

Framing Narratives: An Examination of Women's Histories
in the Wyatt Historic House Museum

by

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Abstract

Historic house museums can offer unique access to a variety of histories and narratives. However, there is a tendency for homes to be reconstructed, conserved, and curated as historic house museums in an attempt to preserve male-centred histories. This male focus within a domestic context is ironic, as the home was a place strongly associated with constructed ideals of women during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Adopting a material culture perspective, this thesis explores the potential of house museums to provide rich and textured histories through the curation and interpretation of historical objects, including the architecture of the house itself. My thesis examines the Wyatt Historic House Museum as a site that successfully frames women's histories and narratives. I discuss a series of objects and architectural elements of the home and consider in particular how they contribute to a narrative framing of women's health issues during the period.

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Introduction

“The nineteenth century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling. It conceived the residence as a receptacle of the person, and it encased him with all his appurtenances so deeply in the dwelling’s interior that one might be reminded of the inside of a compass case, where the instrument with all its accessories lies embedded in deep, usually violet folds of velvet.” - Martin Bressani and Nicholas Roquet¹

*“The Wyatt Residence has been the home of the present owner; Wanda Wyatt, all her life. Some few changes, for comfort, have been made both inside and outside over the years. It is a rambling house with many little things to attest to its age. The stone foundation, the steps that carry you from one level to another, and the floors, with hard pine boards from ships masts are interesting. The furnishings are mostly antique and the house itself has an atmosphere of the past... There are many memories over a hundred years.”*²

When first entering the Wyatt Historic House Museum, located in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, visitors are greeted by two framed oil on canvas portraits of women seated in domestic interiors. Hung directly across from one another in the front entrance hall, the portraits depict the two daughters of Summerside’s prominent Wyatt family: Wanda Wyatt [Figure Intro.1] and Dorothy Wyatt [Figure Intro.2]. Miss Marion Jack, a friend of the girls, painted the portraits while the three were in Chicago together in the late 1910s.³ Adhering to conventions of the turn

¹ Martin Bressani and Nicholas Roquet, “Entropy in the Home: Reflections on the Nineteenth-Century Interior,” *Architecture and Ideas* 9 (2012): 53.

² Wanda Wyatt, “‘B’ Wyatt House,” *Information for I.O.D.E. Echo Magazine*, 16 October 1973. Copy of text available at the MacNaught History Centre and Archives.

³ Deirdre Kessler, *A Century on Spring Street: Wanda Lefurgey Wyatt of Summerside, Prince Edward Island, 1895-1998* (Charlottetown: Indigo Press, 1999), 189; Dorothy Wyatt, 7 November 1918, Box ‘Dorothy,’ Folder ‘Dorothy Randal Wyatt 1916-1918, Vol.I, 1918-1920, Vol II (in exhibit),’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

of the twentieth century, both portraits exhibit the strong connection between ideals of women and the notion of the home, as Wanda and Dorothy, adorned in fashionable garb, blend into the surroundings of their painted interiors.⁴ As Beverly Gordon effectively summarizes, “[t]he woman was seen as the embodiment of the home and in turn the home was seen as an extension of her - an extension of both her corporeal and spiritual self.”⁵ The portraits of Wanda and Dorothy Wyatt situate both women within this time period, and indicate that the two sisters lived lives of privileged leisure. Dorothy’s pale green dress subtly matches the colour of the wall behind her, and the light, airy shawl draped over her shoulder mimics the material of the white curtain included in the space. Similarly, Wanda’s gauzy shoulder wrap, coloured a vivid orange, seems to melt into the collection of various flowers on the wall that serves as her backdrop. The flowers included in the background of Wanda’s portrait — meant to convey stylized floral wallpaper — mirror those in the garden seen through the window of Dorothy’s painting. These characteristics subtly reference the intimate connection that was believed to exist between women and the confined ‘domestic sphere’ of the home and the natural yet cultivated environment of the garden during this period.

While these paintings provide some insight into the lives of the Wyatt women, there is more to be gleaned about their diverse personal histories. Much has been written about men in the context of history, but historians must turn to different forms of documentation to piece together lesser known narratives that detail the lives of women. Personal texts written by women,

⁴ Beverly Gordon, “Women’s Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, no.4 (Winter, 1996): 283.

⁵ Gordon, 282.

such as diaries and letters, are incredibly informative in understanding the lived experiences of women from the past. Similarly, objects that were owned, used, and kept by women, such as Wanda and Dorothy, can provide different insights about individual women's narratives. As sites that often contain collections of objects that can be read as informative "documents," I am arguing that historic house museums can also be understood as large objects themselves, especially in their ability to contextualize the lives of their past inhabitants. While the portraits introduce Wanda and Dorothy's upper-class lifestyles on a limited level to visitors of the Wyatt House, a further exploration of their home and personal belongings reveals more details about their lives. Specifically, themes that the portraits allude to, such as travel, fashion, and the relationship between women's bodies and domestic interiors, are emphasized during the interpretive guided tour of the Wyatt Historic House Museum through the curated arrangement of objects. The strong connections that existed between women of this period and their interiors — as exemplified by the portraits of Wanda and Dorothy — emphasize the potential houses and objects owned by past inhabitants have to function as revealing, personal documents that can provide access to complex histories about women from the past.

Recent scholarship has examined house museums in diverse contexts, including contemporary museum practices, tourism, discussions of local history and heritage, notions of

constructed narratives and authenticity, and the history of specific house museums' preservation.⁶ The house museum's origins are deeply rooted in the traditions of the cabinet of curiosity, bourgeois collections, historical societies, and the popular "phenomenon of period rooms."⁷ Patricia West acknowledges that the history of the establishment of house museums in North America was motivated by cultural politics and nationalistic identity.⁸ Underlying these motivations is the belief that house museums are largely recreated —and sometimes even invented — spaces that serve the purpose of functioning as static time capsules. Upon entering the house museum, visitors can engage with an earlier time period and way of life by viewing and occasionally interacting with the domestic space and objects on display.⁹ The experience of visiting these sites is often enhanced by the tendency of house museums to be directly linked to an important historical figure whose memory and influence is presented as permeating the space itself. It is this direct connection to a national or local influential figure that serves as the original

⁶ See for example Kevin Meethan, *Tourism in Global Society: Place, Culture, Consumption* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Tamar Katriel, "Sites of Memory: Discourses of the Past in Israeli Pioneering Settlement Museums," in *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, eds. Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg, 99-135 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999); Caterina Albano, "Displaying Lives: The Narrative of Objects in Biographical Exhibitions," *Museum and Society* 5, no.1 (March 2007):15-28.; Richard Handler and William Saxton, "Dyssimulation: Reflexivity, Narrative, and the Quest for Authenticity in "Living History"," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no.3 (August 1988): 242-260.

⁷ Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Press, 1999), 40-41.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Laura L. Quinn, "Telling is Slant: Historic House Museums and the Re-Creation of the Past," PhD diss., (University of Rochester, 2001), 2.

impetus behind the concept of the house museum, and it is here that the politics inherent in the house museum are most evident.¹⁰

North America's first house museum was established in 1850. Known as Hasbrouck House and located in New York, the site was turned into a house museum to commemorate the revolutionary hero George Washington. The preservation of this building was directly motivated by a belief in the home's ability to instill feelings of unity, pride, and a common national heritage in America. Shrines in the form of monuments and buildings of historical significance — including house museums — were created to encourage the ritualistic actions of hero worship and pilgrimage as a way of creating a common, national identity.¹¹ Similarly, narratives based on military histories and the lives of the founding fathers were being presented and preserved in the minds of Americans through the construction of shrines and memorials and the establishment of public commemorative celebrations such as parades and national holidays. These efforts served the purpose of fostering a national heritage that contributed to the "moral and spiritual" identity of individuals and the nation as a whole.¹² Houses became especially captivating to visitors because of their tangible connection to a figure who was important to America's collective

¹⁰ Other examinations of the politics inherent in house museums have been provided by scholars such as Andrea Terry in her paper "Gender, Canadian Nationhood and 'Keeping House': The Cultural Bureaucratization of Dundurn Castle in Hamilton, Ontario, 1900-1960s," *Gender & History* 25, no.1 (April 2013): 47-64.

¹¹ Charlotte Smith, "Civic Consciousness and House Museums: The Instructional Role of Interpretive Narratives," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 21 (July 2002): 75.

¹² R.N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: The Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), cited in Charlotte Smith, 75.

history and identity;¹³ like religious relics, houses carry an aura of authenticity, conveyed in part through material presence and their known connection to significant individuals. Their public exposure of the private spaces of well-known individuals made house museums popular destinations for a variety of audiences.

One consequence of America's preservation of homes belonging to the founding fathers and other historically significant figures is what Charlotte Smith has described as "the Great Man house museum genre."¹⁴ This genre presents wholesome, patriotic histories that highlight the achievements and biographies of prominent male figures in an attempt to foster feelings of nationalism. While the end of the twentieth century saw the incorporation of social history into museums and house museums alike, to date not much has changed in terms of the inclusion of alternative histories in the contemporary house museum in America.¹⁵

The development of house museums in Canada in large part mirrored the American situation. The establishment of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in 1919 saw the federal government preserving and recreating sites related to nationalistic ideals. The desire to create a national identity in Canada during the 1920s and 1930s resulted in the preservation of

¹³ Charlotte Smith, 76.

¹⁴ Charlotte Smith, 74.

¹⁵ An example of a house museum that has successfully included alternative histories in its curation and interpretation is the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in Manhattan. This tenement, comprised of twenty apartments, narrates the history of working class immigrants. The site offers a selection of tours that reflect the experiences of Irish, Italian-Catholic and German-Jewish families that lived in the tenement between the 1860s and 1930s. This museum is explored in Kim Christensen, "Ideas versus things: the balancing act of interpreting historic house museums," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, no.2 (2011): 153-168 (here 161-163). Although not a house museum, another site that explores alternative histories is the Écomusée du fier monde in Montreal. This site narrates the history of working class individuals during the industrial revolution in Quebec. The museum is located in the Généreux Public Bath. Available: <http://ecomusee.qc.ca/en/>

sites that were “intimately associated with colonial expansion bolstered by military force and leavened by the architectural legacy of the successful elites.”¹⁶ The 1960s also witnessed the establishment of house museums in Canada as “expressions of patriotism” that was largely influenced by the period’s celebration of the country’s centennial, the high levels of immigration to Canada and the restless nature of Quebec at the time.¹⁷ As a result, Radu notes, these house museums “glorified the country’s “founders,” forward-thinking industrialists and tenacious settlers and marked sites where ground-breaking technologies were tested, important treaties were signed, and neighbourhoods were developed.”¹⁸ Histories relating to the nation’s aboriginal, female and French-speaking populations were therefore limited in their representation. This trend has continued until the present day, as Canada’s cultural landscape is still filled with sites and historic house museums that were the homes of both regionally, nationally, and internationally known individuals who are predominantly male.¹⁹ As of 2003 the approximately sixteen hundred historic sites designated by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada include only eighty-nine that commemorate women or “institutions that were primarily associated with

¹⁶ Shannon Ricketts, “Cultural Selection and National Identity: Establishing Historic Sites in a National Framework, 1920-1939,” *The Public Historian* 18, no.3 (Summer, 1996): 24.

¹⁷ Stephanie Karen Radu, “Representation, Preservation & Interpretation at Canada’s House Museums,” PhD diss., (Western University, 2014), 69.

¹⁸ Ibid, 69-70.

¹⁹ There are some exceptions to this trend. For example, the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Homestead, located near St. George, Ontario, focuses on the history of Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, a Canadian woman who co-founded the Women’s Institute, the National Council of Women, the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) and the Young Women’s Christian Association. Available: <http://www.adelaidehoodless.ca/>.

women.”²⁰ While there are exceptions, and while representations of women are occasionally included in the mostly male-centred sites, the “feminine” elements included in the average house museum often focus on more common, generalized female domestic responsibilities, such as cleaning, cooking, and childcare.²¹ Historically, women often campaigned for the establishment of historic sites — house museums included — which problematizes the fact that today many of these institutions fail to acknowledge women’s narratives.²² While an initial motivation to preserve the homes of prominent male figures was to allow for a more intimate examination of these public figures’ private lives, this focus on men within house museums is ironic. The home, so often associated with socially constructed ideals of women, female bodies, and the private, domestic sphere, has been preserved and represented as a largely male-centred site because of the prominent public roles of selected men and the connection they have to a national identity.²³

²⁰ Alan B. McCullough, “Parks Canada and Women’s History,” in *Restoring Women’s History Through Historic Preservation*, eds. Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B Goodman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 339-40, cited in Katherine M.J. McKenna, “Women’s History, Gender Politics and the Interpretation of Canadian Historic Sites: Some Examples from Ontario,” *Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal* 30, no.1 (2005): 22.

²¹ Linda Young, “A Woman’s place is in the house... museum: Interpreting women’s histories in house museums,” *Open Museum Journal: Interpreting Historic House Museums* 5 (2002): 1.

²² Lianne McTavish, “Strategic Donations: Women and Museums in New Brunswick, 1862- 1930,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42, no.2 (Spring 2008): 93-116.; Patricia West, “Uncovering and Interpreting Women’s History at Historic House Museums,” in *Restoring Women’s History Through Historic Preservation*, eds. Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, 83-95 (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2003); Barbara J. Howe, “Women in the Nineteenth-Century Preservation Movement,” in *Restoring Women’s History Through Historic Preservation*, eds. Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, 7-36 (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

²³ Carol Duncan, “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship,” in *Exhibiting Cultures*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, 88-103 (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press: 1991).

I will argue that the house museum can be re-conceptualized to serve as an effective site of narration for important and seldom acknowledged women's histories.²⁴ Houses museums that date from a period when women and their bodies were strongly tied to the notion of home and domestic interiors hold particular agency because of the numerous activities women would have engaged with while living in the house. Largely because of its rich collection of objects and its extensive archival collection, the Wyatt Historic House Museum can be understood as a North American house museum that operates outside of the Great Man genre. As a site that has yet to be examined from a critical perspective, the Wyatt House serves as a valuable case study because of the various personal histories it preserves. Built in 1867 and opened to the public as a house museum in 2001 as one of five buildings associated with the Wyatt Heritage Properties, the Wyatt House effectively —and unconventionally — frames women's histories and narratives, and it does so in part through its relationship to a prominent male figure in Summerside's history. The reconstructed decor and furnishings in the rooms of the house represent diverse time periods - from the 1890s through to the 1950s - and coincide with a time when the home and "domestic sphere" were strongly associated with the periods' constructed ideals of middle and upper-class women. Specifically, my examination of the Wyatt House seeks to expand the pre-existing dialogue by focusing on the narrative potential that can be found in the physical structure of the home and within the curation of everyday household objects belonging to historical female figures.

²⁴ Other scholarship in this field includes Debra A Reid, "Making Gender Matter: Interpreting Male and Female Roles in Historic House Museums," in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly, 81- 110 (Walnut Creek, California: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, AltaMira Press 2002); Gail Lee Dubrow, Jennifer D. Goodman, eds., *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

Literature Review

North American House Museums, Historic Sites and Women's Histories

While the available literature about house museums and historic sites in Canada's Atlantic region is limited, there are some notable texts available. Lianne McTavish's work on the efforts made by middle-class, Caucasian women in the funding of the Museum of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick provides insight on the establishment of museum collections in the region.²⁵ Historian Ian McKay's work, including *In the Province of History: The Making of the Public Past in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* written in collaboration with Robin Bates, sheds light on the political involvement and impetus in establishing "tourism/history" within the province. McKay and Bates discuss how through the promotion of Nova Scotia's historic past, the province excludes histories of women, ethnic minorities, and members of the working class in favour of more romanticized histories of an idealistic "golden age." As tourism is also a major aspect of Prince Edward Island's economy, McKay and Bates' text is applicable in discussing the intentions behind the preservation of history on the Island.²⁶ Erna L. Macleod's article "Decolonizing Interpretation at the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site" also critiques the inclusion and exclusion of certain histories at this popular travel destination.²⁷ While the

²⁵ Lianne McTavish, "Strategic Donations: Women and Museums in New Brunswick, 1862-1930," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42, no.4 (Spring, 2008):93-116.

²⁶ Ian McKay and Robin Bates, *In the Province of History: The Making of the Public Past in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

²⁷ Erna L. Macleod, "Decolonizing Interpretation at the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site," in *Canadian Cultural Poesis: Essays on Canadian Culture*, Garry Sherbert, Annie Gerin and Sheila Petty eds. 361-380 (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006).

Fortress of Louisbourg functions on a different scale than the Wyatt House, critiques of its framing of history are helpful in discussing and conceptualizing how the Wyatt House operates.

Texts written about Canadian house museums and historic sites, specifically in relation to their inclusion of women's histories, are also more limited in comparison to their American counterparts. Brittany Ann Bos' "Historical Memory and the Representation of History: Forging Connections Between National Historic Sites and Gender History," is a rare exception. Posing valuable questions such as "How can memories be used in order to 'reclaim' alternative histories not traditionally presented at National Historic Sites?" and "Which memories are commemorated and performed, which memories are left out, and for what purpose?,"²⁸ Bos' article clearly explains the connections that can be made between historical memory — a theoretical framework that is often applied in feminist methodology — gender history, and heritage conservation. The valid criticisms of Canada's National Historic Sites outlined in the article, mainly focusing on their tendency to "present monolithic interpretations of history... that do not consider complex questions related to multiple histories,"²⁹ are applicable to Canada's smaller institutions, such as its numerous historic house museums. In her article, "Women's History, Gender Politics and the Interpretation of Canadian Historic Sites: Some Examples from Ontario," Katherine M.J. McKenna describes how the male-dominated histories and narratives emphasized in many of the historic institutions in the United States are also prevalent in Canada. While she acknowledges that some changes have been made, McKenna observes that quite often

²⁸Brittney Ann Bos, "Historical Memory and the Representation of History: Forging Connections Between National Historic Sites and Gender History," *Conserveries memorielles* 9 (2011). <http://cm.revues.org/836>.

²⁹ Bos, 1.

“the public history of women is now all about finding individuals who behave like men” as a means of justification for the telling of their histories.³⁰ McKenna emphasizes the fact that despite the great strides that have been taken in women’s history as an academic subject, much still needs to be done to convey these histories within historic sites and institutions.

A recent dissertation written by Stephanie Karen Radu explores the preservation, interpretation, and representation within historic house museums across Canada. Providing the first written survey of Canadian house museums, Radu examines how these sites can be adequately defined based on their distinct histories and methods of preservation. She also considers how house museums operate under various representations of homes from the past while discussing the tensions that exist between public programming and conservation, and she critiques certain associations that are often made between house museums and their key interpretational figures. A valuable contribution to the field, Radu’s text comments on the diverse methodologies that have been employed to preserve national, local, and micro histories in Canada’s historic house museums.³¹

The relationship between women and domestic architecture has been extensively explored by architectural historian Annmarie Adams. By specifically examining domestic architecture in relation to feminism and health reform in nineteenth-century England, Adams’ text *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses, and Women, 1870-1900* illuminates the previously unacknowledged active involvement of women in regulating and designing healthy

³⁰ Katherine M.J. McKenna, “Women’s History, Gender Politics and the Interpretation of Canadian Historic Sites: Some Examples from Ontario,” *Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal* 30, no.1 (2005): 24.

³¹ Stephanie Karen Radu, “Representation, Preservation & Interpretation at Canada’s House Museums,” PhD diss., (Western University, 2014).

home environments for their families.³² This work not only broadens the ongoing revision of women's roles within the home and, subsequently, societies of the past, but it also contributes to a discussion of women's health issues, which will be addressed in Chapter Two of this thesis. An article written by Adams and Silvia Spampinato, "Carrollcroft as Women's Space: An Architectural History," also outlines unconventional ways of analyzing domestic environments to highlight the lived experiences of women within their homes. Adams and Spampinato explore how female family members utilized the space within their home to create an interior that served the "family's cultural landscape" in the nineteenth century. This case study of a single family's use of space alters preexisting beliefs about the "proper" ascribed purposes of domestic spaces and illustrates the agency women had in defining and creating their homes. Adams and Spampinato achieve this analysis by examining letters, diary entries, paintings, photographs, and more official forms of documentation such as wills and insurance plans.³³

The work of Patricia West and Charlotte Smith provides a valuable summary of understanding the history of the house museum movement in North America and acknowledges the problematic male-centred narratives that are presently being framed in Canada and the United States. Smith also acknowledges the shift that began to take place in the 1970s as house museums began to incorporate aspects of the new social history movement into their

³² Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way, Doctors, Houses and Women 1870-1900* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

³³ Annmarie Adams and Silvia Spampinato, "Carrollcroft as Women's Space: An Architectural History," *Journal of Eastern Townships Studies*, 35 (2010): 21-48.

interpretive plans. Despite this effort, idealized and simplified histories were often the basis of these sites, rather than more complex socially-diverse histories. Similar to their Great Man genre forebears, “Social History” house museums, Smith concludes, also aim to “shape national opinions and social consciousness” through their interpretive plans.³⁴

Texts such as *Restoring Women’s History through Historic Preservation*, edited by Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, and individual essays included in texts such as *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, edited by Jessica Foy Donnelly, and *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, edited by Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, all make great strides in commenting on the importance of including diverse women’s histories in museums and historic sites.³⁵ Despite their American authorship and focus, the descriptions in this literature of both successful and failed attempts to include diverse women’s experiences within historic writings and sites are helpful in understanding the approach that is currently being employed in Canadian institutions. Fuelling this discussion are texts, such as *Re-presenting the Past: Women and History*, which explore the way women “have been represented, misrepresented and made invisible in accounts of the past.”³⁶ The authors aim to document the ways in which women’s histories are being inserted into the broader historical canon,

³⁴ Charlotte Smith, “Civic Consciousness and House Museums: The Instructional Role of Interpretive Narratives,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 21 (July 2002): 85.

