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CHAPTER 5

The Constantinople Home



When the officers of the Woman's Board of Missions designed the Constantinople Home in the early 1870s, they planned an ambitious institution for the center of women's missionary operations in Istanbul. Envisaging a school for girls as the focal point of the building, they also included plans for a dispensary and a city mission where American women would work to improve the health and home life of Ottoman women. Equally important, the officers saw the building as a place where single women could experience domestic life and organize their professional affairs without interference from the men of the Western Turkey Mission. Brandishing the language of domesticity to justify this female space, the officers of the Woman's Board stipulated that the women in the Home constituted "a family" and appointed the principal of the Home school as its "recognized Head."¹ No longer obliged to board with missionary couples, the single women who lived in the Constantinople Home created an alternative space of belonging where they developed a community of family, friends, and colleagues. Within this space, which predated by a decade the settlement house communities founded by single women in the United States, they sought to establish the authority to manage themselves.²

The language of domesticity shaped the early development of the Constan-

tinople Home, which soon became a centerpiece of American education in the Near East. In 1890 the school was renamed to reflect its earned reputation. That year, upon petition from the Woman's Board, the State of Massachusetts chartered the Home school as the American College for Girls in Constantinople and awarded it the right to confer the degree of Bachelor of Arts. The American College for Girls became the first institution to offer a tertiary-level education in English for Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, and Turkish women, among others. Yet despite its success, in 1908 the officers of the Woman's Board forfeited control of the institution they founded to an independent board of trustees in New York City.

Why, at the height of its power, did the Woman's Board relinquish its center of operations in Istanbul and transfer the property to a group of individuals who remained independent of the mission board? The answer to this question lies in several interconnected factors that thrust the college on a path of development that the Woman's Board was unable to support. The Constantinople Home was, as its name suggests, embedded in a foreign context. It operated against a shifting global backdrop and was terminally troubled by conflicts about women's work that reverberated in Istanbul and Boston to the detriment of the Woman's Board.

Beginning as a modest mission school, the Home school evolved into a prominent institution of higher education that celebrated its identity as an American liberal arts college rather than its Protestant evangelical origins.³ Conflicts between Boston and Istanbul contributed to the shift, as leading faculty members of the college, determined to respond to the needs of the Ottoman capital, moved away from denominationalism to shape an emerging sense of feminist Christian internationalism at their institution. The faculty was supported financially by a new group of trustees who had close connections to American political and commercial interests. Unable to compete with the fundraising potential of this group of wealthy East Coast philanthropists, the Woman's Board surrendered their institution to them.

The loss of the college was a contributing factor in the demise of the Woman's Board after World War I. The causes for the folding of women's separate missionary societies into the male societies in the 1920s and 1930s have been largely attributed to domestic issues within the United States.⁴ Increased professionalization within American women's boards caused the officers to lose

touch with rank-and-file members, leading to a loss of financial contributions. At the same time, women's boards lost the battle in their power struggles with male boards over the nature and autonomy of women's work. Yet local environments were critical to shaping the development of missionary institutions abroad.⁵ I suggest that the demise of the Woman's Board began in the nineteenth century when women missionaries developed ambitions of their own, responded to the needs of local environments, and challenged not only the institutional power of male missionaries but also the moral authority of their female officers. The experiences of women at the peripheries of the American missionary endeavor challenged the denominational and hierarchical structures of the enterprise and contributed to undermining the power of the Congregational Woman's Board.⁶ At the same time, American cultural expansion in the Near East, which for almost a century had been largely the purview of American Protestant missionaries, entered a new phase with its new backers as the United States began to exert its might on the world stage in the decade before World War I.

Ambiguous Origins in Changing Times

The idea of building a girls' school as the focus of the Constantinople Home took shape against a backdrop of continued Ottoman social reform, cultural transformations, economic decline, a political shift toward more authoritarian imperial rule under Sultan Abdülhamid II, who ascended the throne in 1876, and devastating territorial losses for the empire in the Balkans as a result of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 that, among other things, resulted in Bulgarian independence. Most prominent for the missionaries were Ottoman proposals to reform education and changing patterns of consumption among the new urban middle classes, Christian and Muslim, which were also reflected spatially.⁷ The Ottoman elite began to move from the ancient center of Istanbul into the European quarters of Galata and Pera, where modern residential areas were being developed, creating a distinction between traditionalists and modernists and attempting to shape a "cosmopolitan identity."⁸ Changing tastes among the elite reflected a growing interest in western goods and services. Schools were modern institutions that opened up a new form of social space for young women. As women became

more visible in urban centers, the Ottoman middle classes were increasingly drawn toward the idea of a modern education for their daughters.

Proposals for Ottoman reform of education were debated openly in the 1860s. The Ottoman Public Education Law of 1869 included for the first time compulsory elementary education for girls throughout the empire and provision for a school in Istanbul to train female teachers.⁹ Under this law, children would be educated in their native languages at the elementary-school level but in Ottoman Turkish at higher levels. At the same time, Ottoman statesmen crafted a new law that shaped a new concept of Ottoman citizenship, regardless of faith and ethnicity. The Ottoman educational law was promulgated in large part as a response to the successes of American education among Christian populations. The network of American mission schools was the largest foreign-school system in the empire. Yet the law also challenged American missionaries whose earlier progressive reputation for providing female education had to some extent been lost to Christian communities. Rufus Anderson, foreign secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, had moved the one mission school in Istanbul into an interior town in 1856 and insisted on training mission workers in the vernacular. Since that time the missionaries had not had a girls' school in the capital.¹⁰

Even though education for girls continued to remain poorly organized throughout the empire for the next two decades, Ottoman reforms and changing social and cultural circumstances were a major catalyst in the decision to build a new girls' school. Events in Boston made it possible. When Anderson retired in 1866, his replacement, N. G. Clark, supported the decision, but the American Board could not spare the funds. Recognizing an opportune moment, Clark turned to the newly established Woman's Board of Missions, on which, ironically, Anderson's wife, Eliza, served as vice president, to raise the required resources.

