

HERStory: Making Invisible Women Visible

Research notes

Group Number and Researcher Name: 5, Jen Parkinson and Kate Moore-Myers	
Name of Research Focus: Hannah Hodgkinson (1869-1958)	
Date of Birth: 1869, Stockport	Date of Death: 1958
Main Reason to Research: The Life of an Untraditional Quaker Girl.	
Are there any other connections to key geographical locations or people? The Mount School in York	
Key Words: Quaker, Tomboy, Mount School, Gender roles, Religion	
What have you found out?	
<p>Hannah Hodgkinson was born in 1869 in Stockport and first came to York in August 1884 as a student of the Quaker School, the Mount School. While Hannah was at Mount School a handful of female Quakers began attending university after the University Test Act of 1871.</p> <p>Between the years 1885 to 1886, Hannah kept a diary where she would detail her classes, what it was like to board at the school, as well as personal interests. It becomes apparent through reading her diary that Hannah was an avid reader taking inspiration from American novels; <i>What Katy did at School</i> and <i>Gypsy Breynton</i>. These texts were not the typical Quaker texts of the time and featured unconventional, tomboy-ish heroines, and so Hannah would read them with her friends away from the prying eyes of their teachers. This ‘secret book-club’ was later named <i>The League of the Jolly-cum-profs</i>.</p> <p>Her diary concludes on the 22nd June 1886 when she scrawled in her diary “LEFT SCHOOL THE END”.</p> <p>What we do know of Hannah, is that after leaving the Mount, Hannah did not marry nor have any children. This is most unusual for Quaker women during the nineteenth-century and may signify a possibly LGBTQ+ representation but at the very least a woman who chose not to conform to traditional social conventions and expectations in the nineteenth to early twentieth-century.</p>	
Why is this interesting and what impact have they had?	
<p>Upon attending school in the nineteenth-century, Quaker school girls were taught to anticipate only a basic education that would allow them to effectively manage their households. Historically, Quaker faith placed a greater emphasis on traditional gender roles and so education would often entail cooking and needlework. Hannah subverted these traditional roles by reading texts which had strong female protagonists that demonstrated more masculine behaviour. Hannah’s inspiration from these characters is</p>	

later reflected through her descriptions of her actions, choosing to adopt one of the character's tomboyish fashion of walking up the stairs banging and singing which she then later taught to her friends.

Are there opportunities for follow up research?

Unfortunately after 1888 most accounts of Hannah are sketchy at best, offering little insight into what the ex-school girl got up to after returning home to Stockport. However, her diary offers a useful insight into the ordinary life of a teenage Quaker girl in the nineteenth-century, as well as the various political happenings that occurred during this time, expressing support for the Liberal Party in 1885. During her time at the Mount, Hannah was also invited to join a sect of non-conforming Quakers. With greater research it may be possible to find out what Hannah did after returning to Stockport and her reasons for never-marrying.

In your research have you discovered any connection to the Castle Museum collections/sites

N/A

Additional Notes About Quaker Women:

Women within the Quaker faith were encouraged to marry to ease their financial dependence on their families. Women were not only encouraged to marry for financial reasons but also moral ones. Women who did not marry were seen as unfortunate and ill-fated due to them going against the natural course of life. Hannah would have undoubtedly come under intense scrutiny both within her faith and by society's gender attitudes.

Primary Sources

Hannah K. Hodgkinson, School Diary, 1885-, The University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 6/6/1/4.

Secondary Sources

Shaw, Sarah Ruth. *Absolute and Legitimate Necessities: Female Quaker Readers in York, C. 1885-1925*. The University of York, Department of English and Related Literature, 2013.