

Many Coloured Coats: The Systems of Academic Dress in Nova Scotian Universities

by John N. Grant

This paper briefly examines the initial migration to North America of academic costume, describes three of the conventions of academic garb that exist in Canada (adapted respectively from Britain, the United States, and France) and provides a glance at the ancient tradition as it developed and changed in three Nova Scotian institutions.

The full pageantry of the university is on display at the convocation ceremonies that mark the completion of its degree programmes. Scores or even hundreds of graduates, similarly clad in black gowns, hoods of various descriptions and, at some institutions, mortar-boards, file into their place in quarters adapted to the solemnity and celebration of the occasion. They are followed in procession by the faculty, whose gowns, hoods, and headwear are usually much more elaborate and colourful, reflecting the institutions at which they studied and, generally, the discipline of their doctoral degree. Finally, in pride of place, come the highest officials of the university among whom the chancellor and the vice-chancellor/president often wear robes that reflect their office rather than their earned degrees. This much-anticipated ceremony represents a new beginning for individual students and celebrates the over 800-year-old tradition of the university. There are, however, variations in the traditions of academic dress and within Nova Scotia's universities the major western systems of academic garb are represented.

Academic costume is a tradition that dates back to the Middle Ages and is represented in the formal wear of the university where 'gowns are still worn on a number of occasions to remind us that we are scholars living in an academic world'.¹ For students, the gown sets the wearer apart from those who are excluded from the mystery. For professionals, it denotes authority and suggests a special role: the judge in the courtroom; the clergy in the place of worship; and the academic in the classroom. Today, however, except for the science professor's lab coat, there are very few academics who wear special clothing other than during special university

¹ Andrew Lennon, 'Academic Gowns', 2001. See <<http://www.cam.ac.uk/societies/cuhags/gowns/gowns.htm>>. Lennon goes on to write, 'They are very useful for keeping food off your clothes and swanning around in gowns makes you look like Batman at a party.'

events such as processions, installations, and convocations.

This was not always the case. While the egalitarian winds of the 1960s blew the academic wrappings off most of the university teachers who had persevered in the tradition, some few held true to their bunting. Peter Waite, who retired in 1989 and is the principal historian of the institution, maintains that he was the last professor at Dalhousie University to teach in a gown. He did so, he explained, to mark the transition from the high school to the university for his first-year students.² Dr Robyn Humphries of the University of New Brunswick at Saint John, the leading Canadian authority on academic dress, echoes Waite's explanation but adds that it was also because his classroom was too cold but mostly because he wanted to!³ These remnants of the ancient tradition also represent much of the reason for the creation and maintenance of academical dress—the symbolic and personal comfort.

The University of King's College

Academical garb was part of the cultural baggage carried by the migrants from Great Britain to the various parts of its far-flung Empire. Because many colonists were dissenters from the established church they, like their established church fellows, created colleges with strong religious imprints to train their clergy and a number of small colleges were founded. Harvard University, which was founded as a bachelor's-degree-granting institution in 1636, is the oldest active English-speaking school of higher education in North America. It was followed by William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), Princeton (1746), and a number of other equally distinguished institutions that were established prior to the American Revolution (1776–1783). The oldest English-speaking university in Canada was itself born of the American Revolution.

When it became clear that the revolutionary cause was triumphant in the colonies that became the United States, colonials who had maintained their allegiance to King George III had to determine their personal future. Some went to Great Britain, others to the British West Indies, but thousands of those who could not remain in the United States moved to what was left of the Empire in North America. The influx of Loyalists more than doubled the population of Nova Scotia and caused its political realignment as both New Brunswick (1784–) and Cape Breton Island (1784–1820) were hived off to create new political entities. While the Loyalists were supporters of the Crown they nonetheless demanded the same rights and opportunities they had enjoyed in their old homes, including that of post-secondary education.

As early as 1783 a group of Anglican clergy meeting in New York, the last strong-

² Personal interview with Dr Peter Waite, 1 June 2005. Dr Waite wore his plain black undress gown while teaching at Dalhousie from 1951 to 1989.

³ Personal interview with Dr Robyn Humphries, 21 May 2007, and subsequent e-mails and telephone conversations.



Fig. 1. Graduands at King's College are piped into the cathedral for encaenia.



Fig. 2. King's College Bachelors of Arts.

hold of the British in the United States, considered their future in Nova Scotia. Their discussions resulted in a petition requesting both a colonial episcopate and a 'literary institution' to 'prevent the growth of "levelling republican [*sic*] principles"' in loyal Nova Scotia. The Revd Charles Inglis (1734–1816), who became the first bishop of Nova Scotia, championed the effort to create a provincial university by establishing a grammar school or academy. This, in the words of the petition, was necessary '... to prevent as early as may be, the youth of this country (now panting after knowledge) from rushing to the various seminaries, already established in the United States'.⁴ When the academy was opened Inglis and his supporters, many of whom were also part of the Anglican establishment that dominated the colonial government, convinced the authorities to create King's College (1789) and to provide financial support. Funding also came from the British government for construction, as did a Royal Charter, and land grants as an endowment. The authorities were seemingly convinced that the University of King's College in Windsor, N.S., would provide the opportunity for young men to 'receive a virtuous education and be qualified for the learned professions', imbed 'loyalty and good morals' and avoid the pitfalls of schooling in '... some of the states of this continent where they