Founded in Boston in 1868, the Woman's Board of Missions appealed to evangelical Christian women to fulfill their "solemn duty of caring for their sex abroad" and support the cause of missions. It was no secret, they wrote, "that the degradation and wretchedness of women, in heathen and Moham-medan countries, is one of the greatest obstacles to the success of the

missionary enterprise.”¹¹ At their first annual general meeting, early in 1869, N. G. Clark and former American missionary George Washburn encouraged the women in attendance to take on the task of starting a girls’ school in Istanbul. In pleading the case, Washburn in particular misled the women about conditions in the Ottoman Empire. Using the same exaggerated language of Protestant superiority that had a long tradition in evangelical circles, he appealed to the supposed superiority of Protestant American women who benefited from the advantages of Christian society that eluded heathens. He painted “a very dark and gloomy picture of the condition of women throughout Turkey,” where, in his view, “every influence of religion and society tends to sink them below the level of the beasts.” According to Washburn, the Turks did not believe it was possible for women to be educated. In contrast, the missionaries had learned through experience that Turkish women were “capable of elevation and education” if only they had “the influence of the gospel.”¹²

Washburn’s comments were misleading in two ways. First, as a missionary in Istanbul, Washburn was well aware of the complexity of Ottoman society and knew about the reforms that would expand educational opportunities for women. Second, he used the word “Turks,” suggesting that Muslim girls would be a target of missionary activities. Ottoman Turks were unlikely to be among the women seeking education from missionary institutions, however. Washburn raised the specter of Islam purely for fundraising purposes. Missionaries had made few inroads into Islam and were unlikely to do so with the new girls’ school in Istanbul. Their chief clients remained Orthodox Christian converts to Protestantism.

Raising the funds for the Constantinople Home became a priority for the Woman’s Board. Led by board president Sarah Lamson Bowker (a former student of Mary Lyon), each officer pledged five hundred dollars as a gesture of confidence in their ability to raise the \$58,000 deemed necessary for the project.¹³ They envisaged a school at the center of the project, but planned to embrace a broader field of mission for American women. They hired Oberlin graduate Julia Rappleye as school principle and Mount Holyoke graduates Dr. Mary Wadsworth and Cora Welch to manage the dispensary and city mission, respectively. The school opened in temporary quarters in October 1871. According to N. G. Clark’s wife, Elizabeth, who had

toured the Ottoman empire with her husband in 1871, the school would be “a seminary of high order, open to pupils of all nationalities,” where “Christian culture” would be the first and highest object.”¹⁴

At a time when the Woman’s Board’s annual budget was only \$31,000, the sum required for the Home had to be raised independently of regular funds. It was this idea of a special fund for the Home that persuaded some of the original founders that the Home should be directed by the Woman’s Board and remain financially independent of the Western Turkey Mission, a proposal that male missionaries in Istanbul subsequently challenged. Despite his initial support, N. G. Clark immediately began to signal his hesitation, declaring that “the whole thing” was “an experiment.”¹⁵ This tentative beginning left the enterprise open to indecision and ensured that the various parties to the discussion would champion different views of the project.

Mission correspondence during those early years illustrates the uncertainty surrounding the school’s purpose and management. Former American Board missionary Cyrus Hamlin argued that the Home should have no connection to the mission but should aspire to be a college with an independent governing body, as was Robert College, which he had cofounded. Hamlin’s progressive views on female education did not extend to female management, however. He wrote that he would “weep in secret places” if women had positions on the governing body of the women’s school.¹⁶ Clark, who believed the institution should be closely connected to the mission, vacillated between describing it as a high school and a mission training school for local helpers.

Interestingly, Clark’s audience seemed to determine his point of view. Writing to Julia Rappleye and Mary Wadsworth in 1872, he favored the high school. Recognizing what he termed “the general progress in education in the empire,” he was pleased to hear that the school would meet the high demands of the residents of Istanbul and expressed the hope that it would stay ahead of local progress by continuing to raise its standards.¹⁷ Writing that same year to the men of the Western Turkey Mission, however, Clark supported the training school option.¹⁸ By 1874, he was of the opinion that teachers at the school were moving away from “proper missionary work” toward “mere secular education.”¹⁹ Nor was Clark alone in his uncertainty. Division of opinion in Boston and Istanbul continued on almost every topic that related to the Constantinople Home. According to

Clark, the ambiguity was “embarrassing, paralyzing, and must cost a good deal of time and strength.”²⁰ Clark, of course, had contributed to the lack of clarity. As late as 1880, he continued to have misgivings about the direction and level of education at the school.²¹

The threads of Clark’s prolonged unease were sewn into the plan for the Home school. The plan expressed the tensions within the mission as it attempted to reconcile the differences between missionaries who wished to educate girls in the vernacular to become wives of pastors and teachers and those who argued that the missionaries should provide the highest level of education available in English to meet the needs of the Ottoman capital. These objectives were not mutually exclusive; they had been reconciled by Mary Lyon at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. Lyon encouraged her students to become the wives of missionaries, but she also offered the highest education available to young women in Massachusetts, and she promoted the idea that her teachers and students should develop their own ambitions. In Istanbul, missionary George Wood insisted that the Home school “must be a missionary school in the broad view afforded by Mt. Holyoke Seminary.”²² The officers of the Woman’s Board concurred.

