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Commitment

In June of 1872 Alice Freeman, accompanied by her father, traveled from Binghamton, New York, to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Their route took them across Canada from Niagara Falls to Windsor, Ontario, and they changed trains in Detroit. Alice made this trip several times over the next four years. The journey was long, tedious, and she had to spend a night on the train, which arrived in Detroit in the morning. But she usually traveled by drawing room, purchased a berth for the night, provided herself with an ample hamper of lunch from home, and enjoyed the journey. [1](#) This first trip with her father combined the excitement of academic exploration and new geographical vistas. She had never before ventured beyond the Susquehanna River valley.

Alice and James Freeman spent commencement week in Ann Arbor. Their purpose was to secure Alice's admission to the University of Michigan, but their visit also allowed them to assess the institution and the town where Alice was to spend most of the next four years. In the 1870s, Michigan's graduation festivities lasted several days, and candidates for admission the next fall were examined along with the festivities which included baccalaureate services, receptions, class day exercises, and commencement proper. The Freemans seem to have remained in Ann Arbor for the full program. Madelon Stockwell, the first woman admitted to the University of Michigan, only two years before, gave one of the commencement orations, as would Alice four years later. [2](#)

In the late 1860s and early 1870s when Alice Freeman's decision to go to college was taking solid form, higher education for women was on the threshold of revolutionary expansion. The number of women seeking college training increased dramatically, and, both as cause and result of that increase, society's attitudes toward educated women changed markedly. When Alice Freeman set off for Michigan in 1872, attending college, according to historian Barbara Solomon, was still "an unusual and complicated choice for native white women." [3](#) However, it was not truly a radical choice, and by 1900 these female collegians were completely accepted. At the turn of the century blacks and the foreign-born found the road to college difficult to travel.

The women who chose to pursue higher education in the early 1870s had, in fact, a wide choice of institutions, ranging from women's colleges and academies (as classical preparatory schools were called) to coeducational universities and teachers' colleges. [4](#) The best of the women's academies, such as Troy, Mount Holyoke, and Catharine Beecher's schools, foreshadowed the women's colleges, the first of which was Vassar, founded in 1865. The first coeducational institution, Oberlin, had admitted women in 1837, followed by a few other small denominational colleges, for example Hillsdale and Antioch in the 1840s and 1850s. By 1870, eight state universities, all in the West, admitted women and enrolled about 200 female students, and about forty private colleges were coeducational and trained some 600 women. However, many college women, about 2,200 in all, were enrolled in the growing roster of women's colleges. [5](#) In 1870, according to census figures, over 11,000 women were enrolled in some kind of higher education, mostly in classical academies and teacher training institutions. Women were 21 percent of all students. However, actual numbers were small. Only 0.7 percent of American women eighteen to

twenty-one years of age attended college. [6](#) By 1900, nearly 3 percent of college-age women were receiving training beyond high school, and women made up 40 percent of the total students in tertiary institutions. [7](#)

Why did increasing numbers of women aspire to college education in the last decades of the nineteenth century? In part, no doubt, because the colleges were there. The middle decades of the nineteenth century were a period of rapid college building in the United States, rivaled only by post-World War II expansion. State colleges and universities proliferated west of the Alleghenies and in the South. Part of this pattern of new institution building was stimulated by the Morrill Act, which passed Congress in 1863 and offered federal land grants to states that provided agricultural education. But the number of church-related colleges also increased rapidly at mid-century. In the Midwest the new immigrant denominations, a half-dozen Lutheran synods reflecting national origins and two Dutch Reform bodies founded their own colleges, imitating the patterns earlier established by the Anglo-protestant denominations. Not all of these institutions admitted women, but most of the immigrant denominational colleges did, and the new teachers' colleges, usually funded at least in part by the states, invariably accepted women. Although the many new Catholic colleges were closed to women, Catholic women's academies multiplied. [8](#) Hardly anyone in the settled parts of the country lived more than a few miles from some college or other.

Another factor directly encouraged the education of women. Employment opportunities were growing. By 1870 one woman in eight over ten years of age was employed. [9](#) Most of their jobs were as servant girls or factory hands, but women had also preempted the teaching profession. The few men who continued to be schoolmasters in the post-Civil War period were largely in administrative posts or taught briefly to earn money to continue their professional educations. Women became the teachers, and, as secondary schools increased in numbers, the demand for educated women increased proportionately. [10](#)

From the beginning, women's higher education was intended as professional education. The early academies saw themselves as training teachers. For example, Alfred Academy, and later University, in western New York which was coeducational from its beginnings, defined its primary mission as training teachers, and at mid-century 150 teachers were graduated there annually. [11](#) The first colleges admitting women and the women attending those colleges saw teacher training as their function. Even fiction emphasized that American "girls" going to college were after professional training and the means of earning a living. [12](#) The same thing was true in England. Queen's College and Bedford College, opening in the late 1840s, were intended to upgrade the training of governesses. The North London Collegiate School for Girls and Cheltenham Ladies College, both dating from the 1850s, trained teachers for the middle schools. [13](#) Women also became teachers in Germany. They were hired in Berlin for the first time in 1863. By 1880 women totaled 461 out of 1,490 public elementary school teachers, and in the late 1860s and 1870s institutions for training them proliferated. [14](#) Higher education for women had professional roots on both sides of the Atlantic. Women went to college to prepare for a profession as well as to indulge their desire for knowledge. [15](#)

At the same time, the young woman who aspired to college faced considerable social pressure to stay home. A college education was not viewed as a broad highway to social prestige and

upward mobility, although for Alice Freeman it eventually led to both. Nor was higher education seen as preparing women for homemaking and parenthood, although seminaries sometimes framed their purposes in domestic rhetoric. Instead conventional wisdom decreed that homemaking could best be taught by female relatives, and parents were likely to see the overeducated female as unsuited for marriage or at least unmarriageable. And if parents, who paid most of the bills, did not see it that way, pundits did.

Although earlier in the century women's ability to learn had been seriously questioned, the educability of women had been proved several times over by 1870. Women had been exposed to academic pursuits and had done as well as or better than men. But the arguments questioning the wisdom of educating women were not so easily put down. In the post-Civil War period women's increasing presence in institutions of higher learning only seemed to intensify the public attack. At least part of the male establishment felt genuinely threatened by women's accomplishments in their sphere. Darwinian theory taught that woman's sphere was biologically determined and lent the weight of apparent scientific proof to women's prescribed domestic role. [16](#) But the most belabored argument by 1870 was that women's limited energy would be used up in study and leave them unfit for their real destiny as childbearers. The best-developed and best-known formulation of these ideas appeared in Edward H. Clarke's *Sex in Education* (1873). [17](#)

Whether college women found these ideas personally threatening is not easily verified. Some writers have assumed that they did. [18](#) But I find no evidence that Alice or her Michigan friends read Clarke or were aware of him. Not once in Freeman's correspondence is Clarke's book mentioned. Some women students probably cared little for marriage and children, but others did. Certainly Alice's desirability as a marriage partner seems not to have been diminished one whit by her pursuit of higher studies. Perhaps Clarke's argument should have run that education would make women less eager for marriage rather than decrease their capacity for it. But Alice's family accepted the imperative that she be able to earn her own living as a corollary to her receiving college training, and they seem not to have been unduly concerned about whether she would not marry or be unfitted by college for marital responsibilities. In fact, had she married any earlier than she did, they would have been very apprehensive about their own financial future. They agreed to the bargain she proposed, that if they educated her, she would educate her younger siblings, and this meant at least the postponement of marriage.

