

The ‘Canadian Tradition’ of Academical Costume in Nova Scotia: The Dalhousie University Model

by John N. Grant

The eleven degree-granting institutions in Nova Scotia represent a variety of systems and traditions of academical costume. By 1807, the University of King’s College (1789), the oldest university in Nova Scotia, borrowed the academical dress of Oxford University,¹ while l’Université Sainte-Anne, where the use of cap, *toge*, and *épitoge* is comparatively recent, is in the tradition of French and Quebec-based institutions.² Several schools, including St Mary’s University, St Francis Xavier University, Mount St Vincent University, and the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, follow the rules of the Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume as developed in the United States in the 1890s.³ Other schools follow the ‘Canadian tradition’ of academical dress that Humphries describes.⁴

It could be argued, however, that this was, and is, in fact, a trans-Atlantic migration of the British academical tradition. G. W. Shaw points out that ‘each uni-

¹ 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 included, for example, using the Oxford BA gown and the BA hood. In its guide to Encaenia, King’s supplies the following information to its graduands. Gowns are black and hoods are black, without lining and trimmed with white fur for BA; black, lined with gold and trimmed with white fur for BSc; black, lined with blue and trimmed with white fur for BJ (1 and 4 yr.); black, lined with white and trimmed with lavender for BMus A limited number of hoods with synthetic fur will be available. See ‘Encaenia (Graduation Ceremonies)’, <http://www.ukings.ns.ca/kings_3476.html>.

² Personal interview, Jason Saulnier, 11 May 2007, and subsequent e-mails. See also: Frank W. Haycraft, *The Degrees and Hoods of the World’s Universities and Colleges*, 4th edn, ed. by E. W. Scobie Stringer (Cheshunt: The Cheshunt Press, 1948), p. 7; Hugh Smith, assisted by Kevin Sheard, *Academic Dress and Insignia of the World: Gowns, Hats, Chains of Office, Hoods, Rings, Medals and other Degree Insignia of Universities and other Institutions of Learning* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1970), Vol. I, p. 139.

³ Eugene Sullivan, ‘An Academic Costume Code and An Academic Ceremony Guide’, *American Universities and Colleges*, 16th edn, Vol. II (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 1857–61.

⁴ Personal interview, Dr Robyn Humphries, 21 May 2007, and subsequent e-mails and telephone and other conversations. See also John N. Grant, ‘Many Coloured Coats’, *Transactions of the Burgon Society*, 9 (2009), pp. 181–99.

versity of Great Britain and Eire has a system of academical dress which is used by its graduates to indicate their degree ... and the faculty ... in which they took the degree.⁵ Hugh Smith supports this in his assertion that in the British tradition 'each Institution has its own distinctive code of academic costume.'⁶ The difference, however, between the British tradition and that Canadian tradition is that in Canada many, if not most, institutions subscribe to an external system of academical costume rather than the universal individual distinctiveness of the British universities. One of the Nova Scotian institutions that developed its own individual system of academical costume is Dalhousie University. While it reflects the influence of the known systems, which are incorporated within its tradition, it has developed a system peculiar to itself.

Dalhousie University was founded in 1818 by Lieutenant-Governor George Ramsay, the 9th Earl of Dalhousie (1770–1838). Dalhousie was 'born near Edinburgh, attending its high school and university'.⁷ On the death of his father in 1787 he joined the British forces and served in the West Indies, Ireland, the Netherlands, France, Minorca, and Egypt, and he was with Wellington on the Iberian Peninsula in the wars against Napoleon. After the Battle of Waterloo and the reduction of the forces as a result of the peace treaty with France, he sought employment with the imperial civil service of the Colonial Office. On 24 October 1816 Dalhousie was appointed the lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia, a position he held until 1 June 1820 when he succeeded to the position of governor-in-chief of British North America, based in Quebec City, Lower Canada. On arriving in Nova Scotia, he found that the wartime economy had been kind to the province. Accordingly, while Dalhousie was faced with the usual administrative issues and problems, the province had no accumulated debt to trouble him. What Dalhousie found instead was that in the treasury in Halifax there was a fund amounting to some twelve thousand pounds (Halifax currency), which had been collected during the occupation of Castine, Maine, by British forces from Nova Scotia during the War of 1812–1814. There had been some debate about what to do with the Castine funds and a number of public works had been suggested. Dalhousie, after an introduction to the affairs of the province, came to the conclusion that a provincial university was necessary.⁸

The only seat of higher learning in Nova Scotia at the time was the University of King's College (1789), located at Windsor, some miles from the capital, thus

⁵ George W. Shaw, *Academical Dress of British Universities* (Cambridge; Heffer, 1966), p. 3.