When the Woman’s Board presented their plan, they called for a building to accommodate one hundred fee-paying students, fifty boarders and fifty day students. The plan confirmed that the Home school should be all things to all people. The missionaries in Istanbul wanted “a school in Constantinople for Constantinople” that would demonstrate to Ottoman subjects the best type of education for girls. The Home school was to be “a model school” to attract families in the city who might otherwise send their daughters to local Armenian, Bulgarian, or Greek schools. The level of education it provided should enable its students to teach in schools in Istanbul and other cities across the empire. Graduates would be “well-qualified teachers of native female seminaries and higher schools.” They should “command the respect and confidence” of the city’s residents.

Missionaries believed that the school itself would command respect because students would be fee-paying. Charitable assistance with expectations of missionary work in return for education, which was the norm in mission training schools in the provinces, was not to be an option in the capital. A fee-paying institution offered three benefits: it would gain esteem for

the missionaries, it would tend to influence the spread of other self-supporting schools throughout the empire, and it would not be a drain on mission finances. Missionaries knew that the imposition of fees would not present an obstacle, as more and more families in the Ottoman capital wanted their daughters to be educated and were prepared to pay for it.

At the same time, the plan stipulated that the school was subservient to mission needs. It was “directly auxiliary” to the mission station and the work of proselytizing. It was to be a “centre of Christian work,” the purpose of which was “to train Christian workers.” Students would be groomed for positions as wives of pastors and as Bible women. As a consequence they would learn to run “well-ordered Christian homes.” Instruction would be provided in the vernacular, but English would be taught. In other words, the school was to be guided by missionary principles to provide basic training for mission helpers, but missionaries knew that such a school would not meet the needs of the Ottoman capital. From the outset, therefore, the school had a dual objective that in principle could be achieved but in practice created tensions within the mission between parties who favored one of the objectives over the other.

The final point in the plan established the chain of responsibility for the school. The institution was set “under the care of trustees, consisting of the Constantinople station.” In other words, the Home school, a project founded and funded by the Woman’s Board, would be controlled by male missionaries of the Western Turkey Mission in Istanbul, who were responsible only to the policy makers of the American Board. This point initially went unchallenged by the Woman’s Board because its officers believed that local support and advice from experienced missionaries was appropriate. Reporting procedures soon became a contentious issue, however, as discussions ensued about who had ultimate authority to make decisions regarding the Home and its finances.

Public announcements in *Life and Light* made no mention of tensions. Articles included only positive reports of progress at the Home. After only two years in temporary quarters in the old part of the city, Julia Rappleye was forced by popular demand to rent a larger building because the original house could accommodate only twenty-five students. The school’s first

pupils were the daughters of Armenian converts, but soon Greeks and Turks also sought admission for their daughters, a very promising development. Rappleye reported that “patronage will come to us even before we are ready for it; she hoped soon to see “the tottering and speedy downfall of the might power of Islamism.”²³ In Boston, the Woman’s Board had raised \$30,000 by 1874. They published a sketch of a three-floor building and invited their auxiliaries to adopt a room, name it, and donate the funds to build it. The naming opportunities yielded results. Among the donors were members of Union Church in Boston who provided funds for the physician’s room, dispensary, and patients’ room, and students and graduates of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary who donated funds for a teacher’s room, which they named “the Mary Lyon Room.”²⁴

Unlike the public announcements, unpublished correspondence details strong undercurrents of anger at the Woman’s Board about the men’s actions in Istanbul. As women missionaries worked to develop the plan for the Home, they collided early on with the institutional power of male missionaries who recognized neither the authority of the officers of the Woman’s Board nor the female-headed household in the Constantinople Home. The records of the early years of the school are full of recriminations, accusations, and counteraccusations from men and women missionaries about the work of women, the purpose of the school, what the women perceived to be intrusions of the men in their daily work, and what the men saw as the women’s lack of deference. Negotiating these gendered conflicts would occupy the Women’s Board for several years to come.

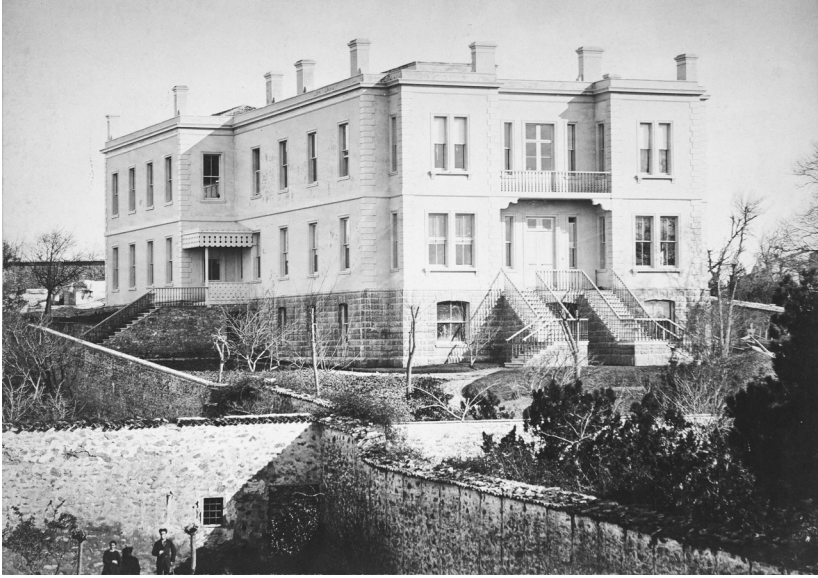
The first major tussle came when Woman’s Board officers discovered, after the fact, that the male missionaries in Istanbul had not followed the construction plans for the Home but had eliminated the dispensary and the city mission. According to the men, it was not a good idea to invite sick people into a building where pupils were studying. In reality, the women’s broader goal was at odds with male missionary expectations that focused on the school as a direct auxiliary to their work of evangelizing. They saw no purpose in looking after the physical and material needs of the city’s women. In a letter of complaint to the Prudential Committee (the American Board’s policy-making group), the women expressed their particular displeasure at the removal from the building plans of rooms for a female physician and a

dispensary. They felt that the revised building plans represented “a violation of good faith” for the women who had supported their original plans and donated funds specifically for those rooms.²⁵ Their protests were in vain, however; the men in Istanbul had already begun construction of the Home without space for the dispensary and the city mission.