Once college became a possibility Alice had to decide where to go. She seems to have made that decision some time in the spring of 1872 before the June trip to Ann Arbor. According to her husband she saw herself as having few choices. [19](#) Elmira, founded in 1855 and legally a college, was close at hand, but its resources were so meager that its offerings in 1872 were not much beyond the preparatory school level. Mount Holyoke was little more than a ladies' seminary. Vassar, the first true women's college, had opened seven years before, and was duly considered by Alice. She may actually have been ready to enroll at Vassar when a male Windsor classmate told her that its entrance requirements were lower than for the eastern men's colleges. [20](#) Alice could never have accepted something she thought second rate. In any case, more than that must have gone into her decision. Vassar, according to its catalog, aimed "to accomplish for young women what colleges of the first class accomplish for young men, that is to furnish them the means of thorough, well-proportioned, and liberal education, *but one adapted to their wants*

in life." (italics mine). [21](#) Could Alice have rebelled at the idea that gender would shape her education in any way?

In any case she seems not to have trusted education designed solely for women. Perhaps her tutor and ex-fiance, Thomas Barclay, urged that Michigan was her best opportunity since the eastern men's colleges were closed to her. Or her determination to obtain the same education as her male confreres may have been fostered by her previous experience with coeducation. All her life Alice Freeman believed that her choice of a coeducational institution was fortunate. Her husband reported that she was convinced coeducation replaced "giddiness and sentimentality" with good sense and companionship. The choice of adjectives may well have been his rather than hers. But he believed she could not have built Wellesley so strongly "if she had not been trained in the company of young men." [22](#) Ironically, one of the major builders of America's women's colleges was both enriched by and a firm supporter of coeducation. Certainly Michigan provided useful patterns for her later work at the University of Chicago.

Alice seems not to have considered Cornell, the only private university admitting women, or Oberlin, Antioch, or other coeducational denominational colleges. She looked to the new state universities, of which Michigan was the oldest and largest. Certainly it offered high-quality training. Michigan was among the most prestigious universities in the country. By the 1870s there were disciplines, such as history, in which it excelled Harvard and Yale. [23](#) And it was less expensive than many of its competitors.

In 1872 the University of Michigan, which opened its doors in Ann Arbor in 1841, had three flourishing colleges, literature and science, medicine, and law. Twelve hundred students, over half in its professional schools, made it the largest university in the country. [24](#) Its library had recently been increased by 10,000 volumes through the purchase of the collection of a Heidelberg scholar, and like Harvard its 40,000 volumes were being catalogued on cards. [25](#) Its zoological collection by 1876 contained a quarter million specimens, over half of which were added during Alice's tenure at the university. [26](#) Its student constituency was national in scope. Over half its undergraduates came from out of state, many from nearby midwestern states, but students from five foreign countries and thirty states were at Michigan in the winter of 1872- 73. [27](#) Michigan was cosmopolitan and eclectic.



Alice Freeman when she arrived at the University of Michigan in 1872. (Courtesy of Wellesley College Archives.)

The state of Michigan's first constitution included an article on education modeled on the Prussian system of schools with a great university at its head. Public funds had been allocated for support of a university from the beginning of statehood. Henry Philip Tappan, the university's first president, was a great admirer of German scholarship and the German university system and established innovative patterns that were to characterize Michigan's next thirty years. His willingness to experiment attracted young scholars with new ideas to the faculty. For example, Andrew Dickson White, later founding president of Cornell, found it an easy choice to forgo a Yale professorship for which he had trained in Europe to begin his academic career at Michigan.

[28](#) In fact the man who much later was to become Alice's husband, George Herbert Palmer, a distinguished Harvard classicist and philosopher, had hoped for an offer from Michigan in 1870. He saw Michigan as a "fresh field" where the religious aberration of his first wife (she was a Swedenborgian) would be less embarrassing and where he could develop freely his scholarly ideas and experiment with his teaching. [29](#)

When the Freemans arrived in Ann Arbor, Michigan's fourth president, James Burrill Angell, had just completed his first academic year on campus. Angell had been lured from the University of Vermont because he found in Michigan an institution "shaped under broader and more generous views of university life than most of the eastern colleges." [30](#) Angell was also attracted because Michigan "had in its faculties at the time of my arrival men of marked ability." [31](#) Angell, in turn, attracted new faculty, seven in the fall of 1872 alone. [32](#) And Angell gave his full support to the university's new commitment to coeducation, initiated just the year before he arrived.

The university was strengthened in many ways under Angell's presidency which lasted until 1909. Women found a secure place (as students, not faculty) in all its colleges, including medicine and law. [33](#) Angell also deliberately buttressed Michigan's already strong commitments, which dated from the Tappan era, to the basic sciences. In the early 1870s while Alice Freeman was still a student, Charles Kendall Adams introduced the seminar method of teaching history, her major field of interest, another example of the innovative, venturesome atmosphere Angell encouraged on campus.

Alice and her father were ushered on that June morning in 1872 into Angell's office, for Angell served as registrar, dean of the Literary College, and professor of international law as well as president. Angell met the Freemans in the law building. University Hall, a much grander edifice linking the original classroom and dormitory buildings erected in 1840, a building that typified the dynamic expansion of the university, was under construction next door. Angell described Alice as he remembered her from that first encounter as "a simple modest girl of seventeen . . . a child of much promise, possessed [of] a bright alert mind, of great energy, of quick sympathies and an instinctive desire to be helpful to others." [34](#) Angell was immediately smitten by that charismatic personality, and he was to remain her adoring friend and fervent supporter for the rest of her life.

In order to be admitted to the university, Alice had to pass examinations administered by the faculty. Nineteenth-century colleges directed their own entrance examinations. College Boards were not available until 1903. [35](#) Alice met formidable obstacles. Unfortunately, she received heavy conditions in Greek and mathematics, and the examiners decided further preparation was in order. [36](#) But Angell himself took responsibility for overriding the examiners and for admitting her "on a trial of six weeks," a confidence Angell found "fully justified." [37](#) Alice erased the conditions but not without great effort. She studied all summer with a Windsor classmate, George Smith, who was preparing for Amherst. [38](#) She stayed in Ann Arbor through her vacations the first year. She hired tutors in Greek and in algebra. The other subjects she made up by herself while carrying freshman work. [39](#)



The University of Michigan in 1872. University Hall is still incomplete. The Law Building is on the left. (Courtesy of Bentley Historical Library.)

When Alice Freeman came for her entrance examinations she had her father for support. When she returned to Ann Arbor in the fall to begin her freshman year, she was alone, separated from her family for the first time. At least she had seen Ann Arbor before, and had taken part in a form of freshman orientation that spring. And she had potential women friends. There were eleven women among the seventy-five students in the freshman literary class. She had seen and probably met Madelon Stockwell the previous spring and noted the honors she received. But what sustained this tall, slender, black-eyed girl was her desire for new horizons. She was probably the first resident of Windsor to journey so far west in quest of a college degree. She had studied all summer; she was prepared to work hard.

Alice Freeman arrived at the little Ann Arbor, Michigan, Central Railroad station at midday. Her room, directly across State Street from the campus square, must have been engaged during her June visit, for she wrote home that her landlady was expecting her and had dinner waiting. [40](#) She both boarded and roomed at the same place and had a front parlor to herself that first year, although Lucy Andrews, later to become her best friend and roommate, lived upstairs. [41](#) She described her room as pleasant, "nicely furnished, with everything one could want, even to bookshelves." [42](#) The new First Congregational Church was being built on one side of her rooming house. On the other side a school for little children held sway. The location was convenient but hardly quiet. Undoubtedly she was tired and a little frightened. But I suspect the black eyes shone, and that she was eager to begin her new life as a student.