⁴ William B. Hamilton, 'Society and Schools in Nova Scotia', Chapter 5 in J. Donald Wilson et al., *Canadian Education: A History* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 93. Inglis was the former rector of Trinity Church, New York, and a governor of King's College, New York (now Columbia). He arrived in Halifax, N.S., as a loyalist refugee in 1783 (David A. Lockmiller, *Scholars on Parade: Colleges, Universities, Costumes and Degrees* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969), p. 61). Lockmiller points out (p. 97) that by 1776 'there were nine colleges along the Atlantic sea board' and that until 1776 'higher education in the colonies was the monopoly of church groups'. In 1776 the constitution of North Carolina provided for a state university, 'but for one hundred and fifty years religion and education were inseparable'. Lockmiller also points out that between the Revolution and 1862 between five and six hundred colleges were organized and about half survived until 1860. In 1969, approximately 175 of these still existed.

will soon imbibe principles that are unfavourable to the British tradition'.⁵ King's was expected to develop on the model and purpose of the ancient universities in Great Britain, as described by Renate Simpson, who writes:

Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Oxford and Cambridge were ... providing a purely 'liberal' education, almost exclusively for the sons of gentlemen of means, who were themselves to become gentlemen of means—or to occupy posts as school masters or clergymen, or to take up politics.⁶

The failure of King's to fulfil its expectation is the story for another place. Henry Roper explains, however, that

by 1850 King's had lost its role, which indeed it had never been able to fulfill, as the focus of higher education in Nova Scotia. In a more wealthy and developed province, it could perhaps have attracted sufficient students willing to devote three or four years to the study of classics, the ancient languages, mathematics and divinity ... but not, alas, in this corner of the world.⁷

While King's did not develop into an Oxford in the wilderness, it did, however, make its best effort to maintain the Oxford tradition by following 'the Oxford model, as far as practicable, in the curriculum; in the academical habits; in the proceedings of the Encaenia; in requiring both Greek and Latin for the B.A. course', and otherwise.⁸

The model chosen was specific and deliberate and in 1807 the College pro-

⁵ Robin S. Harris, *A History of Higher Education in Canada, 1663–1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 28. While King's location in the rural town of Windsor might have been intended to protect its students from the sins of the city, there is some question if that was successful. Alexander Crooke (1758–1842), later Sir Alexander, came to Nova Scotia in 1801 to take up his appointment as a judge of the Vice-Admiralty Prize Court at Halifax. He was also appointed to HM Council, but his chief occupation seemed to accumulate enemies. He returned to England in 1815, but during his time in Halifax he wrote long satirical verse lampooning local society. See Thomas B. Vincent, 'Alexander Crooke's Satire on Halifax Society during the Wentworth Years', *Dalhousie Review*, 53.3 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 404–30. As a governor of King's College he was concerned about its character and reputation. Nonetheless, in the first Canto of his 'The Inquisition' he wrote (p. 413, lines 17–20):

*Where friendly 'Windsors' midnight Portals gape,
To Britain's Youths emboldened by the grape,
And Venal Nymphs expose their Painted Charms,
To lure the Novice to their hackney'd Arms.*

⁶ *How the PhD Came to Britain: A Century of Struggle for Postgraduate Education* (Guildford, Surrey: Society for Research into Higher Education, 1983), p. 10.

⁷ 'The Bishop, the President and the Professor: Turmoil at the University of King's College in the 1880s', *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society*, 2 (1999), p. 95.

⁸ F. W. Vroom, *King's College: A Chronicle 1789–1939, Collections and Recollections* (Halifax, N. S.: Imperial, 1941), p. 96.

claimed its ‘Habits to be the same as worn in Oxford, their dress plain, decent, and cleanly, without lace, or other expensive or coxcomical ornaments’.⁹ This decision was most recently reinforced in its ‘By-Laws, Rules and Regulations’ as presented over two hundred years later which again state that ‘the academical habits shall be such as are worn in the University of Oxford.’ This regulation is supported by the accompanying decision that the ‘gowns and hoods appertaining to all degrees shall be the same as for the University of Oxford’ (with the addition of Doctor of Canon Law and Honorary Fellow of King’s College)¹⁰ and worn and presented at Encaenia.

The 1807 Statutes of the College continued: ‘No member of the University shall appear out of the College, within the town or township of Windsor, without his Academical habit, unless with the permission of the President.’ In 1830, when Captain William Moorsom reported on his travels in Nova Scotia, he commented that he mistook King’s College for a ‘military edifice’. He excused his error by noting that a military officer, who had marched his men to this ‘barrack’, could only be convinced of his mistake ‘by the appearance of a dignified cap and gown, in answer to his demands for the barrack serjeant [*sic*]’.¹¹ In his own experience

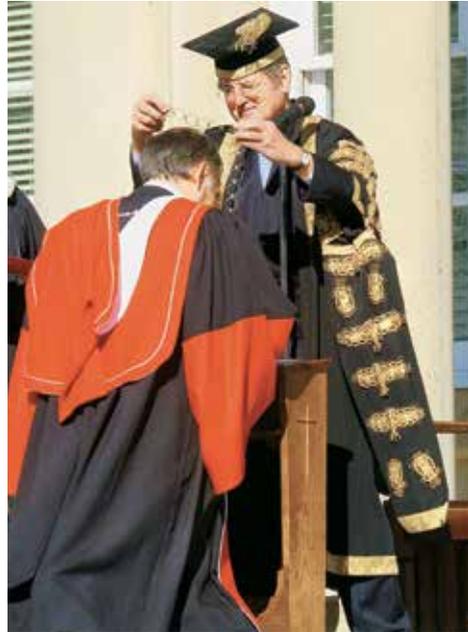


Fig. 3. Michael Meighen, Chancellor of King’s College, bestows the presidential chain of office on William Barker (2003–11), who wears his Toronto gown.