The male missionaries also failed to report the progress of the building and declined to submit accounts for expenditures. They even vested ownership of the real estate of the Home in the American Board instead of the Woman’s Board. The women’s displeasure was palpable. In the same letter to the Prudential Committee, they insisted that American women had raised the funds for the building, planned the work, and would be responsible for sustaining it. In an assertion of their perceived equal status, the officers insisted that they were not “simply collectors” for the American Board but were “an incorporated society working in unison.” They demanded that accounts be sent to their treasury and argued vociferously that missionaries in Istanbul take steps to vest ownership of the Home in the Woman’s Board. They also reiterated their understanding of the Home’s family arrangements and the headship of its principal. They insisted that Julia Rappleye was accountable for the Home and invoked her spiritual authority: “Under her alone under God devolved the responsibility of success or failure,” they wrote.²⁶ In the women’s view, the tensions between the men and women missionaries existed because the men did not recognize Rappleye’s status.

The men of the American Board had not adjusted to the changes precipitated by the existence of the Woman’s Board and the increasing numbers of single women missionaries with minds of their own. Although male missionaries appreciated the women’s fundraising abilities and were happy to share the costs of the missionary enterprise, they expressed no willingness to share power. They believed that single women missionaries were subordinate to male authority. Although the officers of the Woman’s Board expressed their displeasure and requested a change in behavior from the trustees in Istanbul, the men were slow to change their ways. As late as 1882, the Istanbul trustees continued to correspond with the American Board, not the Woman’s Board, about issues at the Home. The men in Istanbul were not in a hurry to resolve the tensions.

In a bid to regain control of their institution, the Woman’s Board



The Constantinople Home, 1876. Courtesy Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections.

appointed a new team of teachers ready for the move into their new building early in 1876. Rappleye moved to Brusa to develop a new school there under the sponsorship of the Woman's Board of Missions of the Pacific. Clara (Kate) Pond Williams took Rappleye's place. A widow with two small children, Williams was a graduate of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary and had taught at Mount Holyoke and at the American Board mission school at Harpoot in eastern Anatolia. She was joined by three other teachers, Ellen Parsons (a Mount Holyoke graduate), Mary Mills Patrick, a teacher from the mission school at Erzurum also in eastern Anatolia, and Annie Bliss. They were subsequently joined by Clara Hamlin, daughter of Robert College founder Cyrus Hamlin. Patrick later recalled that they were "a group of unusual women."²⁷

Shaping an International Institution

With the opening of the new three-story building in Üsküdar, on the eastern side of the Bosphorus, Williams instituted significant changes at the Home. Chief among them was that English became the language of instruction,

which allowed the faculty to achieve three critical goals to meet Ottoman needs rather than mission needs.²⁸ First, Williams indicated that the school would be open to the diverse ethnic and national groups in the empire. Bulgarian girls began to arrive after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78. Second, teachers could use English-language textbooks, raising the level of education offered and making it possible for them to arrive from the United States and begin teaching immediately without the need to learning a foreign language before getting to work. Finally, and not inconsequentially in an era of European imperial rivalries in the Ottoman empire, she met the needs of parents who wanted their daughters to learn a European language, offering competition to the schools operated by Catholic nuns who taught in French. During Williams's tenure, the Constantinople Home began to evolve into an international educational institution that truly met the needs of the Ottoman capital and its hinterland. In conformance with Ottoman law, Ottoman Turkish was taught in all three years of instruction; Armenian, Bulgarian, and Greek students learned their own language, and all students could also study French.

By 1889, as a result of numerous changes at the school, Mary Mills Patrick became principal. The Woman's Board, encouraged by Kate Williams, who had been in the United States since 1883, planned a change in the status of their institution from school to college. The officers decided to "drop the misnomer of The Home," and, after discussing several options, selected the name American College for Girls.²⁹ Patrick agreed that it was a "dignified name" that expressed "the nationality of the founders and supporters of the college." She favored promoting the American identity of the college rather than its domestic philosophy or missionary connections. She also hoped that the connection between the college and the Woman's Board would be "more definite" and the reporting lines for the new college established "on a much more satisfactory basis" than the Home school.³⁰ She was to be disappointed.

Some of the male missionaries in Istanbul believed that the women had misjudged the moment for expansion of female education. While the Woman's Board in Boston proceeded to draft a constitution for the college, Albert Long and Henry Dwight in Istanbul insisted that the time had not yet come to offer an advanced level of education for women in the Ottoman Empire. In their view, raising the standard of education to that offered by a "Smith

or Wellesley” would “tend to limit rather than to extend the usefulness of the institution.” They argued that the lack of good preparatory schools in Constantinople meant that girls did not have the basic learning to study at college level, completely ignoring the fact that the Home school had always had a preparatory school. The girls themselves married young, they noted, which meant that they were unlikely to stay in school. The college would therefore have difficulty retaining young women “of mental powers sufficiently mature” to complete the course of study.³¹ The Woman’s Board paid no heed to the opinions of Long and Dwight, nor were the men’s views borne out.

Not long after the Massachusetts Legislature passed the act incorporating the American College for Girls, the first meeting of the corporation (governing board) of the college took place, on March 6, 1890. The bylaws stipulated that only members of the board of directors of the Woman’s Board could be elected trustees of the corporation. Augusta Smith was elected president, Abbie Child vice president, Caroline Borden secretary, and Ellen Carruth treasurer. Ten additional officers, all women, were elected to the corporation, including Mary Mills Patrick, who was appointed president of the college. To mark the occasion, and to close a chapter in the institution’s trajectory, Caroline Borden published a brief history of the Constantinople Home.³² She was to become a major player in the subsequent development of the college.

