

A vertical stained glass artwork on the left side of the page. It features a central basket filled with various fruits, including apples and grapes, rendered in warm tones of red, orange, and yellow. The basket is set against a background of abstract geometric shapes and patterns in shades of blue, green, and brown, all contained within a dark leaded glass frame.

Welcome to the Martha Storyboards Virtual Albums!

*The Martha Storyboards present **highlights** of the Martha Story. For additional historical information, consult James Cameron, ***And Martha Served*** (2000): [And Martha Served.pdf](#)*

*The stained-glass motifs and vibrant colours of the Storyboards are inspired by the Bethany Chapel Windows, now located in the **Heritage Gallery**, Parkland.*

*Except when noted, historical photographs on the Storyboards have been scanned from originals in the **CSM Archives, Bethany Resource Centre**. Photographs on the Storyboards were edited to fit into the stained-glass designs. The original photographs, with full descriptions, are reproduced in the Storyboards Albums. Enjoy!*

*When professed, Sisters chose a **religious name**. In 1967, Marthas could retain their religious name or revert to their baptismal name and surname. The Albums identify Sisters by both their religious and secular names.*

*The **Notes** suggest additional resources that are readily accessible online – many more are available at your local library. Consult the Martha website for information on current programs and activities.*

"A full and abundant life for all": The Teaching Ministry of the Marthas

In the 1920s, the Marthas began a new ministry in teaching. The Sisters were recruited by reform-minded priests, notably Father Jimmy Tompkins and Dr. Moses Coady, who identified education as the crucial catalyst in social action. Their goal was the empowerment of ordinary people, their vision, "a full and abundant life for all."

Rural schools in Nova Scotia were severely underfunded and understaffed. The Marthas were ambitious for their schools: excellence in academics; education in the arts, particularly music; organization of school clubs and projects. Within 35 years, the Marthas expanded their teaching apostolate into 25 rural communities.



The Marthas' first teaching ministry was an all-grades school, Margaree Forks, in Dr. Coady's own parish. Initially, the school had only kerosene lamps and a hand pump. Lacking money, parents often paid in vegetables while the children sold berries for school projects.

However, the students excelled. They ran an impressive garment and garden club, compiled their own magazine (judged the best in N.S. in 1935), organized a Red Cross branch, and initiated a mock parliament. Older pupils held weekly discussions on farm issues.

Two Marthas were assigned to St. Andrews School, Antigonish County, in 1928, an all-grades school that accommodated 52 students.

In 1931, the school was named "the most progressive school" in N.S. Its Fall Fair and its Debating Club won provincial honours, and its drama productions were outstanding.

The Marthas added music and art in 1932 and weaving in 1935: "Looms to the right of us, looms to the left of us."



Mats woven by male students, St. Andrews School



Martha Teaching Missions in the West and Beyond

In 1933, the Marthas responded to requests for teachers in Lethbridge, Alberta, by sending three Sisters. The Marthas extended their ministry to the mining communities of Canmore and to Blairmore, where they taught music and organized kindergartens. The Marthas later expanded their teaching ministry to Picture Butte (1961), Fort McMurray (1975), Calgary (1993), west to Kamloops (1962), and south to St. Kitts, in the Caribbean (1986).

YEARS OF EXPANSION: MARTHAS IN N.S. SCHOOLS

- MARGAREE FORKS (1925)
- LITTLE BRAS DOR (1926)
- ST. ANDREWS (1928)
- CANSO (1937)
- DOMINION (1938)
- MAIN-A- DIEU (1942)
- ESKASONI (1947)
- LITTLE DOVER (1947)
- HEATHERTON (1951)
- EAST BAY (1953)
- INGONISH (1953)
- INGONISH BEACH (1954)
- DINGWALL (1955)
- ALDER POINT (1956)
- POST ROAD, ANTIAGONISH COUNTY (1956)
- ST. ANDREW RURAL HIGH SCHOOL, ANTIAGONISH COUNTY (1956)
- SOUTH WEST MARGAREE (1958)
- SAMPSONVILLE (1958)
- TRENTON (1958)
- INTERVALLE (1958)
- HAVENDALE (1958)
- BAY ST. LAWRENCE (1959)
- TRACADIE (1959)
- PORTAGE (1960)
- BIG POND (1960)



Little Dover, Guysborough County, 1956



The Marthas deeply valued art, music, theatre and performance as integral to a "full and abundant life" and they provided specialized arts instruction to their rural students.



