

THE WEST RIVER SEMINARY
1848 - 1858

R. Sheldon MacKenzie

The rural village of Durham in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, parallels both sides of the east River of Pictou. At present it consists of a canteen, a large white wooden church building and church hall, an automobile salvage yard and a number of houses surrounded by some of the richest farm land in the County. In common with many other local village areas ¹ in Pictou County, Durham is not now what it was at the turn of the century, and a very different place from what it was at the time with which we are concerned in this paper. Long gone are the days when it was home to an important Post Office ², an Inn with an enviable reputation for hospitality ³, several general stores, a shoe shop, tinsmith and blacksmith shops, a Grammar School ⁴ and two presbyterian churches, one on either side of the West River.⁵

All that remains of these signs of former prosperity is one of the two churches, the most imposing building in the village. With respect to educational facilities, there are no schools in Durham

¹ e.g. Green Hill, Saltsprings, Rocklin, West Branch, etc., all of which were community centres with postal services, stores, shops, mills of various kinds and schools .

² Ranking second in the county and fourth in the province.

³ The Temperance Inn, owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. John MacCoul. There were four Inns in the village, three of them licensed.

⁴ Daniel MacDonald, first school inspector for Pictou County, was teacher and Supervisor of the Grammar School.

⁵ Central Church, on the west side of the river, established in 1856 and the old church on the east side of the river, near where the present community hall is located.

in the present day. However, there **was** a sign on the east side of the river, just as one crossed the bridge, that must have intrigued visitors to the area just as it was so much taken for granted by those who have always lived there that now it is largely forgotten. College Road runs down the east side of the river past more of the farming land for which the West River valley has long been renowned. College Road is the only reminder that for a space of ten years Durham was the home of the West River Seminary and Theological Hall. And might be today a centre of higher education in the province had not a series of political, economical and personal interests decreed that its usefulness to the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia would be better served if it were located in a larger centre of population. In 1858 it was moved to Truro, Nova Scotia, then to Gerrish Street, Halifax, and was later, in 1878, in union with the Free Church College, to become part of the Pine Hill Divinity Hall on the north west arm of the capital city. Pine Hill Divinity Hall became one of the founding theological institutions of the ecumenical Atlantic School of Theology.

The story of the West River Seminary has been told in a number of ways.⁶ For the most part it has been told as one part of the larger

⁶ As for example in the short articles or papers by the following: John Currie, The Presbyterian College, Halifax, Its Past, Present, and Future, Presbyterian Witness, 7 Nov., 1891; K.J. Grant, Jottings, Reminiscent of Seminary Life At Durham, Pictou Co., 1848-1858, at the request of Principal Mackinnon, 24 Nov., 1920, n.p.; Ada S. MacDonald, The West River Theological Seminary, 1848-1858, PANS, Vol. 2., MG.1.; Clarence Mackinnon, A Hundred Years of Theological Education In The Maritime Synod, Presbyterian Witness, 23 Oct., 1920; James MacLean, Presbyterian College, Halifax, The Theologue, Vol. VIII, March 1897, No. 4, pp. 101-106; Isaac Murray, Historical Sketch, Presbyterian Witness, 30 April, 1904; "A Presbyterian," Letter to the Editor, Presbyterian Witness, 3 Nov., 1849, p. 350; W. McCulloch Thompson, The West River Seminary,

history of arts and theological education in Nova Scotia generally.⁷

The scope of this present paper will be limited to an examination of various academic and non-academic matters as they relate to the Seminary alone. The focus will be narrowed, in the main, to deal with the curriculum and with other issues as they relate to it. In another paper the same approach will be taken toward the life and work of the Theological Hall which, although it operated in tandem with the work of the Seminary and was under the control of the same Synod and shared the same facilities, was a separate institution in its own right.