⁹ Vroom, p. 41. Also see Mark DeWolf and George Flie, *1789: All The King’s Men: The Story of a Colonial University* (Halifax, N.S.: Alumni Association of the University of King’s College, 1972).

¹⁰ University of King’s College, *By-Laws, Rules and Regulations of the University of King’s College made by the Board of Governors* (January, 2004), pp. 16, 15. This means, for example, it used and uses the Oxford BA gown, which is a long black gown with open, pointed sleeves, reaching nearly to the hem, and a gathered yoke. The BA hood is of black fabric, trimmed with white fur. See UKC Calendars and J. Venables, *Academic Dress of the University of Oxford*, 9th edn (Oxford: Shepherd & Woodward, 2009), p. 33.

¹¹ Lt. E. T. Coke, *A Subaltern’s Furlough* (London: Saunders & Otley, 1833), as quoted in William Scarth Moorsom, *Letters from Nova Scotia*, ed. by Marjory Whitelaw ([Ottawa]: Oberon Press, 1986), pp. 86–87. Coke points out that while the rules about wearing gowns were clear, students did not always obey. He confided that he saw ‘some very unacademically-dressed young men in green shooting jackets, standing at the hotel door, smoking cigars

of King's College and its academical habits, F. W. Vroom remembered that in the 1870s 'the incoming students used to go to Mrs. Maynard at the rectory to get gowns made by the Sewing Circle. I will not comment [he wrote] on the excellence of the cut or of the material; but they served their purpose.' Likewise he recalled being in his room in 'North Pole Bay' and hearing 'the sound of voices outside and looking out saw most of the men sitting on the "Middle Bay" steps'. When they began to sing, he recalled, 'I seized my mortar-board and rushed down, and was there in time to join in the chorus.'

Vroom also remembered the various processions and ceremonies in which academical dress was featured. The 1889 Centennial celebration was to include a procession of 'boys from the School, wearing mortar-boards, young men of the College in caps and gowns, Bachelors, Masters and Doctors of various kinds ...'. He likewise recalled Dr Thomas B. Akins (DCL, 1865, *honoris causa*, UKC) at Encaenia in 1876, 'in his brilliant scarlet robes and black velvet hat'; and the academics worn at the funeral of a local churchman. He also commented, however, that the

lack of uniformity in the matter of headgear was noteworthy. ... The Bishop wore a black velvet skull-cap, the rector of Windsor a wide-awake, the rector of St. Paul's a silk hat, and Dr. Davis a biretta ... evidence that Kingsmen are not all cast in the same mold.¹²

In 1920 the main building at King's was destroyed by a disastrous fire which raised the question of if, as well as how, King's was to survive. However, as a result of a generous contribution from the Carnegie Foundation, the University was rebuilt but, by the terms of the grant, in Halifax rather than Windsor. In 1923, King's entered 'into association with Dalhousie University (1818), which, with a ... Charter dating from 1820, is the third of Canada's senior Universities'. By agreement, the two universities 'have maintained joint facilities of Arts & Social Science and Science ...'.¹³ Located on a five-acre site on the same campus as Dalhousie, the University

and surveying each passenger as he stepped out of the coach. The only mark of scholastic garb they wore was the square cap and tassel, and one of them crossed the street with his gown folded up and carried under one arm and a large stick under the other.' Also see William Moorsom, *Letters from Nova Scotia* (London: Henry Coburn & Richard Bentley, 1830), p. 231.

¹² Vroom, pp. 41, 57, 120, 137, 118, 123.

¹³ University of King's College, Halifax, *2005–2006 Calendar* (Halifax, N.S.: King's College, 2005), p. 17. Many institutions, including universities, seem to prefer to stretch their antecedents. While there are various bases for dating their establishment, the eight universities generally considered to be the oldest in Canada are the University of King's College, the University of New Brunswick, Dalhousie University, McGill University, the University of Toronto, Acadia University, and Queen's University. See Ralph D. Mitchner, 'On Determining the Seniority of Canadian Universities', *Dalhousie Review*, 41.2 (Summer, 1961), pp. 222–32.



Fig. 4. At King's College, left to right: Two Doctors of Civil Law, a Doctor of Divinity, the president, the chancellor, a senator, and the mace bearer.

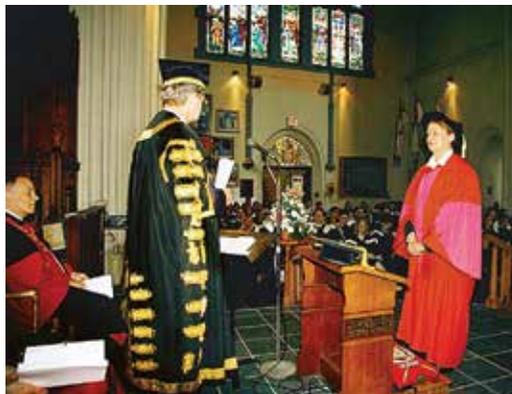


Fig. 5. In the Cathedral Church of All Saints at King's College, a Doctor of Civil Law waits to be hooded by Chancellor Meighen. President Barker is at left.

of King's College recreated itself, retaining the names of its 'Bays' (residences), its resident 'Dons', and its other traditions. *King's College: A Chronicle* records that:

A question on the mind of some was whether King's students would conform to Dalhousie customs or would keep up the customs of their fathers and grandfathers before them; but with remarkable unanimity they clung to their own traditions, and graduates of a former generation who visit the College now see that Kingsmen are really Kingsmen still. If anyone asks 'Why do you wear gowns at lectures and at dinner?' The answer is, 'Because we have always done so.'¹⁴

In the 1990s scholarship students still wore a gown different from their classmates' and all were expected to don the black for their first day of classes and for formal meals. Today, students are still required to rent gowns, but use them even less frequently. Similarly, professors no longer teach in their undress gowns, although a few continued the tradition until fairly recently. The change in garb was perhaps best illustrated by two instructors who co-taught a course—one dressed in gown and mortar-board and the other in blue jeans and a fireman's red hat! Currently, some of the academical tradition remains but, like elsewhere, it is most commonly seen at the Encaenia ceremonies that have retained many of King's other ancient customs.