Of necessity Freeman plunged into academic work. Classes were large and classrooms crowded. Eleven hundred students were taught by only thirty-three professors. Mass education already was well on its way in the United States, quite in contrast to European elitist institutions. For example, in the 1870s the University of Marburg in Germany had only 430 students and sixty-two professors. [43](#) Also Michigan had many rules. It had not completely moved from its small college beginnings. Class attendance was compulsory. Expulsion was automatic after ten unexcused absences. [44](#)

The freshman classical curriculum, in which Alice was enrolled, required Latin, Greek, and mathematics plus a written English exercise each week. Botany was added the second semester. There were no electives for first year students in 1872-73. [45](#) Latin, Greek, mathematics, and English essays were continued in the first semester of the sophomore year, but second semester course offerings broadened considerably. Rhetoric and English literature were added, and history could be substituted for mathematics, an option Alice chose. In the junior year history could be elected to replace Greek, while physics and chemistry were each taught for a semester, French and speech were required in the fall semester, and either astronomy or French were part of the spring work. In the senior year all work was elective.

Harvard, under its new president Charles Eliot, introduced the elective system in 1871. From the early 1870s Michigan allowed electives, but students continued to agitate during that decade for more curricular freedom and made considerable progress during the years Alice was in Ann Arbor. In addition to required courses, Alice studied political economy, United States and

English constitutional history, English literature, philosophy, Italian, and Greek tragedy. Among her professors were President Angell, Henry Simmons Frieze, Charles Kendall Adams, and Moses Coit Tyler, all distinguished scholars with national reputations. She was also enrolled in the seminaries (seminars) offered for students preparing to teach. [46](#)

In his memoir George Palmer does not credit Alice Freeman with being a scholar. He evaluates her "scholarly work as not quite solid." [47](#) He attributes this to poor preparation and the strain of overwork. No doubt Alice Freeman was overextended. In her freshman year she not only had to master the regular curriculum but make up her deficiencies in Greek and mathematics. She was forced to drop out for over half of her junior year to earn money teaching, and made up junior courses during her senior year. But she did this expeditiously. She studied at home during the summer, passed her junior physics course by early November, the fall of her senior year, and was ready to be examined in French and English literature just after Thanksgiving. As an upper classwoman she sometimes got up at six in the morning to write her history essay, but only because she had attended an extracurricular lecture the evening before. [48](#)

Despite George Palmer's negative evaluation, Alice's undergraduate scholarship hardly seems deficient. She turned in a stellar performance at the oral freshman Latin examination, astounding Henry Frieze, who had been in Europe on leave that year and did not know her, with her ability to translate Horace's satires. [49](#) One of her male classmates reported that their class had "read more Greek and done more work in Math. [sic] than any preceding class." [50](#) Much as Palmer admired and loved Alice he did feel the need, on occasion, to downgrade her, especially her family background and her scholarship. President Angell, in contrast, always praised her academic excellence. And the record bears him out. No grades, only pass-fail, appeared on academic transcripts in the 1870s. But unless Alice Freeman had been among the highest ranking scholars in her class, she would never have been chosen by the faculty as one of the commencement orators. Alice spent her life not as an academician and scholar, but as an educator and a doer. Although she wrote no technical treatises and her only book was a collection of poems published posthumously, [51](#) her letters as an adult attest to her ability to use the English language with high skill. But it is fair to say that despite her academic competence, her intellectual interests were secondary. She did not find her challenges in the world of ideas but in her relationships with people. Undoubtedly had she felt a call to academic scholarly activities she would have performed with the same excellence and flair she brought to the administrative, promotional, and instructional activities that did engage her.

The campus experience of the first generation of Michigan women has been described by Olive San Louie Anderson, a student contemporary of Alice Freeman, in her autobiographical novel, *An American Girl and Her Four Years in a Boys' College*. [52](#) The picture Anderson painted is one of harassment, discrimination, and a large degree of unwelcome. Landladies refused to rent to women students, church members did not speak to them. As Anderson saw it, the price women paid for entering a male preserve was high. Anderson's description of the University of Michigan has been used frequently by scholars to attest to the hostility early women students faced at Michigan. However, the picture presented by Alice Freeman's letters and diary is quite different. Alice described a nurturant concerned faculty, friendly male students, and a rich, rewarding church life.

A letter to her family at the beginning of her junior year showed her integration into and delight with campus life. She reported that she and her friend Lucy had a pleasant journey and were met in Detroit by two of their male classmates who escorted them to Ann Arbor. Everyone, including her minister, George Duffield,

was so glad to see us back that it really made me quite glad to be here myself. And my boys! [her Sunday school class] and all the rest! . . . Prof. D'Ooge [of classics] came down to the Mission yesterday to see me and expressed himself very much delighted with my return. [53](#)

Perhaps Alice's experience, as exemplified in that letter and several others, can be explained by her sunny disposition. President Angell described her character as "a bright, beautiful, optimistic type," a "radiant center of life." [54](#) Alice Freeman's personality no doubt had much to do with how she viewed her college years, and inevitably she translated every experience into high adventure; however, the period of antagonism, if there really was any, toward women students at Michigan was very brief, and women were fully integrated into most phases of university life by 1872. Over one hundred women were on campus by fall 1875, Alice's last year. [55](#) When Madelon Stockwell joined the Michigan student body five years before, she was treated at first as a curiosity, but she was soon accepted. Two years later she was one of her class's commencement orators, and she married a classmate in a ceremony performed by one of their professors. Angell was a major force in the acceptance of women. He believed women belonged in the university. He did not believe Edward Clarke's assertion that study was bad for women's health. Instead he argued that "the regularity of the life and the deep interest that it awakens and maintains, are manifestly conducive to mental and physical health." [56](#)

Alice Freeman enjoyed her years at Michigan. She formed many close friendships with both men and women and participated fully in the life of the college and the community. She certainly was not harassed. Her relationship to the faculty was close, almost familial. Benjamin Cocker, professor of philosophy, also visited her Sunday school class, Angell watched over her like a guardian angel, and Charles Kendall Adams, who presided in her history seminar, invited her to Christmas dinner with his family. [57](#) Alice Freeman's women friends also enjoyed their college years and explored their new universe with high excitement. It is true that only venturesome girls would take on a "boys' college," but once there, they seemed even to have enjoyed "the boys," and "the boys" certainly to have enjoyed them.

Helen Horowitz in her study, *Campus Life*, saw women's position in coeducational universities somewhat differently than I found it experienced by Alice Freeman. [58](#) Horowitz reported that college men at Cornell and Michigan put "women into the established groove of the pauper scholar and ostracized them accordingly." [59](#) Horowitz's analysis of the nineteenth-century campus showed two groups of students: a wealthy elite who tended to fight the authority of the faculty and who clearly controlled undergraduate college life, and a relatively impoverished group of docile future ministers, lawyers, doctors, and teachers who attended college for formal training in the professions. [60](#) And Horowitz puts women, when they appeared on male campuses in the 1870s, with the latter. Men were forced to sit beside women in class, but college life continued to be completely dominated by men. [61](#)

Again this assessment fails to match Alice's experience. It is true that Alice, like other women, did not come to the university to be "finished," but rather to prepare herself for a profession that would permit her to earn her living and help support her family. Nor did she experience college life through the social fraternity. Fraternities were of course closed to women, and in any case Alice had deep moral reservations about the fraternity system. She worried about the spiritual life of fraternity members, writing Lucy Andrews, "Let us pray for the noble young men, who are going down unless the arm `mighty to save' is quickly thrown around them." [62](#) But fraternities did not dominate the Michigan campus in the 1870s. There were no residential fraternity houses until 1879, and the J-Hop (junior dance), the most important early-twentieth-century social occasion of the college year and firmly under fraternity control by 1890, was still an all-campus event attended by everyone in the 1870s.