“...a full and abundant life for all”:

The Teaching Ministry of the Marthas

The title is inspired by the sixth principle of the Antigonish Movement: “The objective is a full and abundant life for all.”

In the 1920s, the Marthas began a new ministry in teaching. The Sisters were recruited by reform-minded priests, notably **Father Jimmy Tompkins** and **Dr. Moses Coady**, who identified education as the crucial catalyst in social action. Their goal was the empowerment of ordinary people; their vision, *“a full and abundant life for all.”*

Rural Schools in Nova Scotia were severely underfunded and under-staffed. The Marthas were ambitious for their schools: Excellence in academics; education in the arts, particularly music; the organization of school clubs and projects. In a period of 35 years, they expanded their apostolate in Nova Scotia from one school in 1925 to 25 rural communities.



Elementary school children, Little Dover, Guysborough Co., 1956

Margaree Forks School : the first Martha teaching ministry

The Marthas' first teaching ministry was an all-grades school, **Margaree Forks**, in Dr. Coady's own parish. Coady spearheaded the initiative to construct a new school to accommodate 90 pupils, and the community donated labour and lumber. Like most rural schools, the building had only kerosene lamps and a hand pump. Lacking money, parents often paid in vegetables while the children sold berries for school projects.

However, the students excelled. They ran an impressive garment and garden club, compiled their own magazine (judged the best in N.S. in 1935), organized a Red Cross branch, and initiated a mock parliament. Older pupils held weekly discussions on farm issues.



Margaree Forks School, Cape Breton, opened 1925. The School was a two-department school, accommodating all grades from one to eleven. Note the landscaping.

Two Marthas were assigned to **St. Andrews School**, Antigonish County, in 1928, a two-classrooms, all-grades school that accommodated 52 students.

In 1931 the school was named “*the most progressive school*” in N.S., winning the Dent Citizenship Cup. Its Fall Fair and its Debating Club won provincial honours, and its drama productions were outstanding.

The Marthas added music and art in 1932 and weaving in 1935: “*Looms to the right of us, looms to the left of us.*”



Above: Mats woven by male students, St. Andrew's School [between 1935 and 1942]

Left: Students in front of St. Andrews School, opened 1928.

Marthas in Nova Scotia Schools: The first 35 years

* MARGAREE FORKS (1925) * LITTLE BRAS D'OR (1926) * ST. ANDREWS (1928) * CANSO (1937) *
DOMINION (1938) * MAIN-A- DIEU (1942) * ESKASONI (1947) * LITTLE DOVER (1947) * HEATHERTON
(1951) * EAST BAY (1953) * INGONISH (1953) * INGONISH BEACH (1954) * DINGWALL (1955) *
ALDER POINT (1956) * POST ROAD, ANTIGONISH COUNTY(1956) * ST. ANDREW RURAL HIGH
SCHOOL, ANTIGONISH COUNTY (1956) * SOUTH WEST MARGAREE (1958) * SAMPSONVILLE (1958)
* TRENTON (1958) * GUYSBOROUGH INTERVALE (1958) * HAVENDALE (1958) * BAY ST.
LAWRENCE (1959) * TRACADIE (1959) *PORTAGE (1960) * BIG POND (1960) *

In 1950, the Marthas taught in ten rural schools. By 1960, the number of schools had increased to 25, and the number of teaching Marthas had tripled to 60 academic instructors. Some Marthas also taught on circuit, offering specialized subjects in neighboring schools: home economics, music, art, and crafts. Although N.S. expansion declined in the 1960s, the Marthas did commence new teaching ministries, including Lincolnville and Half Island Cove, Guysborough County.