The University of King's College represents the oldest British system of academical costume in Nova Scotia and one which is also found in other Commonwealth countries. It still follows the Oxford tradition in the pattern of gowns, hoods, and caps but Nova Scotia did not develop the individualistic tradition of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain in which 'each university ... has a system of academical

¹⁴ Vroom, p. 152.

dress which is used by its graduates to indicate their degree ... and faculty¹⁵ While the academical tradition of the King's was moulded on that of Oxford and while Dalhousie University, as a non-sectarian institution, was strongly influenced by the University of Edinburgh, many of the other institutions in university-rich Nova Scotia subscribe to the American system of academical garb.

St Francis Xavier University

The origins of academic dress traditions in the universities of the United States also lie in the British tradition. The earliest American universities, including Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, etc., were, in fact, English institutions so it is not remarkable that they reflected their cultural tradition. Frank C. Baxter and Helen Walters point out that 'in the United States ... caps and gowns have been used from colonial times' at Columbia (King's College), the University of Pennsylvania, Yale, and likely Harvard.¹⁶ In 1768, the Princeton Trustees voted that '... all the officers and students ... shall appear uniformly habited, in a proper collegiate black gown and square cap ...'¹⁷ while in 1807 Harvard decreed that 'every Candidate for a first Degree shall be clothed in a black gown, or in a coat of blue grey, a dark blue, or a black color ...'¹⁸

Authorities suggest that after the American Civil War (1861–65) most colleges no longer required their students to 'wear caps and gowns while in residence'¹⁹ although they were often expected to be worn at college-related activities off-campus. After 1885, however, in response to 'a widespread student movement in America to wear caps and gowns at commencement ceremonies'²⁰ some institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania, adopted individual systems of academical costume that trustees, faculty, and students were expected to follow.²¹

After several universities adopted their own rules of academic dress, the Inter-Collegiate Code of Academic Costume was agreed to in 1895, standardizing cuts and colours.

¹⁵ G. W. Shaw, *Academical Dress of British Universities* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1966), p. 3.

¹⁶ *Caps, Gowns and Commencements* (Chicago: E. R. Moore, 1966), p. 13.

¹⁷ Margaret Smagorinsky, *The Regalia of Princeton University: Pomp, Circumstance, and Accountments* [sic] of *Academia* (1994), p. 1 <<http://etcweb.princeton.edu/CampusWWW/Communications/regalia.html>>.

¹⁸ Cynthia W. Rossano, *Reading the Regalia: A Guide to Deciphering the Academic Dress Code* (Harvard University: Commencement and Reunion Guide, 1999), p. 5; and *These Festival Rites*. See <<http://www.Harvardmag.com/issues/mj99/ner.reading.html>> and <<http://harvardmag.com/issues/mj97/ner.rituals.html>>, respectively.

¹⁹ Smagorinsky, p. 2.

²⁰ Baxter and Walters, p. 13.

²¹ University of Pennsylvania, 'Penn. Commencement: Academic Regalia', 2004, p. 1. See <<http://www.upenn.edu/commencement/hist/costume.html>>.

St Francis Xavier University is representative of the Nova Scotian institutions that have adopted the American system of academical costume. A smaller university with deep and historic roots in its community, St Francis Xavier University was born in Arichat, N.S., in 1853 but in 1855 it was relocated to Antigonish, N.S., which later also became the seat of the bishop²² and which today refers to itself as the 'Highland Heart of Nova Scotia'. Although created by Bishop Colin F. MacKinnon to provide 'higher education facilities' for his far-flung Roman Catholic flock, the University also attracted non-Catholics from earliest times. It received authority to grant degrees by provincial legislation in 1866.

Always it was primarily an undergraduate institution, its early graduates, until the Bachelor of Science was first offered in 1904, received the Bachelor of Arts degree. St Francis Xavier flirted briefly with a programme in law and established the first engineering school in Nova Scotia. The nearby girls' academy was affiliated with the university as Mount St Bernard College in 1894. 'In 1897 St. Francis Xavier became the first Catholic coeducational university in North America to grant degrees to women.'²³ In the 1920s St F. X. resisted the blandishments of the Carnegie Foundation to move, like King's, to Halifax. For much of its existence it struggled to survive, financially dependent on student fees and the generosity of the community it served. Today (2010), St Francis Xavier, with over four thousand students, glories in several years of being ranked by either *MacLean's Magazine* or the Toronto *Globe and Mail* as one of the premier undergraduate universities in Canada.

Despite reference to 'the town and the gown' in descriptions of the relationship between the University and Antigonish, there seems to be nothing in the St F. X. tradition to suggest the regular wearing of gowns to classes, meals, or elsewhere by either faculty or students. Prior to the 1960s, many of the faculty were clergy and wore the traditional black suits and white clerical collars and the increase in the number of professors from the laity in that decade did not make faculty dress more conservative. The students of the University were, in the first part, the sons of the farmers and fishermen of eastern Nova Scotia and not the scions of any self-identified provincial gentry. They would likely have considered wearing 'habits' as, at worst, ostentatious and otherwise, as pretentious. While St F. X. was a Roman Catholic institution and established, in part, to prepare a locally born clergy, it was not only a religious seminary. This may also have influenced any decision about the

²² A. A. Johnson, *A History of the Roman Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*, Vol. II: 1827–1880 (Antigonish, N.S.: St Francis Xavier Press, 1971), Chapter 13, 'Higher Education, 1852–1862', pp. 293–337.