The first theological education in British North America in connection with the Presbyterian Church began in the autumn of 1820 in Pictou. Dr. Thomas McCulloch was the only professor and he taught his students in a room in the Pictou Academy. The Academy, about which much has been written, provided an Arts education preparing men for the study of law, medicine, theology and science. The theological instruction given by Dr. McCulloch, in addition to his heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities in the Academy, met an obvious need. In 1824 twelve students graduated from his program of instruction, some of whom were to become almost

An Address At The Centenary, Eastern Chronicle, 23 Sep. 1948; William Verwolf, West River Seminary, The MacGregor Celebration Addresses, Frank Baird, ed., 1936. pp. 249-259. n.p.

⁷ E. Arthur Betts, The Keir Period, 1844 - 1860, pp. 14 - 17 in Pine Hill Divinity Hall, 1820 - 1970. Executive Print, Truro, N.S. 1970; J.W. Falconer, W.G. Watson, The West River Period, 1848 - 1858, pp. 9 - 10, in A Brief History of The Pine Hill Divinity Hall And The Theological Department of Mount Allison University, n.d., n.p..

as legendary in their time as their famous professor did in his. The thoroughness of their education in Arts and Theology was confirmed when three of them, on going to Scotland, presented themselves for examination to the Senatus of the University of Glasgow.⁸ They were granted the degree Master of Arts, with distinction, without further work or examination. It appears that the theological instruction given voluntarily and on his own time by Dr. McCulloch was resented in some quarters from its beginning. Interference from the Halifax Council, which vetoed funds to the Academy in favour of Kings College, Windsor, and the often aggressive hostility of fellow presbyterians, ministers of the Church of Scotland, who were contemptuous of any attempt to train a native ministry, meant that eventually the Pictou Academy and the Theological Hall along with it, were rendered unable to continue as they had hoped to do. In 1838 the Academy was reduced to the status of a Grammar School. In the same year when Dr. McCulloch went to Halifax, to assume the presidency of Dalhousie College, the Theological Hall went with him. It met in his home until his death in 1843. The Synod appointed as his successors Dr. Keir of Princetown, P.E.I., as Professor of Theology, and the Rev. James Ross, West River, as the Professor of Biblical Literature. The theological instruction then moved to Prince Edward Island, where once again it was located in the home of the professor. The students had the advantage not only of the erudition of their professor but easy access to his splendid personal library as well. The Theological Hall, a pretentious title for the theological

⁸ Messers John L. Murdoch, John MacLean, and R. S. Patterson.

instruction of the day, shifted once again in 1848. This time it moved to the West River and to the home of Professor Ross, with three students in attendance.⁹

The Synod, or at least a majority of the Synod, became increasingly unhappy with the failure, as far as they were concerned, of the reorganized Pictou Academy to provide the education necessary as a prerequisite to the study of theology.¹⁰ Therefore, in 1848, the Synod passed a resolution to set up a Seminary of its own. Such a Seminary would provide an Arts education, independent of government control or interference and dependant solely on the voluntary support of the church. The Rev. James Ross, already the Professor of Biblical Literature in the Theological Hall, was elected Professor of the Seminary as well and charged with responsibility for the entire curriculum.¹¹ James Ross was not a stranger to the work of education. He had been a teacher in Sackville, New Brunswick, when, as a young man, in 1835, he responded to an invitation to succeed his father in the church at Durham. That he continued his interest in education prior to the opening of the Seminary, and while he was

⁹ The house and farm of James Ross eventually passed into the hands of the Maxwell family, and from the estate of the late William Maxwell to Mr. Arnold Cock, whose widow is the present occupant.

¹⁰ There was a difference of opinion at the Synod meetings prior to the opening of the Seminary in 1848. There were those, in the minority as it turned out, who felt that the preparation at the Academy was adequate and, if not, that it ought to be restructured so as to be adequate, in preference to the creation of a new and therefore more expensive facility elsewhere.