³⁵ Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, eds., *Restoring Women’s History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2003); Jessica Foy Donnelly, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, California: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, AltaMira Press, 2002); Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1986).

³⁶ Ann-Marie Gallagher, Cathy Lubelska, and Louise Ryan, eds., *Re-presenting the Past: Women and History* (New York, Harlow: Longman Publishing, 2001), 1.

ultimately demonstrating the important discussion concerning the need for women's history that is taking place in a variety of contexts, including historic sites and history as an academic subject and discipline.

Building upon the work initiated by Patricia West but within a Canadian context, art historian Andrea Terry discusses the political involvement and 'nation-building' motive that is demonstrated in the history of Dundurn Castle, a house museum located in Hamilton, Ontario. Referencing Lianne McTavish, Terry also draws on the work of art historian Anne Whitelaw as she further acknowledges and confirms the important role women played in the initial development of Canada's historic sites and museum collections, despite the "patriarchal norms" that are often embedded in national institutions.³⁷ Terry explores these concepts further in her article "Gender, Canadian Nationhood and 'Keeping House': The Cultural Bureaucratization of Dundurn Castle" by stressing the need to acknowledge the contributions women have made in the establishment and management of historic sites. Kim Christensen's article, "Ideas versus things: the balancing act of interpreting historic house museums," focusing on the Matilda Joslyn Gage House in Fayetteville, New York, considers the importance of offering interpretations and tours within house museums that do not solely focus on uncritical histories of domestic objects. She argues that domestic objects, rather than being used in generalized and apolitical contexts, have the ability to be presented in house museums as dynamic connections between the past and present. As her title illustrates, 'ideas' rather than 'things' can form the basis of interpretive tours within these spaces, and she explores the example of how tea wares can be used to narrate

³⁷ Andrea Terry, "Claiming Christmas for the Tourist: 'Living History' in Dundurn Castle," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 3, no.2 (2008): 58.

Gage's political involvement with the women's rights movement.³⁸ Her application of material culture within the house museum is similar to my approach in this thesis.

Material and Visual Culture Theory

Material culture theory, broadly defined and applicable in numerous fields of study, acknowledges the important role objects or artifacts play in researching a particular time period, culture, or group of people, and examines the knowledge that objects can provide in understanding the diversity of human experience.³⁹ Similar to how written documents and texts provide invaluable insight about the past, objects can be approached as evidence providing a tangible and visible connection to a past, experienced time. As art historian David Jules Prown summarizes: “[m]aterial culture is the study through artifacts of the beliefs - values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions - of a particular community or society at a given time.”⁴⁰ Prown goes on to assert that “objects made or modified by man reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them, and by extension the beliefs of the larger society to which they belonged.”⁴¹ In her discussion of

³⁸ Kim Christensen, “Ideas versus things: the balancing act of interpreting historic house museums,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, no.2 (2011): 153-168.

³⁹ Heidi Aronson Kolk, “The Many-Layered Lives of Things: Experiments in Multidisciplinary Object Study at a Local House Museum in St. Louis,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 47, no.2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2013): 161-196; Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People’s Lives* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008); Mieke Bal, “Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting,” in *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museums*, ed. Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, 84-102 (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004).

⁴⁰ Jules David Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no.1 (Spring, 1982): 2.

⁴¹ Prown, 1-2.

material culture, Karen Harvey also makes an important distinction in defining the field, stating that rather than just defining a particular object or artifact, “ ‘material culture’ encapsulates ... the myriad and shifting contexts through which [an object] acquires meaning. Material culture is not simply objects that people make, use and throw away; it is an integral part of — and indeed shapes — human experience.”⁴²

Harvey’s definition of material culture has a direct link to visual culture, a field of study that emphasizes the importance of understanding an object within a broader context. Specifically, interpreting images and objects through the field of visual culture requires an analysis not only of the image or object itself, but also an “intertextual” analysis that acknowledges “the audio, the spatial, and psychic dynamics of spectatorship” that become major components of engaging with visual images.⁴³ Images and objects, therefore, can both be understood as non-static entities; their history, their location and purpose as well as “the way people engage with them”, as Kairi notes, all contribute to an analysis through a visual cultural lens.⁴⁴ The same can be expected when studying objects as examples of material culture, which I am advocating can be applied in the curation of historic house museums. The importance of the context of objects within their specific histories, their particular placement in a historic house museum interior, and the way

⁴² Karen Harvey, *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 3.

⁴³ Irit Rogoff, “Studying Visual Culture,” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998), 14.

⁴⁴ Jain Kajri, “Introduction: Calendar art as an object of knowledge”, in *Gods in the Bazaar: the Economies of Indian Calendar Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 18.

visitors and tour guides interact with them significantly impact the way they are understood. This notion, that objects can serve as evidence of the beliefs, practices, and experiences of individuals is applicable both historically — as exemplified by thousands of museums' collections of objects around the world — and contemporarily, as anthropologists, such as Daniel Miller, illustrate in studies of the belongings of living individuals.⁴⁵

How does material culture theory, as a theory that is applicable in the discussion of human experiences from both the past and present, ultimately manifest in a historic house museum? Frequently operating as a series of historic period rooms complete with a collection of domestic objects, house museums are unique in their categorization as both a past domestic space and a museum. While house museums presently function as static, uninhabited interiors, they were once private dwellings, and the presence of objects suggest traces of lives led in these spaces. The home itself can be conceptualized as an object of material culture, standing as evidence of lives lived in the past. Indeed, following the object-based theory described by Prown, houses are reflections of various changing social, cultural, and individual beliefs and experiences. Through the duration of its existence, for example, a single home likely hosts different family members, experiences architectural alterations, undergoes changes in exterior and interior decoration, and subsequently shows visible signs of human interactions. As private dwellings, these spaces are extensions of and witnesses to the intimate lives of individuals, and much can be gleaned from studying their material composition; as Jean Baudrillard states, “to

⁴⁵ Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008); Daniel Miller, ed. *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors* (London and New York: Berg Publishers, 2001).

study the nature of the interior of a building is to study the culture of the people who occupy those inside spaces.”⁴⁶ The period during which the Wyatts occupied their residence in Summerside was a time when the home and its contents were largely understood as expressions of status and extensions of the self.⁴⁷ Relating to this idea, recurring connections have been made between home, notions of self, identity, and the body, especially in relation to women’s experiences and narratives. These intimate connections between the home, personal narratives, and the gendered history of women’s experience can be fruitfully explored through the conduit of historic house museums.

Similar to the personal qualities attributed to domestic interiors, various discussions of material culture position objects as being “parts of ourselves”⁴⁸ and explore how objects can be understood as having multidimensional and layered “lives” based on their relation to individuals and other material possessions.⁴⁹ Igor Kopytoff’s “The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process” imagines objects or commodities as having their own biographies. He poses questions about “things,” explaining that each question could also be asked when determining the biography of a person. Questions such as: “Where does the thing come from and who made

⁴⁶ Jean Baudrillard, “Structures of Interior Design,” in *From Organisation to Decoration: An Interiors Reader*, ed. Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone (London: Routledge, 2013), 125-129.

⁴⁷ Jean-Christophe Agnew, “A House of Fiction: Domestic Interiors and the Commodity Aesthetic,” in *The Domestic Reader*, ed. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 133-135; Mark Kingwell, “Tables, Chairs, and Other Machines for Thinking,” in *Practical Judgments: Essays in Culture, Politics, and Interpretation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 241.

⁴⁸ Russell W. Belk, “Possessions and the Extended Self,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 15, no.2 (September 1988): 139-168.

⁴⁹ Heidi Aronson Kolk, “The Many-Layered Cultural Lives of Things: Experiments in Multidisciplinary Object Study at a Local House Museum in St. Louis,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 47, no.2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2013): 161-196.

it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things?” and “What are the recognized “ages” or periods in the thing’s “life”?” all contribute to the construction of a biography of an object.⁵⁰ These questions assist in the conceptualization of objects as worthwhile points of investigation that can yield information about society, memory, culture, and personal histories. Similarly, *The Material Culture Handbook* positions objects as providing “a powerful medium for materializing and objectifying the self, containing and preserving memories and embodying personal and social experiences.”⁵¹ Because of their status as previously inhabited domestic interiors and the custom of these spaces to be filled with material possessions, house museums and their contents currently serve as valuable points of entry in considering the relationship between objects and individuals, both historically and contemporarily, and how both the historic site and its objects can effectively be interpreted to convey narratives.

While it is common for historic house museums to offer object-based interpretive plans, there is a tendency among many institutions to present their objects as one-dimensional, static, and, more generally, as examples of the decorative arts.⁵² As Jessica Connelly notes in the introduction of *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, this popular trend of presenting basic histories of objects means that institutions “often ignore the homeowners’ reasons for acquiring and own-

⁵⁰ Igor Kopytoff, “The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process,” in *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 66.

⁵¹ Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer, eds. *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 9.

⁵² Bradley C. Brooks, “The Historic House Furnishings Plan: Process and Product,” in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (Walnut Creek, California: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, AltaMira Press, 2002), 128-143.

ing the objects, neglect the artifacts' primary uses in the house, and discriminate against the host of non-decorative items that were equally essential to the particular home environment.”⁵³ This observation aligns with Harvey and Prown’s concept of material culture theory and sheds light on the importance of using in-depth material culture analysis in interpreting and curating historic house museums as a means of conveying diverse, accurate, and relatable histories. Emphasizing this, Connelly states that “house museums should take advantage of [material culture] and use it to uncover and understand the relationship between the tangible and intangible aspects of their sites’ histories.”⁵⁴ Taken together, house museums and their contents can serve as valuable entry points for visitors to engage with history and narratives, and forge new, more diverse examples of collective memories outside of the generalized histories that are usually represented within historic sites. In this same vein, house museums have the potential to become sites that frame conflicting or sometimes important yet uncomfortable histories and narratives.

Acknowledging the personal attributes that are inherent in objects and interior domestic spaces adds another dimension to the discussion of historic house museums. The notion of an ‘original’ or ‘authentic’ collection of objects within the house is a familiar topic to many who work within these institutions.⁵⁵ Rather than being filled with objects that were purchased, owned, and used by individuals who lived in the home, it is common for the interiors of many

⁵³ Jessica Foy Donnelly, ed. *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, (Walnut Creek, California: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, AltaMira Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ ‘Original’ here is used to indicate whether or not the collection of objects was used in the house or by the house’s original occupants. Prince Edward Island’s other historic houses include Yeo House, MacPhail Homestead, and Beaconsfield Historic House, none of which feature a collection of original objects with the exception of a few items.

house museums to be constructed by museum staff through the assemblage of a collection of objects gathered from various sites and locations. In relation to the previously mentioned themes of institutional, political, and national identity, this means of collecting allows for the presentation of constructed, and sometimes biased, interiors that have been fabricated based on assumed and often generalized histories and the interests of local or national politics.⁵⁶ The gathering of objects to fill an empty house museum encourages assumptions that must be made about what past inhabitants actually owned, as well as their tastes, and way of life. The knowledge that the original inhabitants of a house actually touched, used, cleaned, purchased, etc. the physical objects that remain in a house museum contributes an added dimension to the curatorial plan, interpretation, and visitor experience.

This experience is contextualized through an examination of the Wyatt House. The collection of objects located in the Wyatt House is original in the sense that nearly everything on display in the house today belonged to the Wyatt family. While critiques of constructed histories are still applicable to the house museum, the originality of the objects, especially when considered within the above mentioned parameters of visual and material culture, provides visitors with an added insight into the lives of the Wyatt family members. Other discussions about the significance of objects to the lived experiences of everyday people — either in the past or in the present — also reveal the importance of objects in their ability to act as physical remnants of past experiences.

⁵⁶Andrea Terry's exploration of holiday-related programming at Dundurn Castle investigates the application of politics and dominant histories in house museums and living history sites. See Andrea Terry, "Claiming Christmas for the Tourist: 'Living History' in Dundurn Castle," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 3, no.2 (2008): 104-120.

riences and in their ability to convey narratives, memories, and personal histories.⁵⁷ With this in mind, the originality of the objects in the Wyatt house take on added significance, both in their appeal to visitors and as important sources of study.

Methodology and Sources

This study is grounded in archival material, material objects, and the home itself as material evidence of women's history. My experience as a past interpretive tour guide of the Wyatt House provided me with a deep understanding of the history of the home, the Wyatt family, and the guided tour. I chose to focus on Cecelia Wyatt for this thesis because of her life-long health issues. Women, health and travel — themes that appear throughout the tour of the Wyatt House — are valuable topics of discussion that are not often addressed in historic house museums. Because Cecelia passed away in 1937, research was limited to archival items that were created prior to her death. From the extensive archival collection housed at the MacNaught History Centre and Archives I decided to focus on diaries written by the two Wyatt sisters, Wanda and Dorothy;⁵⁸ letters written between Wanda, Dorothy and their parents, Cecelia and Ned; and the remaining literature and ephemera relating to Cecelia Wyatt's various health issues and travel destinations. When studied in conjunction with the house and its contents, this

⁵⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi "Design and Order in Everyday Life [1991]" in *The Design Culture Reader*, ed. Ben Highmore, 157-164 (London: Routledge, 2008); Sandra H. Dudley, Amy Jane Barnes, Jennifer Binnie, Julia Petrov and Jennifer Walklate, eds., *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁵⁸ Wanda Wyatt kept over one hundred diaries in the span of her life, many of which are now transcribed and available electronically upon request at the MacNaught History Centre and Archives. Dorothy kept only four diaries, none of which are available electronically, but all of which were read for the purpose of this research.

material provides a multi-layered understanding of the lived experiences of all four Wyatt family members. Additionally, I examined photographs that were taken of the family while they were on their travels to various health spas and sanatoria in the United States which provided visual testaments of the places the family travelled, the people they met, and the activities they participated in as privileged members of the upper class. Important to my method was site-based research at the Wyatt House to better understand the home's collection of objects, the relationship between the objects, the house itself as an object of material culture, and the institution's approach in interpreting the space as a museum.

In addition, research was also completed at the Lefurgey Cultural Centre, as this building serves as the office space for the management of the Wyatt House. Records relating to the establishment of the Wyatt House as a historic house museum are kept here. Catalogue records of the Wyatts' collection of objects were consulted, specifically those that documented objects relating to Cecelia's medical concerns. In some cases, these records revealed where items in the house were found after the home was donated to the city of Summerside and provided clues as to the decisions that were made in its curation as a newly-founded museum. The catalogue records also offered information regarding the provenance of various objects, which was useful in conducting further secondary source research on the material culture collection. Finally, an interview with Susan Rodgers, the original curator of the Wyatt House, also proved

invaluable to understanding the decision making process that went into curating and restoring the Wyatt House as a historic house museum.⁵⁹

Lastly, Deirdre Kessler's *A Century on Spring Street: Wanda Lefurgey Wyatt* provides a chronological biography of the family that focuses on Wanda Wyatt. The biography is constructed from the various archival materials, such as diaries, photographs and letters, that remain in the Wyatt collection today. The text provides a thorough overview of some of the themes that are addressed in the interpretive Wyatt guided tour, such as women's education, health, and community involvement. Additionally, Kessler's text aids in understanding the cultural landscape of Prince Edward Island in the early twentieth century.⁶⁰ A recent text by Mary McDonald-Rissanen, *In the Interval of the Wave*, also provides valuable groundwork in contextualizing both urban and rural Island culture and society during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries by examining women's life writings, namely in the form of journals. Her chapters entitled "In Their Long-Belted Dresses: Images of Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Prince Edward Island Women" and "Urban Bourgeois Women and Their Everyday: Margaret Gray Lord (1845-1941) and Wanda Lefurgey Wyatt (1895-1998)" proved to be extremely beneficial in situating the discussion of this thesis.⁶¹ Overall, McDonald-Rissanen's methodology of turning to unpublished women's diaries as a way of understanding their lived

⁵⁹ The curatorial plan that Susan Rodgers put into place has continued until the present day despite the house being under new management. While the objects are in the same location as they were placed in 2001 when the site opened, the narrative structure of the guided interpretive tour of the home has gone through revisions. Susan Rodgers (original curator of the Wyatt Historic House Museum), in discussion with author, April 2015.

⁶⁰ Deirdre Kessler, *A Century on Spring Street: Wanda Lefurgey Wyatt of Summerside, Prince Edward Island, 1895-1998* (Charlottetown: Indigo Press, 1999).

⁶¹ Mary McDonald-Rissanen, *In the Interval of the Wave: Prince Edward Island Women's Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Life Writing* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2015).

experiences has also informed my thesis, as documents written by all members of the Wyatt family have heavily supported my consideration of the Wyatt House and its collection.

This thesis examines the history of the Wyatt Historic House Museum with the aid of material culture theory. My approach in analyzing the framing of women's histories in the Wyatt Historic House Museum is rooted in art historian David Jules Prown's application of the theory, and also utilizes discussions of material culture used in archaeological and anthropological study. Theoretical and scholarly texts pertaining to material culture were therefore essential to informing my discussion of the Wyatt collection within the home, and literature pertaining to women's health, separate sphere ideology, and health travel provided the groundwork for situating my specific discussions of particular pieces of the collection. Lastly, writings relating to domestic interiors and decoration informed my overall understanding of the concept of home and interiors within a Western discourse.

Chapter Summaries

The structure of this thesis is intended to bring readers on a tour of the Wyatt House. In the same way that visitors to the home are introduced to the Wyatt family through the presence of Wanda and Dorothy's portraits in the front entrance hall, readers have been provided with a glimpse into the lives of the family through an examination of these paintings. Venturing further into the home, visitors and readers are given a more detailed understanding of Wanda, Dorothy, and their parents by viewing the home's interior spaces and the family's belongings. As a house museum that does not have barriers or ropes installed that limit access into various rooms, the Wyatt House enables visitors to freely enter each room and closely view the home's various ob-

jects. Similarly, this thesis closely examines objects as a means of understanding the lives of individuals from the past.

Chapter One supports my argument that objects can provide information about the lives of individuals and that historic house museums can therefore utilize objects to frame important narratives about women. I begin by examining the influence of separate sphere ideology in understanding the perceived relationship between women and their homes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I then question why a majority of contemporary house museums are being preserved as a means of conveying narratives surrounding men despite the gendered relationship that exists between women and domestic interiors. The Wyatt Historic House Museum and its past inhabitants are introduced and contextualized within the social, economic and cultural landscape of late nineteenth century Prince Edward Island as a means of grounding the discussion of the site in its locale. This is followed by specific descriptions of the lifestyles and personalities of the two Wyatt daughters which are fuelled by an exploration of the girls' curated bedrooms in the Wyatt Historic House Museum. Finally, the chapter focuses on the room in the home most associated with prescribed notions of masculinity during the period: the study.⁶² This room is investigated as both a means of unconventionally introducing the female head-of-house through a masculine space and as a way of complicating traditional understandings of women's roles within domestic interiors. Serving as a broad introduction to the remaining chapters of the thesis, the exploration of the three Wyatt women demonstrates the complex reality of separate

⁶² It should be noted that this space is referred to as the study on the interpretive guided tour of the home, but Wanda Wyatt referred to it as the library in her diaries.

sphere ideology for these individuals as all three adhered to and deviated from societal expectations in different ways.

The second and third chapters draw additional connections between women, bodies, and domestic interiors by providing a closer investigation of Cecelia Wyatt's life that focuses on the history of her ongoing health issues and treatment practices. In Chapter Two, Cecelia's respiratory and digestive problems are contextualized within a larger discussion of changing medical practices and concerns surrounding women's fashion by selectively studying objects on display in the master bedroom of the Wyatt House. The chapter's examination of objects in the master bedroom, such as an inhaler and a Vapo-Cresolene vaporizer, illustrates some of the various treatment options Cecelia tried while residing in her home on Spring Street and demonstrates how narratives relating to women can be interpreted in a historic house museum. Chapter Three expands on these concepts by considering how Cecelia's extensive travelling affected the architecture of her home in Summerside. My argument that house museums can function as valuable documents that narrate women's lives is explored in this chapter as I apply Annmarie Adams' investigation of the complex relationship between women, health, and home to my discussion of Cecelia's treatment practices. I examine the sun parlour of the Wyatt House as an example of Cecelia's feminization of space.