The Student Lecture Association, dating from 1854 and run by a student board, was the major contributor to student social and intellectual life in the 1870s, and women and men sat side by side at its lectures by such luminaries as the poet James T. Fields, E. L. Godkin, editor of the *Nation*, the actress Mrs. Siddons, and the feminist Mary Livermore. [63](#) The columns of student publications such as *The Chronicle* and the *Oracle* were open to women. Alice wrote a substantial essay championing the elective system for the *Oracle* in 1874. [64](#) Women were prominent members of the Student Christian Association, the largest campus club. It was at its meetings that Alice first met her classmates, Eliza Mosher and Lucy Salmon, both of whom were also to make substantial contributions to the position of women in academic life.

In fact women were more closely integrated into the student power structure and campus life during their first two decades at Michigan than they were at the turn of the century, when fraternities were more clearly in control of college activities. By 1900 student publications largely excluded women as did the Student Union, the largest organization on campus. When the union's new building opened after World War I, women were denied use of the front door until the 1950s. The pioneer women who opened the classrooms and college societies in the 1870s were treated much more as companions, colleagues, and equals than their nieces and daughters who followed a generation later.

Michigan's early acceptance of women was not unique. Much the same pattern of acceptance followed by rejection occurred at the University of Wisconsin. Women were initially ostracized, then accepted, especially after the arrival of John Bascom as president in 1874. But the atmosphere changed again in the 1890s when women, whose numbers on campuses greatly increased, began to be seen as ornaments of college social life and "had to fight for the right to be intellectual beings." By 1900 Wisconsin women were the recipients of grossly prejudiced behavior by professors, as they were by then in the Michigan Medical School. [65](#) M. Carey Thomas saw herself as treated well by the men at Cornell when she began her studies there in 1875 and saw herself as a "complete convert to `Coed'." [66](#) However by the fall of 1877 when she was struggling to be accepted for graduate work at Johns Hopkins she saw it as "very hard for a lady in a mixed university." [67](#)

In Alice's letters and diaries we see firsthand how one woman and her friends experienced coeducation at Michigan in the 1870s. These women were not cut off. They had many male friends. They were independent, as Alice herself was later to write: "The girl who goes to the

University of Michigan today, just as when I entered there in 1872, finds her own boarding place . . . ; makes the business arrangements for her winter's fuel and its storage; finds her washerwoman or laundry; she chooses her own society, clubs, and church. The advice she gets comes from another girl student. . . Strong is the comradeship among these ambitious girls." [68](#)

They were "University girls," as they called themselves with pride, the center of the universe, curiosities perhaps but desirable curiosities. As students they were treated as equals, sharing organizations, honors, and lifestyle. Angell and most of the faculty obviously enjoyed their presence. Why else would they have invited them to holiday dinners, found them jobs when they needed them, listened to their swains' appeals for assistance in their unrequited suits? Women on the Michigan campus in the 1870s may have been seen as exotic, but they were certainly equal, given equal consideration, equal respect, and equal accolades. Only later were women forced into circumscribed niches that have since been ascribed to the whole period. Women always seem to do well when they first invade a previously male preserve, when traditional prejudices seem temporarily set aside. For example, women in the New Deal found their best opportunities in newly organized and innovative agencies. When those agencies became part of the establishment, women were pushed aside. [69](#)

The initial acceptance of women may also have been nurtured by the winds of reform and change buffeting academia in the 1870s. Students were in the vanguard of this reform. Michigan's class of 1876 to which Alice Freeman belonged saw itself as a reforming legion that permanently changed campus life at the University of Michigan. [70](#) They agitated successfully for the elective system, for which Alice campaigned. They championed a better-trained faculty, and they abandoned obnoxious student customs.

Student behavior was a problem at campuses across the country in the 1870s. Michigan was no worse, and was probably better, than a dozen eastern institutions. When Michigan classes gathered on campus in the fall of 1872, however, the first chapel convocation was absolute bedlam, juvenile and disgusting. Freshmen and sophomores engaged in the traditional interclass fight. When the freshmen entered the law lecture room used for chapel, the sophomores tried to throw them over the bannister and down the steps. Hymn books, rotten eggs, and tomatoes were all used as weapons. Puerile sport, such as holding a man's head under the campus pump, was common. Hazing continued through the fall and then stopped, at least on campus. Whether they deserved it or not, the class of 1876 took the credit. [71](#) Hazing was to reappear a hundred times over the next century, but the excesses of nineteenth-century university life were temporarily halted.

President Angell contributed to the more adult campus atmosphere. He transformed chapel into a civilized occasion both by force of personality and by making it voluntary, [72](#) and *The Chronicle* intoned that hazing "after one or two dying throes, lies dead." The practice had to be stopped before doing "serious injury to the University." [73](#) It was not dead, only temporarily unconscious, but its incidence markedly decreased. Perhaps the presence of women on campus had an effect. There were eighty-eight women on campus in 1872. [74](#) That was a large enough group to be a visible presence. Perhaps the elegance of new University Hall, dedicated in the fall of 1873, also contributed. At long last there was a real chapel, built for the purpose, seating 550 students, with four doors, one for each class, to keep students properly stratified, as well as a

second floor auditorium seating over 2,000 people, ample provision for rainy commencements, winter concerts, and important events of the Lecture Association. [75](#) Recreation rooms for society meetings and social events also helped provide enough space so that students had no need to spill into the streets. For one reason or another, the excesses of male undergraduate life were modified.

In the 1870s higher education was not thought to improve young women's matrimonial prospects, and as late as 1904-8 only 52 percent of Michigan women graduates married. [76](#) Alice herself married late, as was typical of those college women who did marry, but she was literally plagued by suitors during her college years. According to her diary four fellow students proposed to her in November and December of 1874. [77](#) And this was not atypical. One of her classmates reported five social engagements with gentlemen in a single week. [78](#) The late age and infrequency of marriage by nineteenth-century college women may well reflect the pressing financial obligations that often sent them to college in the first place. Proposals were a constant during Alice Freeman's college years.