¹¹ "For two years he carried on his college work in conjunction with that of the pastorate. He was then relieved of his charge, and for some years performed, alone, the work of a whole faculty of arts." (underlining mine). Tribute paid to Dr. Ross at Synod, Oct., 1855, reported in Presbyterian Witness, 20 March, 1886.

the Professor of Biblical Literature in the Theological Hall, is reflected in the minutes of Synod for 1847 .On that occasion he announced his intention " to visit some of the Theological Seminaries in the United States for the purpose of observing the manner in which these Institutions are conducted and of otherwise promoting the efficiency of the course of Theological Study to be prosecuted in the Church." ¹² The Seminary, although established and funded by the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, was, unlike Kings College, Windsor, without denominational limitations with respect to students.¹³ From the outset the students were mainly from the parent denomination of the Seminary, but as time went on there were students from other presbyterian bodies as well. Then,too, while the Seminary was founded to prepare young men in Arts subjects for the study of theology prior to ordination, it provided the same liberal arts education to those who eventually pursued careers in teaching, law and medicine. ¹⁴ When the Seminary opened on 9th November, 1848, it had a registration of 12 students. Despite the criticism both from those who were opponents

¹² Minutes of Synod,The Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia,1847,p111.

¹³ "There shall be no Religious test in the admission of Students." Article XI of the Bye-Laws of the Seminary, as approved by Synod in 1852.

¹⁴ "The Seminary shall be open to all who desire instruction in any of the branches therein taught." Article IX ,Bye-Laws of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia. Sanctioned By Synod, 1852. As witness the examples,for instance, of James McGregor, one of its brightest students, son of Dr. McGregor, who went into the business world, where he was a success and the founding member of what was for many years an important County business firm in New Glasgow and of Dr. David McLean, educatwd at the Seminary, who studied medicine at Philadelphia and Edinburgh, and who died in Stellarton on 30 August,1876.

of the project in principle,¹⁵ and from those who sincerely believed the proposed scheme of education at West River to be impossible of achievement, the level of instruction from the beginning would seem to have been remarkably demanding. This is evidenced in a number of ways. There are, for example, the reports in the press of the day and in the minutes of the Board of Superintendence of the lectures with which each session of the Seminary and Theological Hall were opened and of the oral examinations with which each session of these institutions was closed. In conjunction with the method or system of examinations at the close of each session, to which I shall return later, there is abundant information on the number and nature of the essays written or other research projects carried out each session by the students in the Seminary and Theological Hall. In addition to the results of the instruction, as demonstrated in the examination process, we are fortunate to have at least one significant example of the instruction itself as it relates to the Seminary. This example comes in the form of Notes Taken From Professor Ross's Lectures On Moral Philosophy . The notes were taken by a student, John McDonald, in 1853. These notes, beautifully written in the manner and language of the time, and because of that very difficult to read today, represent some twenty-four lectures delivered and

¹⁵ A memorial from the Prince Street Congregation, Pictou, to the Synod meeting in Pictou, 1850, asked " the Synod to reconsider its decisions in reference to the Philosophical classes recently established at the West River." The Synod gave full debate to the issue raised in the memorial and replied by reaffirming, in the strongest terms, its commitment to the Seminary as its best means of providing instruction preparatory to theological studies." Minutes of Synod, 28 June, 1850. p.168; Reported in Presbyterian Witness, 6 July, 1850. p.211.

recorded between May 5th and June 9th of that year. ¹⁶ The lecture sessions, given daily with the exception of Saturday and Sunday, must have lasted well beyond an hour in each case, with some lectures lasting easily two or three times that long. The notes taken by Mr. McDonald, occupying some 238 closely written pages, and concluding with the terse comment End of Part First, are a thoughtful development of the course description advertised in the public notice of the Seminary. ¹⁷ The notice, part of a scheme to make known the opportunities for a liberal education to the widest possible audience, ¹⁸ includes a brief description of the various course offerings for each of the four years in the Seminary. Moral Philosophy was offered to students in their second year, along with Greek, Latin and Mathematics. According to the course description for Moral Philosophy, it included "The origin of Action and the nature of Power; the freedom of the Will, the Mechanical, Animal, and Rational Principles of Action; the nature and standard of Virtue; the existence of the Deity; the immortality of the Soul; Duty, as indicated by the light of nature; Man in a state of nature; the origin and processes of the Arts and Sciences; Law;

¹⁶ The lecture notes were carefully transcribed for me by Miss Fern MacDonald, thus making available a wealth of information that is otherwise virtually impossible to read with any facility. I am further indebted to Miss MacDonald for the additional materials supplied me on a continuing basis as a consequence of her research in various archival centres in the course of her professional work.