²³ St Francis Xavier University, *Academic Calendar 2006–2007* (St F. X., 2006), 'History of StFX', unpaginated. James D. Cameron, *For the People: A History of St. Francis Xavier University* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press (for St F. X. U.), 1996) is the authority on the history of the University and is extensively depended on here.

regular wearing of the cap and gown if, indeed, that was ever considered. While the young women who attended Mount St Bernard's were reminded that 'general regulations stipulated that boarders should come equipped with a "plain black costume" for Sunday outings ...' (the so-called 'parade of wild geese'²⁴), this was a nod to conservative dress rather than a reference to academical gowns, habits, or school uniforms.

The 'widespread student movement [of the 1880s] in America to wear gowns at Commencement ceremonies', referred to in the article 'The Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume: An Introduction', elsewhere in this volume, was soon felt in Antigonish as well. In June 1899 the Antigonish *Casket* reported on the Closing Exercises held at 3:30 at College Hall at St Francis Xavier University on 14 June:

These exercises were invested this year with somewhat more than the wonted solemnity. The professors of the law faculty attended in their gowns, and sat side by side with the professors and graduates who were also arrayed in hood and gown, donned for the first time.²⁵

The first public institutional reference to academical costume at St F. X. was in its Academic Calendar of 1899–1900. The June graduates of 1899 would have worn a 'gown of black stuff and a hood of blue velvet' with, as most were Bachelor of Arts students, a lining of white silk. Provision was also made for the lining of hoods for the Bachelor of Letters (grey silk), Master of Arts (red silk), and a Master of Letters (green silk).²⁶ The Calendar of 1905–06 described the hoods for six degrees, including the Bachelor of Science which was distinguished by a hood of orange velvet with a white silk lining.²⁷ The Calendar of 1910–11 outlined eight degrees, including three doctorates, which were likely honorary degrees. Of these, the Doctor of Laws must be considered senior as its academical gown was of black

²⁴ Laurie C. C. Stanley-Blackwell and Raymond A. MacLean, *Historic Antigonish: Town and County* (Halifax: Nimbus, 2004), p. 160. In the early years of co-educational classes (and by 1902 there were thirty-three women and eighty-four men in the Arts programme), 'CND sisters acted as chaperons for the Mount St. Bernard resident students ...' and *strictly* controlled 'conversation between the sexes while on campus'. However, the academical tradition at Mount St Bernard College merits further investigation as Dr John A. MacPherson, a long-time professor and ceremonial officer (now retired) at St F. X. U., remembers a time when the female students of Mount St Bernard's College wore their academical gowns to Mass at their own chapel. The tradition did not persist when, with the greater integration of the two institutions, the University Chapel became the centre of worship for the Mount students as well. (Personal interview, 16 August 2008.)

²⁵ The Antigonish *Casket*, 15 June 1899, Thursday, p. 5.

²⁶ St Francis Xavier University, *Academic Calendar, 1899–1900* (St F. X. U., 1899), p. 38.

²⁷ St Francis Xavier University, *Academic Calendar, 1905–1906* (St F. X. U., 1905), p. 81. Alex Kerr has suggested a connection as indicated in Bruce Christianson, 'Lined With Gold: London University and the Colour of Science', *Transactions of the Burgon Society*, 5 (2005), pp. 80–89.

silk rather than ‘stuff’, with a hood of blue velvet and a lining of violet silk, a traditional ecclesiastical and judicial colour.²⁸ In 1934, T. Baty commented that St F. X. ‘obtains ... distinctive hoods boldly by the use of velvet’, and concluded ‘There is little system, but much beauty, in the colours.’ Between the mid-1930s and the mid-1940s, however, despite Baty’s assertion that the ‘... poetry of colour is offended by rigid rules’,²⁹ university authorities agreed to adopt the colour coding of the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume, thereby providing St F. X. with more system but less colour.³⁰

The decision having been made to adopt the Code, there was little need to debate the colours that would represent the University in the lining of its hoods. Historian James Cameron points to an undocumented article in an October 1938 edition of the *Xavierian* that maintained that after the 1855 move to Antigonish the issue of university colours was raised and, among other recommendations, ‘it was suggested that the colors of St. Andrew be used. ... It was accepted and from that time onward blue and white have stood for St. F. X.’³¹

In 2010, the University offered masters’ degrees in five areas of study, thirteen bachelors’ programmes, and three diplomas, and has introduced (in cooperation with two other Nova Scotian universities), a PhD programme in the Faculty of Education. Black gowns are worn by the recipients of all earned degrees but the mortarboard has not been employed for over thirty years. The colour of the hoods for all earned degrees, other than the bindings, is the same. The hood shell is black while ‘the hood lining which distinguishes St. Francis Xavier University is yale blue with thereon a white chevron’.³² The hood bindings (two inches for bachelors and three for masters) and the length of the hood follows the approved design and colour coding of the Intercollegiate Bureau to indicate the discipline in which the degree was earned. When the most recent degree programmes were introduced and adopted, the senate was thus able quickly to approve the colour designated for the degree by reference to the Code. While the doctoral dress has not yet been described, it will also likely also be based on the Code.