⁶ Smith, Vol. I, p. 139.

⁷ P. B. Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, 2 Vols (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994–97), Vol. II: 1925–1980, *The Old College Transformed*, p. 7.

⁸ Peter Burroughs, 'George Ramsay, 9th Earl of Dalhousie', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. VII, p. 723; Waite, Vol. II, p. 8.

protecting its students from the sins and temptations of the city. It was, however, an Anglican institution and until 1829 demanded that its graduates subscribe to the articles of faith of the Church of England before they could convocate. Dalhousie himself was a product of the University of Edinburgh, which had no such restrictions on its students or teachers. Dalhousie ‘envisioned a school modeled on that institution, with professors lecturing on classics, mathematics, and eventually moral and natural philosophy ... open to youth of all religions and every class of society’.⁹ Dalhousie had also visited Pictou where Pictou Academy, which grew out of the school Thomas McCulloch had opened by 1808, was incorporated in 1816. While it did not then have, nor had it yet requested, the right to grant degrees, ‘it began to look and act like a college, its students were soon wearing the red gowns and caps familiar to McCulloch from the University of Glasgow ...’. Lord Dalhousie did not, however, feel that a ‘distant corner’ of the province was a suitable location for a provincial institution and determined that it would be an urban college located in Halifax. With the support of his executive council and the approval of the colonial secretary, Lord Bathurst, to use the Castine funds, plans were set in motion.¹⁰

The site chosen for the ‘simple, solid Georgian structure of stone’¹¹ was at the north end of the Grand Parade, where the City Hall now stands, in the heart of downtown Halifax. On 22 May 1820, ‘after agreeing with genuine reluctance that the college be named in his honour, Dalhousie laid the cornerstone with full masonic and military honours’.¹² Within weeks, however, Dalhousie went off to govern the Canadas and his replacement had interests that did not include agriculture or education. Without Lord Dalhousie’s presence enthusiasm waned and while the building was completed in 1824, it had neither professors nor students until 1838. In that year the board of governors prevailed upon Thomas McCulloch of Pictou Academy to serve as its first president and the doors were opened to students on 1 November. In 1842 a code of rules to govern the college was introduced. It reinforced the founder’s principles of religious and class freedom for the students and professors, set the terms of its BA degree, and determined that the minimum admission age was

⁹ Burroughs, ‘George Ramsay’, p. 723. For a broad discussion of the impact of the Scottish influence on Dalhousie and higher education in general, see John G. Reid, ‘Beyond the Democratic Intellect: The Scottish Example and University Reform in Canada’s Maritime Provinces, 1870-1933’, Chapter XII in Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid, *Youth, University and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), pp. 275–300.

¹⁰ Waite, Vol. II, p. 12.

¹¹ Thomas H. Raddall, *Halifax: Warden of the North*, rev. edn (Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 162.

¹² Burroughs, ‘George Ramsay’, p. 723. Prior to his departure, Dalhousie addressed the legislature. Among the other points he commented on, he stated: ‘I earnestly recommend to your protection, the College now rising in this town.’ See *Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, 3 April 1820, p. 246.

fourteen years. But, despite the fine plans, 'inept management by its board, outside rivalries, and the death of McCulloch in 1843, put Dalhousie into twenty years of limbo as a Halifax high school'.

In 1863 Dalhousie was reborn. In an unlikely alliance of political foes, Joseph Howe and Charles Tupper 'cooperated to put Dalhousie College on its feet with a new charter and six professors'. While it retained its non-denominational character, Peter Waite, emeritus professor of history, maintains that 'the spirit and energy driving it was Presbyterian and Presbyterian passion for education'.¹³ During most of the years between the 1860s and the 1950s, Dalhousie, like all the post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia, generally 'lived on the edge of financial disaster'.¹⁴ Partly rescued by the financial support of benefactor George Munro in the 1880s, by 1912 Dalhousie had 400 students and three professional faculties (Law, Medicine, and Dentistry). In 1911 Dalhousie's board of governors purchased the forty-three-acre Studley campus, the heart of the modern institution. Today, with an undergraduate population of over 12,000 and another 3,500 graduate students, Dalhousie is the largest Nova Scotian University.