¹⁷ Presbyterian Witness, 25 Nov., 1854. p.190.

¹⁸ By action of the Board of Superintendence, 1 March, 1854, it was agreed that for at least three months in advance of the opening of the Seminary, notices should be placed in the Nova Scotian, the Eastern Chronicle, the Presbyterian Witness and the Missionary Register.

Government and Political Economy." ¹⁹ With respect to the notes taken by Mr. McDonald of Professor Ross' lectures we have this professional opinion: "The notes appear to be verbatim accounts of the lectures, given the very polished style and the appositeness of the terminology. The lectures are of a very high standard, certainly for the context. They are clear, well argued and suggest a very thorough acquaintance with the philosophical literature as it would have been in 1853. The standard would certainly be comparable to what one might expect in a good undergraduate course in moral philosophy in the context of a theology faculty - the theological interest is manifest e.g. in the discussion of "free will." It would certainly have been the foundation for a good first or second year university course text. The only additional thing one would expect in that context would be some more reference to the particular writers and schools of thought which are addressed sometimes in a rather general manner - in other words, we have the text without the footnotes. Professor Ross's students would appear to have benefited from a very clear, precise and informative account of the subject matter of moral philosophy, combining admirable precision of language with a good pedagogical approach. I am no authority on theological studies in the period concerned, but I suspect you would not often have found better or even as good in the seminary context - probably not in many universities either." ²⁰

¹⁹ Presbyterian Witness, 25 Nov., 1854. p.190.

²⁰ Professor Peter F. Harris, a senior member of the Department of Philosophy, Memorial University of Newfoundland, former Director of Studies, St. Edmund's House, University of

Entrance Requirements

The high level of instruction and examination in both the Seminary and the Theological Hall meant that some young men were unprepared by academic background to take advantage of the educational opportunities with which they were presented at both of these institutions. Likewise, the professors felt that the programme was jeopardized by inadequate prerequisite training on the part of some students. That this was a matter of considerable concern to the church is obvious from the several efforts that were made to correct it.²¹

By 1853 the entrance requirements for registration in the Seminary were as follows: " ... a competent acquaintance with the English language, Arithmetic, Geography, first three books of Euclid, Latin and Greek Grammars, first book in Latin, four books of Caesar, four books of Ovid, and Catalines Conspiracy, (or an amount of Latin equivalent thereto), first book in Greek and fifty pages of the Majora. Examination, for entrance, to turn on the foregoing

Cambridge, kindly read the transcribed lecture notes and provided me with this opinion.

²¹ The Presbytery of Pictou overtured the Synod in 1852 " to establish a standard of examination for applicants before admission to classes at the Seminary." This standard was to be advertised throughout the church and books, authorized by Professor Ross, were to be made available to students interested in attending the Seminary and anxious to meet the prerequisite standards. In addition, on the recommendation of Professor Ross, another term was added to the Seminary course, making four terms in all. Earlier in the same year, the Board of Superintendence, meeting at West River on 3rd March, requested Professor Ross to submit to the Board at its next meeting " a standard of qualifications for entrants into the Seminary," with which he complied and later read to the Synod, meeting in Truro, in the same year.

subjects." ²² The success of these entrance requirements was demonstrated within a year when, after examining new applicants for registration in the Seminary, the Board noted "much gratification in witnessing the decided superiority of their attainments to those of previous years and ... resolved to recommend them to the professor, as qualified to enter his Senior Class." ²³