Beyond the hood linings, blue and white are also the colours of the president’s robes. In 1970 Hugh Smith described them as ‘an intercollegiate code pattern doctorate gown made from yale blue material and having facings, down each side in

²⁸ St Francis Xavier University, *Academic Calendar 1910–1911* (St F. X. U., 1910), p. 63.

²⁹ *Academic Colours* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha Press, 1934), pp. 69, 4.

³⁰ Despite a careful reading of the Minutes of the Board of Governors, St Francis Xavier University, from the 1920s to the 1950s and an examination of the University Calendars for the same time period, as well as considerable consultation within the institution, the date of the adoption of the ‘Code’ has not yet been clearly identified.

³¹ Cameron, p. 389.

³² Hugh Smith and Kevin Sheard, *Academic Dress and Insignia of the World* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1970), Vol. 1, p. 249.

front and around the neck, and three horizontal bars on each sleeve of light blue velvet. The sleeve bars are piped all round with white and there is a white piping down the outer side of each facing.³³ Today, however, both the chancellor and the vice-chancellor/president wear special robes for degree ceremonies and other formal occasions that are appropriate to their office and similar to those worn by their counterparts at other Canadian universities. The vice-chancellor/president's robes are of full length, with square-ended sleeves. In a link to the older robes, they are of Yale blue and have three bars or 'frogs' running horizontally across the sleeves below the arm-hole. The edgings, facings, and bars are silver brocade, which represents the white of the traditional colours of the University.

In accordance with the tradition of its founding, the bishop of the diocese of Antigonish is *ex officio* the chancellor of the University. In his ceremonial duties as chancellor, he wears, over the black suit and Roman collar, a Yale blue robe identical in cut to that of the president but trimmed with gold brocade and with three gold bars on each sleeve. The chancellor, like the president, does not wear a hood but wears the soft cap, blue with a silver cord for the president and black with a gold cord for the chancellor. The robes of the recipients of all honorary doctoral degrees, in a deviation from the Code, are Cambridge style doctoral gowns of periwinkle blue with white trim and lining.³⁴ Doctoral bonnets are worn and the hoods are blue, lined with white.

Blue and white are also the provincial colours and the saltire, the 'X' shaped cross of St Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, is depicted on the Royal and Ancient Arms of Nova Scotia as well as on those of St Francis Xavier University. The 'X' at St F. X. is an important part of the symbolism of the College and has made the copyrighted and closely controlled X-ring a widely recognized and 'enduring university hallmark'.³⁵ The current style of the X-ring dates from the 1950s. Each year on 3 December, the feast day of St Francis Xavier, the X-ring ceremony is held. Full academical garb is worn to this ceremony, which includes the presentation and blessing of the rings and 'the traditional ring tapping'. For the thousand seniors, with 95 percent participation in 2010, it is a ceremony that rivals convocation in its ritual significance.³⁶

L'Université Sainte-Anne

L'Université Sainte-Anne is the sole example of a third system of traditional academical dress represented in Nova Scotia. It, like 'universities in France, Italy,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ St Francis Xavier University, *Spring Convocation Program*, 7 May 2006, p. 39.

³⁵ Cameron, p. 389. The *Xavierian* is the student newspaper of St Francis Xavier University.

³⁶ J. M. [Janna MacGregor], 'Tradition Meets Change of Venue at X-Ring 2006', *StFX Alumni News* (Spring 2007), pp. 18–19.

French-speaking Canada, and Turkey’,³⁷ subscribes to a tradition of ‘academic costume of a pattern fundamentally different from that used by the Institutions ... mentioned above.’³⁸ It also, however, emerged from the ecclesiastical tradition, as is acknowledged by the ‘earliest mention of academical dress at Paris is to be found in the order of Pope Innocent III in 1215’.³⁹ However, while the British and Continental tradition in academical dress emerged from the same roots and was similarly influenced by external forces, they nonetheless developed differently. The black gown and square cap that also prevailed in France would be most familiar to academics in the British tradition. In France, however, ‘robes tend to indicate an office held rather than a degree, and the faculty in which the office is held’.⁴⁰ This tradition was carried to French-Canada where, as Hugh Smith points out for Laval University, the University of Montreal, and the University of Sherbrooke, ‘the design of the university gown and *épitoge* is the same in every instance’.⁴¹

In France, the *épitoge* is a scarf, trimmed with fur and worn over the left shoulder of the gown, and is the most peculiar feature of its academical costume tradition. The *épitoge* developed from the liri-robe appendage (the long tail) of the hood which ‘originally served a useful purpose, being used both to pull the hood on and off the head and to hold the hood in position by binding it round it and fastening it under the chin’.⁴² At the time that the hood was becoming significant as an indicator of status in the universities in Great Britain, it was being abandoned in Europe. Similarly, when the shoulder scarf disappeared from ordinary European dress, it was retained by legal and court officials and by academics. At the universities in France the shoulder-scarf became the symbol of degree. ‘The *épitoge* of a bachelor has one row of white fur at the front and one row at the back. The licentiate and master have two rows and the doctor has three rows of white fur.’⁴³ The colour of the scarf usually refers to the faculty in which the degree is held.

Parts of this tradition are maintained in the academical dress that represents the ‘functions’, i.e. rector, vice-rector, members of the university council, etc., at some universities in Quebec, although professors normally wear what is proper to the institution where they earned their highest degree. In the tradition of French-Canada the term *épitoge* primarily refers to a short hood that is worn over the gown and hangs down the back. Its colour is generally ‘distinctive of the Faculty in which the

³⁷ Frank W. Haycraft, *The Degrees and Hoods of the World's Universities and Colleges*, 5th edn, rev. and enlarged by F. R. S. Rogers et al. (Lewes: Baxter, 1972), p. xi.