Waite was a member of the history department at Dalhousie University between 1951 and 1989 and was also the last professor at Dalhousie to teach in the plain black 'undress' gown.¹⁵ In his two-volume history of the institution, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, he tells the story of the creation and development of the College from its inception in 1818 to 1980. Part of the story is of the academical garb worn by the professors and students for both regular use and ceremonial occasions.

Waite writes with great fondness of some of the pioneer professors of Dalhousie University. Drawing pictures with words as few can do better than he, Waite describes teachers like Charles Macdonald, professor of mathematics from 1863 to 1901, writing: 'There he would stand, his coat covered with chalk dust (for he did not wear a gown), his massive leonine head thrown slightly back, his face radiant with the idea of opening up to these young minds a new field of knowledge ...'. Among Macdonald's contemporaries, John Johnson, professor of classics from 1863 to 1894 taught in academical garb, 'tightening his gown around his shoulders as he did when he was angry ...', according to Waite. George Lawson, professor of chemistry from 1863 to 1895, was 'the only Dalhousie professor of 1863 to have

¹³ Government of Nova Scotia, *The Statutes of Nova Scotia Passed in the Fourth Session of the General Assembly* (Halifax, N.S.: Queen's Printer, 1863), pp. 44–46: 'An Act for the regulation and support of Dalhousie College'. This new charter for the institution reconfirmed Lord Dalhousie's plan for his college by again decreeing that would be no religious tests; appointed a new board of governors; provided that the college would be a university; and committed the internal regulation of the school to the Senatus Academicus 'subject in all cases to the approval of the Governors' (Waite, Vol. II, p. 8).

¹⁴ Waite, Vol. I: *1818–1925, Lord Dalhousie's College*, p. 10.

¹⁵ Personal interview, Dr Peter Waite, 1 June 2005. See also 'Coloured Coats', p. 184.

one of those new-fangled German degrees'.¹⁶ Archibald MacMechan who, according to Waite, contributed more to the academic reputation of Dalhousie than any other professor of his era and who taught there from 1889 to 1931, always wore a gown in his public duties. So too did George Wilson, Waite's one-time colleague in the Department of History, and whom he described as:

A big man, over six feet, and strongly built, he spent his summers working on his parents' farm. He was a farmer who looked like a Roman senator; his Dalhousie lectures were carved with dignity and authority, and he wore his black academic gown like a toga.¹⁷

Many of the other members of faculty wore their academical uniform as commonly as today's science professors wear their white lab coats. Eventually, however, either due to a simple change in style or to the perception that they were setting themselves apart from their students and therefore hindering the movement toward democratization in the classroom (or the advent of more efficient central heating systems), most professors cast off their gowns until, with Waite's retirement in 1989, the traditional figure of the gowned academic vanished from Dalhousie's classrooms although not from the ceremonial occasions of the University.

While the wearing of gowns was never a requirement for Dalhousie faculty, it was a requirement for Dalhousie's students. During its first stumbling steps of life under Thomas McCulloch (president 1838–1843), the 1842 code of rules established the tradition. Under McCulloch these regulations the board of governors specified 'that the undergraduate Gown shall be of the same pattern as the Undergraduates Gown now used in King's College, Windsor ...', and appointed a committee to 'arrange and settle the style and pattern of the cap to be worn by Members of the College'. The King's gown was, as designated by the statutes of 1807 and reinforced by the by-laws ever since, the Oxford University scholar's gown and thus it became the Dalhousie undergraduate gown as well. The 1842 board was equally clear that students were expected to wear their caps and gowns. In order to graduate, students had to maintain 'Academical Residence' during their time at the University, part of which consisted of 'wearing the proper habit'.¹⁸

After its resuscitation in 1863, Dalhousie reintroduced the 1842 requirements concerning student garb.¹⁹ Waite comments on Dalhousie students in the 1860s and 1870s, writing:

¹⁶ Waite, Vol. I, pp. 103, 106, 108.

¹⁷ Waite, Vol. II, p. 15; Vol. I, p. 162; and Vol. II, p. 145.