Charles Wooldridge, a member of the 1875 class, an editor of *The Oracle*, and Alice's erstwhile mathematics tutor, was a student from Iowa who lived around the corner. She complained that Wooldridge, "whom I clearly disliked, had offered himself at regular intervals since spring 1873." [79](#) He introduced her to the opera which she enjoyed "exceedingly." But she ended up with a "nervous headache" and felt it unwise "to indulge in such exciting pleasures often." [80](#) No matter. Wooldridge was not acceptable to her. He deeply embarrassed Alice by appealing to President Angell, Dr. Benjamin F. Cocker, Methodist clergyman turned professor of philosophy, and others for assistance in pressing his suit. [81](#) Alice wrote her friend Lucy when Wooldridge bombarded her with fervent letters after she left Ann Arbor temporarily to teach. "Why is it that I seem to be doomed to this thing. . . . It is such a passionate letter, and I know he must be terribly in earnest to talk so and I tremble for the effect it will have on him just now. Do be kind to him." [82](#) Olive San Louie Anderson may have been describing Alice as a student when she wrote: "At first glance you would say she had not a single element of beauty. Her hair was red, and her nose had a decided inclination to turn up; she had freckles and light eyebrows, and yet no person became acquainted with [her] who did not think her beautiful, and before her college life was over, more than half a dozen boys had fallen hopelessly in love with her." [83](#)

Alice Freeman, the Michigan student, liked pretty clothes, and chose and wore them in Ann Arbor with the same careful attention to style and color she was to give her wardrobe the rest of her life. There was little money for luxury during her college years, and most of her new clothes were presents. Her friend Lucy gave her little tokens of ribbons and gloves. A new dress was her Christmas gift from her family in 1874. [84](#) For her first evening at the opera she "wore my blue suit, which with my blue and white hat and white gloves makes a pretty outfit for such an occasion." [85](#) And at another engagement, "I wore my blue merino suit that evening at Mr. Markham's with the 'boiled out' tie and the bow the same shade, that Ella [her sister] made for me, on the back of my hair." [86](#)

However, it was Alice's personality that contributed most to her presence on campus. She captivated everyone she met, from President Angell to her women classmates. No disappointment defeated her. As Angell said, "her genial outgoing spirit seemed to carry with her

an atmosphere of cheerfulness and joy." [87](#) In a letter to her friend Lucy, Alice advised her that "the best thing you can do . . . is to be just as happy as you can in any way that you can. . . . Shun everything that hurts you and be good to yourself always and everywhere." [88](#) On another occasion she wrote her mother that she believed God helps those who help themselves and confessed, "I have come to several places . . . where I could only see one step ahead; but as soon as I have taken that, another has been opened to me." [89](#)

She occupied a special place among her fellow students. Mary Caswell, a cousin of President Angell's wife Sarah, first met Alice in 1876 at the president's commencement reception. She wrote many years later:

I can see her now as she stood by the piano, surrounded by fellow students who were taking their leave before they went out in the world. Perhaps the real reception was, after all, there. Miss Freeman was then a slender young girl, not beautiful or even striking in appearance, but as she stood talking with her fellow students, it was easy to see her preeminence among them; that in taking their leave of her, they were parting from a person whose attraction and power they had felt in a helpful and inspiring way. [90](#)

Optimism, openness, and faith in herself and others nourished the flame that attracted others to her, women as well as men.

Until she married, Alice Freeman's formal religious affiliation was always with the Presbyterian church. She joined the Windsor congregation at fourteen, and in January of 1873 transferred her membership by letter to the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor. Again in 1875 when she interrupted her Ann Arbor years to teach in Illinois, she attended the Presbyterian church in Ottawa as a matter of course. Sundays were busy, two services with sermons, a prayer meeting, and a Bible class. [91](#) She taught Sunday school on Sunday afternoons, recruited by an upperclassman who took her strolling after Sunday afternoon dinner in the local cemetery, a favorite student haunt. [92](#) Sunday schools relied heavily for staff on young people, especially women, who volunteered. Her class was composed largely of German working-class boys whom she found bright and interesting. [93](#) One wonders if she taught her Sunday school boys English, because Sunday schools in the 1870s were designed to serve the educational as well as the religious needs of the urban poor, especially new immigrants. She left this class in the hands of a friend, Hattie, when she temporarily left Ann Arbor to teach in 1875. [94](#) But her "boys" kept in touch with her by letter. [95](#)

The Sunday school relationship was important to both teacher and pupils. During her college years it represented her social contribution to the community. Alice experienced no prejudice as a woman in local churches. She reported in the fall of 1874 that "everyone [at church] was so glad to see us [the women students] back that it made me quite glad," and they welcomed her return to the Mission Sunday school. [96](#)

However, Alice's religious life in Ann Arbor centered on the Student Christian Association, a nondenominational group with broad student membership and support that met in the early evening twice a week and held daily prayer meetings in December. [97](#) Like most institutions of

higher learning, the nineteenth-century University of Michigan had a distinctly religious, if nonsectarian, atmosphere. Its earliest professors had been clergymen. Chapel was required until Angell made it voluntary in 1872, and attendance at Sunday church services was expected. Founded as the first college Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in the country, the Student Christian Association advocated the admission of women to the university and admitted women to membership as soon as they arrived on campus, hence the more inclusive name. [98](#) Its members came from all the university's colleges (or departments as they were then called), and it was easily the most active organization on campus.

When Alice was forced to leave the campus to earn money by teaching, she seems to have missed the Student Christian Association more than any other college activity. Her friend Lucy Andrews had been raised in the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii) where the missionary influence was still dominant, and it was to Lucy that Alice poured out her disappointment at not being in Ann Arbor for a long planned day of prayer. "You must tell me all about [it]. I have hoped and prayed so much for it." [99](#) In the 1870s, for most middle-class Americans, ideals and goals were framed within the ethos of Protestant evangelical Christianity. Alice Freeman did what she did as a Christian. As a young woman, she felt Christ looking over her shoulder as she helped her family, worked in a mission Sunday school, or assisted in the conversion of a classmate. However Alice was never a zealot. She was not above admitting that she felt glad when Sunday services were over one dreary, rainy day in Otego, New York, during summer vacation in 1875. [100](#) When missionaries visiting the campus urged her to join their work in Turkey when she graduated, she seems not to have taken their recruitment effort very seriously, adding wryly: "I don't believe I'm wanted very badly anywhere." [101](#)

The most persistent worry that plagued Alice's college years was financial. Support from home seems to have been uncertain and erratic. She was frequently short of funds, had bills in arrears, and felt it necessary to impress on her parents in her letters the frugalities she assiduously practiced. In the 1870s Michigan was not the most expensive place to acquire a college degree, but it was not cheap. One historian has estimated that \$1,400, or \$350 a year, would see a student through to a bachelor's degree in contrast to nearly \$1,000 a year needed to attend Yale. [102](#) One of Alice's male classmates who kept careful records bears out this estimate. He spent \$321.75 for the 1872-73 academic year. [103](#) Admission fees were \$25.00 for nonresidents, annual fees \$10.00, room and board with private families \$3.00 to \$5.00 a week. [104](#)

These were modest enough charges; nonetheless, they represented a considerable outlay, clearly straining the resources of a middle-class family. Michigan offered no scholarships from 1866 to the 1890s, nor were there any student loan funds. [105](#) Alice's needs may well have taken most of the Freeman cash income. The number of physicians in the United States had increased much more rapidly than population in the 1860s, intensifying competition. Only well-educated urban specialists were particularly prosperous, and even in New York City a young physician earned only about \$400.00 a year. [106](#) James Freeman practiced in a small country town where many of his fees would be paid in kind by local farmers.