³⁸ Smith, Vol. I, p. 139.

³⁹ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A History of Academical Dress in Europe until the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 36.

⁴⁰ Rogers, in Haycraft (1972), p. 33.

⁴¹ Smith, Vol. I, pp. 185, 217, 258.

⁴² Hargreaves-Mawdsley, p. 7.

⁴³ Rogers, in Haycraft (1972), p. 33.

wearer's degree is conferred'.⁴⁴ These features are also part of the sartorial tradition of l'Université Sainte-Anne.

L'Université Sainte-Anne is located at Pointe-de-l'Église (Church Point) on Baie Sainte-Marie (St. Mary's Bay) at the heart of the Acadian region in southwest Nova Scotia. The Acadians are descendants of French settlers who came to Nova Scotia in the 1600s. Often treated as pawns by the authorities of warring empires, thousands of them were deported from the province in the late 1750s and early 1760s. Some avoided *la Déportation* and others returned in the years after 1763 and re-established themselves in widespread communities across Nova Scotia.

The Acadians were very aware of the importance of education in the struggle for economic and cultural survival and for them schooling was partnered with French language instruction within the framework of Roman Catholicism. For 'several decades', they 'complained of archdiocesan neglect' and eventually the archbishop of Halifax, Mgr Cornelius O'Brien, responded. In an effort to 'overcome some of the educational imbalance', he sought guidance to determine who 'would be interested in supporting a francophone order in Nova Scotia' and establishing 'a mission and an academy for boys at Church Point'.⁴⁵ Eventually, the Eudist Fathers accepted his invitation and a boys' school, which existed until about 1960 as part of the College, was created and Sainte-Anne's was born.⁴⁶ Today, l'Université Sainte-Anne, where the official working language is French, is the only francophone school of higher education in Nova Scotia and the preservation of culture and language, French teacher-education, and Acadian studies, as well as an opportunity to pursue university studies in French, continues to be the basis for its existence.

L'Université Sainte-Anne was founded on 1 September 1890 by Father Gustave Blanche and the fathers of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, called the Eudists. On 30 April 1892, by provincial legislation, it was incorporated as a university with all the rights and privileges affirmed by the title. In 1971 the University was entrusted to a secular administration. ... In 1988, le Collège de l'Acadie was founded with the mission of offering professional and technical programs in the Acadian regions of Nova Scotia. ... In 2003, the Collège de l'Acadie and l'Université Sainte-Anne were united to form one institution.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Smith, Vol. I, p. 259.

⁴⁵ J. Brian Hanington, *Every Popish Person: The Story of Roman Catholicism in Nova Scotia and the Church of Halifax, 1604–1984* (Halifax, N.S.: Archdiocese of Halifax, 1984), p. 165.

⁴⁶ [Gérald Boudreau], *1890–1990: Sainte-Anne: cent ans d'images du collège à l'université* (Church Point, N.S.: L'Université Sainte-Anne, 1989), p. 5.

⁴⁷ *L'Université Sainte-Anne, Annuaire 2004–2005 (août 2004)*, p. 5 :

L'Université Sainte-Anne a été fondée le 1^{er} septembre 1890 par le père Gustave Blanche et les pères de la congrégation de Jésus et Marie, dits des Eudistes. Le 30 avril 1892, en vertu d'une loi provinciale, elle a été incorporée et devient université avec tous les droits et privilèges afférents à ce titre. En 1971, la direc-

The tradition of academical costume at Université Sainte-Anne (USA) is relatively recent. While pictures of the Eudist professor-priests well into the 1960s generally show them in their traditional cassocks (*soutanes*), they are wearing clerical rather than academical garb.⁴⁸ Students, however, apparently never wore gowns to classes, meals, or any university events other than convocation, a tradition of academical costume that began in the 1943–44 academic year. Traditionally, when students represented the University they wore a blue blazer, with the College crest, and grey trousers or, after women were admitted in 1961, a grey skirt.⁴⁹

The *toge* (gown) worn by graduands at the *Collation des Grades* (Convocation) are basic black and while in the past the mortar-board was worn, today it has been set aside. The same gowns are worn by both bachelor's and master's recipients. The robes worn by the *chancelier* (chancellor) of the University are the most ancient. Made of deep brown velvet, they are full with long boxed sleeves, opened between the shoulder and elbow, with a gold brocade facing and a square collar. The costume is complemented with a mortar-board that, however, the current chancellor does not wear. A decade or more ago other administrative offices, in the tradition of garb representing 'functions', acquired new robes. The *recteur* (president) is outfitted in an open black gown with gold velvet facings and sleeve-linings of gold satin and bound in brown satin, as brown and gold were then the official colours of the University. The robes of the *vice-recteur* and those of recipients of a *Doctorat honorifique* are identical. Made of black stuff they, like the president's robes, are based on a Cambridge pattern doctoral gown in which the 'sleeves are reversed near the level of the elbow in front and the triangle of the lining thus formed is held in place with a cord and button'.⁵⁰ The facings of these robes are gold satin while the sleeve-linings of both the vice-president's and honorary doctorates robes are brown satin and bound in gold. No *épitoge* is worn with the vice-president's robes. The *épitoge* used to mark the honorary degree is, depending on the discipline of the degree, one of those ordinarily worn by a graduand. The chair of the board of governors wears an open black robe with full lined sleeves. Its facings are dominated by red and blue.