¹⁸ Dalhousie University Archives, [hereinafter DUA], Board of Governors Minutes, 5 November 1842, p. 42; 2 February 1843, p. 50. Also see note 1, above.

¹⁹ DUA, Board of Governors Minutes, 28 November 1863; Senate Minutes, 6 February 1865. Also see Section X.1 of the Code of Student Conduct as reported in the Dalhousie University *Calendars* 1866–67 to 1882–83 inclusive.

Dalhousie students were usually recognizable. The Senate required that all students wear mortar-boards and gowns, not only while at Dalhousie but going to and from as well. A common sight around the Parade was a 'black angel', mortar-board on head, hurrying to class, his gown blowing in the wind. Mortar-boards were more honoured in the breach than the observance, however, and outside the college grounds gowns tended to become scarcer after the first term. They were the target for every ragamuffin who had any latent combative instincts. ... Gowns acquired their own patina of age and experience; the more tattered and battered the better.²⁰

The regulations on academic costume that were confirmed by the senate in 1865 were printed in the University's *Calendars*, which appeared regularly after the mid-1860s. The *Calendar* for the academic year 1866–67 informed its new and returning students that 'all Undergraduates and Occasional Students attending more classes than one, are required to provide themselves with caps and gowns, and wear them in going to and from the College. Gowns are to be worn at Lectures, and at all meetings of the University.'²¹ The regulation, with slight variation in wording, was repeated in every *Calendar* until 1882–83, when the qualifying clause 'except such as may be specifically exempted by the Senate' was introduced and, in the following year (1883–84), reference to the requirement of cap and gown disappears.²²

In 1881 the question of the admission of women to the University as students came before the board of governors. With the full support of the board and the administration, the senate approved the motion that:

Female students shall hereafter be entitled to attend lectures and after passing the prescribed examinations to be admitted as undergraduates of this College, and to compete for and take all such prizes, honours and exhibitions and Bursaries as are now open to male students, so hereafter there shall be no distinction in regard to College work or degrees between male and female students.²³

The arrival of the first two female undergraduates in the autumn of 1881, both with prized Munro bursaries, brought another change to campus life. At their request the senate, on 30 October 1881, exempted 'lady students' from having to wear academical gowns.²⁴ The 1885 Senior Class picture (not their convocation picture) shows

²⁰ Waite, Vol. I, pp. 64, 114. Waite relates the story of one encounter. 'Duncan Fraser ('72) and a friend were accosted by a gang of city boys, who taunted them about their garb. To Fraser's surprise, his companion hit out left and right and of course Fraser had to join in.' In the end, as Fraser put it, 'the oatmeal in our system prevailed', and the honour of the gown over the town was maintained.

²¹ Dalhousie University, *Calendar of Dalhousie College and University, Session 1866–67* [hereinafter DU Calendar] (Halifax: For the University, 1866), p. 17.

²² DU Calendar 1882–83, p. 24; 1883–84, p. 18.

²³ DUA, Board of Governors Minutes, 28 July 1881; also see Waite, Vol. I, p. 132.

²⁴ DUA, Senate Minutes, 30 October 1881. For an extensive discussion of women at Dalhousie in the early years, see Judith Fingard, 'College, Career, and Community: Dalhousie

fourteen students, thirteen of whom are gowned; two are wearing mortar-boards, and Dalhousie's first female graduate, Margaret Florence Newcombe, without either of the accoutrements of academical costume.²⁵

Whether or not this exception to the rule was the thin edge of the wedge, the days of the regular wearing of the undress gown by Dalhousie's students was about to end. On 21 March 1882 the *Calendar* committee made its regular report to the senate and 'a part of it was read when Prof. Forrest gave notice that at a future meeting he would move for the abolition of caps and gowns.'²⁶ It must have been a contentious issue as it was not until thirteen months later that the motion was finally brought forward. In the meantime, rules regarding the wearing of cap and gown were regularly enforced. For example, on 11 November 1880 the senate voted to reprimand and, on amendment, fine three students 'who had appeared at the Examination without gowns' twenty-five cents each, a punishment that was visited on others in November 1882 and April 1883.²⁷

On 3 April 1883 the resolution to abolish undergraduate gowns and caps was finally brought to the table. While the senate minutes do not record the ensuing discussion on the motion it was likely vigorous as it concluded in a rare recorded vote. Five members of the senate, including the principal, voted in favour of the motion and three voted against it. Two of those who voted to retain caps and gowns were Professors Macdonald and Johnson, perhaps not remarkably as they had been the authors of the 6 February 1865 report that had re-established the 1842 rule. The resolution was then sent to the board of governors who responded on 30 April 1883 that they approved of the change.²⁸