Collectively, these chapters explore the complex idea of historic narrative framing through objects of material culture as exemplified by the Wyatt Historic House Museum. Specifically, I show how the aforementioned 'great man genre' is subverted by the curatorial plan of the Wyatt House. Through its display and interpretation of objects, the museum complicates the

often assumed and generalized histories of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century upper and middle-class women. Because the Wyatt Historic House Museum's collection of material objects were owned and used by members of the Wyatt family, an effectively diverse interpretive plan is in place that acknowledges alternative histories through the platform of objects. I investigate the site's interpretive approach to objects, and suggest possible points of entry and inspiration for other historic institutions potentially to use in offering more nuanced women's histories.

Chapter One

Subverting Separate Sphere Ideology: The Importance of a Women's House Museum

"My darling little girl, your treatment is just like housecleaning. You are eliminating a lot of morbid matter that is only harmful and like some offensive material around the house it is better out than in and when gotten rid of the whole environment has a healthier and pleasant condition."

- Ned Wyatt to his wife Cecelia, June 23, 1913⁶³

Gender ideologies between the middle of the nineteenth and the middle of the twentieth centuries tied women to their homes so strongly that it "helped shape the perception of both."⁶⁴ The home was directly associated with the ideal of womanhood, and ideal notions of womanhood were directly associated with the notion of the home. The above excerpt from Ned Wyatt's letter to his wife Cecelia perfectly illustrates this ideology as he makes a direct connection between her ill body and a dirty house. Ned's written message to Cecelia also demonstrates the complex relationships that exist between domestic interiors, gender, and body politics. Ultimately, these associations between women, their bodies, and the home manifest in the discussion of separate sphere ideology in which women of the middle and upper classes were associated with the socially constructed "domestic sphere" while men were associated with the "public sphere" outside of the home in the world of politics, finance, and industry. It is important to recognize that the metaphor of separate sphere ideology, largely developed and applied in academic scholarship by historians in the late 1960s and early 1970s, references a complex

⁶³ Ned Wyatt to Cecelia Wyatt, 23 June 1913, Box 'Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,' Folder 'To Cecelia from Ned June-Dec 1913 Chicago, Ill,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

⁶⁴ Beverly Gordon, "Woman's Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age," 282.

relationship between “an ideology *imposed* on women, a culture *created by* women, [and] a set of boundaries *expected to be* observed by women.”⁶⁵

Despite its contemporary criticisms, separate sphere ideology is still relevant in thinking about gender roles during the Victorian and Edwardian periods because of the societal expectations it prescribed for many women.⁶⁶ It is this pervasive ideology of separate spheres that largely inspired my thesis: Why should houses that were built during a time when the notion of “home” was so often associated with women now be preserved and maintained as a means of narrating the lives of prominent men? Because the lived experiences of many women during these periods did centre around the home, I argue that there is much to learn by studying their previously inhabited spaces as a means of gaining insight into specific women’s histories. Additionally, while recent scholarship has described the complications associated with separate sphere ideology, proving that men and women often operated within both spheres albeit in different capacities, many house museums have not followed suit. Not only do house museums neglect

⁶⁵ Linda K Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no.1 (June, 1988): 17. For one of the first discussions of the bourgeois public sphere, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Buger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

⁶⁶ Numerous academics have complicated the traditionally defined roles of the “domestic sphere” and the “public sphere,” illustrating how men and women both had influence and agency in each “separate” sphere. For example, while women did spend more time in their domestic interiors than men, women, as Annmarie Adams explains, played a role in the ‘public’ sphere of home economics by often taking charge of hiring domestic help, organizing social events, and purchasing many of the items used by members of the family, such as food and clothing. As well, separate sphere ideologies were often applied to a specific experience, namely that of middle and upper class Caucasian women. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to review these criticisms in detail, some examples of the revisions include: Annmarie Adams, “Female Regulation of the Healthy Home,” in *Home, Work, and Play: Situation Canadian Social History, 1840-1980*, eds. James Opp and John C. Walsh, 1-17 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2006); Emma Ferry, “‘Decorators May be Compared to Doctors’: An Analysis of Rhoda and Agnes Garrett’s ‘Suggestions for House Decoration in Painting, Woodwork and Furniture (1876),’” *Journal of Design History* 16, no.1, (2003): 16; and for a specific examination of Prince Edward Island women, Mary McDonald-Rissanen, *In the Interval of the Wave: Prince Edward Island Women’s Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Life Writing* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2015), 27-57.

valuable histories associated with women and domestic interiors, but many of them also fail to acknowledge the agency women had in their own homes, the roles women played in the public sphere, and the influence men had in the domestic sphere. As previously inhabited, private spaces, historic house museums can be used as sites that complicate separate sphere ideology through their public exploration of past lives.

To situate the discussion, this chapter will serve as an introduction to the Wyatt Historic House Museum by summarizing the history of the Wyatt family through the consideration of individual rooms in the house. A brief description of Prince Edward Island's economic history will be provided as a means of contextualizing the home and the family within a local history, and an examination of the home's study will function as a specific case study because of its unique portrayal of Edwardian family life. I argue that this investigation into the history of the Wyatt women, as framed by the Wyatt Historic House Museum through the curation of objects, attests to the complexities surrounding separate sphere ideologies. While the Wyatt women in many ways operated within the century's prescribed gender roles, their personal belongings and written documents reveal that they also subverted this lifestyle in subtle ways. An important history in and of itself, the significance of women's lived experiences during this period becomes even more valuable when considered within the preexisting dialogue surrounding contemporary museum practices and the viability of historic house museums. Because of the complex associations that exist between women, their bodies, and domestic interiors, it makes sense that women should be integrated as part of the main focus within historic house museums.

Contextualizing the Wyatt House: A Brief History of Summerside and the Wyatt Family

On the corner of Prince and Spring Street in the city of Summerside sits what is now the Wyatt Historic House Museum [Figure 1.1]. Constructed in 1867, the modest-sized pale yellow Georgian style home with dark green shutters is situated within the city's current historic district — an area praised for its numerous nineteenth-century houses that boast a variety of architecture styles. Originally owned by local merchant Robert Strong, the Wyatt House went up for auction in 1887 where it was purchased by the Honourable John E. Lefurgey [1824-1891] — a local shipbuilder and merchant who lived in a large Gothic Revival home right across the lawn.⁶⁷ Already having a beautiful home of his own, the family story is that John Lefurgey gave his new purchase to one of his daughters, Cecelia [1864-1937], on the occasion of her marriage to James Edward Wyatt in 1890 [1860-1932].⁶⁸ A lawyer from Charlottetown, James — commonly referred to as Ned — set up a law practice in Summerside, took up mortgage holding, was a Conservative MLA, and served as Speaker of the House in Charlottetown from 1912-1916. Following their marriage, he and Cecelia moved into their new home and welcomed the birth of their first daughter, Dorothy, in 1893. Their second daughter, Wanda, was born two years later in 1895, and their son, Ivan, was born in 1896 [Figure 1.2]. Ivan, sadly, died at the age of two from infancy sickness, so the Wyatt House, as it came to be known, was witness to the life of this four-person family [Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4]. Before her passing in 1998 at the age of 102, Wanda Wyatt expressed her hope that the family home, complete with its original furnishings, letters,

⁶⁷ "Wyatt House History," *Experience Summerside Arts, Heritage & Culture*, last modified 2013, accessed 29 October, 2013, <http://culturesummerside.com>.

⁶⁸ Kessler, 5.

photographs, and personal documents, would be left to the city of Summerside to be preserved as a house museum.⁶⁹

The Wyatt House and many of the other historic homes that can be found in Summerside's downtown heritage district were constructed for the leading male figures in the industrial and mercantilist businesses of the early nineteenth century.⁷⁰ In 1895, during these early years of mercantile success, another profitable venture captured the attention of the province; the farming of silver-black foxes, the rarest and most desired of the furs in the fashion world at the time, ensured the stability and growth of the economy on Prince Edward Island and resulted in what many refer to as the Island's version of the Klondike Gold Rush.⁷¹ Summerside came to be known as the 'fox capital' of the world for its strong association with the prosperous farms.⁷² While few fox farms exist today, evidence of the success of many male Islanders from this exciting chapter of Island history remains in the form of a second wave of the construction of Four Square style homes in Summerside's downtown core and across the province.⁷³

As a province that is often associated with rural agricultural landscapes and idyllic seaside communities, Prince Edward Island's urban culture was significantly affected by these in-

⁶⁹ Kessler, 3-11. Technically, Wanda left the home to the Wyatt Foundation (which she established in 1966) and they were to follow her wishes of giving the house to the City of Summerside as long as the City accepted the gift.

⁷⁰ Fred Horne, *Images of our Past: Historic Summerside, 1900-1970* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 2002), xvi.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Horne, 14-15.

⁷³ An example of a Four Square style home that was constructed on Prince Edward Island for a leading fox farmer in the industry is the Hudson Gordon House, located in Montrose, PEI. Some defining elements of Four Square Style include hipped roofs with large dormers and large four room floor plans. "Hudson Gordon House," *The Register of Canada's Historic Places*, accessed 21 March, 2015, <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=1815>

dustrial histories. Although they contained less than fifteen percent of the Island's population, "the Island's two major settlements, Charlottetown and Summerside," as historian Edward Mc-Donald explains, "provided a counterpoint to the pastoral landscape. They were more socially stratified, more ethnically mixed, and more economically diverse than rural Prince Edward Island."⁷⁴ The Island's historic narrative is rooted in land ownership disputes, and agricultural, industrial, political and other often male based histories. While rural agricultural and fishing based communities were the daily reality for many men and women alike, the Island's urban histories must not be excluded from its broader narrative, especially in considering women's histories from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While little scholarship exists that critically discusses the experiences of historic upper and middle class Island women, their histories can be broadly contextualized by what has been written about other Victorian and Edwardian women living in urban environments. Despite the Island's pervasive reputation as an idyllic, rural "garden of the gulf," complex narratives of high society culture, customs, and expectations that existed in other provinces were also prevalent on Prince Edward Island, albeit in smaller numbers.

The Wyatt residence allows us to understand a wider context that surrounds Prince Edward Island's well known industrial and political histories, particularly in reference to the histories and narratives of the Island's upper class women. As members of the social elite of Prince Edward Island, the Wyatt family benefitted from the burgeoning industries of the province. In particular, the role of Cecelia's father in the shipbuilding industry of the Island ensured a high

⁷⁴ Edward MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted: Prince Edward Island in the Twentieth Century* (Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation, 2000), 7.

social standing for the members of his family.⁷⁵ The Lefurgey and Wyatt women, along with other women of the Island's nineteenth and early twentieth-century high society, largely operated within the prescribed ideological framework of separate spheres. As MacDonald states:

the concept of separate spheres was like the whalebone corsets still fashionable at the turn of the century: it gave structure to women's lives, but it was terribly confining. What it failed to provide was the freedom to choose. Gazing through the prism of the present, the repression in women's lives stands out in high relief, but at the time it was of a piece with the strict conformity that Island society expected of all of its members.⁷⁶

Commenting on the presentation of women in Prince Edward Island local newspapers at the beginning of the twentieth century, Mary McDonald-Rissanen notes that an examination of these publications suggest that there was no "pivotal place for women in society other than being beautiful, healthy, and fit for reproduction," emphasizing the societal limits that were often placed on women during this time.⁷⁷ The prescribed lifestyle of separate sphere ideology is most applicable in understanding the life of Cecelia Wyatt because she was raised during the Victorian era. Her daughters, primarily raised during the Edwardian era, were likely brought up following the beliefs and practices that were inherent in separate sphere ideology. However, an investigation of the objects owned and used by Wanda and Dorothy provides a deeper understanding of each woman's individual lived experiences. Objects on display in Dorothy's bedroom frames a narrative of decorative arts pursuits that aligns in many ways with the assumptions made about high

⁷⁵ Cecelia was the daughter of the Honourable John Lefurgey, a prominent local shipbuilder and merchant from Summerside. In 1870, Lefurgey was elected to the Prince Edward Island legislature. He remained a member of the executive council for twenty years and was an "ardent advocate" of Confederation, as noted in Kessler, 6. Additionally, shipbuilding provided the backbone of Summerside's economy during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As Horne notes, "due to the impact of shipbuilding, by the 1880s Summerside was the commercial capital of Prince County and the western half of Prince Edward Island." Horne, xiv.

⁷⁶ MacDonald, 62.

⁷⁷ McDonald-Rissanen, 45.

society Edwardian women, while Wanda's bedroom suggests a narrative of education and travel that subverts this ideological framework. The presence of both narratives in the home, in addition to the framing of their mother Cecelia's lived experience, emphasizes the fact that the lives of early twentieth-century women were varied, complex, and individualized, despite the generalized histories of women that are included in many house museums.

Interiors as Self-Portraits: The Bedrooms of Dorothy and Wanda Wyatt

Regardless of its rather unassuming exterior, visitors are greeted with physical signifiers of the Wyatt family's social standing upon entering the Wyatt Historic House Museum for the interpretive guided tour. Referencing the family's preoccupation with interior decorating, the home's original pink and green patterned wallpaper lines the walls of the entrance hallway and continues up the main staircase to the landing of the second floor [Figure 1.5]. The individual portraits of Wanda and Dorothy — discussed in the introduction of this thesis — are displayed on either side of the front entrance hall. After referencing these portraits and introducing the members of the family in the entrance space, the tour guide brings visitors through the living room, which is located off the main hall, see Figure 1.6, where items of aesthetic, historic, and narrative interest are pointed out. With its ornate furnishings, objects of curiosities, and multiple seating options, the living room emphasizes the Wyatts' status as educated, privileged members of the Island's upper class who often hosted meetings and other social events in their living room [Figure 1.7].⁷⁸ After leaving the living room, guides lead visitors up the main stairs to the second

⁷⁸ Local newspapers such as *The Journal* would often reference parties and social gatherings that would take place at the Wyatt residence. An excerpt from the February 8, 1905 *Journal*, for example, reads that "Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Wyatt gave a very enjoyable party at their home on Friday evening last, when they entertained a number of their friends to whist and dancing."

floor bedrooms, and it is here, in these intimate and personalized spaces, that the individual personalities and interests of the Wyatt women are fully explored and contextualized. In spite of Ned's prominent role in Summerside and on the Island as a whole, it is the three Wyatt women whose stories permeate the walls and contents of the home.

On the upstairs landing, the first door on your left in the second floor plan leads you into Dorothy's bedroom [Figure 1.8]. Papered in a soft cream and silver wallpaper, the space houses Dorothy's ornately carved wooden four-poster bed and features her luxurious walk-in closet — a true testament to the Wyatts' wealth at the time [Figure 1.9]. The baby furniture that was used by all three Wyatt children — including a highchair, a cradle, and a walker — is also displayed in Dorothy's room, despite its lack of association with the nursery. Tour guides often point out the objects to visitors and then reference Dorothy's inclination towards a more traditionally "domestic life." Her personal diaries reveal her desire as a young woman to be married and to raise a family. Dorothy's other domestic interests are referenced in her bedroom; a love of interior design is reflected in her handmade bed skirt and matching vanity desk cover,⁷⁹ and an array of Dorothy's art supplies and her sketchbook, displayed on a wooden hope chest, give evidence of her artistic pursuits [Figure 1.10]. Taking her interest in design seriously, Dorothy enrolled at Mount Allison University in 1929 to take classes in "Art Structures, History of Art Design, Prospections, and Interior Modelling."⁸⁰ In addition to this interest in fine art, Dorothy also had a

⁷⁹ It should be noted that both the bed skirt and the vanity covering are reproductions made by the original curators of the house to replace the aging ones that were found on the furniture after the city received the home. Susan Rodgers (original curator of the Wyatt Historic House Museum), in discussion with the author, April 2015.

⁸⁰ Dorothy Wyatt to Wanda Wyatt, n.d., Box 'Correspondence Dorothy,' Folder '1929 to Family from Dorothy,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

love of music and singing. Even before she attended Mount Allison, Dorothy travelled to Toronto to take singing lessons with a variety of instructors. The initial entry in one of Dorothy's four diaries begins with a reflection on leaving the island to pursue an education in music:

Well here I am in Toronto and so far the experience has been fine. I left home Fri. 15th of Feb and guess it was my lucky day. The morning was fine after a heavy rain . . . up at 6 a.m. quite a shock to my system I admit. Mum looked a bit dazed when I left as my departure was rather sudden in the end but I had wanted to study my singing in earnest and it was hard to do it at home.⁸¹

This interest in music is suggested in her bedroom through the display of selected examples of her sheet music and a black folio that she used to carry her music. The display of these various objects in a space that was actually lived in by Dorothy effectively frames the artistic personality of the eldest Wyatt daughter and inspires a dialogue about how she fit within separate sphere notions of the feminine ideal. The curation of the bedroom, supported by the in-depth interpretive tour, gives visitors an understanding of Dorothy's life as a domestically inclined yet mobile, cosmopolitan woman of Prince Edward Island's upper class.

To the right of Dorothy's bedroom door is the entrance to the bedroom of Wanda.⁸² Two years younger than Dorothy, Wanda lived an exceptionally different life than that of her older sister, and this is reflected in the curation of her bedroom [Figure 1.11]. A belief in the positive future for women's rights was held by all members of the Wyatt family, and Wanda successfully

⁸¹ Dorothy Wyatt, 1 March 1925, Box 'Dorothy', Folder 'Dorothy Randal Wyatt 1916-1918, Vol.I, 1918-1920, VolII (in exhibit)', MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

⁸² On the tour it is sometimes noted that this was the childhood and young-adult bedroom of Wanda. Following the death of their parents in the 1930s, Wanda took over the master bedroom while Dorothy remained in her bedroom. During the curation of the Wyatt House as a historic museum, it was decided that the upstairs bedrooms, along with the dining room, entrance hall and front parlour, would largely reflect the house as it was in the early 1900s when all members of the Wyatt family were living in the home, so the bedroom was therefore converted back to what it would have been like when Wanda was staying in the space. Susan Rodgers (original curator of the Wyatt Historic House Museum), in discussion with the author, April 2015.

participated in widening career options for island women of the early twentieth century. The first woman from Prince Edward Island who was permitted to study in a ‘male’ profession, Wanda was allowed to become a student of law in 1919,⁸³ following her completion of a BA from the Royal Victoria College, an affiliation of McGill University, in 1917.⁸⁴ Wanda did not continue with her studies despite her acceptance into the program, and staff at the Wyatt Heritage Properties suspect that this may have been because she felt obligated to stay home and take care of her ailing mother. Her completion of a B.A. — in many ways a unique accomplishment for the period — is referenced in the room through the display of two hardcover notebooks she used while attending the College, above which hangs a framed image of an anonymous woman. Featuring the woman's head and shoulders in the middle of an oval of blank space, the image reads “The Future,” and emphasizes the Wyatts’ progressive attitudes. Wanda’s tendency to travel, usually for pleasure or as a companion to her mother, is made evident through the display of travel brochures in her opened dresser drawers, and her later role in the wider community is also noted by tour guides when the green, velvet hood hanging in Wanda’s closet is pointed out to visitors. In recognition of her active participation in her community, particularly through her support of Island heritage and art, the University of Prince Edward Island awarded Wanda an honorary doctorate in 1992, and this hood was presented to her at the ceremony [Figure 1.12].⁸⁵ Other examples of Wanda and Dorothy’s involvement in the community are also referenced in

⁸³ “Miss Wyatt To Study Law,” *The Guardian Newspaper*, Charlottetown, PEI, December 1, 1919, page 5.

⁸⁴ Kessler, 127.

⁸⁵ Kessler, 442.

the room. A framed certificate awarded to the Abegweit Chapter of the IODE for its efforts during World War II hangs on the wall, reminiscent of the time Wanda spent as an important member of the organization. Collectively, the objects in Wanda's room provide a framing of an educated, well-travelled woman of Prince Edward Island's upper class who participated in public society by contributing to the improvement of her community. In addition to their ability to evoke narratives of their lives and interests, Wanda and Dorothy's bedrooms comment in many ways on the women's adherence to and deviation from feminine ideals of the period.

