and the weakly, of whom you could never make much, and leave the finest of the wheat, the energetic, the benevolent, and those whose early training had been favorable to usefulness, from whom you might expect great things.” Lyon was as judicious regarding the students she admitted as the teachers she employed.

Rather than detract from education, the domestic requirement proved beneficial: it reduced the operating costs enough to allow students to live in campus housing instead of residing with local families, created additional exercise, improved students’ health, and provided a tonic for homesickness and despondency. Each student received an assignment with which she was familiar and worked from thirty to sixty minutes daily. Lyon did not propose that students learn new domestic chores; she insisted that the home provided the best place for this, with the mother as the appropriate teacher. Lyon did not intend to replace a mother’s responsibility in teaching her daughter domestic duties, thus removing any suspicion that education would make a woman unfit for her role in life.

EXPENSES

Many parents financially sacrificed to send their daughters to Litchfield, Troy, Music Vale, or Mount Holyoke. Table 4.1 provides a comparison of
the expense to attend each institution. The minimum figure often covered only board and tuition. The earliest record at Litchfield is a bill addressed to Susan Masters in 1805, which covered twenty-one weeks' tuition ($7.00), school expenses ($0.33), and entrance fee ($1.00). In 1819 the tuition fee was $6 per quarter (twelve weeks). By 1823 a student studying music and painting in addition to the regular course of study and boarding could expect to pay a minimum of $180 to $200.

Troy's cost was higher. In 1823, $200 covered only board and tuition in academic subjects. Because of inflation, Willard found it necessary in 1835 to raise the fee to $240, while five years later a reduction reflected an economic depression. The cost of board and tuition remained the same from 1840 until 1863, when it increased to $280 per year. In 1865 the price increased by $20 per year, or $150 per term. “Extra” courses, such as music, painting, drawing, and languages, could significantly drive up the cost. For example, in 1865 a student enrolled in extra courses could pay as much as $500 per year.

Although Orramel Whittlesey did not view Music Vale as a business venture and was not interested in making a profit, the cost of board and tuition there was comparable to that at Troy. Daughters of clergymen and missionaries received liberal discounts—one-fourth of the expenses. The same privileges were granted to widows and daughters of soldiers who died in the war. Whittlesey also encouraged students to remain the full school year by offering a substantial discount. In 1855, for example, the fee per quarter (eleven weeks) was $58; should the pupil remain all four quarters, the charge would be only $200, a savings of $32. In addition, there was no extra charge for instruction in voice, thoroughbass, counterpoint, composition, voice, guitar, harp, melodeon, organ lessons, or for instrument use. By at least 1863, expenses increased by $50 per term (twenty weeks).

Since Mary Lyon hailed from central New England, she was aware of the need for an institution for middle-class students in that area. To help reduce financial strain, she established Mount Holyoke in the vicinity to minimize

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travel expenses. She strove to help young women whose circumstances required them to be self-supporting, setting the board and tuition at two-thirds the cost of higher education at schools such as Ipswich and Troy. Initially the board of trustees set the fee at $64 per year. Against the board’s recommendation, she made it more affordable by reducing the fee to $60 per year. The cost of tuition remained the same for sixteen years; the seminary raised it to $68 per year in 1854. There was an increase each of the following two years and again in 1863; it began to rise annually thereafter. Unlike Troy, Litchfield, or Music Vale, there was no additional fee for elective courses at Mount Holyoke.

Conclusion

An examination of the structure at Litchfield Female Academy, Troy and Mount Holyoke Female Seminaries, and Music Vale Seminary is telling on many levels. Though the institutions shared some similarities, the cultural context and goals for each school had a distinct effect on its government, personnel, and student body. The setting for Litchfield Academy, a town known for its professional and social status, created an environment that appreciated and supported women’s higher education. This elitist group, along with the prestige of the law school, helped the academy to attract students from the upper levels of society. By the time Emma Willard moved her school to Troy, she had achieved an exalted reputation for her work in women’s higher education. The support of city officials and the citizens of Troy enabled Willard to operate the institution envisioned in her plan, one that would provide an optimal education for women at the collegiate level.

Mary Lyon succeeded in managing Mount Holyoke on a reasonable budget that allowed women to obtain a higher education. Admission prerequisites and domestic duty requirements were a major distinction between Lyon’s seminary and those at Litchfield and Troy. Music Vale, like Litchfield and Troy, appealed to women of the higher class. Further, it was unique in offering an intense one-year program that trained women to teach music on a professional level.

The cultural contexts and structures of these four institutions are crucial to understanding the academic and music education they provided. An examination of the curricula they offered reveals that music education at these schools was valued as more than a mere social accomplishment.