The matter of inadequate preparation for classes in the Seminary was only temporarily solved and came up again in a series of meetings of the Board of the Seminary. For example, on 24 June, 1856, at Synod, the Board reported that "there should be a preparatory school of some description" to make up the academic deficiencies in some of those seeking admission to the Seminary. At a Board meeting in Truro on 15 Oct., 1858, the professors stated that they had accepted into their classes "some students whose proficiency fell far short of the standards required," but who had experienced particular difficulty in obtaining the necessary education before coming to Seminary. The same complaint was made again the next year at the autumn meeting of the Board. This time the professors felt that "the deficiency threatened to interfere seriously with the working of the classes in the event of these applicants being received." ²⁴ In the spring of 1860 a special committee of the Board was set-up to assist the professors in the

²² Bye-Laws of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia. Sanctioned by Synod, 1852, and published in the Presbyterian Witness, 25 Nov. 1854. p.190.

²³ Minutes of the Board of Superintendence, March, 1853.

²⁴ Ibid., 18 Oct., 1859 .

admission of students to the Seminary. ²⁵ Previous to this, it had from the beginning been the responsibility of the several presbyteries " to examine applicants for admission to the Philosophical classes, on their classical and mathematical attainments, and to certify these to the professor in the same way in which students are certified on their admission to the Divinity Hall." ²⁶

Examination of Students

At the end of each academic session, the Board met at West River for the purpose of examining the students on the subjects in which they had been under instruction during the academic term. This must have been a most intimidating ordeal for the students. They were given an oral examination in the presence of the full Board and were expected to answer questions not only from their professors, but from any member of the Board and from anyone else who happened to be in the room at the time. ²⁷ The examination-in-chief seems always to have been conducted by one of the two professors.

(Over the period of the life of the Seminary at West River there were 7 people who were responsible for the minutes of the Board. Of

²⁵ Ibid., 18 Apr., 1860 .

²⁶ This was a decision of the Board at its first meeting on 22nd Aug., 1848, at Lower Stewiake.

²⁷ The nearest thing we have in academic circles today would appear to be the defence of a post-graduate thesis before a panel of experts deemed competent on the topic under discussion.

these 7 the most helpful for our purpose was James Watson, who was secretary to the Board from 1853 56. His accounts of the examinations are more detailed than those kept by any of his colleagues, although we have useful information from them as well.) The first examination, on 25th June, 1849, following the first academic session of the Seminary, was exceedingly thorough. Perhaps because it **was** the first examination and the Board was anxious to exercise its responsibility to the Synod in a responsible manner, George Christie, then Secretary, notes that " the classes were examined at great length in Logic, Latin, and Greek, and a class in Hebrew, to the entire satisfaction of the Board." ²⁸

After each of the examinations the members of the Board and other interested parties present, availed themselves of the opportunity to address the students. It seems that no matter how well the students had done in the examinations, they were always encouraged " to increased activity."

By October 2nd of the following year there were 21 young men present during the examinations, in two classes. As a result of a decision of the Board on that day, it was decided to invite members of the Presbytery of Pictou, presumably because they found it easier than most others to be present, and any other ministers who might find it possible to be present, to take part in the examinations with the Board. As a consequence of these invitations there was a large number of people present, including 13 ministers. The records of the Board for these particular examinations are scarce, but a correspondent for the Presbyterian Witness has

²⁸ Minutes, Op. Cit., 25 June , 1849 .

provided an interesting account of them.