The Dalhousie community and its senate might have reasonably expected that the discussion of undergraduate caps and gowns had thus concluded. However, fourteen years later it reappears in the minutes of the senate. On 29 January 1897 a letter advocating the wearing of gowns by students was received from the General Student Meeting and was read to the senate. In February the senate entertained a delegation of students who 'made statements on the subject'.²⁹ The 18 February 1897 issue of the *Dalhousie Gazette* reported that the 'agitation for gowns is still working towards its end' but that 'students seem almost unanimous in their desire to the revival of the old custom'³⁰ and in March, the senate passed a 'Resolution as to

Coeds, 1881–1921', Chapter Two in Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid, *Youth, University and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), pp. 26–50.

²⁵ Waite, Vol. I, p. 133.

²⁶ DUA, Senate Minutes, 21 March 1882. Forrest later became the president of Dalhousie.

²⁷ DUA, Senate Minutes, 11 November 1880; 13 November 1882; and 23 April 1883.

²⁸ DUA, Senate Minutes: 3 April; 6 April 1883; 6 February 1865; and 30 April 1883.

²⁹ DUA, Senate Minutes, 29 January 1897; and 5 February 1897.

³⁰ *Dalhousie Gazette*, 29.6 (18 February 1897), p. 178. Founded in 1868, the *Dalhousie*

Wearing of Gowns' which stated that undergraduates and general students '... shall be expected hereforth to provide themselves with caps and gowns' and to wear them at classes and meetings at the University.³¹ First calendared in 1897-98, students were also informed that the 'forms prescribed are the Oxford undergraduate gown of black stuff with sleeves, and the black trencher with tassel'.³² In May 1897 the *Gazette* informed students that, after a call for tenders, Messrs Clayton & Sons of Jacob St., Halifax, would 'furnish gowns made of good and suitable material for \$3.50 each' provided that the firm had an order for at least one hundred garments.³³

When classes resumed in the autumn of 1897 the question of undergraduate gowns was still alive, but perhaps just barely so as the *Gazette* reported that in October the General Arts Students meeting noted its regret that 'the wearing of gowns has not been adopted by the students.' In response, the meeting resolved to 'petition the faculty to adopt measures compelling students to wear gowns'.³⁴ However, when the *Calendar* of 1898-99 was printed it was clear that this was not a role that faculty wanted to resume as the section dealing with 'Academic Costume' had been amended to inform students that they were 'entitled to' wear caps and gowns rather than the 'expected to' of the previous year.³⁵ This change was noted in the *Gazette* with the observation that 'it would appear that the fad of last year has not many very warm supporters among the Faculty.'³⁶

Students were thereafter reminded of their 'entitlement' in every edition of the University *Calendar* between 1898-99 and 1970-71. In the *Calendar* of 1971-72, however, the section headed 'Academic Costume' was removed and so too was all reference to undergraduate caps and gowns.³⁷ While some of the photographs of student life in the early twentieth century, like that of the Dalhousie debating team in 1910, show students in gowns, the 'fad' of 1897 apparently just wore out.³⁸

Gazette is the oldest university newspaper in Canada and one of the oldest continuously running student newspapers in North America.

³¹ DUA, Senate Minutes, 25 March 1897.

³² DU *Calendar* 1897-98, p. 56.

³³ *Dalhousie Gazette*, 29.10 (10 May 1897), p. 324.

³⁴ *Dalhousie Gazette*, 30.1 (9 November 1897), p. 50.

³⁵ DU *Calendar*, 1898-99, p. 61.

³⁶ *Dalhousie Gazette*, 30.9 (17 May 1898), p. 267.

³⁷ See Dalhousie University *Calendars* between 1898-99 and 1970-71. The reference in the *Calendar* of 1970-1971 is under 'University Regulations 12.6-Academic Costumes'. The following year, 1971-72, the Regulations were altered and all reference to academic costume was omitted. It is perhaps surprising that the reference outlasted the 1960s.