The Woman’s Board was ahead of its time in placing overall management of the college in the hands of an all-woman corporation. Women were appointed to the governing board of Wellesley from its inception in 1875, and by 1884 women served on the board of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, but neither institution had an all-female board. The record does not show whether Cyrus Hamlin “wept in secret places.” The college’s bylaws also retained the domestic language of the original working plan for the Home, stipulating that the college buildings were designed to be “the home of the Institution,” where the faculty “constituted a family” and the president of the college was “the head of the family.”³³

Despite their radical move, however, the corporation saw fit to require the faculty of the college to administer the college jointly with a male advisory board in Istanbul and even to confer on the curriculum, thereby undermining the authority of the president and the faculty. The bylaws appeared to vest authority in the faculty and the Woman’s Board, yet they ensured the

intervention of the male missionaries in Istanbul in the day-to-day operations of the college and also in control of its finances. A local advisory board was necessary for matters that needed male representation, such as acting on behalf of the college in matters relating to the Ottoman state, paying taxes, managing the external relations of the college, and perhaps supervising the property it occupied. Yet the responsibilities of the advisory board extended into everyday administration and even curriculum design, matters that were well within the purview of the president and faculty.

The language of domesticity that upheld female authority within the family of the college was an empty vessel. The Woman's Board still deferred to the American Board, the female faculty of the college was required to defer to the male missionaries in Istanbul, and the bylaws did nothing to reduce opportunities for continued conflict between the two groups. Renewed tensions rapidly arose regarding the purpose of the college, the status of the professors, and finances. Downright hostility characterized the relations between the faculty and the missionaries in Istanbul for the first decade of the life of the new college.

In preparation for the first commencement ceremony of the American College for Girls, Mary Mills Patrick immediately moved to declare a shift in the nature of the college. While the college remained steadfastly Protestant, and Bible study continued throughout the four years of instruction, its first annual calendar openly celebrated a move toward a nonsectarian, liberal arts institution that welcomed women of all faiths. The opening paragraph stated that the college offered "to young women who desire to obtain a liberal education, advantages and facilities of the highest grade." While foregrounding education, the calendar noted that the college aimed "to combine the highest moral and Christian culture with the most complete mental discipline."³⁴ It listed all the Home school graduates since 1875. Seventy-four young women of nine nationalities and several different faiths had completed their education, including Jewish students and Christian Orthodox students who continued to attend their own churches. The calendar was a celebration of internationalism and freedom of religion.

The last graduating class of the Home included the institution's first Muslim graduate, Gulistan Ismet Hanum. The graduation of a Muslim



The American College for Girls at Constantinople, 1890. From The American College for Girls, Calendar, 1889–1890 (London: Sir Joseph Causton & Sons, 1890).

student who remained Muslim speaks to Patrick's evolution from an evangelist to an educator who opened the institution's doors to young women of all faiths and permitted them to retain their religious practices. But the non-sectarian nature of the college caused discomfiture for the Ottoman state as well as the Istanbul missionaries. If the college was no longer a proselytizing arm of the mission, then it potentially held more appeal for Muslim students. In 1892 Sultan Abdülhamid issued an edict banning Muslims from attending mission schools.³⁵ Despite the edict, Halidé Edib attended the college as a day student in 1893–1894 until the sultan issued an edict pointedly prohibiting her from attending. Edib subsequently returned to the college, graduating with a B.A. in 1901.³⁶ She became a prominent alumna, public figure, and poster child for the college. Caroline Borden subsequently called her a "Princess of influence in both Diplomatic and Educational life in Constantinople."³⁷

This international, nonevangelical shift at the college particularly antagonized Henry Dwight. He was provoked to ask pointedly whether the institution was an arm in the evangelical struggle for souls or an institution offering a liberal arts education for Ottoman women. In the increasingly difficult



Mary Mills Patrick, undated portrait. American College for Girls Records, Archival Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York. By permission of the Trustees of Robert College of Istanbul, New York.

work of evangelizing, Dwight regarded the American College for Girls as a potential recruiting environment for missionary work, and, as he saw it, the college needed to be squarely in the evangelizing corner and the faculty must operate within the confines of the Western Turkey Mission. He posed three questions: Had the missionary character of the college changed? Did members of the faculty remain assistant missionaries connected to the Western Turkey Mission? Should the Western Turkey Mission resolve questions affecting the annual support of faculty?³⁸

At the American Board in Boston, the Prudential Committee responded affirmatively to all three of Dwight's questions. In their view, members of the college's faculty should return to the work of the mission. They were an integral part of the mission, supported by funds gathered for missionary work. The college must therefore "steadfastly and directly promote the aggressive missionary work amid which it stands."³⁹ In a statement not dissimilar to the one N. G. Clark made to Esther Maltbie in 1876, Clark's successor, Judson Smith, emphasized that faculty was responsible only to the trustees of the corporation and the Woman's Board, but their work was a part of the mission and they must report to the men of the mission in Istanbul. The female trustees endorsed his statement: the college remained a missionary institution, the faculty remained assistant missionaries of the American Board and members of the Western Turkey Mission, and, as such, should be treated in the same way as other assistant missionaries, particularly as regards salaries.⁴⁰ Thus the trustees confirmed the subservience of the faculty to the Western Turkey Mission—but the faculty refused to yield. In a letter to the college's trustees Patrick noted that the various nationalities in the Ottoman Empire were making progress in educational affairs. If the college did not maintain and improve its standing, it would be "left behind."⁴¹

Two issues confirmed that the faculty no longer considered themselves a proselytizing arm of the mission. In 1892 Lydia Giles, a Mount Holyoke graduate and a member of the faculty, announced her engagement to Stephen Panaretoff, a Bulgarian Orthodox Christian who was a faculty member at Robert College.⁴² The couple planned an Orthodox wedding, followed by a Protestant ceremony at which Elias Riggs had apparently agreed to officiate. Riggs's willingness to marry the couple indicates that some members of the mission embraced a broader view of the Christian community. Comments from missionaries in several locations suggest, however, that they believed Giles must have been mentally unbalanced to even consider the idea of marriage to an Orthodox Christian. Dwight resigned his position on the college advisory board in protest. The marriage went ahead; the couple remained in Istanbul and subsequently traveled to the United States when Panaretoff was appointed Bulgarian ambassador to the United States in 1914.