The first year group, the Junior Class, was known as the Logic Class.²⁹ These students were examined first. The examination was conducted by Professor Ross with the topics for the examination suggested by the members of the Board and other ministers present. The students read a number of essays, mainly on topics connected with Logic, and were closely questioned on them. Their answers revealed how much they clearly understood their subject. Since this was the Junior Class, some allowance was made with respect to composition which, although it was quite proficient, was not quite up to the standard it would achieve in the second half of the course. This assumption was clearly justified when the Senior Class, examined in Moral Philosophy, presented essays which were judged as models of composition. The Senior Class, in addition to its concentration on Moral Philosophy, was, like the Junior Class before them, examined as well in Geometry and Algebra, Latin and Greek. A group of these senior men, a class of 6 or 7, had also studied Hebrew and was examined on it as well. As much as a modern student must be impressed by the academic attainments of these students of 150 years ago, even more impressive is the fact that all of these subjects and the examinations in them were conducted by one man in the person of the Rev. James Ross. That his great gift as a teacher was to inspire students to teach themselves in no

²⁹ "The Logic course embraces an analysis of the intellectual powers and their mode of operation, giving particular prominence to the nature and different kinds of evidence, and of prejudice, to the different modes of reasoning, and to fallacies,- Aesthetics, Universal Grammar,- Composition,- and Elocution". Presbyterian Witness, 25 Nov., 1854. p.190.

way takes anything away from the formidable task with which he was faced every day. In addition to his academic and administrative responsibilities at the Seminary, he was, at this time, the minister of a large and demanding congregation. That the Board should have been impressed by the professor and his students is not surprising. A certain Reverend Mr. Smith, present at the examinations in 1850, claimed that the demonstration of proficiency by the students in the examinations compared favourably with anything he had known "in the old country."³⁰ Once again, as in the previous year, at the close of the examinations, the students were addressed by most of the ministers present, commended on their attainments thus far, and "recommending increased exertion."³¹

In the autumn of 1851 (3rd Sep.,) the examinations were conducted with less than half the total number of students that had been presented themselves in 1850.³² There were 3 students in the Logic Class and 7 in the class on Moral Philosophy. The essays of the students in each class were gathered and one from each series of essays prepared by the student concerned was selected by the

³⁰ Ibid., 12 Oct., 1850. p.325.

³¹ As reported in the United Secession Magazine, New Series, Edinburgh, Wm. Oliphant and Sons, MDCCCL1, p.37, included in correspondence to the Editor from a Nova Scotian, signed W.M., under date 12 Nov., 1850.

³² Some students were absent due to illness and others were unavoidably absent for other reasons. It is not known whether some had dropped out of the course, temporarily or otherwise, between the first and second years.

Examiner and read by the young man who had written it.³³ (Each student had prepared, on an average, half-a-dozen essays during term.) The Professor then examined the student on the essay " in a rigorous course of interrogation." In both Junior and Senior Classes, the entire class was examined on topics to do with Logic or Moral Philosophy which were chosen by the Board and on which the students had done research and written essays. In addition to the proceedings having to do with Logic and Moral Philosophy, the several classes were " minutely inspected " in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics once again with excellent results. The Board, through its Convenor, expressed itself, without hesitation or qualification, impressed with the diligence and proficiency of the students and with the enthusiasm and effectiveness of their professor. One senses that there were times when the examination process was hurried beyond what was comfortable. One of these times was the examination of the Seminary in 1852 (31 August). The minutes of the Board report examinations in two classes - Logic and

³³ Some indication of the seriousness of these essays will be obvious at once from the list of names and topics that follows:

(a) Logic - John Mckinnon - " The Modern Systems of Philosophy"
 William Fraser - "The Different Modes of Reasoning"
 Daniel MacDonald - " Sophisms "

(b) Moral Philosophy

Alex Cameron	- " The Immortality of the Soul"
Allan Fraser	- " The Freedom of The Will"
David Terhune	- " The Advantages of a Liberal Education"
George Roddick	- " Political Economy"
John Currie	- " The Various Theories of Conscience"

John Hardie - " Autumn "

John Matheson - " The Existence of Deity "

The topics and names come from a report published in the Presbyterian Witness, 20 Sep., 1851. p.303 .

Natural Philosophy. According to the Bye-Laws of the Seminary, sanctioned by Synod in 1852 and advertised as the curriculum in 1854, this would mean the first and third year classes. In any case, there were 24 students in all,- 7 in the Logic Class and 17 in the Natural Philosophy group. The Junior Class was examined, as in previous years, by each man reading in turn from an essay, one of a series, he had researched and written during the term. In addition the professor examined them on the "External Senses."