Familial Obligations: The Effects of Cecelia Wyatt's Health

In order to better understanding how the prevalent ideology of separate spheres applied to the Wyatt family, it is essential to recognize the history of health and travel that defined Cecelia's life and how it affected the decisions that were made by Wanda, Dorothy, and Ned. As this chapter's introductory quotation alludes to, Cecelia suffered from various physical ailments, and Wanda and Dorothy were almost constant companions of their mother as she sought relief from her illnesses at sanatoria throughout North America. Because this topic of health, travel, and its broader consequences fuels the discussion of the following two chapters, this chapter will briefly comment on the fact that Cecelia's health issues are key in better comprehending Wanda and Dorothy's lived experiences, as their mother's poor health affected many of the choices the women made throughout their lives. Wanda's decision to not pursue a degree in law was likely because of her mother's condition. Marrying a suitable husband — an expectation placed on many women of high society — was never a reality for either Wanda or Dorothy, and this has

been attributed to the fact that both girls felt an obligation to take care of their mother.⁸⁶ Dorothy, in particular, spent much of her life by Cecelia's side, which appears to have limited her engagement with people her own age and the amount of time she was able to spend doing activities she enjoyed. Cecelia comments on Dorothy's presence in many of her letters to Ned by writing passages such as "[I] just wish Dorothy could get among some young people. She keeps close to me & is such good company."⁸⁷ Dorothy also expressed the limitations she sometimes felt in her life by writing in her diary. Phrases such as "this evening Wanda & I got raving about our ambitions & desires for a good time. Poor Mother does not like to hear it especially as she is helpless to do anything"⁸⁸ suggest how attentive Wanda and Dorothy were to their mother. This narrative of health and travel is more heavily recognized in other parts of the home, but it is also alluded to in Dorothy's bedroom, where a travellers trunk sits next to Dorothy's bed, signifying the extensive travelling Dorothy did as her mother's companion and caregiver. An ornate pair of shoes that belonged to Cecelia sits on top of the trunk, subtly alluding to the main purpose for most of Dorothy's travel [Figure 1.13]. While Ned did some travelling of his own, typically for business

⁸⁶ An interview between Mary O'Brien of the University of Prince Edward Island and Wanda Wyatt in 1984 reveals the obligation she felt. In discussing her hopes for her future as a young girl, Wanda stated that "the fact that my mother wasn't well, I felt my responsibility to the family. And my getting out on my own would be a very selfish thing to do, under the circumstances. And that's the way it proved, you see. I could have gone out, and forsaken the family, gone out on my own, but I didn't." She later explained that if her mother had been well that it "would have been an entirely different story all together. If you didn't have that feeling that somebody must be there to look after her, it would have been different. You would have had a feeling of freedom, and of going out on your own and testing yourself, your own wings." Source: Wanda Wyatt, interview by Mary O'Brien. December 4, 1984, University of Prince Edward Island, interview transcript available in Wyatt fonds 'personal papers', MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE, 12.

⁸⁷ Cecelia Wyatt to Ned Wyatt, 6 April 1913, Box 'Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,' Folder 'To Ned from Cecelia & Dorothy in U.S Apr-May 1913,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

⁸⁸ Dorothy Wyatt in her diary, 24 May 1918, Box 'Dorothy,' Folder 'Dorothy Randal Wyatt 1916-1918, Vol. (In exhibit) 1918-1920, Vol II,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

purposes, he was often the primary resident of the Wyatt home for many months of each year. During periods when Wanda, Dorothy, and Cecelia were able to shop, attend concerts, social functions, and lectures while they were away (depending on Cecelia's condition), Ned was usually at home seeing to the operations of the family home -- a responsibility usually in the hands of the female-head-of house.

Masculine Spaces within Domestic Interiors: The Study

Although their bedrooms are the spaces most strongly associated with the lived experiences of Dorothy and Wanda as upper class women of the Island, their narratives are also referenced through the rest of the house with the display of various objects. Similarly, Cecelia's bedroom, the focus of Chapter Two, concentrates on her specific history, but her personal narrative is woven through the entire curation of the Wyatt House as well. While the broader aim of this thesis is to explore the unconventional histories that are framed in the spaces of the Wyatt House, it is also important to recognize the effective framing of more traditional women's narratives in the home, specifically those that relate to the ideological constructions of separate sphere ideology. To gain an understanding of how the Wyatt women operated within these parameters, I will examine the room most oriented within early twentieth-century ideals of masculinity: Ned's study. Following a description of the room as the space where visitors are provided with the most detail regarding the life of Ned Wyatt, the remaining portion of this chapter will consider the effective framing of Cecelia Wyatt within this space. Through the curation of particular objects, the room provides viewers with a different understanding of the often generalized examples of separate spheres.

Ned's study is located off the family dining room, and it can be accessed through a door in the dining room or through the small hallway outside of the kitchen, as the plan of the first floor illustrates [Figure 1.6]. Painted a deep shade of red and naturally lit by one tall window draped in heavy fabric, the study houses various objects that symbolize ideals of masculinity and the Edwardian male head of house [Figure 1.14]. In addition to a filing cabinet, Ned's robe from his time as a Speaker of the House, a set of golf clubs, and a cricket bat are all located in corners of the room. A heavy wooden desk, featuring Ned's *Oliver* typewriter, cheque books, receipt books and ink well, sits in the middle of the study facing a sizeable fireplace. The fireplace, showcasing a large painting of a ship over its mantle, also houses photographs of Ned's mother and father. To the left of the fireplace is a wall covered by built-in book shelves, and directly in front of it stands a low armless rocking chair and an ornate wooden sewing table that disrupt the room's masculine atmosphere [Figure 1.15]. Situated on an angle facing Ned's desk, the rocking chair and sewing table were placed in the study based on excerpts from Wanda's diaries. Phrases such as "D[orothy] is practicing and M[other] is doing some fancy work in the library"⁸⁹ indicate that Cecelia spent time in the space as she worked on what were likely embroidery and other sewing projects.

Acknowledging this activity, the seat of the chair serves as a space to display four pieces of embroidered material [Figure 1.16], while the inside of the sewing table contains various instruments associated with embroidery and fancy work, such as bits of thread, buttons, and a measuring tape [Figure 1.17]. Two of the items on the chair are napkins fashioned out of a white

⁸⁹ Wanda Wyatt in her diary, 28 October, 1927, Wanda Wyatt's 1927-1928 diary, MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

fabric printed with a design of flowers and leaves, and they are perfectly embroidered with Cecilia Wyatt's, nee Lefurgey, initials of "CLW" in a calligraphy font, suggesting that the pieces were done on a machine.⁹⁰ The second set of pieces, on the other hand, are detailed with various elements such as an embroidered border, stitched lettering, and designs, and they are therefore examples of a woman's fancy work completed by hand. When studied in the context of the men's study, this collection of objects becomes loaded with broader notions of the history of the ornamental arts and middle and upper-class Edwardian ideals of womanhood and domesticity. By exploring these ideas in a historic house museum, the objects in the study complicate common assumptions about separate sphere ideals during the period.

Docile Domestic Activities: Embroidery, High Society Women, and Cecelia Wyatt

For the purpose of this thesis, women of the upper and middle classes have been specifically discussed, but it should be acknowledged that needlework in a variety of forms was a common part of the daily lives of women from most classes. Sewing was an integral part of survival for some women and families of the lower classes, as this skill provided them with the ability to create and mend clothing, perform duties as hired help, and generate an income as lace-makers or dressmakers.⁹¹ Needlework, often in the form of embroidery, however, was a common pastime for women of the upper classes, conducted both in groups or pairs as a form of socializing, or in solitude. This seemingly simple craft, as I hope to illustrate through the examination of

⁹⁰ "Artefacts Canada- Humanities," *CHIN's Professional Exchange*, accessed March 25, 2014, [http://www.pro.rcip-chin.gc.ca/bd-dl/artefacts-eng.jsp?upp=0&emu=en.artefacts:/Proxac/ws/human/user/www/Record;jsessionid=4t-dqmy2mt1&m=44&w=NATIVE\('INSNAME%20EQ%20'WYATT%20HERITAGE%20PROPERTIES'%20and%20image%20=%20'X'"\)](http://www.pro.rcip-chin.gc.ca/bd-dl/artefacts-eng.jsp?upp=0&emu=en.artefacts:/Proxac/ws/human/user/www/Record;jsessionid=4t-dqmy2mt1&m=44&w=NATIVE('INSNAME%20EQ%20'WYATT%20HERITAGE%20PROPERTIES'%20and%20image%20=%20'X')

⁹¹ Kathryn Ledbetter, *Victorian Needlework* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2012), 15-21.

the handiwork on display in the study, reveals multilayered and complex connections between embroidery, ideals of femininity, and the home. As previously alluded to, women of the upper and middle classes were ideally meant to stay confined to the interiors of their home, busying themselves with “contemplative, domestic activities . . . such as sewing or reading.”⁹² The financial success of the male-head of house was also often demonstrated by the ability or non-ability of his wife to stay home without having to contribute to the family’s economic income. A leisured wife, therefore, was one of the ultimate symbols of financial success and status.⁹³ The assemblage of objects in the study is a physical remnant of this history and way of life, and the rocking chair functions as a complementary aspect to the narrative, serving as the space Cecelia would occupy as she fulfilled her womanly “duty” of participating in docile, calm activities.

While a dialogue surrounding the status of craft and needlework is outside the specific parameters of this thesis, Parker provides valuable insight on the status and expectation of women during this period by examining the reputation of their handiwork as craftwork rather than works of art. Similar to the direct connections between women and the home, Parker explains how stereotyped femininity and embroidery had come to mean one and the same thing,⁹⁴ exemplifying this by stating how it was believed that “women embroidered because they were naturally feminine and were feminine because they naturally embroidered.”⁹⁵ Both embroidery

⁹² Gordon, 283.

⁹³ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2010), 11.

⁹⁴ Parker, 6.

⁹⁵ Parker, 11.

and the feminine ideal, Parker notes, were “characterized as mindless, decorative and delicate; like the icing on the cake, good to look at, adding taste and status, but devoid of significant content.”⁹⁶ This poignant observation is further strengthened in considering the prominent role embroidery, as a form of the ornamental arts, played in the education of women. Primarily because of separate sphere ideology, educational opportunities, even for women of the upper classes, were limited. While men were able to study subjects that would enhance their capabilities in the public sphere, such as science, mathematics, and law, women were often restricted to the study of music and art. As the bedrooms of Dorothy and Wanda illustrate, Dorothy’s life adhered to this prescribed lifestyle as she found fulfillment in music and art while Wanda, still an active participant and supporter of artistic endeavours, subverted the period’s prescribed roles for women through the completion of her Bachelor of Arts degree, which required her to complete classes such as biology. Embroidery, likely practiced by both Wyatt daughters, was often taught informally within the Victorian home to girls at a young age, but there were opportunities to study the art of embroidery more formally at various institutions.⁹⁷ This partial education within the ornamental arts, although likely enjoyable for many women, is a direct reflection of the limited roles that women were expected to fill as wives, mothers, and daughters of the upper and middle classes. It is here that Cecelia Wyatt, as an Edwardian woman of privilege, can be inserted into this broader history.

⁹⁶ Parker, 6.

⁹⁷ Ledbetter, 11.

Because of her social status, Cecelia was able to enrol in 1880 at the Mount Allison Ladies College in Sackville, New Brunswick.⁹⁸ While the Ladies College was progressive for its time, becoming the first Canadian institution to give women the right to a college degree in 1875,⁹⁹ the young Cecelia Lefurgey participated in the traditional educational opportunities for women during this period. Her focus on an education in music and art is reflective of her upbringing and lifestyle back home on the Island as a daughter of one of Summerside's leading families,¹⁰⁰ and her education became applicable in her later life as it provided her with the artistic skills in the ornamental arts that were deemed necessary for her status and role as a proper wife of the Edwardian period.¹⁰¹ Her education also stands as a testament to the broader, traditional expectations placed on women during this period to create beautiful sounds through music, produce beautiful objects through the mediums of paint or thread, and ultimately function as beautiful docile, ornamental figures within the home. It is this final point, specific to Cecelia Wyatt but telling of a broader history, that the sewing table, rocking chair, and accompanying embroidered materials initially acknowledge in the Wyatt House.

Subverting Separate Spheres: A Woman's 'Place' Within the Home

It has so far been established that the display of the sewing table, the rocking chair, napkins, and embroidered pieces of fabric initially functions in the context of women's histories that

⁹⁸ "Display results for Fonds Acc4486, Cecelia Lefurgey Wyatt fonds" Archives Council of Prince Edward Island, accessed February 2014, <http://www.archives.pe.ca/peain/fondsdetail.php?number=1030124&lang=E&fonds=Acc4486>

⁹⁹ Marie Hammond Callaghan, ed., *We were here: Exploratory Essays on Women's History at Mount Allison University* (Sackville: Mount Allison University, 2007), 4.

¹⁰⁰ Kessler, 6.

¹⁰¹ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space: Privacy and the Canadian Home* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 65.

are commonly represented in house museums. References to women's roles as wives and mothers and their daily activities within the home are often as far as many house museums go in recognizing the female presence. I believe the discussion of the complex history surrounding embroidery and ideal femininity during this period has effectively illustrated the value in including these narratives in the curation of house museums. However, while the display of the rocking chair and the sewing table do initially operate within the parameters of traditional women's narratives, I also believe that they go beyond this interpretation and ultimately subvert the common beliefs about women's place within the home and relationship with the male head of house. This inclusion of a female presence in the study successfully allows the Wyatt House to go beyond the traditional representations of women commonly seen in historic house museums.

In picturing a Victorian or Edwardian lady working on an embroidery or needlework project, one does not often conclude that she would have done so in a masculinized space such as the study. Instead, it is believed that women of the upper class more commonly worked on their projects in the comfort of their living rooms or parlours.¹⁰² The display in the Wyatt House complicates this belief, and I believe that this representation of the female presence in a men's space speaks to a more truthful rendering of relationships between this husband and wife of the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods. I also believe that the inclusion of this narrative succeeds in supporting the acknowledged complications that surround separate sphere ideology; qualities of the male-dominated public sphere exist within the home, as exemplified by the study, but women had the ability to insert themselves within these masculine spaces, as exemplified by the rocking chair, sewing table and embroidered materials. As well, the space offers a nuanced perspective of

¹⁰² Ledbetter, 5.

the male head-of-house as we gain an understanding about a space that was occupied by both husband and wife. The brief case study of the Wyatt House's study attests to the ability of house museums to offer a revised perspective on women's histories, and it creates a space to further discuss the complicated relationships that exist between women, their bodies, domestic architecture, and interiors. The lifestyles of Wanda and Dorothy also testify to the diverse experiences of women from the period, despite the prevalence of separate sphere ideologies. Specifically, their role in caring for their ailing mother provides a unique entry point into the history of women's health.

Chapter Two

Health Care at Home: Alternative Women's Histories in a House Museum

*"This has been the most strenuous day I have ever put in mentally. Mother's condition was truly alarming last night. I was on duty, and about 10 P.M. we gave her juice which she took without relish. Then we passed a restless three hours, finally Mother feeling so bad I got hot water to drink & gave her a Treatment over stomach, but she began to feel faint & nauseated & then vommited [sic] about a qt of blood & water. Wanda & I were very alarmed, called Dr. F who got here after 2 A.M. & stayed till after 8 A.M. I guess he saved her life by being here, she had several very weak spells. W & I told the Dr to wire Father which he did (Mrs. Wyatt needs you, serious stomach trouble, girls tired out). Father will be scared to death."*¹⁰³

-Dorothy Randall Wyatt in her diary, May 13th, 1919

"Underlying the work of this book is my belief that medicine and culture go hand in hand and that one way of discovering attitudes towards women is to examine their medical experience. Health is where the public and private worlds merge, and for women whose lives have been seen largely as private and therefore inaccessible, an examination of the medical care given to them reveals an important aspect of their existence." - Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of their Bodies*¹⁰⁴

Similar to that of the bedrooms of her daughters, the curation of the Wyatt House's master bedroom attests to the life of Cecelia Wyatt [Figure 2.1]. Upon entering the room, visitors are greeted with a bright, large space that houses the personal effects of Cecelia and Ned. Complete with a window seat, fireplace, four-poster bed, and various other pieces of furniture, the bedroom is a favourite among viewers [Figure 2.2]. The interests and lifestyle of Cecelia are subtly alluded to in the room through the display of the fashionable *Harpers Bazaar* magazines, books on proper etiquette and home decorating, and her elaborate vanity, complete with various beauty accessories. The bedroom is also the space where visitors are introduced to the fact that Cecelia

¹⁰³ Dorothy Wyatt, 13 May 1919, Box 'Dorothy,' Folder 'Dorothy Randal Wyatt 1916-1918, Vol. (In exhibit) 1918-1920, Vol II,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁰⁴ Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of their Bodies: Women and their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 7.

spent the majority of her life battling what were chiefly undiagnosed illnesses. While the Wyatt House frames common associations of women and the home, as explored in the previous chapter, the history of Cecelia's health concerns provides an added layer to the home's complex narrative and encourages visitors to think about the individual lives of women from the past.

As a space that is associated with daily beautification routines, the bedroom is an appropriate place to acknowledge the important connections that can be made between interiors, the female body, issues of health, and the ritualized routine of dressing. This chapter examines objects relating to Cecelia's treatment practices that are now on display in the master bedroom. Their placement in a space that also includes items relating to Cecelia's dedication to and interest in fashion, such as the *Harper's Bazaar* magazines and the beauty tools displayed on her vanity [Figure 2.3], references ideas of routine use, beautification, and the "preparation" of the body. For women of the upper class during this period, the art of dressing was of the utmost importance as the status and wealth of their husbands was often reflected in the garments they wore as their wives. Key components of dressing every morning for women of the middle and upper classes included "long-fitted dresses, crinolines, petticoats, corsets, and heeled shoes."¹⁰⁵ Cecelia, as the wife of a prominent male figure on the Island, definitely participated in these fashion trends, and she would likely prepare herself every morning in her bedroom.¹⁰⁶ Rooted in a complex social and cultural construction of gendered ideals, changes were gradually made to what was deemed

¹⁰⁵ Eileen O'Connor, "Constructing Medical Social Authority on Dress in Victorian Canada," CBMH/BCHM/ Volume 25, no.2 (2008): 392.

¹⁰⁶ It is known that servants often assisted women with their daily routine of dressing. In Cecelia's case, little is known about how she readied herself for the day. Staff speculate that the Wyatts' hired help likely only assisted with meals, cleaning, and possibly the taking care of the children.

fashionable and appropriate for women to wear.¹⁰⁷ Alongside this, a revised application of medicinal remedies saw over-the-counter medicines coming into domestic interiors, allowing buyers to use medicinal instruments in the comfort of their own homes. Displaying objects of fashion and objects of medicine in the same domestic space therefore speaks to the intimate routine of bodily preparation that necessitated the wearing of intricate garments and the occasional use of medicinal remedies. Finally, the gendered ideals rooted in women's fashion were also a part of the interior design practices of the period. In the same way that a woman's clothes reflected the status and wealth of her family, so did the interior of her home. Customarily decorated by the female head-of-house, interior design principles of the time mimicked those that were applied to women's fashion. This resulted in a visual connection between the garments women wore as members of the upper and middle classes and the fabrics used in fashioning their interiors, ultimately connecting women and their bodies to domestic spaces.

Maw's Improved Inhaler: Material Evidence of the History of Healthcare in the Home

The history of nineteenth and early twentieth century middle and upper class Western women, their health issues, and the treatments that were prescribed to them has been a focus of academic study since the 1970s.¹⁰⁸ Many of the scholars who examine these histories focus on discussions: of ineffective local treatments; the rest cure, created in 1872 by S. Weir Mitchell and

¹⁰⁷ Beverly Gordon, "Women's Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age," *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, no.4 (Winter, 1996): 298.

¹⁰⁸ See Verbrugge for an overview of early literature on this topic. Martha H. Verbrugge, "Women and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1, no.4 (Summer, 1976): 957-972.

often used to treat women suffering from mis-diagnosed fatigue and nervous disorders;¹⁰⁹ the inappropriate focus on the uterus as the cause of various ailments in women; and the incorrect diagnosis and treatment of “hysteria” and “nervousness.”¹¹⁰ Even though members of the Wyatt family did not explicitly partake in treatments such as the rest cure or diagnoses relating to the female reproductive organs, they were customers and participants in a variety of what were chiefly naturopathic theories surrounding human health and well-being. Evidence of these unconventional and under-discussed health treatments remains in the collection of objects and archival material belonging to the Wyatts.¹¹¹ In particular, many of the objects on display in the master bedroom today successfully frame a subtle narrative of Cecelia’s persistent attempt to combat the illnesses that affected her everyday life.

The initial introduction of Cecelia’s health issues and treatment takes place in the space of the master bedroom through the presence of a ceramic inhaler. Pointed out to visitors to the home by the interpretive tour guide, the white vessel is complete with a cork stopper and a glass tube mouthpiece, and it is inscribed with “Maw’s Improved Inhaler,” [Figure 2.4]. Its

¹⁰⁹ Ellen L. Bassuk, “The Rest Cure: Repetition or Resolution of Victorian Women’s Conflicts?” *Poetics Today* 6, no.1/2 (1985): 247.

¹¹⁰ See Bassuk; and Ann Douglas Wood, “‘The Fashionable Diseases’: Women’s Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 4 (Summer 1973): 25-52.; A recent important contribution to the literature surrounding the complex and varied history of women, domestic spaces, and health is the work of architectural historian Annmarie Adams. Her book *Architecture in the Family Way, Doctors, Houses and Women 1879-1900*, with case studies focusing on English middle-class homes in the nineteenth century, documents the specific and culturally relevant relationship women had with their built environment and examines how women’s private lives at home modified the public sphere, largely through their participation in health reform. Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way, Doctors, Houses and Women 1870-1900* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996).