The second issue was an attempt to smooth over the differences within the mission with a proposal from some of the men in Istanbul to remove the

college from the work of proselytizing and the direct supervision of the Istanbul missionaries.⁴³ Patrick welcomed the proposal; however, the Prudential Committee rejected the conciliatory gesture, describing the proposal as “a virtual revolution, detaching the institution from the immediate sphere of approved missionary policy and administration.”⁴⁴ With only three dissenting votes (one of which was Caroline Borden’s), the corporation of the college concurred that it was unwise to make such changes because to do so would be a “violation of mission policy.”⁴⁵ The officers of the Woman’s Board continued to defend the patriarchal institutional traditions of mission policy. They had become precisely what the board’s more radical founders had insisted they were not: merely a fundraising arm of the American Board.

Fissures now developed, not only between Patrick and her board but also within the board. Patrick was obliged to avow her loyalty to the Woman’s Board and write to correct any impression that the faculty “wished to escape our obligations as missionaries of the Board.”⁴⁶ She insisted that the faculty had never contemplated cutting their connection to the Woman’s Board; they were merely concerned to secure funding for the college. For her part, Caroline Borden resigned her position as secretary to the corporation of the college. In her letter of resignation, she noted that she would not have agreed to serve as a member of the college’s governing body if she had not “fully believed that the jurisdiction over the Institution and its Faculty was in the control of the Woman’s Board of Missions.”⁴⁷ Over the next few years, several individuals associated with the college made private and public efforts to assuage doubts at the Woman’s Board about the Christian purpose of the college and Patrick’s ability to pursue it. According to one professor at the college, Patrick had succeeded in giving the students “a religious training which shall be positive and deep and strong” in a location where “broader religious tolerance is asked of us.”⁴⁸

Although the situation was much more complicated, Patrick and Borden laid the responsibility for the decision to place the college under the control of the Istanbul missionaries squarely at the door of Judson and Augusta Smith. In her memoirs, Patrick described their years in office as “the dark ages.”⁴⁹ In Borden’s view, by their action the college “lost its independence and was made subservient to the Missionary Boards.”⁵⁰ As we’ve seen, Judson Smith was foreign secretary of the American Board, and his wife, Augusta,

was president of the Woman's Board and the corporation of the American College for Girls. That these positions were held by a married couple assured the subjugation of the Woman's Board to the American Board. It could not be otherwise. The college never had been independent, although Borden believed that it was and argued that the Woman's Board should have supported the faculty position. Trapped within the hierarchical reporting structure of their organization, the officers of the Woman's Board voted against the faculty. Borden and Patrick were obliged to yield and bide their time, but they contrived to engineer their independence.

Paving the Way for Independence at a Global Ecumenical Moment

The rift between the women missionaries in Istanbul and their board officers in Boston could not be bridged. No longer willing to be deferential, faculty members began to question the moral authority of their female officers and planned to seek independence from the Woman's Board. Although they were members of the missionary enterprise, the faculty believed that the institution they had developed should not be subservient to the goals of the mission. As professional educators, they argued for the right to conduct their own affairs and promote nonsectarian education. In the ensuing struggle the lines were not drawn hard and fast; some members of the corporation and some male missionaries in Istanbul supported the faculty.

Three factors paved the way for independence. In 1895, the sultan granted the college an imperial *irade* that provided an Ottoman charter for the college, recognized the corporation's ownership of the college, and held the faculty strictly to educational work, in return for which the college obtained tax-exempt status, even from religious taxes.⁵¹ The college was now recognized and licensed by the Ottoman government.

Although bureaucracy proceeded slowly in the Ottoman Empire, the timing of the charter requires some comment. The Ottoman Education Law of 1869 stipulated that foreign schools must obtain a license from the government to operate. This requirement had most often been observed in the breech. College records and Patrick's memoir suggest that the sultan finally agreed to grant the charter to deflect attention from massacres of Armenians by Ottoman irregulars that had begun in Anatolia in 1894 in response to

Armenian revolutionary activities and were reported in European and U.S. newspapers.⁵² The sultan hoped that the granting of the license would be reported in U.S. newspapers and would soften the outrage among Americans over the massacres.

The college's faculty worked continually to improve standards and develop the college's curriculum, which was similar to that of women's colleges in the United States. General courses included English literature, mathematics, geography, zoology, botany, physiology and hygiene, chemistry, geology, physics, astronomy, history, psychology and ethics, and the history of art. French and music were optional. Armenian, Bulgarian, and Greek girls also pursued studies in their own language, although Ottoman Turkish was no longer offered. Faculty members also worked to upgrade their qualifications; Mary Mills Patrick herself earned a Ph.D. from the University of Berne in 1897.

A final factor was Patrick's successful fundraising tour in the United States in 1899–1900. It had become clear to all parties that the Woman's Board could no longer support the growing expenses of the college. Appropriations from the Woman's Board rarely exceeded \$5,000 annually to cover salaries, scholarships, and incidental expenses. The college's only other source of income was small donations and fees for tuition and board. Faculty salaries remained the same in 1892 as they were in 1871. Only in 1901, thirty years after the Constantinople Home first opened its doors, did the faculty receive a substantial increase, from \$440 to \$572 annually.⁵³ Patrick and Borden determined to secure other sources of funding.

