

MARION TAIT

Education



*Inducted: 2006
Years at GCI & VS:
1925 - 1930*

Marion Tait was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in 1911. After her family moved to Preston following the First World War, she received her elementary school education at Preston Public School and her high school education at Galt Collegiate Institute. In a university magazine later in life, she is quoted as saying that, "they were excellent schools. I owe them my education." Even in these early years, Marion impressed both her teachers and fellow students with her academic prowess, earning thirteen 'firsts' on the departmental examinations in 1930, her last year of high school. The Preston chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire awarded a scholarship to Marion to assist her with her post-secondary pursuits.

Enrolling in Victoria College, at the University of Toronto, Marion studied the Classics, Greek and Latin. She again demonstrated her scholarly brilliance by achieving the highest honours in the Arts programme in her graduating year, 1934. She continued at the University of Toronto to earn her Master's degree in 1935. Marion then proceeded to Bryn Mawr, a small arts college near Philadelphia that was regarded as one of the top scholastic women's colleges in the world. While pursuing her studies there, she was the first Canadian to be awarded the Fanny Burlock Workman European Fellowship at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens and at the American Academy in Rome. In 1939, Marion received her Ph.D. She was an instructor of Classics (Greek and Latin) at Bryn Mawr (1938-1940) and at Sweet Briar College in

Virginia (1940-1941). At Mt. Holyoake College in New England, Marion Tait was instructor (1941-1944) and associate professor (1944-1948).

In 1948, Miss Tait accepted the position of Dean of Students and Faculty and professor of Classics at Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, New York, one of the pre-eminent women's colleges in the United States. During a brilliant career of scholarship, at the age of 37, she became the youngest Dean ever at Vassar. Miss Tait was highly regarded in American academic circles for her work in the Classics, especially as a scholar of Homer. Further, she held the Sarah Gibson Blanding chair in Liberal Arts and Sciences at Vassar College, traveling to sites and museums in Greece and Italy.

As a scholarly teacher rather than a publishing scholar, Miss Tait was better known for her teaching and her research. She was as gifted an administrator as she was a professor. She chaired the Vassar College curriculum committee, co-ordinated the Vassar College Teacher Preparation programme with the State Department of Education, acted as educational consultant for the Youth Services of New York and served on the U.S. Capital Advisory Committee that reviewed certification requirements for elementary teachers. Her work was her life; Miss Tait never married. In 1976 she retired to Massachusetts. She passed away in 1982, perhaps the most beloved of Vassar's Deans.