¹¹¹ For more information about naturopathic remedies refer to Elaine H. Gort and David Coburn, “Naturopathy in Canada: Changing Relationships to Medicine, Chiropractic and the State,” *Soc. Sic. Med.* 26, no. 10 (1988): 1061-1072.

manufacturer is indicated as being S. Maw, Son & Thompson of London, England, and its instructions for use are printed in black ink on the body of the inhaler: “[t]he water should be boiling, and the inhaler not more than half filled.”¹¹² Dating from c.1870-1900,¹¹³ the inhaler is tangible proof of Cecelia’s lifelong battle with respiratory problems. Rather than focusing on health issues with which upper and middle class women from this period are often associated, such as nervousness and hysteria, the curation of the Wyatt collection in the home acknowledges less commonly discussed ailments that likely affected many North American women. In understanding the specific, personal narrative of Cecelia Wyatt, the inhaler serves as a platform for visitors and scholars alike to become further engaged with the history of domesticated health treatments, particularly when considering the inhaler’s placement in and relationship to other objects on display in the master bedroom.

Cecelia Wyatt: Wife, Mother, and Patient

The inhaler functions as the initial glimpse into what has been identified as a series of health conditions that affected Cecelia Wyatt. After being examined by Dr. Lindlahr in Chicago for the first time in 1912, Cecelia herself wrote home to Ned about her symptoms, stating that her “trouble is from poisons in the body. Skin not acting, stomach & bowel action poor & drugs in the system. Some kidney trouble.”¹¹⁴ Numerous clippings, pamphlets, and articles with titles

¹¹² As Mark Sanders notes in “Inhalation Therapy: An historical review,” Maw’s Improved Inhaler is a descendent of the Improved Nelson Inhaler that was supplied by the “well-known pharmacy supplier S. Maw & Sons in London” in 1865. Mark Sanders, “Inhalation Theray: An historical review,” *Primary Care Respiratory Journal* 16, no.2 (2007): 75.

¹¹³ Sabrina Webster, “W01.1.605A-B-Inhaler,” Wyatt Foundation Catalogue Record, Wyatt Heritage Properties, catalogued 07/19/2001.

¹¹⁴ Cecelia Wyatt to Ned Wyatt, 9 May 1912, in Kessler, 109.

such as “If You Suffer from Acidosis,”¹¹⁵ “The Brinkler School of Eating,” and “The Dr. Nathan Tucker Asthma Specific,”¹¹⁶ were saved by Cecelia and speak to the issues she experienced and treatments she considered. Despite their diversity, generally all the items relating to Cecelia’s health spring from theories surrounding the human diet and respiratory treatments. These clues, in addition to the inhaler and other physical objects left in the home, indicate that Cecelia’s health issues were principally related to respiratory and gastrointestinal problems. Further evidence of these specifics can be found in diary entries written by Dorothy and Wanda in their personal journals. Phrases such as “she was so tight in the chest”¹¹⁷ and “Dr. Kingston... thinks Mother’s trouble is in the stomach and intestines”¹¹⁸ are numerous and indicate that these two ailments were the main source of Cecelia’s ongoing physical pain and discomfort. Other entries in the girls’ diaries mention their mother and her health endlessly. Some are detailed and extensive in what they describe, while others only feature single line phrases that summarize how Cecelia was feeling each day. The recurring mention of Cecelia’s health troubles in the entries indicate how often she suffered from her symptoms, the extent to which Cecelia’s ailments affected her daily life, and the preoccupation both Wanda and Dorothy had with their mother’s condition.

The various pieces of medical literature and advertisements that were kept by the Wyatts, the references in Wanda and Dorothy’s diaries, and the objects that can be found in the home in-

¹¹⁵ Box ‘Cecelia,’ Folder ‘Health related items,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹¹⁶ Box ‘Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,’ Folder ‘Letters to Cecelia 1913,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹¹⁷ Wanda Wyatt, October 22, 1918, 1918-1919 diary, MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

dicate the numerous treatments Cecelia tried to ease her poor health. Frequently mentioned are special diets that Cecelia often tried, such as diets of milk or fruit juice; enemas—often administered by either Wanda or Dorothy; and light therapy treatments, of which two lights remain on display in the master bedroom of the Wyatt House and its ensuite bathroom. In addition to the inhaler, the surface of the desk next to the bed in the master bedroom currently displays another object that Cecelia likely used: a Vapo-Cresolene vaporizer complete with its original packaging [Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6]. Visitors to the Wyatt House often see this domestic medicinal instrument pointed out and explained during the interpretive tour following the explanation of Cecelia's inhaler.

The Vapo-Cresolene Vaporizer: The Domestication of Patent Medicines

Like the inhaler, the vaporizer, dated c.1884-1901 and manufactured in New York,¹¹⁹ is explained in relation to Cecelia's health and her continuous search for relief from her respiratory problems. A derivative of tar, cresolene was believed to aid people who suffered from bronchial and respiratory ailments, such as whooping cough, and it was specifically described as a “vapour inhalant recommended for loosening mucous discharge in the nose and throat associated with colds.”¹²⁰ Commenting on its broader history, Mallory Schwartz notes that the emergence of the Vapo-Cresolene vaporizer coincided with the early twentieth-century fascination with and development of “a wide variety of patent medicines” that were available over the counter and

¹¹⁹ Linda Andry, “W02.1.56A-G - Vaporizer,” Wyatt Foundation Catalogue Record, Wyatt Heritage Properties, catalogued 07/22/2002.

¹²⁰ Andry.

“marketed directly to customers” rather than to physicians.¹²¹ An increasing frustration with the ability of physicians to treat asthma in their patients resulted in the domestication of health treatments, and the Vapo-Cresolene vaporizer is a remnant of this history.¹²² Aligned with this trend, Sanders notes how the period between the 1880s and the early 1990s witnessed the increased production of inhalers and inhalants in America and Europe and the improvement of distribution and advertising methods that ensured the popularity and purchase of these early treatments.¹²³ The availability of over the counter medicines such as the vaporizer and inhaler becomes apparent when examining newspapers from the period. The Island’s *Guardian* newspaper, for example, includes advertisements for the Vapo-Cresolene vaporizer in many of its issues from 1901-1905 [Figure 2.7]. Phrases such as “Vapo-Cresolene is sold by druggists everywhere” speak to how pervasive this medical instrument was and illustrate the growth in the distribution of commercialized domestic health remedies.¹²⁴

Addressing the domestication of medicine, Schwartz also observes how the vaporizer resembled a gaslight — “a common household icon of the late nineteenth-century era from which it derives” — and how it “functioned like one, using a small flame to heat and vaporize the medicament.” She comments on the ornate design of the instrument’s brass base, explaining how

¹²¹ Carla C. Keirms, “Better than Nature: The Changing Treatment of Asthma and Hay Fever in the United States, 1910-1945,” *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 34 (2003): 514, cited in Mallory Schwartz, “A Cup Full of Domesticity: The ‘Duke-Fingard’ Vaporizer,” *CBMH/BCHM* 27, no.1 (2010): 208.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Sanders, 76.

¹²⁴ *The Guardian Newspaper*, Charlottetown, PEI, November 4, 1901.

“it gives the impression of luxury and opulence that would make this device fit with other home furnishings”.¹²⁵ The vaporizer’s resemblance to a familiar household item and its adherence to the ornate design principles of the period assist in reading this object as a tangible result of the social climate of the time. The familiar, domestic design qualities of the vaporizer would counteract the unfamiliar idea of implementing medicinal treatments within the home that were typically administered by physicians, ultimately comforting patients as they sought relief of their respiratory ailments.¹²⁶ The inclusion of the Vapo-Cresolene vaporizer in the master bedroom of the Wyatt House is indicative of the Wyatt family’s participation in what was a common medical treatment in North America, and, on a broader level, the display of the vaporizer in the home acknowledges a common home remedy from the past and underscores how the domestic space often functioned as a place of treatment. The vaporizer and inhaler function as entry points into a narrative central to the lives of the Wyatt family members; Cecelia’s health. The objects visually reference the diversity of the treatments Cecelia attempted in her home and offer a view of the material culture of early twentieth-century medicine in Canada.

Dr. Lindlahr’s Nature Cure Bulletins: Alternative Health Regimes to Follow from Home

Other material that has been preserved in the Wyatt Historic House Museum archival collection provides additional clues as to the methods Cecelia engaged with in search of relief for her symptoms while she resided in her home in Summerside. Prominent among the pamphlets, booklets, and letters are references to the naturopathic treatment known as “Nature Cure.” While

¹²⁵ Schwartz, 207.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

a more detailed discussion of this method of treatment will be the focus of Chapter Three, it is relevant to discuss an element of the Nature Cure program in relation to this chapter's unpacking of domesticated health remedies practiced from the Wyatts' family home on Spring Street. While the aforementioned Dr. Henry Lindlahr eventually opened two Nature Cure sanitariums in Chicago, which Cecelia visited, he also printed and distributed correspondence courses and Nature Cure Bulletins that instructed readers how to follow the Nature Cure regime from the comfort of their own homes.

Various examples of these documents remain in the Wyatt archival collection, and many of them are signed 'Mrs. J. E. Wyatt, 1912' in the upper right hand corner [Figure 2.8]. It is likely that Cecelia received these bulletins and course packs while she was staying at one of the Lindlahr sanitariums in Chicago, as 1912 was the first year that she travelled to the United States for care in one of his facilities.¹²⁷ It is probable that Cecelia continued to practice Nature Cure methods while she was in her own home in Summerside through the written instruction of the correspondence courses. Divided into numbered lessons, the correspondence booklets included in the Wyatt archival collection cover the subjects of diet, bathing, a daily regime of natural living, breathing exercises, relaxation, physical exercises, mental attitude, the treatment of acute diseases, and the law of crisis.¹²⁸ For example Lesson IV, Bathing, provides directions on how to give oneself foot baths, limb baths, upper body baths, and lower body baths. As its name suggests, Nature Cure placed a strong emphasis on the importance of being close to nature, and the

¹²⁷ Kessler, 109.

¹²⁸ Box 'Cecelia,' Folder 'Lindlahr courses, etc 1910-1912,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

course pack goes so far as to encourage readers to conduct sunbaths, air baths, and barefoot baths, described as walking “barefoot in the grass from five minutes to half an hour at a time.” The best time to do this bath, the course mentions, is “in the dewy grass of the morning.”¹²⁹ These instructions are indicative of naturopathic ideologies, in and of themselves reflective of the social and cultural beliefs of the time that stressed the relationship that existed between the natural environment and human bodies.¹³⁰

The Nature Cure correspondence courses become especially interesting when they are read in conjunction with the archival collection of letters that were written between members of the Wyatt family. Correspondence between Ned and Cecelia during the time that she spent at the Lindlahr Sanitarium is particularly telling, as the letters highlight the extent to which Cecelia’s treatment had an influence on other members of the family. In a letter dated June 7th, 1913, Ned wrote to Cecelia while she was in Chicago at the Sanitarium:

The trees are just now in bloom. The garden is coming along. I have [done] all the work myself and have planted lettuce, radishes, onions, beets, carrots, parsnips, peas and beans and hope [it] will be just right when you come home. I have my cold water rub every morning . . . I work up a good heat in mowing the lawn or digging in the garden...take a hot bath with soap and rub down with cold water.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Dr. Henry Lindlahr, Correspondence Course, Lesson 5, “Bathing,” available in Box ‘Cecelia,’ Folder ‘Lindlahr courses, etc 1910-1912,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹³⁰ Linda Nash, “Finishing Nature: Harmonizing Bodies and Environments in Late-Nineteenth-Century California,” *Environmental History* 8, no. 1 (January 2003): 25-52.

¹³¹ Box ‘Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,’ Folder ‘To Cecelia from Ned June-Dec 1913, Chicago, Ill,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

This excerpt indicates that while his wife was in Chicago receiving Nature Cure treatment, Ned was practicing a similar regime from their family home in Summerside. A letter dated June 9th that Cecelia wrote in response to Ned's initial letter confirms this:

My darling Ned, I just received yours dated June 7th & it seems to me you are carrying out the Nature Cure regime even better than we are here. Getting close to nature by the work in the garden opening up the chambers of elimination thro [sic] the natural outlets - Getting the products of Nature [at first] hand & adding to that the water treatment with the drinking in of the pure air unadulterated by dirt & smoke of a big city. Added to that contentment of mind it is not only Physical development but Spiritual as well.¹³²

The dialogue between Ned and Cecelia supports the existing history surrounding the nineteenth century's association between human bodies and the natural environment, emphasizing the period's belief that the human body — and therefore the physical condition of the body — could be "continually permeated and changed" by nature.¹³³ Ned's active participation in Nature Cure treatment practices places him in an unexpected context defined by the period's strong associations between women's bodies, the natural environment, and the domestic sphere.¹³⁴ While Cecelia was away staying at a large institution, it was Ned who remained in Summerside tending to the family garden and taking care of the home, ultimately challenging common conceptions of Edwardian women's prescribed gender roles. This exchange of letters therefore recognizes the immediate results Cecelia's health issues had on the daily life of other members in the Wyatt

¹³² Letter from Cecelia to Ned dated June 9th, 1913, Box 'Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,' Folder 'To Ned from Cecelia in Chicago 1913,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹³³ Nash, 43.

¹³⁴ Both Carolyn Merchant and Susan Griffin's texts provide in-depth analyses of environmental history and the relationship between women and the natural environment and are early foundational texts of ecofeminism. Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980); Susan Griffin, *Women and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); Barbara T. Gates also examine the perceived relationship between women and nature in her text. Barbara T. Gates *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian women embrace the living world* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

family. A further exploration of Cecelia's travelling for health purposes will be the focus of Chapter Three.

As this chapter highlights, the domestic history of the Wyatts' engagement with health issues and treatments is explored in the master bedroom of the house through the curation of its objects. The inhaler and the vaporizer, as already mentioned, are situated on the desk next to the master bed [Figure 2.9]. What does the conscious placement of these objects by the curator imply? In thinking about modern bedside tables, it is assumed that these are often spaces reserved for items of special interest, importance or routine use. Thus, in the context of Cecelia's health, it is significant that these objects used in aiding Cecelia's respiratory issues are permanently housed in a space that is associated with items of importance and daily use. Their placement subtly emphasizes the prominent place Cecelia's health problems had in her life. Photographs that were taken of the home soon after its donation to the city of Summerside by Wanda Wyatt show that the inhaler was housed on a shelf in the attic of the home [Figure 2.10]. Understanding the prominent role Cecelia's chronic illness played in her life likely inspired the decision to place the inhaler in its current position in the master bedroom. This curatorial decision serves as a valuable example that can be applied in other house museums aiming to highlight specific, unique histories about past inhabitants.

Fashionable Dress: The Preparation of the Body and Women's Health

The curation of other objects in the master bedroom, although not specifically relating to physical ailments or medicinal remedies, contributes an additional layer to the narrative of Cecelia's health. A wood-framed chaise lounge, or 'fainting couch,' upholstered with dark pink fab-

ric sits against the wall on the opposite side of the four-poster bed from the desk with the inhaler and vaporizer [Figure 2.11]. Displayed on the chaise is a silver black fox stole — effectively attesting to the powerful fox farming industry on the island — and a black corset.¹³⁵ In conjunction with a pair of Cecelia's shoes and her jacket that are displayed nearby, these objects are used on the tour of the house to illustrate the importance of fashion to the Wyatt women. As a victim of respiratory and digestive troubles, Cecelia's health issues suggest a possible correlation between fashionable, tight-laced corsets and Cecelia's suffering body.¹³⁶ While there is no documented proof of what caused Cecelia's physical ailments, staff at the Wyatt Heritage Properties have long speculated that Cecelia's corset wearing, in the very least, did not aid in the recovery from her ailments.

The display of the corset in the master bedroom acknowledges these suspicions and introduces visitors to the wider history and dialogue of women, fashion and health that existed even during the period when corsets were an essential element of women's everyday dress. While it is not the purpose of this thesis to provide an overview of this complexly layered and important history, some elements of the medical literature available at the time are relevant for this discussion. Historian Eileen O'Connor, in her tracing of the dissemination of public health

¹³⁵ The stole and the corset are two examples of objects in the home that did not originally belong to the Wyatt family. This 'un-authentic' classification allows visitors to the museum to interact with both items. The corset, especially, is often picked up by the interpretive tour guide who then encourages visitors to touch and feel the stiffness of the corset's composition as a way of emphasizing how uncomfortable it must have been for many women who were expected to wear them. The corset therefore does not operate in the same way as the inhaler or the vaporizer, as it was not an object that Cecelia actually used. The corset and its curation does, however, provide an example that other house museums can follow in curating 'un-authentic' objects in their spaces.

¹³⁶ For a detailed discussion of Victorian corsets and women's bodies, see Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001).

information in Canada between 1860 and 1900, identifies three dominant issues relating to women and fashion that were included in the prescriptive medical literature of the time. These issues included: “the need to regulate body temperatures through dress; the effect of tight clothing on the organs; and the “unnaturalness” of fashionable dress”¹³⁷ - all issues relating to the health of the female body. In explaining these, O’Connor also notes that some male physicians “demonstrated that they understood corsets were a product of an increasingly consumer-oriented society in the late 19th century. They realized that men controlled the flow of market goods available, were responsible for advertising and also largely defined norms of female beauty.”¹³⁸ Wendy Mitchinson, in her study of Canadian women, their doctors, and treatment, further contextualizes this gendered issue, explaining that the blame doctors placed on corsets “allowed doctors to advise women on the kind of clothing they should wear.”¹³⁹ Cecelia’s corset wearing, while it attests to ideals of the feminine, can therefore also be understood as an example of the complex patriarchal social and medical system that was in place during the early twentieth century. Conceptualizing the inhaler as a product of a growing consumer demand of over the counter medication also fits in with this narrative, especially in thinking about the daily toiletry routine that existed for women of the middle and upper classes.

Textile and art historian Beverly Gordon contributes another layer to the elaborate relationship that exists between women’s bodies, domestic interiors, and fashion. In her paper titled

¹³⁷ O’Connor, 394.

¹³⁸ O’Connor, 399.

¹³⁹ Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of their Bodies: Women and their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 15.

“Women’s Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age,” Gordon hones in on the period’s association between women and the domestic interior, emphasizing the tendency for homes to become the “impersonation” of their female inhabitants. Gordon also reverses this discussion and points out that, similarly, “women could reflect and even become a part of an interior” mainly through their style of garments.¹⁴⁰ During a period that was overwhelmingly concerned with the physical appearance of objects, spaces, and people as a means of suggesting social status or wealth, a woman within her home often functioned as a permanent and physically perfect fixture - she herself would serve as “the noblest ornament of her ornamented dwelling.”¹⁴¹ Venturing outside of the home, a woman continued to function in the public sphere as an animate ‘domestic’ object adorned with fabric that presented an image of her family’s social status and achievement. As Gordon aptly summarizes: “[d]ress - the decoration of the body - and interior furnishings - the decoration of the home - together formed what in more contemporary terms has been called the *front* that projected the desired image to the world at large.”¹⁴² Women and elements of domestic interiors such as windows and walls were often “decorated” using similar fabrics and patterns, and the Victorian and Edwardian periods also saw the adornment of pieces of furniture with garments similar to those worn by many upper and middle-class women: vanity tables, chairs and beds would be covered with “skirts” and “shawls,” while “scarves” and “veils” covered women’s shoulders as well as tables, sofas and

¹⁴⁰ Gordon, 282.

¹⁴¹ Jacob Von Falke, *Art in the House: Historical, Critical, and Aesthetic Studies on the Decorating and Furnishing of the Dwelling*, trans. and with notes by Charles C. Perkins (Boston: L. Prang, 1878), 333, cited in Gordon, 283.

¹⁴² Gordon, 283.

piano tops in their homes.¹⁴³ Island press publications that include descriptions of the fashionable attire Cecelia wore while attending public events adhere to this shared language between women's garb and interior decor; an article in *The Guardian* that details a reception held in Saint John, New Brunswick for the Duke and Duchess describes Cecelia as wearing "black marveilleux, silk, jet and sequin trimmings, [and] diamond ornaments."¹⁴⁴ Similarly, the portraits of Wanda and Dorothy in the front entrance of the house exemplify the practice of "decorated" women and interiors; the sisters wear garments that almost seem to blend in with their interior surroundings, paralleling the fabrics that adorn various pieces of furniture throughout the house, such as in Dorothy's bedroom [Figure 2.12]. The portraits, the furniture, and the corset, with its varying fabrics of ribbon, lace and silk, serve as remnants of this history and situate the Wyatts within a period when women were strongly associated with their domestic interiors.

As Chapter One briefly illustrated, the concept of home and the domestic sphere was strongly associated with ideas of women, femininity, and domesticity for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In recognizing this while conceptualizing house museums, it becomes apparent that the preserved or re-created house museum has the potential to engender a re-reading of the history of Victorian women. The Wyatt House exemplifies this potential by providing an effective framework for preserving and presenting narratives of women's health issues during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Largely because of its complete collection of objects that belonged to the family and the careful consideration that went into the curation of the

¹⁴³ Gordon, 289.