Many Michigan students delayed their educations, teaching school while they accumulated the cash to support their Ann Arbor years. The Freemans must have been relatively prosperous in the summer of 1872, for they were able to send Alice directly to the University of Michigan on

graduation from Windsor Academy. James Freeman had kept his farm when he entered practice and expected lumber from woodlands on that property to supplement his medical fees. Flooding of the Susquehanna in the spring of 1874 swept away the timber Freeman had accumulated on its banks and destroyed that source of income. [107](#) During the fall of 1874 money became increasingly tight, and by Christmas Alice had decided she must leave school and teach for awhile. [108](#) Her father closed his Windsor consulting rooms that winter and moved the family and his practice to Otego, New York, [109](#) a larger community that he no doubt thought would offer a more reliable income. But money troubles continued to plague him, and his health also began to deteriorate. [110](#)

The Panic of 1873 compounded James Freeman's difficulties. It precipitated the deepest depression the United States had yet experienced, and the market for lumber and agricultural products fell so low that many mortgages were foreclosed. Freeman's financial woes, part of a national catastrophe, were compounded by his mining speculations. Had he not suffered personal losses, he would still have faced drastic loss of income from the general downturn in the agricultural economy. The American economy in the nineteenth century was expanding and rich in opportunities, but also highly volatile. Entrepreneurs frequently acquired and lost more than one fortune.

A letter home during Alice's senior year reported that she had only \$16.00 and needed much more to pay her obligations. Her wood bill alone was \$12.00 (the winter had been very cold) and she needed new shoes, having only cloth summer ones, and books had been more expensive than usual. [111](#) Obviously her previous year's teaching had not left her with sufficient reserves to support herself, or perhaps more likely she had used her savings to assist her family. She tutored a young man in Greek, which took most of Saturday, and coached another young man in Virgil during her vacation. [112](#) She forwent spending the holiday with friends to earn this money. [113](#) She promised her family that if they could help her through this year she would "push my own canoe afterwards." [114](#) The evolving New Woman was beginning to take charge of her life.

Her brother Fred, not quite two years younger than Alice, had now finished secondary school, and it was his earnings that provided part of her support during her last year. As she wrote to her mother from Ann Arbor during the summer of 1875, she wished Fred too could go to school, but her "wishing is not good for much as long as I do nothing but spend money." [115](#) She promised that Fred would get his chance, and she did eventually help him through medical school.

The state of the Freeman family exchequer convinced Alice before the end of the first semester of her junior year to leave school temporarily to teach. President Angell assisted her in finding a position as principal of the high school in Ottawa, Illinois, and she did not inform her family of her decision until her plans were complete. The salary was more than adequate, \$700 for five months. [116](#) It was not uncommon for Michigan students to leave the campus for several months to teach school and make up the work by examination. [117](#) Four of her friends, all men, saw her off at the Michigan Central station after Christmas. She received some help with her missed work from classmates, especially Lucy Andrews, who sent her class notes, corrected exercises, and kept her informed of reading assignments, but of course she had no way to recoup the lectures and class work. [118](#) She returned to Ann Arbor for commencement in late June of 1875 and resumed her campus residence the following September. [119](#)

Other than worrying about making up her college work and missing her friends, Alice found her new role as teacher stimulating and rewarding. The family where she boarded lived comfortably and welcomed her as another daughter. Their piano and library were "always at my service." The superintendent called for her and escorted her to school, introducing her en route to the president of the bank and

all the important people. . . . We at last reached the high school and then in an inquisitive, criticizing way, three hundred young people looked over "the new teacher." I sat up in front pretending to listen to them expounding the mysteries of algebra while I examined the faces before me and smiled to myself as I wondered what they were thinking of me, for it does seem absurd. . . . They look as old as I do. [120](#)

She was not yet twenty.

Her schedule was arduous and her responsibilities heavy. She rose at six a.m. because early morning was the only time she could find for her eight daily preparations. Except for the dinner hour she was busy with classes from 9:00 to 4:30. She stayed after school to do paperwork. Saturday afternoons she criticized essays. Her evenings were always interrupted by callers. [121](#) She had no previous teaching experience except her Sunday school classes and tutoring, and her classes were overflowing with sixty students the rule. But by February she could write, "I think I am getting along pretty well. I am certainly beginning to enjoy it a good deal." [122](#) But Ann Arbor was never long from her mind. She wrote her friend Lucy:

Tell me about this semester's work. I suppose the chemistry is all in lectures so I can do nothing with that myself. Are you reading any book in connection with the class? If so, please give me the title. . . . What are you reading in Plato? And is it very difficult? [123](#)

And a month later:

This has been such a busy week, and next week is going to be still harder, and then, a rest of a week, when I shall try to write you a whole letter, without struggling away from reports and examinations to do it!! [124](#)

At Ottawa everyone, as usual, loved her. "It really seemed pleasant to get back to school [after spring vacation] and see so many bright young faces smiling a good morning--to have dozens of young people crowd around me to tell me 'how glad they were to have school begin again' You see there is some pleasure as well as work and care in this kind of living." [125](#) And when she attended the lyceum and an oyster supper, she was "made the center around which any number of people revolved--'a University Girl!!!', you know. But that's nothing new." [126](#)

At times the daunting workload was too much, even for the resilient Alice. "I am too tired to write. . . . Such a busy week," but she went on to closely fill four pages that overflowed into the margins. [127](#) And she denied being "blue or sick or dreadfully overworked," just very busy "with a superabundance of things I might do if there were plenty of time and strength." [128](#) Her spring

vacation was taken up with grading essays and helping with the senior play. She complained, that it was "Oh, Miss Freeman! We can't do a thing without you . . . from Mr. Schrieb [the superintendent] to the youngest scholar . . . but chum you know how everyone thinks I've nothing to do but help them." [129](#)

She had agreed to teach only twenty weeks, but when the end of the school year approached, the school board told her how pleased they were with her work, and she wrote her mother that they "begged me to reconsider . . . telling me I must stay. . . . They say I know enough now and can finish my studies by myself. As if they knew!" [130](#) Unfortunately most of her family's letters to Alice have not survived, so we do not know how her mother replied to this letter. Even if her hard-pressed parents were apprehensive about supporting Alice through a last year at the university, she was not about to modify her goals. She was determined to have her degree in hand before she ventured further into the world of work.

Aside from her persistent money troubles Alice Freeman's only serious worry during her college years seems to have been an occasional bout of ill health. Consumption plagued the Freeman family. James Freeman's health was frequently uncertain, and Alice's younger sister Stella was to die of tuberculosis at nineteen. Alice's health first began to trouble her while she was teaching at Ottawa. [131](#) When she returned home in the summer she continued not to feel well, was sleepless, and found the unseasonably cold, rainy weather difficult. [132](#) But her health did not improve when she returned to the university. She wrote home in November:

I have coughed a good deal this fall. There has not been a time since the week after I came when I have not had a cold, have had three heavy ones, with all the care I could take. I know I never was so susceptible to colds before. . . . Don't send a prescription for I haven't any money. [133](#)

Money and health problems were to continue to plague the Freemans.

As the academic year drew to a close, the class of 1876 was increasingly concerned with commencement, post-college plans, and the inevitable partings. That same spring the great exposition celebrating the 100th birthday of the Republic opened in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. The class of '76 thought of itself as the "Centennial Class," with special obligations to a maturing American society, obligations it had already begun to fulfill through its contributions to reforming campus life, especially ending hazing and prodding curricular reform.