The *épitoge*, or short hood, worn by graduands at l'Université Sainte-Anne con-

tion de l'Université a été confiée à une administration laïque. ... En 1988, le Collège de l'Acadie a été fondée avec pour mission d'offrir des programmes professionnels et techniques dans les régions acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse. ... En 2003, le Collège de l'Acadie et l'Université Sainte-Anne ont fusionné pour devenir un seul et même établissement.

For the most complete history of the institution, see René LeBlanc and Micheline Laliberté, *Sainte-Anne: collège et université, 1890–1990* (Pointe-de-l'Église: Université Sainte-Anne, 1990).

⁴⁸ Boudreau, pp. 134, 139, 141, and 144 provide examples.

⁴⁹ Personal interview with Jason Saulnier, 11 May 2007, and subsequent e-mails.

⁵⁰ See Smith, Vol. III, Appendix 1, pp. 1640–41.

sists of a plain black shell with a lining that represents the degree earned. There is no hood-binding employed at USA. The Bachelor of Arts *épitoge* has a yellow lining, Business Administration is green, the Bachelor of Science is blue, and Education, at both the bachelor's and master's level, is red. The choice of colours is institutional. For example, when the Bachelor of Science degree was offered in its entirety at USA., the administration enquired of the Science Department what colour they desired for their hood lining and blue was their choice. The 2007 convocation had a record number of 116 graduates dominated by the red of education. Because the University did not own a sufficient number of education *épitoges*, red-lined hoods were rented from Acadia University for the occasion and served the purpose.⁵¹

The traditions of academical garb, including those at USA, are never completely static. At Sainte-Anne a number of changes in academical heraldry and tradition have been instituted since the beginning of the lay administration in 1971 and more recently owing to the 2003 union of the Collège de l'Acadie and the University. In March 1978 the institution's name was changed from Le Collège to L'Université Sainte-Anne and in August 1997 a new Achievement of Arms was granted to the University by the Canadian Heraldic Authority.⁵² In 2004 the official colours of the new united institution were changed from the traditional brown and gold to copper and blue. The copper represents a working metal of the common people and the blue is to remember the importance of the sea to the Acadian people. A new university ring has also been created. Available in silver or gold, the ring is faced by a stylized star on a black background. The star represents that same emblem on the Arms and on the Acadian flag and perhaps is a reminder of the star that led the Acadian's ancestors back home to Nova Scotia.⁵³

Conclusion

The three traditions of academical costume described above do not represent all of

⁵¹ Personal interview with Muriel Comeau, Registrar, Université Sainte-Anne, 7 May 2007. Ms. Comeau has had a long connection with the University having been a student there in the early days of women attending the school. Also see 'Sainte-Anne graduates record 116', Halifax *Chronicle Herald*, Sunday, 6 May 2007.

⁵² The Canadian Heraldic Authority, <http://archive.gg.ca/heraldry/index_e.asp>.

⁵³ Personal interview with Johanne Leroux, Communications Officer, USA, and subsequent e-mail communication. Pictures of gowns, etc., were received from Ms. Leroux and from Jean-Pierre J. Godbout, Directeur, Association des anciens et amis, Université Sainte-Anne.

Nova Scotia's eleven degree-granting institutions.⁵⁴ Dalhousie University (1818)⁵⁵ was founded in imitation of the University of Edinburgh. Dalhousie, however, did not encode Edinburgh's academical garb, but rather developed its own system drawing on a variety of sources including Oxford and Cambridge. Acadia University (1838),⁵⁶ by comparison, adopted the gowns 'of the patterns laid down by the Intercollegiate Code',⁵⁷ but the hoods, in cut, linings, and edgings, are not. The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University (1887)⁵⁸ has settled any question of its academical costume by using none.

These institutions are representative of what Robyn Humphries calls the Canadian tradition of selection, adaptation, and adoption of academical garb. Today, the outward symbols of our institutions, including their academical costumes, are apparently ancient enough that they are seldom questioned and have simply become a part of the being of the institution. No matter how archaic the tradition or varied the origin of gown, hood, and cap might be, there seems to be little doubt that, at least in times of institutional pomp and circumstance, academical costume will persist in the universities of Nova Scotia.

⁵⁴ The eleven are Acadia, Atlantic School of Theology, Cape Breton University, Dalhousie, Mount St. Vincent, Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University, St. Mary's, St Francis Xavier, Université Sainte-Anne, and University of King's College.

⁵⁵ Dalhousie University was founded in 1818 by Lieutenant-Governor George Ramsay, the 9th Earl of Dalhousie (1770–1838). Although based on the liberal, non-denominational and educational standards of Edinburgh, it became identified with the Presbyterian Church. Although university status was granted in 1841, it was only after several false starts and a rebirth in 1863 that Dalhousie became consistently active. Today, it is the biggest university in Nova Scotia with twelve faculties and over a hundred degree and diploma programmes. It is located in the capital city of Halifax.

⁵⁶ Acadia University was established by the Baptist Church but, while the Baptist seminary was there, it had no religious tests for admission. It traces its origins to Horton Academy in 1828 but more specifically to the creation of Queen's College in 1838. In 1841 Acadia College (Queen Victoria was apparently 'not amused' by having a dissenters' college named for her), received its Charter and it became Acadia University in 1891. It is located in Wolfville, N.S.

⁵⁷ Smith, Vol. I, pp. 174–75, 178–79, and pp. 142–45.

⁵⁸ The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University was established in 1887 in part due to the efforts of Haligonians like Anna H. Leonowens (i.e. of *Anna and the King of Siam* fame) and others. It received university status in 1969. It was then the only degree-granting art school in Canada. It is located in Halifax, N.S.