¹⁴⁴ *The Charlottetown Guardian Newspaper*, October 22, 1901, page 7.

home, the Wyatt House presents visitors with an alternative version of women's history that is told through the display of historical objects. The inhaler, as visitors' initial source of reference to Cecelia's sickness, operates effectively as a platform for discussion, especially because of its direct and intimate association with Cecelia's health and daily life. The inclusion of the inhaler and the vaporizer in the master bedroom encourages a wider discussion about the growth of consumer culture and how this influenced the development of medicine and fashion. While many house museums currently provide generalized narratives that centre around more commonly discussed activities associated with women of the past such as childrearing, cleaning, cooking, sewing and embroidery, the Wyatt House's inclusion of a health-oriented history is a necessary acknowledgement that women lived diverse and multi-layered lives beyond what is commonly represented in historic house museums.

Chapter Three

Travelling for a Cure: Seeking Wellness outside of the Home

"My darling Ned,

This is my second day out of bed after a terrible ordeal of suffering over six weeks, in fact ever since you left. It has been so hard for the dear girls up night & day but we do hope & pray the worst is over." - letter from Cecelia to Ned dated April 3rd, 1919 in Chicago.¹⁴⁵

As this thesis has so far examined, the ideological construction of Victorian and Edwardian women is often rooted in an understanding of domestic spheres, prescribed gender roles, and a patriarchal society. However, women from this period frequently removed themselves from their domestic interiors and travelled outside of their homes for a variety of purposes.¹⁴⁶ In the case of the Wyatts, Cecelia's health issues resulted in her spending a significant amount of time outside of the home as she travelled to a number of sanatoria, the majority of which were in the United States. While she spent time outside of the home, Ned took charge of the house's upkeep, performing the roles often associated with the female head-of-house, such as gardening and hiring domestic help. The Wyatts are therefore an example of a family that operated outside of the assumed lifestyles associated with this period. The exploration of this history within a house museum serves as an effective revision of the domestic histories often associated with men and women from the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

¹⁴⁵ Cecelia Wyatt to Ned Wyatt, 3 April 1919, Box 'Correspondence Ned,' Folder 'To Ned from family in Chicago 1919,' MacNaught History Centre and Archive, Summerside, PE.

¹⁴⁶ For example, there is a growing literature that details the history of women travel writers from the Victorian era. Examples include: Jeanne Kay Guelke and Karen M. Morin, "Gender, nature, empire: women naturalists in nineteenth century British travel literature," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26, no.3 (2001): 306-326; Dea Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989). Additionally, Emily Blaser's PhD dissertation specifically examines how women travel writers' work re-conceptualizes notions of domesticity. Emily P. Blaser, "Homecomings: Victorian British Women Travel Writers and Revisions of Domesticity," PhD diss., (Marquette University, 2014).

The broad and stimulating history of travel is introduced to visitors of the Wyatt House in the living room of the home. The objects on display in this space initiate the narrative of the life-changing journey that Wanda took with her Aunt Beatrice in 1929. Wanda spent nine months travelling across the globe after setting sail in New York aboard the S.S. Resolute on an “around the world” cruise. While the cruise ship travelled to and stopped in various major cities ranging from Panama City to Shanghai,¹⁴⁷ the object situated in the Wyatts’ living room that represents this cruise is a considerably sized Bengal tiger rug that is currently spread out in front of the room’s hearth on the floor [Figure 3.1]. An object of revulsion, fascination and sympathy, the tiger skin does not adhere to the list of suggested purchases for the cities of Bombay and Calcutta.¹⁴⁸ Following her purchase of the skin, Wanda later had it turned into a rug in Montreal.¹⁴⁹ After initially viewing the tiger rug, visitors are then usually alerted to other objects in the space that Wanda likely purchased as she traveled abroad, such as a collection of small brass containers etched with ornate designs that remain on the top of the piano. All of these items would have served a purpose in this “public” room of the home. Alluding to wealth, knowledge, and travel, objects such as the tiger rug are expressions of the family’s identity as members of Prince

¹⁴⁷ “S.S. Resolute Cruise Around the World, 1929, Information for Cruise Members,” brochure, Box ‘MHCA0001 Travel Series World Cruise, 1929,’ Folder ‘Tour Information - World Cruise, 1929,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁴⁸ The “S.S. Resolute Cruise Around the World, 1929, Information for Cruise Members” brochure, in addition to its listing of cities the cruise would port in, includes suggestions of items to buy in each city. Listed under the heading ‘Bombay and Calcutta’ is the following: Tropical clothing, sun helmets, silverware, carvings in ivory and sandal-wood, rugs, photographs and descriptive books of India, brassware, inlaid work, gold and silver brocades, silks and chiffons, carved alabaster, Persian carpets, Cashmere shawls, oriental jewelry, carved wooden and brass coffee tables.” p.10.

¹⁴⁹ The original skin was made into a rug by Holt Renfrew & Co. Ltd. Montreal, Quebec, in December of 1929. Catalogue Record, W00.1.290. Rug, catalogued 11/08/2000 by Linda Andry.

Edward Island's educated and worldly upper class. The narrative of Wanda's cruise — described by Wanda herself as being “one of the biggest thrills of [her] life”¹⁵⁰ — continues throughout the remaining rooms in the home as other objects that were purchased on the cruise are pointed out during the tour.

A History of Health and Travel: Framing Alternative Narratives within the Home

While the objects in the home that were brought back to Prince Edward Island from around the globe reflect a specific kind of travel that is intimately connected to histories of colonialism, consumerism, and fashion, other forms of evidence remain in the home that contribute to an alternate form of travel experienced by the Wyatt women. As previously mentioned, Cecelia's constant search for a cure to her ailments resulted in frequent trips around North America. In addition to its ability to reflect the treatments Cecelia practiced while she was in the home, the Wyatt House and its guided interpretive tour also narrate this history of Cecelia's travel as she searched for effective medicinal remedies and cleansing climates. Many of the treatments Cecelia tried were administered by various sanatoria in the United States. The letters, pamphlets, advertisements and diary entries kept by the four members of the Wyatt family highlight the extent of Cecelia's travelling and can be used to situate her within a broader narrative of nineteenth and twentieth century health treatments and practices. These archival materials, in addition to the architecture of the home and its physical contents, serve as valuable documents that narrate the lived experiences of Wanda, Dorothy, Cecelia and Ned and offer a more complex understanding of women and familial histories from the period.

¹⁵⁰ Wanda Wyatt, interview by Mary O'Brien. December 4, 1984, University of Prince Edward Island, interview transcript available in Wyatt fonds ‘personal papers,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE, 13.

It is probable that Cecelia's travelling for health-related purposes happened for a variety of reasons. Chiefly though, it should be noted that the health care options available for Islanders at the beginning of the twentieth century were abysmal.¹⁵¹ As MacDonald notes, the Island's limited financial resources translated into a lack of spending by the provincial government on public health. In fact, by the 1920s, medical care options on the Island were largely privately run. Outside of the costs associated with running the Falconwood Insane Asylum, the Prince Edward Island government spent "less than \$1000 per year on public health."¹⁵² This meant that the Island did not have a department of health, an up-to-date medical laboratory, or a full-time medical health officer, resulting in Prince Edward Island having the highest mortality rate for tuberculosis in Canada.¹⁵³ Following the First World War, the issue of public health became a central topic of concern on the Island. Through the assistance of the Red Cross, the late 1920s saw the establishment of a Child Welfare and Public Health Branch, resulting in better health care for Islanders.¹⁵⁴ As members of the Island's upper class, it is probable that the Wyatt's sought health remedies in areas that offered adequate options and more favourable, warmer climates.

An examination of archival material that exists in the Wyatt fonds of the MacNaught History Centre and Archives offers a rough timeline of Cecelia's many visits to sanatoria outside of Prince Edward Island. The material also illustrates the amount of time both Wanda and Dorothy spent as their mother's companions. *The Guardian* noted in December of 1900 that "Mr. and

¹⁵¹ MacDonald, 124.

¹⁵² MacDonald, 125.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Mrs. J.. Edward Wyatt, and children of Summerside, left yesterday morning for Florida, where Mrs. Wyatt and her daughters will spend the winter.”¹⁵⁵ Postcards that were sent between Dorothy and her parents from Bermuda in 1910 include lines such as “mother is feeling better” and therefore suggest that Cecelia was in Bermuda seeking physical relief.¹⁵⁶ Cecelia first visited Chicago in 1912 where she followed the Nature Cure regime prescribed by Dr. Henry Lindlahr. She took a break from living in Chicago from February 1912 until May 1913 as she sought treatment in Tucson, Arizona.¹⁵⁷ While she was in Arizona, Cecelia received a letter dated February 21st, 1913 from Mt. Gilead, Ohio, with the heading “The Dr. Nathan Tucker Asthma Specific.” The letter details a response to Cecelia’s request for information regarding treatments for asthma. The fact that Cecelia was enquiring after treatment options while she was already spending time in a climate meant to improve her condition demonstrates her preoccupation with searching for remedies to her ailments. From June until December of the same year Cecelia was back in Chicago, and letters from July 1914, July and August of 1915, 1918 and 1919 indicate that she spent time in Chicago during those years with intermittent trips back home to the Island, such as a summer spent in Prince Edward Island in 1916¹⁵⁸ and in 1919.¹⁵⁹ The beginning of 1917 saw Cecelia and Dorothy stay at Tampa Bay and, later, Pass-a-grille, Florida. Later in the

¹⁵⁵ *The Guardian Newspaper*, Charlottetown, PEI, December 18, 1900, page 12.

¹⁵⁶ Box ‘Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,’ Folder ‘Postcards to Dorothy 1910’s,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁵⁷ Box ‘Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,’ Folder ‘to Cecelia from Ned Arizona- 1913 - Jan-Mar,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁵⁸ Dorothy Wyatt, 1916-1918 diary, Box ‘Dorothy,’ Folder ‘Dorothy Randal Wyatt 1916-1918, Vol.I, 1918-1920, Vol II (in exhibit),’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁵⁹ Wanda Wyatt, 1919-1920 diary, MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

year they visited Tryon and then Asheville, North Carolina where they stayed at both the Ottari and then the Osteopathic Sanatorium in North Carolina, followed by a stay at Takoma Park Sanatorium in Washington and then a visit to Dr. Van Valen's Sanatorium in Peekskill, New York. They remained in New York from May until the end of the July when they returned to Chicago and stayed until 1919.¹⁶⁰ In the years 1923 and 1924 Cecelia stayed in Nevada, Missouri at the Weltmer Institute for Suggestive Therapeutics.¹⁶¹ Numerous other trips ensued, until 1937 when Cecelia, Wanda and Dorothy took a final trip to Barbados in the hopes that the island's climate would be more agreeable with Cecelia's condition.

Health and Home: Women as Managers of Domestic Interiors

Existing literature that discusses the complex relationships between women, health and domestic spaces acknowledges the influence health concerns had in shaping the physical structure of private dwellings and the daily operations of the household in both America and Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁶² The period witnessed an inherent belief that the condition of domestic interiors had a direct effect on the quality of human health. Annmarie Adams' examination of the house-body-woman relationship in late nineteenth-century Britain contextualizes this influence of medicine on architecture and vice versa, especially in understanding the roles of women during this time and the emergence of feminism. Adams

¹⁶⁰ Dorothy Wyatt, 1916-1918 diary, Box 'Dorothy,' Folder 'Dorothy Randal Wyatt 1916-1918, Vol.I, 1918-1920, VolII (in exhibit),' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁶¹ Box 'Cecelia,' Folder 'Cecelia's Weltmer Institute receipt,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE; Box 'Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,' folder 'To Dorothy from Cecelia 1924-25,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁶² Victoria Jane Solan, “‘Built for Health’: American Architecture and the Healthy House, 1850-1930,” PhD diss., (Yale University, 2004); Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way, Doctors, Houses and Women 1870-1900* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

explains how

the close association of houses, bodies and women around 1870 was activated through a coincidence of social factors at the time: the formulation of the germ theory, the availability of contraception, advances in women's political status and education, changing attitudes towards motherhood, the rationalization of housework, and the feminization of interior design.¹⁶³

Within this context, women were able to exercise a certain power within domestic spaces that positioned them outside of their past, limited roles where reproduction and childcare were their primary responsibilities. Adams emphasizes how women were now in a position that allowed them to manage household affairs such as interior design and social events.¹⁶⁴ As women and domestic spaces were believed to be intimately connected during this period, the additional belief that the quality, or health, of a home had a direct impact on the health of its inhabitants positioned women as the family members responsible for the health of the home and — therefore — the health of their families. In her dissertation, Victoria Jane Solan investigates similar themes that were taking place in America. She explains how the “control of disease began in the home, and the association between health and home remained strong” in mid-nineteenth-century America.¹⁶⁵ Given the influence both Britain and America had on Canadian culture and society, it can be assumed that a similar system of beliefs pertaining to health, home, and gender roles also existed in Canada.

While Adams focuses on domestic architecture in British urban spaces, Solan comments on the emergence of suburban locales in America. Suburbs promised more space for the single

¹⁶³ Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way*, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Adams, 6.

¹⁶⁵ Solan, 8.

family home, an escape from the congested streets of cities, and a closer relationship with nature. Solan notes that the period saw an increase in the treatment of patients in “specialized building facilities such as the hospital and asylum,” but it also saw the continuation of architectural construction and alteration as a means of controlling health.¹⁶⁶ Homeowners, she explains, believed “that the design of their houses would have a significant impact on the health and character of their families, a belief which has persisted from the mid nineteenth century to the present day.”¹⁶⁷ How then, does Cecelia Wyatt’s narrative of sickness, travel and naturopathy fit into this discussion of home, health and women’s roles as health regulators? I contend that it complicates this history. While she was the mother of the home, Cecelia was also the chronically ill member of the family and was therefore unable to regulate the health of the domestic space she and her family inhabited. Instead of hoping for relief simply through the management of her home, she spent much of her life travelling in search of a cure for her bronchial and digestive troubles. Cecelia’s narrative therefore contributes an added layer to the discussion of the period’s architectural alterations, domestic spaces in relation to health regulation and comfort, and familial relationships.

Cecelia Wyatt and the Nature Cure Regime

Even though Cecelia visited a variety of places in search of a successful cure for her chronic ailments, she most frequently stayed at Lindlahr’s Sanitarium in Chicago [Figure 3.2]. Established by Dr. Henry Lindlahr in 1902, the original sanitarium located on Ashland Boulevard

¹⁶⁶ Solan, 14.

¹⁶⁷ Solan, 15.

was complemented by a second institution in 1914.¹⁶⁸ This second institution, Dr. Lindlahr's Health Resort, was located outside of the city in Elmhurst, Illinois. The establishment of a second location for Lindlahr's practice not only allowed for a larger number of patients to participate in his health regimes, but its rural location also aligned with the Victorian belief that natural environments and healthy dispositions were correlated.¹⁶⁹ Naturopathic remedies proved to be the basis of the treatment regimes Cecelia practiced throughout her life under the instruction of the various doctors and institutions she visited. Both Lindlahr facilities treated their patients using 'Nature Cure' or 'the Cure'. Based in naturopathic beliefs, the treatment emphasized the importance of vegetarianism, exercise, and exposure to air, water and sunlight in regulating the body. To fully understand this treatment process, it is important to define naturopathy more broadly. As summarized by Elaine H. Gort and David Coburn, naturopathic practitioners view

disease as the body's way of attempting to deal with imbalance, disharmony or stress on the physical, mental, emotional and/or spiritual level... as imbalances continue, acute and eventually chronic diseases result... The emphasis is on teaching patients how to successfully manage and preserve their own health.¹⁷⁰

A nonconventional or "deviant" medical practice, naturopathy emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and prescribed therapies that "range[d] from diet and lifestyle advice, colonic irrigation, hydrotherapy, and electroacupuncture, to homeopathic and herbal

¹⁶⁸ Nancy Wilson, "The Lindlahr Sanitarium," *The City of Elmhurst*, accessed 20 October, 2013, <https://www.elmhurst.org/DocumentCenter/Home>. PDF available: <https://www.elmhurst.org/DocumentCenter/View/261>

¹⁶⁹ The location in Elmhurst, Illinois, consisted of multiple buildings, such as an administrative building, cottages, and air huts. See Figure 3.3. Source: "Prospectus of the Lindlahr Nature Cure Institutes inc.", (Chicago, c. 1914). Box 'Cecelia,' Folder 'Prospectus - Lindlahr Nature Cure,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁷⁰ Elaine H. Gort and David Coburn, "Naturopathy in Canada: Changing Relationships to Medicine, Chiropractic and the State," *Soc, Sci, Med.* 26, no. 10 (1988), 1061.

remedies.”¹⁷¹ While naturopathic views have continued until the present day, the popularity that these treatments gained in the early twentieth century in North America declined after 1937.¹⁷²

In addition to the Nature Cure Bulletins that were issued by the sanitarium, Lindlahr’s facilities offered various services for its patients in its implementation of Nature Cure. Patients, guests, and students had the opportunity to educate themselves on the treatment method through “Nature Cure literature, daily lectures and question-box talks by Dr. Lindlahr and his assistants.”¹⁷³ Additionally, the prospectus issued by the facility describes how “in the dining room, students and patients may observe the practical application of the principles of natural dietetics and of high-class vegetarian cookery,”¹⁷⁴ the idea being that after a few months the guests and patients at Lindlahr could “return home fully equipped to be their own physicians and the health advisors of their families and their friends.”¹⁷⁵ The “natural remedies” practiced by the Lindlahr facilities are described in the prospectus: “Curative” gymnastics, diet, hydrotherapy, osteopathy, chiropractic therapy, mud, open air and sun baths, homeopathy, herbal remedies and diagnosis from looking at the iris of the eye all happened at both Lindlahr locations.¹⁷⁶ The emphasis on the importance of nature in curing the human condition is especially evident in the

¹⁷¹ Gort and Coburn, 1061.

¹⁷² Gort and Coburn, 1063.

¹⁷³ “Prospectus of the Lindlahr Nature Cure Institutes inc.”, (Chicago, c. 1914), p.13. Box ‘Cecelia,’ Folder ‘Prospectus - Lindlahr Nature Cure,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 14.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, n.p.

description of Lindlahr's second location in Elmhurst. Located outside of the city in a "suburb of dainty, modern homes, gardens, majestic old parks and mansions," Dr. Lindlahr's Health Resort allowed patients to get close to nature.¹⁷⁷ In describing its lawn and its "open air bathing pools," the prospectus explains how the ground "is partly covered with grass and partly with sand, giving the bathers opportunity for sand baths and for absorbing the magnetism of Mother Earth ..."

Those who understand the effects of air and light and of earth magnetism on the nude body will fully appreciate these advantages."¹⁷⁸

The majority of the letters sent and received by Cecelia while she was in Chicago were addressed to the Ashland Boulevard Lindlahr institute, so it can be assumed that this was the location where she frequently stayed.¹⁷⁹ The treatments issued by the sanitarium are documented in letters Cecelia sent to Ned, but also in the letters written by Wanda and Dorothy. Numerous passages from the correspondence illustrate Cecelia's adherence to Nature Cure practices and highlight the severity of her symptoms. For example, a letter written by Cecelia to Ned, dated June 21 1913, reads: "I have been on a fast since last Friday [at] noon getting the whites of four eggs [and] 3 glasses of prune juice 2 water. Have stood it wonderfully well considering I was only 94 pounds... have not been out of bed for the last three days except to walk across the room."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 4.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 6.

¹⁷⁹ Dorothy's 1916-1918 diary does mention, however, that they stayed at the Elmhurst location for two weeks in 1916 around Easter. Dorothy Wyatt, 1916-1918 diary, Box 'Dorothy,' Folder 'Dorothy Randal Wyatt 1916-1918, Vol.I, 1918-1920, Vol II (in exhibit),' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁸⁰ Cecelia Wyatt to Ned Wyatt, 21 June 1913, Box 'Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,' Folder 'To Ned from Cecelia in Chicago 1913,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

Letters sent home to Ned while Cecelia was in Tucson also express her dedication to Nature Cure practices. Cecelia relates in a letter dated February 14, 1913, that “everything is as usual, I feel a little stronger . . . Took a spray bath yesterday & it worked all right.”¹⁸¹ Similarly, a letter from Tucson dated April 26 1913 reads:

Have had a bronchial crisis last night. Could hardly breathe with temperature 4 degrees below normal. That does not seem good. Cannot be getting the proper kind of food or regular enough. When I am housed it is impossible to get food otherwise I do not feel sick.¹⁸² Keep out on the porch most of the time but I am . . . looking for better results.¹⁸³

Cecelia’s mentioning of the porch is significant, as is her frequent inclusion of phrases such as “I have slept out” in many of the letters she wrote to Ned while she was in Tucson.¹⁸⁴ These inclusions indicate that Cecelia was spending lengths of time sitting and sleeping outside in the fresh air - another example of her application of Nature Cure to her daily life. A letter from Dorothy to Ned describes another occasion when Cecelia was instructed to expose her body to air and sunlight for relief: “The Doctors . . . say that Mother is better but has a lot to get rid of yet.