In March, commencement speakers for all three of Michigan's colleges were announced. Three women were among them, Alice and Annie Warden Ekin for the Literary College, and Eliza Mosher in medicine. All of the chosen, men and women, were Alice's "good friends." [134](#) Although *The Chronicle* reported that everyone was satisfied with the faculty's selection that year, a *Chronicle* editorial complained that other universities get addressed by men like Ralph Waldo Emerson while Michigan got "declamations" from boys and girls. [135](#) But undergraduate grousing was unlikely to diminish the enthusiasm of the elect. In April, Alice selected the topic for her address, "The Relation of Science and Poetry." She later changed the word "relation" to "conflict," but no copy of the paper has survived, so we have no way of assessing the merit of her argument. However, the class prophecy attested to her fiery and fluent way with words:

If you would feel in all its force Dean Swift's heart cutting satire, Then a very easy remedy, just rouse Miss Freeman's ire. [136](#)

Except for two who had died, all the women who entered with the class in the fall of 1872 graduated, although attrition had been nearly 50 percent among the men. Women did not take higher education lightly in the 1870s. A third of the graduating class was from Michigan, sixteen from New York, and another sixteen from nearby states. Eight had come to Ann Arbor from foreign countries. [137](#) The weather was splendid and the exercises festive, including a class concert, a student carnival, and dancing at the Class Day reception. [138](#) Whether Alice's family was able to be there we do not know.

Alice was to return to Ann Arbor many times over the years both for ceremony and study, and for two years before the decade was out she was again to be a resident of Michigan. However no later experience or environment was to rival Alice Freeman's undergraduate years at Michigan in shaping her life. Not only had her intellectual horizons been immeasurably expanded, her relationship to her family had changed from one of dependence to autonomous control of her own destiny and was soon to include a large measure of dependence by her family on her for financial and emotional sustenance. But most importantly, a Michigan network had been forged.

The Michigan network was composed of a core of able, independent, achieving women whose paths were to be much intertwined in the next decades and who provided both collegiality and emotional support for these pioneering women as they moved out into the wider world of work and career. But the network also included male students and faculty who contributed to the support system forged at Michigan. The Michigan influence was to affect Alice Freeman for a very long time.

Chapter Three Notes

[1](#) Alice Freeman to "Dear Ones at Home," September 27, 1874.

[2](#) Commencement program in Edward D. Barry Scrapbook, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

[3](#) Solomon, *Educated Women*, 77. Solomon's study of women's education is definitive and indispensable. Newcomer, *Higher Education*, blazed the trail a generation earlier, as did Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: Science Press, 1929), in the 1920s.

[4](#) Although the public high school was common in the West by 1870, much secondary education was still offered through private or semiprivate academies, frequently known as seminaries. Colleges and universities offered baccalaureate degrees. Seminaries and academies, like other secondary schools, did not.

[5](#) Newcomer, *Higher Education*, 13-90.

[6](#) Newcomer, *Higher Education*, 46; Solomon, *Educated Women*, 63-64; Burke, *American Collegiate Populations*, 215.

[7](#) Newcomer, *Higher Education*, 46; Solomon, *Educated Women*, 63-64; Burke, *American Collegiate Populations*, 215.

[8](#) Solomon, *Educated Women*, 49-50.

[9](#) Ibid., 45.

[10](#) See Michael B. Katz, *Reconstructing American Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), chap. 1.

[11](#) Kathryn M. Kerns, " `Farmers' Daughters': The Education of Women at Alfred Academy and University Before the Civil War," *History of Higher Education Annual* 6 (1986): 11-28.

[12](#) For example, see Olive Anderson, *An American Girl and Her Four Years in a Boys' College* (New York: Appleton and Co., 1878), 8.

[13](#) Joan Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 23-24; and Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), chap. 4.

[14](#) James G. Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 67.

[15](#) Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalism in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), is the most comprehensive account of the professionalization of teacher training in the United States. See also Bledstein, *Culture of Professionalism*.

[16](#) See Barbara J. Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere: Women and the Professions in American History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), 57-59; Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 5-12.

[17](#) Edward H. Clarke, *Sex in Education: A Fair Chance for the Girls* (Boston: Osgood, 1873).

[18](#) See Dorothy G. McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment: One Hundred Years of Women at the University of Michigan*, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Center for Continuing Education of Women, 1970), chap. 8.

[19](#) Palmer, *Life*, 43.

[20](#) Unidentified clipping, Alice Freeman Palmer Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

[21](#) *Vassar College Catalog*, 1865-66, p. 16, as quoted in Newcomer, *Higher Education*, 55. M. Carey Thomas also believed Vassar inferior to Cornell.

[22](#) Palmer, *Life*, 51, 53.

[23](#) Ruth Bordin, *Andrew Dickson White: Teacher of History*, Bulletin no. 8 (Ann Arbor: Michigan Historical Collections, 1958).

[24](#) Secondary sources on the history of the University of Michigan include: Howard H. Peckham, *The Making of the University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967); Ruth Bordin, *The University of Michigan: A Pictorial History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967); Wilfred B. Shaw, ed., *The University of Michigan: An Encyclopedic Survey* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1941-1958) 4 vols.; the extensive and well-processed archives of the University of Michigan are housed in the Bentley Historical Library.

[25](#) Peckham, *University of Michigan*, 67.

[26](#) *The Chronicle*, 7 (March 18, 1876): 126.

[27](#) *The Chronicle*, 4 (January 25, 1873): 91.

[28](#) Bordin, *Andrew Dickson White*, 8-10.

[29](#) George Herbert Palmer to Ellen Wellman Palmer, August 4, 1870. Alice Freeman Palmer Papers, Wellesley College Archives.

[30](#) James Burrill Angell, *The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 227. See Laurence R. Vesey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 21-56 for a discussion of the sterile religiosity and pious conservatism of the eastern colleges in the mid-decades of the nineteenth century.

[31](#) Angell, *Reminiscences*, 227.

[32](#) *The Chronicle* 4 (October 5, 1872): 10.

[33](#) Women's acceptance as faculty in coeducational institutions was very limited until World War I. As Barbara Solomon has noted, "investing in female scholars seemed a great risk to the academic establishment," (Solomon, *Educated Women*, 137-38.) Michigan, despite its willingness to accord women equality as students, was no exception.

[34](#) Angell's memorial address on the death of Alice Freeman Palmer. Palmer, *A Service*, 31ff.

[35](#) Newcomer, *Higher Education*, 135.

[36](#) *Diary*, 1872, 10.

[37](#) Angell's memorial address, in Palmer, *A Service*, 33ff.

[38](#) *Diary*, 1872, 10.

[39](#) *Ibid.*

[40](#) Alice Freeman to family, September 1872, in Palmer, *Life*, 58. Palmer reproduced heavily edited long passages from Freeman's letters, not all of which now can be found in her papers.

[41](#) *Diary*, September 1872.

[42](#) Palmer, *Life*, 58.

[43](#) Peckham, *University of Michigan*, 69.

[44](#) *Annual Calendar*, University of Michigan, 1872-76.

[45](#) *Ibid.*

[46](#) *Diary*, 1876, 14.

[47](#) Palmer, *Life*, 47.

[48](#) Alice Freeman to Elizabeth Freeman, November 7, 1875.

[49](#) Alice Freeman to family, June 1873, as quoted in Palmer, *Life*, 59.

[50](#) F. D. Haskell to Colman Hutson, February 17, 1876, Colman Hutson Papers, Bentley Historical Library.

[51](#) Alice Freeman Palmer, *A Marriage Cycle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915).

[52](#) Anderson, *An American Girl*.

[53](#) Alice Freeman to family, September 21, 1874.

[54](#) Angell's address at the Alice Freeman Palmer Memorial Service in the program *A Memorial to Alice Freeman Palmer* (Chicago, 1903), 9.

[55](#) Peckham, *University of Michigan*, 82.