While previously the two women had sought separation from the Western Turkey Mission, the continuing deterioration of the college campus pressed Patrick to look for separation from the corporation and independence from the Woman's Board. Patrick began in 1896 by suggesting that the college publish a fundraising pamphlet to attract donations for building maintenance.⁵⁴ By early 1899 talk in Istanbul had turned to the idea of raising an endowment. Patrick attributed the idea to U.S. consul-general Charles Dickinson, who pledged \$1,000 to begin the endowment. He planned to appeal to friends in New York State, but thought that his business acquaintances would be unfavorably impressed by the complicated management of the college.⁵⁵ Whatever the practical difficulties, in the absence of a clear

commitment to change from the corporation, some of the men in Istanbul floated the idea of an independent endowment and contemplated the separation of the college from the Woman's Board. Patrick expressed the hope that the college would soon have its own funds and that the Woman's Board would not have to "carry the heavy expenses of this College for many years longer."⁵⁶

Patrick spent the academic year 1899–1900 in the United States on a fundraising tour organized in part by Caroline Borden. On the way she attended, as a delegate of the college, the meeting of the International Council of Women in London, a clear indication of her internationalist credentials.⁵⁷ In New York, Borden introduced Patrick to individuals from the worlds of business and education who could provide the funds to support the college. In addition to meeting wealthy potential patrons on the East Coast, Patrick traveled across the United States from New York via Chicago to Iowa, lecturing on the topic "Higher Education for Women in the Orient." Around this time, articles also began to appear in the New England and New York press promoting the college.⁵⁸

Patrick made several noteworthy public appearances during her American tour, including a presentation at the ecumenical missionary conference in New York, where the conflicts at the American College for Girls were reflected in tensions in the larger missionary movement about women's work and social and religious changes in the United States. These tensions were already apparent at the Centenary Mission Conference held in London in 1888, as delegates debated the goal of education in mission and the relationship of women missionaries and their work to men in missions. Retired American Board foreign secretary N. G. Clark sparred with his replacement, Judson Smith, who questioned whether the missionary education system in "Turkey" belonged in any mission field. Rev. J. N. Murdock of the American Baptist Missionary Union argued that women's work for women was irrelevant. In his view the great point to be maintained in missionary work was "the headship of man."⁵⁹ The conservative bent of the American Board and the majority of trustees of the college corporation was reflected in a speech given by vice president Abbie Child, who discussed education in very general evangelical terms and made no mention of the American College for Girls.

By 1900, however, at the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New

York, many more women gave presentations that defended women's work. Among them, Patrick emphasized the international nature of the college. Its students came, she said, "from Athens on the west; from Russia, Roumania, and Bulgaria on the north; and from the east as far as the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and from Egypt, Syria, and the Greek Islands on the south."⁶⁰ Their achievements were not restricted to work in the mission; instead they aimed higher. According to Patrick, the women of the Near East were ready to engage in professional careers. Some aspired to be physicians and translators. Clearly Patrick's goals for the college had deviated completely from those missionaries who wanted the institution to be an auxiliary to the mission. This transition was accomplished through changes in the views of the female faculty, particularly Patrick herself, about the purpose of the school and the willingness to challenge male authority, and shifts in U.S. society and within the missionary movement that demonstrated a growing sense of Christian ecumenical internationalism. In everything, Patrick was solidly supported by Caroline Borden in Boston.

While in the United States, Patrick also aired her feminist credentials. On October 18, 1899, at Yale University, she marched as one of only four women in the procession of college presidents at the inauguration of Yale's new president. Her impression from that event occasioned a comment that there was "progress at Yale—when women have been rather at a discount in times past."⁶¹ This remark identifies Patrick as a New Woman, one who was confident, assertive, and independent in pursuit of her goals. A well-educated single woman who valued independence, professional advancement, and fulfillment through a career rather than through marriage and self-sacrifice, during her tour Patrick crystallized her feminist, Christian internationalist views and promoted herself as a prominent American educator in the Near East.

The prospect of raising a large endowment once again forced the Woman's Board to broach the question of whether the college should be separated from the Western Turkey Mission. In the spring of 1901, Harriet Stanwood, secretary of the corporation in Boston, wrote to missionaries and other individuals associated with the work of mission in the Ottoman Empire to seek their opinion. Her query caused a flurry of letter-writing from across the empire. The opinions of the correspondents ranged from those in favor of separation because the college diverted the mission from its true objectives

and was “not proper work” for the Woman’s Board, to those who argued against a separation so that the college could “stand as the Queen in our educational system.”⁶² In the face of this divergence of opinion from male missionaries, the officers of the Woman’s Board made no decisions. The status quo continued at the Woman’s Board, but Patrick’s fundraising tour set in motion a trend that could not be stopped.

Patrick’s trip marked a move away from the Woman’s Board toward a new group of patrons from among the wealthy philanthropists of the New York commercial classes. From 1890, when the college was incorporated, to 1899, when she began to raise an endowment, the gifts Patrick listed in her annual president’s reports were typically small and represented donations from the base of the Woman’s Board; for example, \$5 from a Mrs. Louisa P. Turnbull in Philadelphia, \$30 from the Ladies’ Society in Binghamton, New York, and \$50 from Mount Holyoke College. Modest sums were also raised by the alumnae association that Caroline Borden founded after the first commencement. Larger sums were sometimes given, but they were not actively courted on a regular basis. That changed in 1900, when Patrick’s annual report established specific donor categories. For \$500, a donor became a patron for life of the college; for \$1,000, one would be recognized as a patron in perpetuity of the college. Among the new donors were such well-known figures as Mrs. Russell Sage and John D. Rockefeller. Wealthy individuals like Sage and Rockefeller gave thousands and, in some cases, tens of thousands of dollars to the college.⁶³

A new power emerged from these new financial backers. Borden recalled in her notes for 1904 that they “made a rift in the portending darkness by organizing an Advisory Committee.” This group, headed by Charles Cuthbert Hall, president of the interdenominational Union Theological Seminary in New York City, intended to make decisions about how donors’ money was spent.⁶⁴ In the face of donations of hundreds of thousands of dollars to an endowment that remained outside the control of the American Board, the officers of the Woman’s Board were forced into a position where they had to contemplate relinquishing the college.