¹⁸¹ Cecelia Wyatt to Ned Wyatt, 14 February 1913, Box ‘Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,’ Folder ‘To Ned from Cecelia & Dorothy in Arizona Jan- Mar 1913,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁸² Phrases such as this, as well as the diaries of Wanda and Dorothy, indicate that Cecelia was not staying at the actual sanitarium in Tucson but was instead residing in an apartment nearby. This was typical of the family for most places that they travelled and planned to stay for some time. Another example of the Wyatt family living in an apartment rather than a sanitarium Cecelia was visiting for treatment is detailed in Dorothy’s diary from 1918-1920. On December 3, 1918, Dorothy mentions how she, Wanda, and Cecelia “found a new flat” in Chicago and her entry on the 13th describes their new space, reading “our livingroom faces South with a sun parlour. Then the bedroom is east (not much of an outlook but better than the other. Mother does not like the bed much to sleep in though it and the rest of the set are lovely. The dining room is very pretty too they have a very nice walnut set & the kitchen is a dream, it is fun to work in it” [Figure 3.4]. Dorothy’s description of the space speaks to her interest in interior design and is indicative of the relationship between women and their domestic interiors.

¹⁸³ Cecelia Wyatt to Ned Wyatt, 26 April 1913, Box ‘Correspondence Ned’, Folder ‘To Ned from Cecelia & Dorothy in U.S. Apr-May 1913,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁸⁴ Cecelia Wyatt to Ned Wyatt , 29 April 1913, Box ‘Correspondence Ned,’ Folder ‘To Ned from Cecelia & Dorothy in U.S. Apr-May 1913,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

She still has the cough and has not much strength. We have been going up to the roof nearly every day and the sun has brought a rash out on her chest and back and the Doctors are delighted.”¹⁸⁵ Later documents, such as an 1918 dairy entry written by Dorothy that states “Mother a little better. We got her fixed up in the sun parlour”¹⁸⁶ show how the use of such spaces remained a constant practice in Cecelia’s life. In addition to the information they provide about the naturopathic ideology Cecelia was applying to her daily life, passages such as these can be used to illuminate the physical structure of the Wyatt House. I believe these passages also demonstrate how Cecelia fits in to Adams’ and Solan’s discussions of women’s roles in managing domestic spaces during the early twentieth century.

The Feminization of Space: Cecelia Wyatt and the Sun Parlour

A framework employed by Adams and Silvia Spampinato in the discussion of another historic Canadian Victorian home is useful in understanding the architectural structure of the Wyatt House’s interior and exemplifies women’s management of domestic spaces. Through the examination of letters, diary entries, paintings, photographs, and more official forms of documentation such as wills and insurance plans, Adams and Spaminato ask specific questions about the architecture of Carrollcroft House — a home located in Stanstead, Quebec that was inhabited by the Colby family for several generations starting in 1859.¹⁸⁷ The authors pose questions

¹⁸⁵ Dorothy Wyatt to Ned Wyatt, 30 March 1913, Box ‘Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,’ Folder ‘To Ned from Cecelia in Chicago 1913,’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives.

¹⁸⁶ Dorothy Wyatt in her diary, 23 May 1918, Box ‘Dorothy,’ Folder ‘Dorothy Randal Wyatt 1916-1918, Vol.I, 1918-1920, VolII (in exhibit),’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside, PE.

¹⁸⁷ Annmarie Adams and Silvia Spampinato, “Carrollcroft as Women’s Space: An Architectural History,” *Journal of Eastern Townships Studies*, 35 (2010): 21-48.

such as “What does the Colby house itself tell us about the Colby family? What is the role of domestic architecture in the construction of family and gender identity?” and lastly, “How did family members shape the house according to their needs?”¹⁸⁸ Adams and Spampinato aim to answer these questions by exploring how the three female figures of the home regulated and ‘feminized’ their living environment. Additionally, the object-based theory of material culture as described by Prown allows us to understand houses more broadly as reflections of various social, cultural and individual beliefs and experiences. This ability for a home to reflect the lived reality of its occupants, especially during a time when the domestic sphere and notions of home were so strongly associated with the daily lives of women, means that a house museum, such as the Wyatt House, can function as an extremely telling public document that offers valuable, complex narratives of past, private lives. In conjunction with the Wyatt family’s letters and diary entries, these two frameworks assist in both reading the physical structure of the Wyatt House and contextualizing Cecelia as a participant in the management of her home for the purpose of her health.

The many references to Cecelia spending time under the sun or in sun parlours as a means of treatment translates back to her home in Prince Edward Island. After moving into the home in the 1890s, the Wyatts subsequently began making alterations to its exterior and interior as a reflection of their own personal tastes and desires. Examples of structural changes that were made to the house include the pushing back of the front entranceway hall staircase and the creation of a new attic entrance. Although the exact date for this renovation is undetermined, a

¹⁸⁸ Adams and Spampinato, 22.

second phase of renovations was made in 1928 under the direction of an architect. The changes to the house included an improvement to the attic through the installation of Palladian windows and built-in storage spaces under the eaves, the construction of a vestibule with Doric columns,¹⁸⁹ the embellishment of the living room's focal fireplace flanked by white bookcases, and the enclosure of the former open porch for the purpose of creating a comfortable sun parlour [Figure 3.5]. Taken collectively, many of the structural renovations made to the home can be understood in the context of the feminization of space. This "feminization" of an interior is conceptualized in the same way that the term is used by Adams and Spampinato, expressing the "social/cultural process that extends beyond the mere act of shaping space toward an individual's own need" and to create a space that is reflective of the "family's cultural landscape."¹⁹⁰ Specifically, the sun parlour as an architectural alteration also functions as an example of the management of a domestic space for the purpose of healthcare.

Built directly off of the family dining room [Figure 3.6], the sun parlour features three pale yellow shingled interior walls and one exterior wall. This variation in material is a result of the methods used in the original construction of the space that saw the enclosure of the outdoor porch; the sun parlour's construction, therefore, only required the creation of one new exterior wall. This additional wall, comprised almost entirely of two immense windows between which are French doors, provides an ideal view of the Wyatts' back lawn. Once opened, the doors lead

¹⁸⁹ "Wyatt Historic House," *Canada's Historic Places*, 2014, accessed March 28, 2014, <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=2612>

¹⁹⁰ Adams and Spampinato, 23.

to a small outdoor porch perfect for sitting outside [Figure 3.7]. According to the interpretive guided tour of the home, the creation of the sun parlour was initiated because of Cecelia's ongoing health issues, and the repetitive references to the time Cecelia spent in bright, window-filled sun parlours or airy porches in the family letters and documentation supports this interpretation of the space. Many of the archival documents that include phrases about this simple method of treatment date from the 1910s and 1920s — before the construction of the Wyatts' sun parlour. After having the ability to spend time in such readily available rooms while she was travelling, it is likely that Cecelia wanted access to similarly designed spaces in the comfort of her own home. In comparison to the home's living room — a public space designed to receive and entertain guests while demonstrating the family's wealth and social standing through its display of fine furnishings and possessions¹⁹¹ — the sun parlour functioned as both a public as well as private space where Cecelia could enjoy a quiet, sunny morning in solitude or in the company of close acquaintances. The sun parlour's easy access to the outdoor lawn would have allowed her to quickly leave the house to walk outside in the fresh air or sit inside with a door ajar — enabling her to follow Dr. Lindlahr's suggested daily air baths.

The inclusion of this room on the tour of the Wyatt House brings the history of Cecelia's traveling outside of the home for health treatments into the domestic space, and serves as an example of the house museum's ability to narrate a history that happened outside of its walls. Although the sun parlour is seemingly less exotic than the living room, with its display of the tiger rug and other objects of curiosity, the sun parlour nonetheless carries subtle traces of travel through its architecture. As a physical alteration made to the home while the Wyatts lived there,

¹⁹¹ Ward, 62.

the sun parlour is evidence of a conscious decision that was made by the family and therefore provides valuable information about their personal taste. While she did not manage her house for the purpose of regulating the health of her family in the traditional sense, as discussed by Adams and Solan,¹⁹² Cecelia applied the treatment she received in the various sanatoria she visited to the architecture of her own home.

¹⁹² Victoria Jane Solan, “‘Built for Health’: American Architecture and the Healthy House, 1850-1930,” PhD diss., (Yale University, 2004); Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way, Doctors, Houses and Women 1870-1900* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996).

Conclusion

“Dear Miss Wyatt:

I can assure you that your letter was somewhat of a shock to me. Recognizing the post-mark, and with the letter in my hand, I did not anticipate the sad news that it contained until I became aware of the contents. Your dear Mother was so hopeful and so courageous, and looking forward so to the benefits from a winter in the Barbados. I am, indeed, sorry to hear that everything turned out as it did for her and for you and your dear sister.”¹⁹³

In January of 1937, Cecelia, in the company of Wanda and Dorothy, took a trip to Barbados in search of a climate that would improve her condition [Figure 4.1]. The three women enjoyed the sun while Cecelia was periodically treated by a local Dr. Charles Cave at a nearby nursing home.¹⁹⁴ Wanda wrote in her diary on May 9 that she, Dorothy and Cecelia had plans to travel back home to Summerside and were making the first leg of the journey — to Boston — the next day. Her following entry, written on May 18, was filled with heartache, stating “so many days have elapsed since I last wrote in this diary - and so much has happened to change the whole trend of my life.” On their way to Boston, Cecelia, following a complaint of a vicious headache at the back of her neck, passed away in her sleep. As she constantly travelled between her home and abroad, Cecelia’s search for relief from her suffering never stopped.

This thesis has served to broaden the existing literature surrounding the inclusion of women’s histories in Canada’s historic sites and house museums. By combining material culture

¹⁹³ Daniel S. Mackinnon to Dorothy Wyatt, 22 July 1937, Box ‘Correspondence Ned/Cel/Dorothy,’ Folder ‘To Dorothy Cecelia’s Passing (1937-1938),’ MacNaught History Centre and Archives, Summerside. PE.

¹⁹⁴ Dr. Charles Jerome Bright Cave (1879-1939) was born in Bridgetown, Barbados, and travelled to Battle Creek College, Michigan, in 1901 so he could study and later return to the Caribbean as a qualified nurse. While at Battle Creek, he studied under the direction of Dr. Kellogg, the director of the school and the Battle Creek sanitarium. Following graduation in 1907, Dr. Cave travelled back to the Caribbean where he established a sanitarium in Barbados. Known as the Hastings Hydropathic Sanitarium, it was located three miles southeast of Bridgetown, and by the 1930s “his clientele included some leading British colonial civil servants, ; a large percentage of European, Canadian, and American tourists, members of the Old Barbadian gentry; and the island’s leading mercantile families.” Source: Glenn O. Phillips, “Barbados’ Battle Creek Doctor Charles J.B. Cave, 1879-1939,” *Adventist Heritage* 5, no. 2(1975): 22-32.

theory with discussions of the deep associations that exist between women and the concept of the domestic sphere, each chapter has illustrated how an examination of interiors and objects can provide a new contextualization of women's lived experiences. The first chapter introduced the Wyatt family and briefly narrated the lives of women through an examination of their bedrooms. It then discussed Ned Wyatt's study and illustrated how the present curation of the house subverts assumptions often made when discussing separate sphere ideologies.

The second and third chapters of this thesis examined objects on display in the Wyatt Historic House Museum as forms of documentation that support the house museum's narrative framing of Cecelia Wyatt's attempts to combat her ongoing digestive and respiratory issues. Chapter Two specifically focused on the history of associations made between women, home, and health care and explained how as the female head-of-house Cecelia would traditionally be responsible for the "health" of her home and family. Because Cecelia was also the ill member of the family, however, the history of the Wyatt family provides an alternative understanding of how women attempted to treat illness during the early twentieth century while residing in their own homes. Similarly, Chapter Three expanded this understanding and explored the extensive trips Cecelia went on in search of a cure to her illnesses. Although Cecelia spent time outside of her home in Summerside during these travels, the house still contributes to the narrative of travel through its architectural structure and objects on display. Both chapters were written using archival documentation in the form of letters, diary entries and pamphlets that were either written or kept by all members of the Wyatt family.

The complex topic of women, their bodies, and health that was explored in this thesis is timely, as current issues involving similar themes continue to circulate in the media and popular

culture today. Although it is a slightly different dialogue, a relevant discussion concerning women's control over the wellness of their own bodies has continuously populated media outlets. Specifically, there have been active conversations taking place that address Canada's policies surrounding the taxation of menstruation-related products and laws inhibiting women's reproductive rights. This important issue is especially relevant today in Canada's Atlantic Provinces, as laws relating to women's access to safe abortion options is a topic of constant debate. The conversation is most notable in Prince Edward Island where women must travel to have the procedure done, as there are no abortion clinics available on the Island, and in order to do so they must have the approval of two doctors prior to the procedure.¹⁹⁵ Addressing histories relating to women's rights, health, and bodies in the context of historic sites and historic house museums is therefore a relevant decision that can serve to draw connections to important contemporary issues.

Similar to the opportune discussion of women, bodies and health, current discussions of reinventing the historic house museum as a genre are numerous and relevant to my examination of the Wyatt Historic House Museum. Examples such as Frank Vagnone's *The Anarchist Guide to Historic House Museums* and publications issued by the National Council on Public History in the United States question the future of historic house museums that operate within more traditional frameworks.¹⁹⁶ While some institutions have been forced to close because of these

¹⁹⁵ Kevin Bissett, "Debate over access to abortion in Prince Edward Island intensifies," *The Globe and Mail*, May 27, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/debate-over-access-to-abortion-in-prince-edward-island-intensifies/article18877480/>.

¹⁹⁶ John Dicktl, ed. *NCPH Public History News* 34, no.4 (September, 2014); Deborah Ryan and Franklin Vagnone, "Reorienting historic house museums: An anarchists guide," *Architectural Research Centers Consortium*, (2014), 97-106; see also Richard Moe, "Are There Too Many Historic House Museums?" *Forum Journal* 16.3 (2002): 4-11.

limitations, others have adapted to the changing cultural climate by successfully “experimenting with 21st-century public history practices and creating more nimble and dynamic sites.”¹⁹⁷ Solutions have manifested in a variety of forms such as artists’ contemporary interventions, the inclusion of recent histories,¹⁹⁸ and alternate forms of creative community engagement.¹⁹⁹ While numerous other aspects of the Wyatt Historic House Museum could be discussed and critiqued within this discussion of contemporary house museum practices, I am ultimately arguing that the Wyatt Historic House Museum situates the site within a wider dialogue of successful house museum practices.²⁰⁰ Because of the insightful exploration of diverse women’s histories through the display and narration of objects in Wyatt House, it can be considered an exemplary model for other house museums and historic sites. Seeing as such sites are becoming more vulnerable within our current cultural climate in North America, it is relevant to investigate institutions such as the Wyatt House as a way of determining alternative curatorial methods that effectively convey diverse histories.

It is important to note that women who were “daughters of important people or married to a man of social status” were usually the only women mentioned in historic documents or local histories. Because of this limitation, information about the lived experiences of other classes of

¹⁹⁷ Lisa Junkin Lopez, “At the Heart of the Community” in John Dicktl, ed. *NCPH Public History News* 34, no.4 (September, 2014): 1.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ryan and Vagnone, 99.

²⁰⁰ The house’s effective engagement with contemporary audiences is also enhanced by the ability for visitors to move freely throughout the house without the presence of velvet ropes or barricades. Objects in the home are also free from glass cases, ensuring that the home resembles a lived in space. Both these practices are highlighted in Vagnone’s *Anarchist Guide* as being important experience-based tactics to implement in successful house museums.

women from the past is scarce.²⁰¹ Despite this thesis' focus on histories relating to Western women of the upper class, which is in itself indicative of the most available information, it is necessary to acknowledge other diverse histories that could be explored by examining the Wyatt Historic House Museum. Another important aspect of women's lived experience, the lives of the hired help in the Victorian home is a history that should be further explored. Specific to the Wyatt House was the tendency for these girls to be of Acadian descent, therefore stimulating other discussions about the history and narratives of Acadian peoples from Atlantic Canada. The smallest ancestral population on the Island, as MacDonald explains, "Acadians came from the wrong racial stock, spoke the wrong language (French) and followed the wrong religion (Catholicism)...from the perspective of the ruling culture."²⁰² Many Acadian individuals, therefore, lived incredibly different lives than the Wyatts. There is presently an Acadian Museum of Prince Edward Island, but other sites in the region would benefit from including Acadian histories in their curatorial plans. The Wyatt House, even though it does cover the presence of domestic help in the home, could offer a broader historical framing of both hired help in Victorian homes and Acadian history that would serve to diversify the museum's narrative.²⁰³

Similarly, the interpretive guided tour of the Wyatt House briefly acknowledges the presence of the native population on the Island through the display of Mi'kmaq woven baskets. The

²⁰¹ Mary McDonald-Rissanen, 35.

²⁰² MacDonald, 15.

²⁰³ For a fuller historiography and discussion about Acadians in the maritimes see: Derek Johnson, "Merchants, the State and the Household: Continuity and Change in a 20th-Century Acadian Fishing Village," *Acadiensis* XXIX, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 57-75; P.D. Clarke, "L'Acadie perdue; Or, Maritime History's Other," *Acadiensis* XXIII, no. 2 (Autumn, 2000): 73-91.

baskets, ranging in size, are currently stored under the melodion in the front entrance hallway and are often pointed out to visitors [Figure 4.3]. The specific ones in the Wyatt House were likely bought by the Wyatts during visits to Lennox Island,²⁰⁴ or they could have been purchased from one of the numerous Mi'kmaq who would sell handicrafts door to door across the province. The baskets were popular with the Island's upper class population as collectable goods, while rural potato pickers also purchased them as useful harvest tools. By 1900 there were approximately three hundred Mi'kmaq living on Prince Edward Island. Their history is one filled with segregation, discrimination and racism, ultimately mimicking the trajectory of aboriginal communities in other parts of Canada.²⁰⁵ Permeated with notions of primitivism and the exoticised other, the period's racism resulted in the portrayal of the Mi'kmaq as "noble savages" that were "doomed to extinction." Eventually realizing that this would not be the Mi'kmaq's fate, Islanders' attitudes ranged from expressions of open racism to feelings that "the Natives were a people in transition, still trapped between "savagery" and "civilization"."²⁰⁶ Having this complex history of racism addressed in the Wyatt House would be an effective addition to the tour and would incorporate another alternative history. Even though it is difficult to offer a historically accurate framing of the period from the Mi'kmaq perspective, as their opinions were not

²⁰⁴ Lennox Island was (and remains) the location of the largest Mi'kmaq reservation on Prince Edward Island.

²⁰⁵ MacDonald, 16.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

recorded,²⁰⁷ providing a more detailed context for the baskets would commemorate the difficult experiences of the Island's native population. An exploration of domestic help and Mi'kmaq histories present in house museums such as the Wyatt House is another possible entry point in evaluating historic house museums as important sites with narrative potential.

As previously inhabited spaces and current sites of historic exploration and preservation, house museums have the potential to frame unconventional or neglected histories and "provide an alternative model for understanding historical events and social pasts."²⁰⁸ Because of the associations that existed between domestic interiors and women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, historic house museums should narrate histories relating to women from the past. The tendency of house museums to be filled with objects of material culture enhances their value as telling documents, because objects, as this thesis has explored, can be used to effectively frame broader narratives and examine personal histories. In some cases, such as the Wyatt House, objects that were actually owned by the past inhabitants of the home are especially valuable because of the information they can reveal about an individual's interests, tastes, and way of life. Similarly, the architecture of historic homes can sometimes be understood as representations of the past owner's taste and use of interiors. It is this ability for a home to contextualize a collection of objects that gives house museums added meaning as sites of historic exploration and understanding. In an age when the value of historic sites is being questioned, a revisionist approach to curating and interpreting historic homes so they frame more challenging or unique narratives,

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Stephanice Karen Radu, "Making Ourselves at Home: Representation, Preservation & Interpretation at Canada's House Museums," PhD diss., (Western University, 2014), 45.

such as histories relating to women, could provide house museums with added significance in our changing cultural and political landscape.

Illustrations



Figure Intro.1 Marion Jack, *Wanda Lefurgey Wyatt*, c. 1920, oil on canvas. Presently located in the Wyatt Historic House Museum, Summerside, Prince Edward Island. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure Intro.2 Marion Jack, *Dorothy Randall Wyatt*, c. 1920, oil on canvas. Presently located in the Wyatt Historic House Museum, Summerside, Prince Edward Island. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 1.1 The Wyatt Historic House Museum or ‘Wyatt House,’ located at 85 Spring street in Summerside, Prince Edward Island. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 1.2 Wyatt family portrait, 1897. In order from left to right: Wanda, Ned, Dorothy, Cecelia holding baby Ivan. Photo courtesy of MacNaught History Centre and Archives.