The class in Natural Philosophy was examined in the same way, with the exception of the general topic of Optics, which the Board selected for examination, as was its privilege. In each of the several classes the examinations included the classical languages and mathematics as in previous years. These examinations went on "up until the time of the opening of the Theological Hall," which rather creates the impression of running short of time.

A change in the Secretary to the Board, from James Bayne to James Watson, means that the minutes of the Board are more detailed and therefore more interesting than they had been during the tenure of the previous Secretary. There is, of course, a repetition in the method of examination from year to year, and it would be tedious to record the separate examination details for each of the ten years the Seminary was at the West River. It is, however, more than ordinarily informative to review the content of the annual examination proceedings in order to appreciate the consistently high standard of instruction and research that marked the educational program at the Seminary.

For example, during the examination proceedings in the autumn of

1853 (31st August)," a few questions were put on Logic in general, and then a searching examination gone into on the power of conception and memory." The topic of the examination, chosen by the Board, gave the students no advance warning of what they might expect. They knew, of course, that they would read and answer questions from one of a series of essays they had prepared during the term. They knew too that the essay in question would be selected for them by the Professor and/or Board in consultation with him. What they did not know was the topic outside the interest of the essays that might be put forward for discussion and examination. The topics of the essays themselves indicate that they were well within the upper range of undergraduate work for that day, whether in Logic or Moral Philosophy. In the Moral Philosophy class of 1853 the topic selected by the Board for particular discussion was The Liberty of The Will . After a detailed questioning on this topic, the students read from one of their term essays, each one an essay on a topic different from his fellows. The Secretary commented:"The state of the classes seemed excellent, and in advance of what it was last year." ³⁴

With Mr. Watson as Secretary, we are given the content of the language examinations for the first time, ³⁵ and some indication,

³⁴ Minutes, Op Cit., 31 Aug., 1853 .

35 Junior Class - examined in Latin on Virgil
 " in Greek on extracts from
 Xenophon's Anabasis
 Senior Class - " in Latin on Juvenal
 " in Greek on extracts from the
 Odyssey

In geometry several problems were demonstrated on the blackboard and/or worked out on slates.

although no detail, of what was required in the area of mathematics. He included a comment which seems to have reflected the tone for the entire proceedings: "After tendering a few appropriate and solemn admonitions to the young men, the examinations terminated." Much, I should think, to the relief of the young men!

The examinations in 1854 (5th-6th September) were judged by the Board to have been the best of any until that time.³⁶

The examination of the young men in the Seminary maintained its integrity throughout the period of time at the West River. There is evidence, however, that with the appointment of a second professor in the person of Thomas McCulloch, Jr., in 1854, and the addition of a new course from time to time, the examination procedure was more rushed than it had been at the beginning. Sometimes it had to be terminated by the Order of the Day for the opening of the Theological Hall, which met in tandem with the closing of the Seminary. And when the Seminary moved to Truro, Nova Scotia, the examination procedure was considerably revised in the interests of efficiency. There is no doubt though, that the students who went through the West River Seminary were worthy graduates of that little institution by the time they passed their final examinations.

The extraordinary quality of the lectures with which each session began, the cautious procedure that was followed for the appointment

³⁶ Ibid., 7 Sep., 1854; Presbyterian Witness, 14 Oct., 1854.
p.162.

of a second professor, the policies that promoted the growth of the Seminary library and the politics that determined the site of the Seminary are matters for which there is no time in this paper. One of the most interesting issues to come before the Synod on an annual basis, after 1848, was the determination of a permanent site for the Seminary. The personal and theological politics that lay behind the removal of the Seminary from the West River to Truro are at once disappointing and compelling in the light they shed on some of the most significant personalities of the day. That story, with the others, must await another opportunity of this kind.