³⁸ Paul Axelrod, 'Moulding the Middleclass: Student Life at Dalhousie University in the 1930s', *Acadiensis* (Autumn 1985), p. 101. He writes: 'Though the teaching styles of the professors varied, classes were generally conducted in an air of formality, with students addressed as Mr. or Miss. The men dressed in jackets and ties, the women in skirts and sweaters—never pants.' Also see the picture in Waite, Vol. II, p. 149, of 'Professor Burns Martin's class in English about 1947'. Waite points to the 'jackets and ties (with one exception) and

While the University might have allowed the tradition of undergraduates wearing caps and gowns to disappear over time, it was consistent in demanding that the formal wear of the institution be used on ceremonial occasions. The wearing of hoods and gowns at convocation began as least as early as 4 April 1866. The University senate traditionally met prior to all convocations and proceeded *en masse* to the exercises, but as this day included the first graduation ceremony, a greater number of officials and guests than usual were present. In his minutes of the proceedings of that day Professor Charles Macdonald noted that ‘The Secretary then, as promoter, brought forward Mr. J. H. Chase and Mr. R. Shaw, robed in gown and hood, to receive from the Principal the degree of B.A.: which was accordingly conferred; their diplomas were presented; and the Principal gave the graduates a short address.’ Macdonald also recorded that the lieutenant-governor gave ‘a brief and appropriate speech’, the representative of the board of governors ‘delivered an address’ and, reflecting the unchanging nature of Convocations everywhere, they were followed by the chief justice, ‘who spoke at considerable length’.³⁹

The source of the inspiration for the hoods and gowns used at Dalhousie is both varied and cloudy. Extant records do not describe the hoods referred to in the 1866 senate minutes. However, T. Baty points out that: ‘The system ... originated in that of Oxford. ... Although the University was professedly designed on the model of that of Edinburgh, it is probable that the influence of King’s College, Windsor, also in Nova Scotia, may have made the inferior degrees and hoods resemble rather those of Oxford. The system has, however, been considerably altered, and is less Oxonian.’⁴⁰ The same BA hood, later described as a simple shape black stuff shell with a white silk lining and a fur border, is still employed, with the probable exception of a change in the source of the fur border. Today, it is described as composed of ‘white faux fur’, thus assuring students that no animals were injured in the pursuit of their degrees.⁴¹ The MA hood, first employed on 28 April 1869 at Dalhousie’s fourth convocation, was of the same style but with a lining of crimson silk and no border or edging.⁴² In 1871, the senate unanimously accepted the recommendation

the polished shoes’ of the apparently all male group.

³⁹ DUA, Senate Minutes, 4 April 1866. Also see the *Presbyterian Witness*, 19.4 (7 April 1866), p. 1, col. 3. For a general discussion of the 1860s in Nova Scotia see John G. Reid, ‘The 1860s: Decade of Confederation’, in *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of the Maritimes* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1987), pp. 93–124.

⁴⁰ *Academic Colours* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha Press, 1934), p. 66.

⁴¹ Dalhousie University, Registrar’s Office, Dalhousie Convocation: Hoods, p. 1. See <<http://www.convocation.dal.ca/Academic%20Dress/hoods.html>>. ‘Stuff’ refers to material which contains no wool, silk, or silk-like content.

⁴² DUA, Senate Minutes, 28 April 1869. The requirements that had to be satisfied to earn the MA included three years of continued ‘good character’ after securing the BA and writing a thesis on a subject set by the senate and the subsequent work satisfying an *ad hoc* committee of the senate. The first recipient of the MA was Henry J. Chase, BA (Dal. ’66).

of the Medical Faculty, the University's first professional programme, for a distinctive hood and gown. The minutes of 8 April record the motion that 'the Hood for the M.D. Degree should be of the shape of the Dublin M.A. Hood: colours, black outside lined with scarlet silk, edged with white silk one inch deep,--the front band to show the three colours longitudinally: and also that a definite pattern of gown ... be recommended for adoption'.⁴³

A distinctive Bachelor of Science hood appeared in 1880. On 2 April the senate decreed that Professors Lawson and MacGregor 'should form a committee to invent a B.Sc. hood'. With admirable promptness the committee reported four days later and recommended that the BSc hood 'should be of the same shape as the B.A. hood, made of black stuff, lined with white silk and edged with crimson silk'. The recommendation was adopted and presumably the hood was used at the convocation on 21 April 1880, held at the Provincial Building, when six degrees were conferred, including one Bachelor of Science.⁴⁴