When Augusta Smith died in 1906, Borden wrote in her notes, “Death of Mrs. Judson Smith—Freedom!” Borden believed that Augusta Smith was chiefly responsible for insisting on the deference of the faculty to the men

of the local advisory board in Istanbul and viewed her as a major obstacle to the progress of the college. On her death, the Woman's Board removed the requirement that members of the corporation be members of the board of directors of the Woman's Board of Missions at the time of their election. According to Borden, the removal of this requirement was "the bomb that dismembered the woman's board." Such a macabre description was perhaps an expression of the anger and frustration Borden had felt as she toiled for so many years on behalf of the college against the more conservative elements of the Woman's Board and the American Board. She expected more support from the new financial backers.

The new board of trustees for the college, based in New York, comprised sixteen members, only four of whom were women, including Caroline Borden and Mary Mills Patrick. The two women seem to have exchanged missionary patriarchy for capitalist patriarchy. A new auxiliary association, charged with the responsibility to raise funds, was headed by Talcott Williams, stepson of former Home school principal Kate Pond Williams, and it included such prominent figures as U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Brewer (son of missionaries Amelia and Josiah Brewer), former U.S. diplomat Oscar S. Straus, Mrs. John Hay (widow of the former U.S. secretary of state), and the well-known feminist reformer Julia Ward Howe. These prominent individuals had the social position to raise funds from wealthy donors in the commercial and philanthropic worlds who had connections to national political power. In a new imperial age of expansive American military and political power in the wake of the Spanish-American War of 1898, these people were more able than mission boards to wield American influence and project American power abroad.

On the last day of 1908, the American College for Girls ceased to be an institution associated with the Woman's Board. On January 1, 1909, the Woman's Board officially transferred to them the property and buildings of the college in Istanbul.

Caroline Borden and Mary Mills Patrick built their power base in a separate female institution established on the foundations of American domesticity, but they could realize the full potential of that institution only by reaching out beyond it—and beyond the denominational mission that shaped it. In

the process the concept of the Christian home at the center of the Constantinople Home yielded to an English-language liberal arts education in the American College for Girls. The notion of a woman as head of family in the Constantinople Home ran counter to the logic of American domesticity, in which women shape the character of home and nation but must be submissive to men who ruled families, missions, and states. The idea that single women would manage their own work in an educational institution was at odds with the intrinsic hierarchy of the American Board, where the Woman's Board of Missions served as an auxiliary to the American Board, women ranked as "assistant missionaries" to ordained male missionaries, and education was subservient to the work of evangelizing. The single women at the Home rejected the submissive role of the missionary wife. Living together in an institutional household where a woman, not a man, held authority, the women resembled Catholic nuns and struggled in the same way as nuns against the patriarchal hierarchy of their organization.⁶⁵ The deep personal and professional friendships they formed within the Home seemed to threaten the men of the mission.

Differences of opinion as to the development of the Home and the position of the American College for Girls within the missionary enterprise shaped the relationship of the faculty within the Western Turkey Mission and eventually brought an end to its relationship with the Woman's Board. Ultimately, the officers of the Woman's Board were obliged to recognize that they could not provide for the financial needs of the college. When Borden and Patrick sought other sponsors, they succeeded in working across gender and denominational lines to wrest the college away from the Woman's Board by appealing to a broad, interdenominational group of wealthy men and women who appreciated the significance of female education in order to promote American values through an American liberal arts college.

Borden and Patrick's goal went far beyond the project that the Woman's Board envisioned. Their success indicates that the demise of the Woman's Board was not so much a result of the board's loss of connection with rank-and-file churchwomen as an indication of the board's unwillingness or inability to support its missionaries at the periphery. Patrick and Borden responded to the needs of the Ottoman surroundings to provide the best education for women that American women could offer in an international environment. In

her memoirs, Patrick frequently commented that the young women of different nationalities got along just fine within the college, even if the nations to which they belonged were at war. Her experiences in Istanbul led her to criticize identities based on religion and extreme nationalism. In an interesting insight to her views about international cooperation, she argued that Ottoman reformer Midhat Pasha's short-lived Ottoman constitution of 1876 was "one of the most profound plans for the advancement of internationalism ever designed." Patrick was not convinced that Midhat Pasha intended to "Ottomanize" all the groups in the empire; she thought that the people in the Near East could have evolved under the new constitution had they been "free from national and religious jealousy."⁶⁶ These insights help explain her trajectory from evangelist to professional educator and her commitment to work for international understanding.

The year that the Woman's Board ceded its institution, 1908, also brought the Young Turk Revolution. Patrick missed experiencing that political upheaval, as she was once again in the United States. In her memoirs, she connected the changes at the college with the political changes taking place in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere. In her view, changes in the college were "symptoms of general transformations taking place in world affairs" that were "especially marked in Turkey."⁶⁷ Patrick's view that the transfer of authority at the college was part of a broader global movement gives added meaning to her perception of her place and the place of the college in world affairs. Only ten years later, in the aftermath of World War I, pamphlets advertising the college promoted it as a "fortress of Americanism."⁶⁸ The college became a new instrument of American cultural expansion in a new age of American global power. Female education was now too important to be left to mission boards.