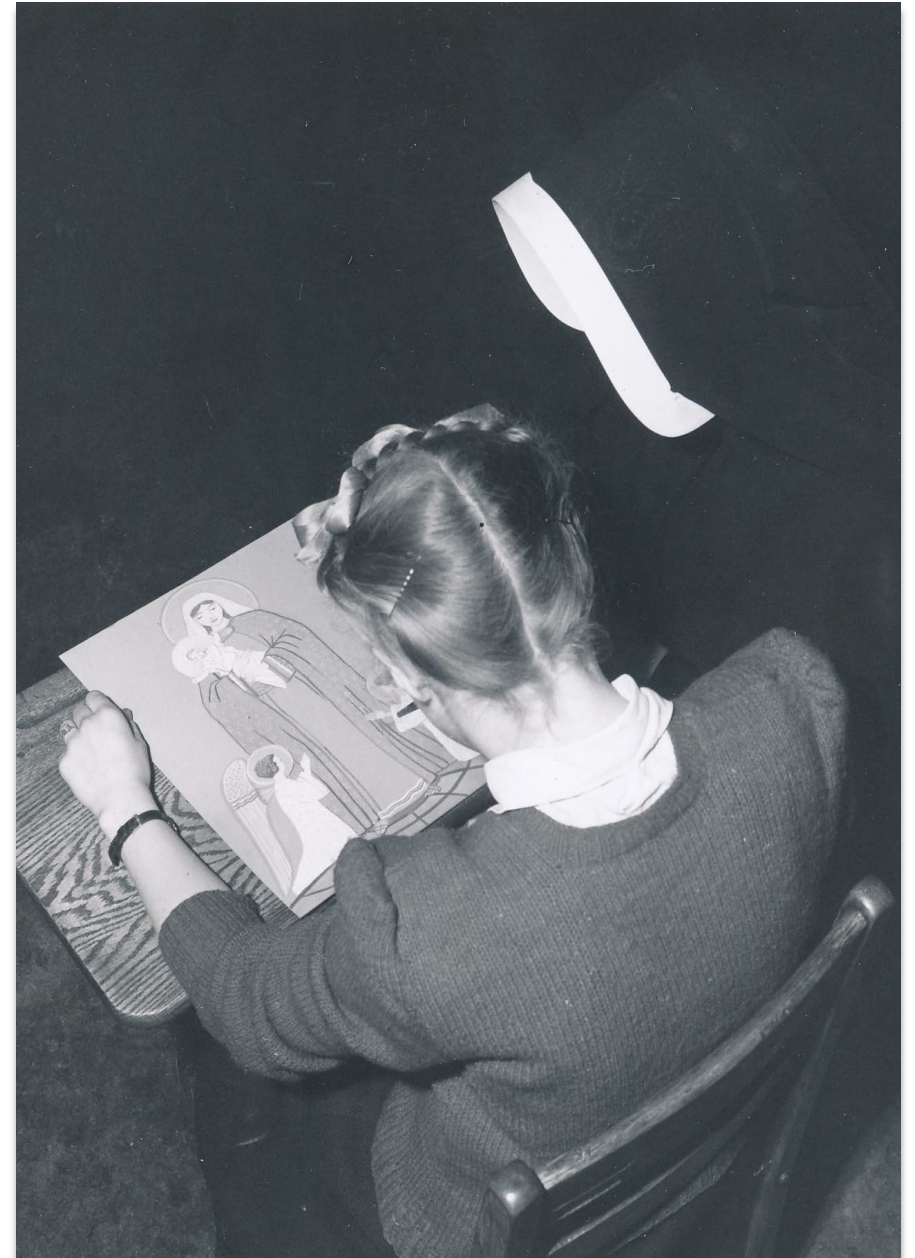
*Sister Hugh Marie
MacPherson teaching
agriculture to St. Andrew
Rural High School
students, Antigonish Co.,
at Bethany Farm
[between 1956 and 1964]*

The daughter of an Upper South River farming family (Antigonish County), **Sr. Hugh Marie (Sarah Janet) MacPherson** represents the highly qualified Marthas who taught in Nova Scotia's rural schools. She was a St. F.X. graduate (BSc, 1944), who earned subsequent BEd and MA degrees. Sr. MacPherson was a teacher for forty years in small school houses in Margaree Forks, Main-a-Dieu, Dingwall,, Neil's Harbour (Cape Breton) and Lincolnville (Guysborough Co). From 1956 to 1964, she taught agriculture at St. Andrew's Rural High School because she valued the skill and knowledge required in farm work.

The Marthas deeply valued [Art, Music, Theatre & Performance](#) as integral to a “*full and abundant life*” and they provided specialized arts instruction to their rural students.



Sister M. Louise Harding teaching piano [between 1958-1965]



Student working on an art project

Martha Teaching Missions in the West and Beyond...

In 1933, the Marthas responded to requests for teachers in [Lethbridge](#), Alberta, by sending three teachers. Despite initial difficulties, the Marthas remained in Lethbridge, teaching for more than 50 years.