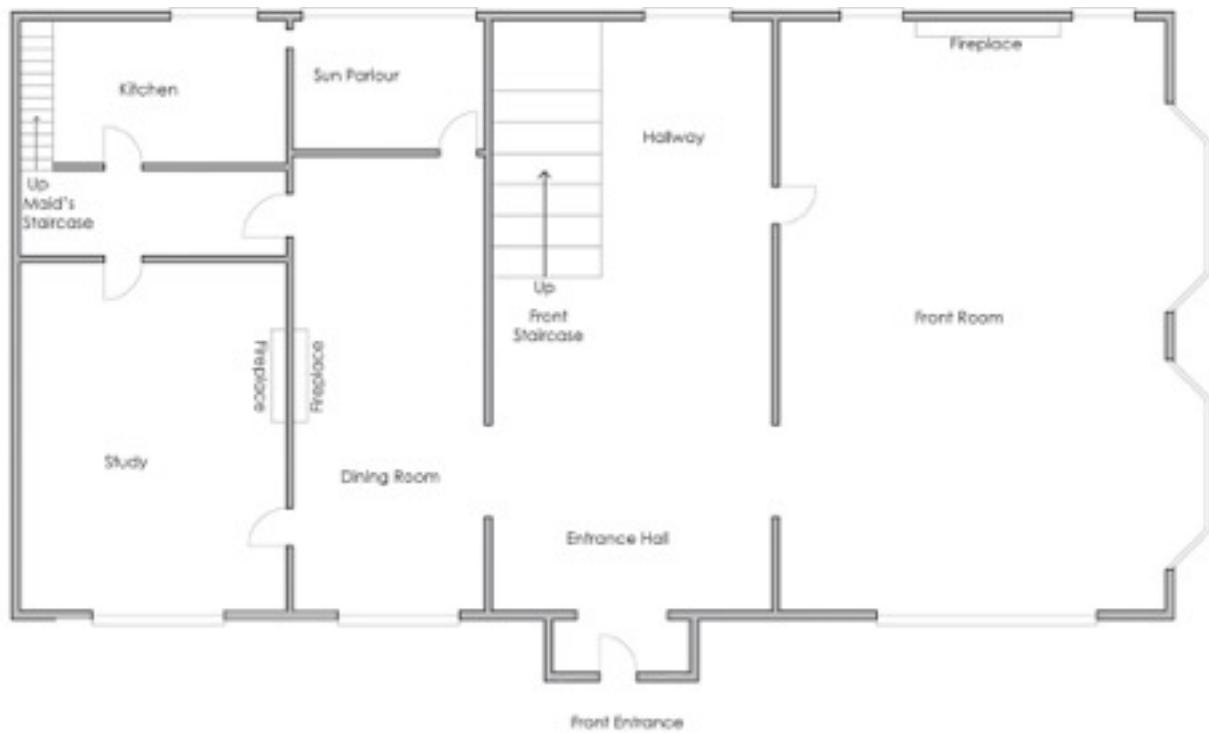
Figure 1.3 Ned Wyatt holding Dorothy Wyatt, left, and baby Wanda, right, 1895. Photo courtesy of MacNaught History Centre and Archives.



Figure 1.4 Cecelia Wyatt with Wanda, left, and Dorothy, right, 1899. Photo courtesy of MacNaught History Centre and Archives.



Figure 1.5 Wyatt Historic House Museum, front entrance hall. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Wyatt Historic House Museum
Main Level

Figure 1.6 Floor plan of the first floor of the Wyatt Historic House Museum (note: plan is not to scale). Credit: Jessica Kirkham



Figure 1.7 Far end of the Wyatt Historic House Museum's front room. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Wyatt Historic House Museum
Second Level

Figure 1.8 Floor plan of the second floor of the Wyatt Historic House Museum (note: plan is not to scale). Credit: Jessica Kirkham



Figure 1.9 Dorothy Wyatt's bedroom featuring walk-in closet, four poster bed and nursery furniture. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 1.10 A selection of Dorothy Wyatt's art supplies on display in her bedroom. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 1.11 Wanda Wyatt's bedroom until 1937. After 1937 - the year Cecelia Wyatt passed away - Wanda took over the master bedroom of the home. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 1.12 The closet in Wanda Wyatt's bedroom, featuring the green hood presented to her when she was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Prince Edward Island in 1992. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 1.13 The travellers trunk and Cecelia's shoes on display in Dorothy's bedroom. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 1.14 Ned Wyatt's study or office in the Wyatt Historic House Museum. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 1.15 Rocking chair and sewing table in Ned's study. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 1.16 Linen napkins and embroidered materials displayed on the rocking chair in Ned Wyatt's study. Photo credit: author, 2013.

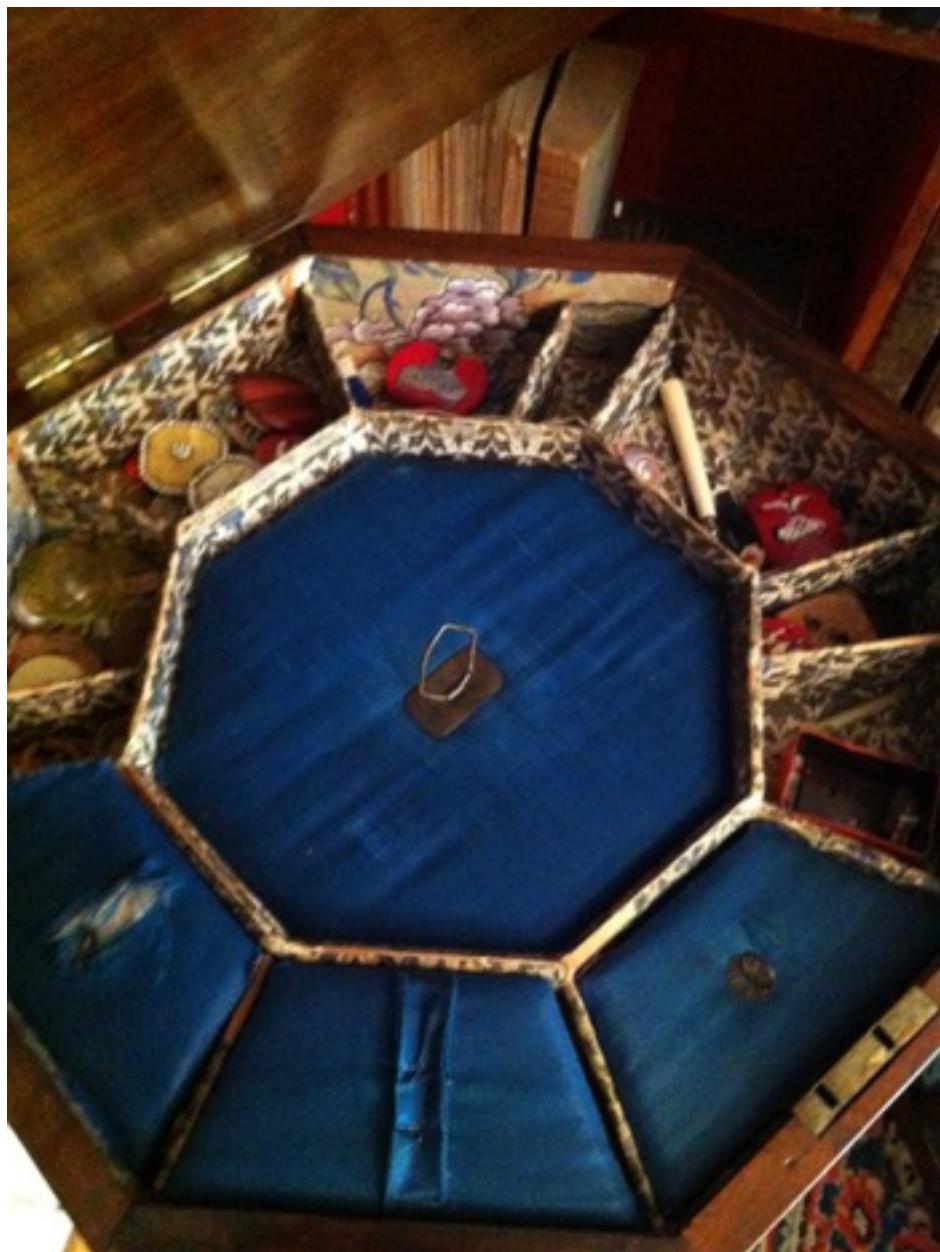


Figure 1.17 Interior of the Wyatts' sewing table on display in the study. Photo credit: author, 2013



Figure 2.1 Cecelia Wyatt, c. 1890. Photo courtesy of MacNaught History Centre and Archives.



Figure 2.2 Ned and Cecelia Wyatts' bedroom in the Wyatt Historic House Museum (the master bedroom). Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 2.3 Cecelia's vanity in the master bedroom of the Wyatt House. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 2.4 Maw's Improved Inhaler in the collection of the Wyatt Historic House Museum. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 2.5 Vapo-Cresolene Vaporizer in the collection of the Wyatt Historic House museum.
Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 2.6 Original packaging that came with the Wyatt's Vapo-Cresolene vaporizer. Photo courtesy Adam Kirkey, 2014.

2



Doctors Like It.

For over twenty years Vapo-Cresolene has received the unqualified support of the medical profession; we feel very proud of this. Physicians everywhere realize the importance of this direct way of treating all throat affections. Put some Cresolene in the vaporizer, light lamp beneath, and then breathe-in the healing and germ destroying vapor. It is the doctor's prescription now for whooping cough, frequently curing it in a few days.

21

Vapo-Cresolene is sold by druggists everywhere. A Vapo-Cresolene outfit, including the Vaporizer and Lamp, which should last a life-time, and a bottle of Cresolene, complete, \$1.50; extra supplies of Cresolene 25 cents and 50 cents. Illustrated booklet containing physicians' testimonials free upon request. **VAPO-CRESOLENE Co., 180 Fulton St., New York, U.S.A.**

Figure 2.7 Advertisement of Vapo-Cresolene Vaporizer from *The Guardian* newspaper, November 4, 1901.

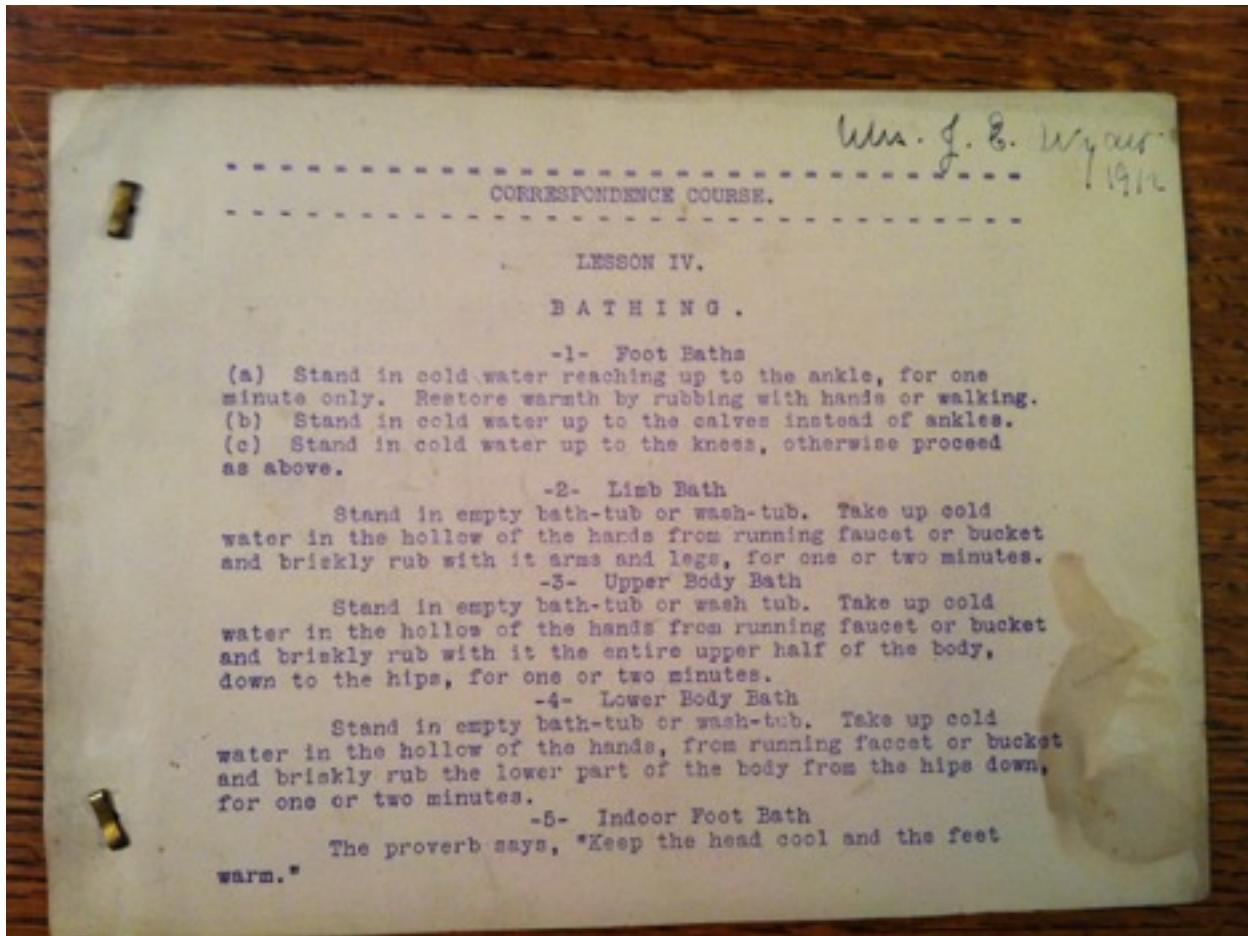


Figure 2.8 Dr. Henry Lindlahr's Nature Cure Bulletin Correspondence Course, Lesson IV "Bathing" c. 1912. Wyatt fond, Box 'Cecelia,' Folder 'Lindlahr courses, etc 1910-1912,' MacNaught History Centre and Archives. Photo credit: author, 2014.



Figure 2.9 The inhaler on the bedside table in the master bedroom, where it is currently housed and pointed out to visitors on the interpretive guided tour. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 2.10 A shelf in the attic of the Wyatt Historic House Museum, featuring the inhaler. 2000.
Photo credit: Lefurgey Cultural Centre, Summerside, PE, 2000.



Figure 2.11 Chaise lounge in the master bedroom of the Wyatt House. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



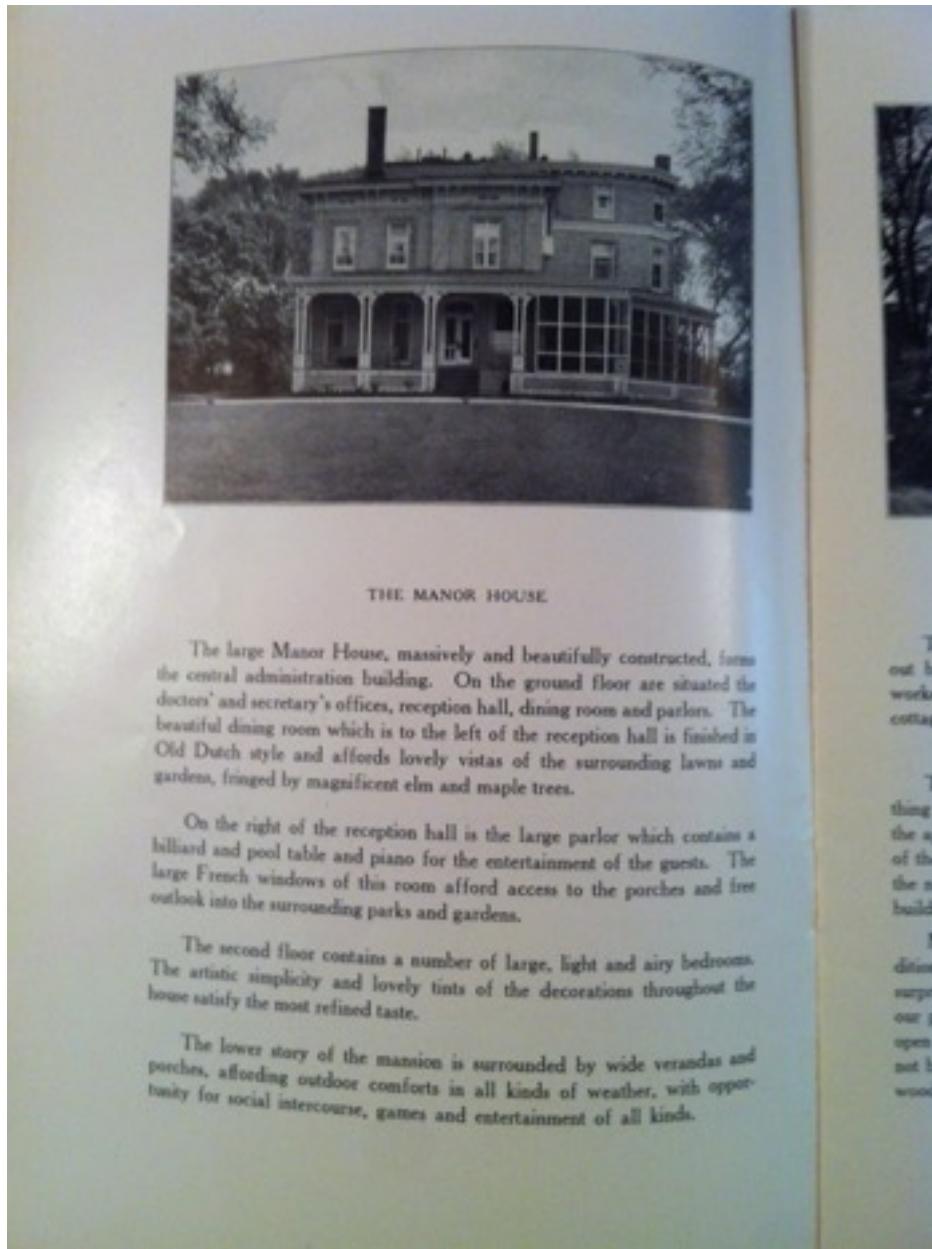
Figure 2.12 Dorothy's bedroom in the Wyatt House. Note the curtains and the skirt on the vanity table. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 3.1 Bengal tiger rug on display in the front room of the Wyatt House. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 3.2 Dr. Lindlahr's Sanitarium on Ashland Blvd in Chicago, Illinois. Photo available: <http://chuckmancollectionvolume14.blogspot.ca/2012/11/postcard-chicago-dr-lindlahrs.html>



THE MANOR HOUSE

The large Manor House, massively and beautifully constructed, forms the central administration building. On the ground floor are situated the doctors' and secretary's offices, reception hall, dining room and parlors. The beautiful dining room which is to the left of the reception hall is finished in Old Dutch style and affords lovely vistas of the surrounding lawns and gardens, fringed by magnificent elm and maple trees.

On the right of the reception hall is the large parlor which contains a billiard and pool table and piano for the entertainment of the guests. The large French windows of this room afford access to the porches and free outlook into the surrounding parks and gardens.

The second floor contains a number of large, light and airy bedrooms. The artistic simplicity and lovely tints of the decorations throughout the house satisfy the most refined taste.

The lower story of the mansion is surrounded by wide verandas and porches, affording outdoor comforts in all kinds of weather, with opportunity for social intercourse, games and entertainment of all kinds.

Figure 3.3 “The Manor House” of Dr. Lindlahr’s Health Resort in Elmhurst, Illinois. Photo of page 8 of “Prospectus of the Lindlahr Nature Cure Institutes inc.” c.1914. Photo credit: author, 2014.



Figure 3.4 Photo taken by Dorothy of Ned, Cecelia and Wanda (seated on floor) in their apartment in Chicago, c. 1919. Photo courtesy MacNaught History Centre and Archives.



Figure 3.5 Sun parlour in the Wyatt Historic House Museum. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 3.6 Photo of the dining room in the Wyatt Historic House Museum, featuring the door into the sun parlour at the back on the right side of the room. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 3.7 The back of the Wyatt House, c. 2004. Photo courtesy Historic Places Prince Edward Island, available: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/hpo/IMG/ORIGINAL/71ddd164WyattRearelevation.jpg>



Figure 4.1 Dorothy, Wanda and Cecelia in Barbados, 1934. Photo courtesy MacNaught History Centre and Archives.



Figure 4.2 The ‘Girl’s Room’ in the Wyatt Historic House Museum. Photo credit: Adam Kirkey, 2014.



Figure 4.3 Mi'kmaq baskets on display in the front entrance hall of the Wyatt Historic House Museum. Photo credit: author, 2013.

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Primary Sources

This thesis made use of various primary documents from the Wyatt Fonds that are housed in the MacNaught History Centre and Archives, located in Summerside, Prince Edward Island. These documents included letters, diaries, pamphlets and brochures, and photos that were taken, written or used by the Wyatt family.

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