The regulations regarding the formal wear of the University appeared in the *Calendar* for the first time in 1883–84. They stated that Bachelors and Masters of Arts, Bachelors of Science and Law and Doctors of Medicine 'shall be entitled to wear gowns of black stuff and hoods', noting that 'the distinctive part of the costume is the hood'. The BA, MA, BSc, and MD hoods were as described above while the LLB hood was of black stuff with a white silk lining and bordered with gold coloured silk. There were no directions given regarding the type of gown that graduating students were expected to wear excepting those in law whose 'gowns shall be similar to those worn by Barristers-at-law'. The *Calendar* was clear, however, about wearing the dress uniform of the University, stating that 'successful candidates for these degrees shall be required to appear at Convocation in the proper academic costume, to have the degrees conferred upon them.'⁴⁵

By 1888, the Bachelor of Letters (black stuff with a lining of white silk, bordered with light blue silk) was added to the degrees offered, followed by the Master of Letters in 1894 (black stuff with a lining of light blue silk). In 1892 the LLD, *honoris causa*, was first awarded. Its hood, as befitting its status, was of black silk lined with purple silk,⁴⁶ colours that now are used in the hood of the degree of Master of Law. The Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, as Smith reported in 1970, 'wear[s] an Edinburgh pattern doctorate gown made from scarlet cloth and having the facings, down each side in front and round the shoulders, covered with black silk. The sleeves are lined with black silk.' The gown is complemented by a scarlet cloth hood

⁴³ DUA, Senate Minutes, 8 April 1871.

⁴⁴ DUA, Senate Minutes, 2 April; 6 April; and 21 April 1880.

⁴⁵ DU *Calendar* 1883–84, p.19; 1885–86, p. 55; and, 1883–84, p.19. This continues to be the rule.

⁴⁶ DU *Calendar* 1887–88, p. 51; 1893–94, p. 51; and, 1892–93, p. 51.



Fig. 1. BA.



Fig. 2. BSc.

lined with black silk in the Cambridge full shape and a black birretum trimmed with a gold cord and tassels. The registrar's office currently lists over seventy hoods employed, although neither the BL. nor the ML has survived.⁴⁷

In his comments on the eleven hoods used by the University in 1934, T. Baty noted that while Dalhousie was 'one of the first Universities to adopt the tri-coloured hood', it was 'devoid of system'. He wrote: 'The lavish use of white has, however, an enlivening and good effect. ... The system, apart from the white linings for Bachelors, is far from clear. White silk linings for Bachelors, and scarlet [*sic*] silk linings for Masters seems to be the guiding principle, but the attribution of colours is otherwise perplexing, though generally handsome ...'.⁴⁸ Baty would continue to be perplexed today as twenty of the twenty-nine bachelors' hoods have either a white lining or a white border but the other nine have neither. The Master of Arts hood, which has a crimson lining rather than Baty's scarlet, might once have provided a standard but, of the thirty-three master hoods described in 2007, only four others employ either crimson or scarlet.⁴⁹ The 'system' is obviously one of institutional choice rather than an adherence to a defining code of any kind.

The University's registrar's office is responsible for ensuring that its graduands appear at convocation correctly garbed. Bachelors require a hood and gown; masters a gown, hood, and mortar-board; and doctors a PhD gown, hood, and birretum (although some faculties demand a mortar-board).⁵⁰ The 'black mortar-board cap

⁴⁷ Personal Interview with Christina Coakley, Assistant to the Registrar and Convocation Coordinator, and Karen Anderson, Parchment Coordinator, Registrar's Office, Dalhousie University, 18 July 2008. See Smith, Vol, 1, p. 178. Also see Dalhousie University, Registrar's Office, Dalhousie Convocation: Hoods, pp. 1-3 <<http://www.convocation.dal.ca/Academic%20Dress/hoods.html>>. Also see note 41, above.

⁴⁸ *Academic Colours*, p. 66.

⁴⁹ Dalhousie University, Registrar's Office, Dalhousie Convocation: Academic Dress, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Dalhousie University, Registrar's Office, Dalhousie Convocation: The Gowns Room During Convocation, p. 1. These combinations are different from those reported by Smith in



Fig. 3. PhD.