[56](#) *Pennsylvania School Journal*, 1881, in Woody, *Women's Education*, 236. Angell first refuted Clarke in the *Woman's Journal*, August 23, 1873, 267.

[57](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, December 29, 1874.

[58](#) Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Others have agreed with Horowitz. Sally Schwager argues that women consistently received second-class status at coeducational colleges and universities in the nineteenth century, basing this conclusion on a number of studies of women's experience at Oberlin, Grinnell, Cornell, Wisconsin, Berkeley, Stanford and Michigan (Schwager, "Educating Women," 361-72); Glenn C. Altschuler, *Better than Second Best: Love and Work in the Life of Helen Magill* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990) reports male students "pointedly shunned" coeds and sees men and women mixing freely only after 1900, (5, 189); Helen Horowitz in *Campus Life* (201) seems to lump the 1870s and the 1890s together.

[59](#) Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 41.

[60](#) *Ibid.*, 29-30.

[61](#) *Ibid.*, 42.

[62](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, February 27, 1875.

[63](#) *The Palladium*, 1873-74, 57.

[64](#) *Oracle*, vol. 8 (February 1874): 25-27.

[65](#) See Amy Hague, "What If the Power Does Lie Within Me: Women Students at the University of Wisconsin, 1875- 1900," *History of Higher Education Annual* 1984, 78-100; Lynn Gordon believes that women at the University of California, many of whom commuted from across the Bay, "sparked no interest in the faculty or community" and "had no access to the main currents of student life" (Gordon, *Higher Education*, 55). California was much smaller and much newer than Michigan with only 100 undergraduates. Women were present on campus from its beginnings in 1870, but campus life for both men and women in the first decade seems to have been minimal (Gordon, *Higher Education*, chap. 2.); Nonetheless a woman was one of the three original editors of the *University Echo* when it was first published in 1877 William W. Ferrier, *Origin and Development of the University of California* (Berkeley: Sather Gate Book Shop, 1930) 336.

[66](#) Marjorie Housepian Dobkin, ed., *The Making of a Feminist: Early Letters and Journals of M. Carey Thomas* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1979), 107; Charlotte Williams Conable, *Women at Cornell: The Myth of Equal Education* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 70-126, sees Cornell as very hostile to women from the beginning. See also Frankfort, *Collegiate Women*, 31; Morris L. Bishop, *History of Cornell* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), 151.

[67](#) Dobkin, *Making of a Feminist*, 121.

[68](#) Alice Palmer in Anna C. Brackett, ed., *Women and the Higher Education* (New York: Harper Bros., 1893), 112-13.

[69](#) See Susan Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 192.

[70](#) *The Chronicle* 7, (June 30, 1876): 211-13.

[71](#) Ibid.

[72](#) Peckham, *University of Michigan*, 75-76.

[73](#) *The Chronicle* 7 (November 27, 1875): 43-44.

[74](#) *President's Report, 1872-73*, University of Michigan Archives, Bentley Historical Library, 6.

[75](#) Peckham, *University of Michigan*, 66-67; Shaw, ed., *Encyclopedic Survey*.

[76](#) Solomon, *Educated Women*, 120.

[77](#) *Diary*, November, December 1874, 12.

[78](#) Mary Alice Williams to her family, 30 May 1873. Williams Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

[79](#) *Diary*, June 1876, 15..

[80](#) Alice Freeman to family, as quoted in Palmer, *Life*, 63.

[81](#) Ibid.

[82](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, February 14, 1875.

[83](#) Anderson, *An American Girl*, 59-60.

[84](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, February 20, 1875.

[85](#) Alice Freeman to Elizabeth Freeman as quoted in Palmer, *Life*, 63.

[86](#) Alice Freeman Palmer to Elizabeth Freeman, November 7, 1875.

[87](#) Angell as quoted in Palmer, *A Service*, 31.

[88](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, February 27, 1875.

[89](#) As quoted in Palmer, *Life*, 61.

[90](#) Mary Caswell to David Mackenzie, undated [ca. 1903], Alice Freeman Palmer Papers, Wellesley College Archives.

[91](#) *Diary*, 1875, 11, 13.

[92](#) Alice Freeman to Family [ca. fall 1872] as quoted in Palmer, *Life*, 64.

[93](#) Palmer, *Life*, 64; The best discussion of the Sunday School movement is found in Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790- 1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[94](#) See Alice Freeman to "Hattie," April 17, 1875.

[95](#) *Ibid.*

[96](#) Alice Freeman to "Dear Ones at Home," September 25-27, 1874.

[97](#) *The Chronicle* 4 (November 30, 1872): 56.

[98](#) That the organization changed its name and allowed women to be members as soon as the university began admitting women is the official story. See Shaw, ed., *Encyclopedic Survey*, 4, 1885-1890. However I found an unidentified clipping among miscellaneous Freeman memorabilia in the Bentley Historical Library that states that Alice Freeman was responsible for the admission of women to the Student Christian Association and the change in name from the YMCA. The official story seems to me to be more likely correct.

[99](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, February 27, 1875.

[100](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, July 18, 1875.

[101](#) Palmer, *Life*, 66.

[102](#) Peckham, *University of Michigan*, 67.

[103](#) Account book of Levi Lockwood Wheeler, 1872-73. Levi Lockwood Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

[104](#) University of Michigan, *Announcements*, 1872-73.

[105](#) Shaw, ed., *Encyclopedic Survey*, 4, 1850, 1860.

[106](#) See Rothstein, *American Physicians*, 98-113, 295.

[107](#) Palmer, *Life*, 56.

[108](#) *Diary*, 1874, 12.

[109](#) *Ibid.*

[110](#) Ibid., 15.

[111](#) As quoted in Palmer, *Life*, 60.

[112](#) Palmer, *Life*, 65.

[113](#) Ibid., 65.

[114](#) Ibid., 61.

[115](#) Alice Freeman to Elizabeth Freeman, July 7, 1875.

[116](#) *Diary*, 1875, 13. Although Alice implies her salary was for the period she worked, I suspect it may be the yearly stipend.

[117](#) See Calvin Thomas *Diary*, January-April 1873. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

[118](#) See especially Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, February 20, 1875 and April 5, 1875. Mary Marston to Mama, January 31, 1875, Mary Olive Marston Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

[119](#) *Diary*, 1875, 13.

[120](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, December 29, 1874.

[121](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews [ca. February 1, 1875] as quoted in Palmer, *Life*, 67.

[122](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, February 20, 1875. Geraldine Jonich Clifford argues the importance of teaching as a power base for women in American society as well as emphasizing the importance of the teaching experience in the social history of American women [John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe, eds., *Women and Higher Education in American History: Essays from the Mount Holyoke College Sesquicentennial Symposia* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1988), 165-82].

[123](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, February 20, 1875.

[124](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, March 24, 1875.

[125](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, April 5, 1875.

[126](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, March 4, 1875.

[127](#) Ibid.

[128](#) Ibid.

[129](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, March 28, 1875.

[130](#) Alice Freeman to Elizabeth Freeman, ca. May 1875, as quoted in Palmer, *Life*, 70-71.

[131](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, May 15, 1875.

[132](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, July 15, 1875.

[133](#) Alice Freeman to Elizabeth Freeman, November 7, 1875.

[134](#) *Diary*, March 1876.

[135](#) *The Chronicle* 7 (April 8, 1876): 139.

[136](#) *Ibid.*, (June 30, 1876): 218.

[137](#) *Ibid.*, 216-17.

[138](#) *Ibid.*, 222; Edward Barry Scrapbook, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.