Fig. 4. MD.

with a black tassel’ is now no longer used by bachelors but is part of the garb of the recipient of the master’s degree. Smith pointed out that graduates (other than doctoral candidates) ‘wear a gown of unspecified pattern’, but today all candidates including MDs and LLBs wear the same basic black gowns.⁵¹ Doctors of Laws ‘wear an Edinburgh pattern doctorate gown’ while Doctors of Philosophy ‘wear an Oxford University Master of Arts gown’.⁵²

The styles of the hoods are also diverse. The basic hood is of the Oxford University simple shape (even the MD hood, which had been modelled on the University of Dublin MA, is now also of the Oxford simple design), while the doctoral hoods, made of ‘black corded silk’ are of the Cambridge University design. All of the hoods are ‘colour-coded to identify the students’ field of study’, while the PhD doctoral gowns incorporate Dalhousie’s colours to mark their distinctiveness.⁵³

1970.

⁵¹ Smith, Vol. I, pp. 178–179.

⁵² Telephone Interview with Karen Anderson, Registrar’s Office, Dalhousie University, 14 July 2008. There are two PhD gowns. One is of black faced with yellow silk. The other (for the faculties of Architecture and Planning, Computer Science, and Engineering) is ‘black with front panels of royal blue velvet edged with white; the yoke is pointed in the black and velvet edged in white, the sleeves are lined in white and covered half way up with velvet piped in gold ...’. This gown came to Dalhousie when the Nova Scotia Technical University became part of Dalhousie University. It is only rarely used. The third earned doctoral degree is the JSD (Doctor in the Science of Law) which uses a ‘gown of black faced with Olympic blue silk’. The first PhD gown described above is the most commonly used doctoral garb.

⁵³ Dalhousie University, Registrar’s Office, Dalhousie Convocation: Hoods, pp. 2–3. Waite tells the story of the origins of Dalhousie’s colours. ‘The rugby team led to debate in the club about college colours for the football jerseys. There was sentiment briefly for garnet and blue, but a committee sensibly arranged to see samples of jerseys and the result was the official adoption in 1887, of black and gold (or yellow as it often turned out to be) as the Dalhousie colours. Dalhousie’s colours were thus chosen by the rugby players, not by either board or Senate’. See Waite, Vol. I, p. 128.

While the inspiration for the shapes of the hoods and gowns is apparent, the basis for the selection of the colours of the hood linings is not so clear. Although the University of Edinburgh was the model on which Dalhousie University was founded, it is likely that Oxford was the inspiration for its earliest hoods as Edinburgh was not using hoods at that time. The Dublin shape of the medical doctors' hoods was specific to that faculty as were the gowns used by the medical and the law students. The original selection of the Oxford gown that was used at King's College, Windsor, might have been simply due to its availability rather than a more symbolic reason. Trying to determine the inspiration for the colours of the linings, etc., of Dalhousie's earliest hoods is, at best, simple speculation. The hoods of the Oxford/King's College BA (black stuff part-lined with fur) and MA (black silk lined and bound with crimson silk) are probably the inspiration for the Dalhousie BA and MA hoods (although the latter now has a black stuff shell with crimson silk lining with no binding), but the available records are silent on these points. However, since 1871 the selection of the colour of the hood linings has seemingly depended on the choice of the department or faculty involved. Certainly every hood used at Dalhousie since then has first been approved by the University's senate. For example, in 1972 the senate accepted the recommendation that 'burnt orange' was an appropriate colour for the lining of the Master of Physical Education hood based on the argument that the 'colour is the same as that at two other Canadian universities and is not a colour presently used at Dalhousie for any other hoods'.⁵⁴ In the Dalhousie tradition, the latter argument was likely more telling than the former.

Dalhousie University's practice of adopting patterns and styles of hoods, gowns and caps from a variety of sources makes it a model of Robyn Humphries' definition of the Canadian tradition of academic costume. While hoods and gowns, other than those at the doctoral level, are consistently made of black stuff and the hood linings are of silk, there is no apparent internal code, other than avoiding duplication, for the selection of the colour of its hood linings and either the use or the colour of hood bindings or edgings. Likewise, Dalhousie's decision to create a unique doctoral gown, in decoration if not in style, again underscores the University's place in the Canadian tradition of selection, adoption, and adaptation of academic costume.

⁵⁴ DUA, Senate Minutes, 13 March 1972, p. 837, item No. 28.