The Marthas extended their ministry to [Canmore](#) (1934) and to [Blairmore](#) (1939), two coal mining towns. The Sisters taught music and organized kindergartens for their young parishioners.

Marthas later expanded their teaching ministry to Alberta - [Picture Butte](#) (1961), [Fort McMurray](#) (1975), [Calgary](#) (1993); west to [Kamloops](#), British Columbia (1962), and south to the Caribbean, [St. Kitts](#) (1986).



Sister Mary Pauline (Theresa) Kurtz and students, Kindergarten Graduation, Blairmore, Alberta, 1949/ Gushol Studio (Blairmore, Alberta).



The Marthas frequently combined religious education and performance arts. In [Blairmore, Alberta](#), for example, the Marthas provided religious instruction to parishioners' families through creative play.

The Sisters established kindergartens for the pre-schoolers and organized graduation ceremonies, featuring elaborate concerts with elegant backdrops, extravagant costumes, and original dance and choral arrangements. They started several girls' sodalities in Blairmore and surrounding communities that blended religious celebration with music and performance, themes reflected in the Martha vacation schools and liturgical choirs.



Above: Girls from St. Anne's Parish performing dance at annual St. Patrick's Day Concert, Columbus Hall, under the direction of Sr. Mary Matthew (Mary Magdalena) Kurtz, Blairmore, Alberta, 1948.

Left: Kindergarten Rhythm Band, Blairmore, Alberta, 1954 / George Noble (Banff, Alberta)

"Knowledge for the People": The Marthas and the Antigonish Movement

In the 1920s, the Antigonish Diocese experienced widespread economic decline: failing family farms and outmigration; depressed prices in the fisheries; low wages and unemployment in industrial Cape Breton.

Diocesan clergy, notably Dr. Moses Coady and Father Jimmy Tompkins, believed that adult education and community action would solve local distress. The St. Francis Xavier University Extension Department opened in 1928, under Dr. Coady as director, to implement these principles of the Antigonish Movement.

Dr. Coady invited the Marthas to staff the newly-created Women's Division, Extension. The intent was to increase the involvement of women in the cooperative movement and to establish a handicrafts program.



Extension field workers and office staff, St. FX, Antigonish, 1952

Sr. Marie Michael (Mary Sarah) MacKinnon, a former teacher and recent X graduate, was appointed the first director of the Women's Division (1933). She was joined by Sr. Mary Anselm (Irene) Doyle—only 22 years old—to head the Handicrafts Section (1935).

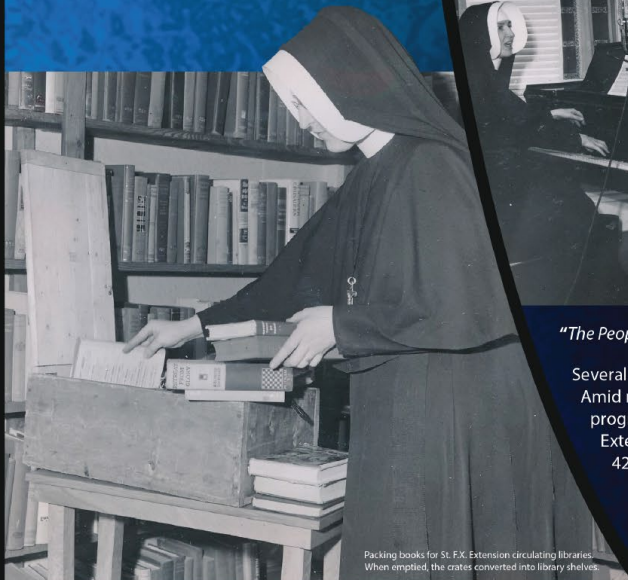
In addition to their assigned duties, the Marthas also researched, wrote, and distributed Extension literature; provided bookkeeping services for community credit unions; established lending libraries; and organized *people's schools* and conferences.

Sister Doyle was inspired by a Founding Martha, M. Marcella (Leah) Beaton, formerly a weaver, Glendyre Mills, Mabou: "I learned a lot from her about what a Martha was." Sr. Beaton was skilled in spinning, in dyeing flax and wools using local plants and barks (*lichens, ragweed, lilac, black birch, alder...*), and in weaving tartans. Until the transfer of the crafts program to the N.S. Government in 1942, Sister Beaton taught textile skills, St. Andrews, Antigonish County.

The Marthas promoted other traditional crafts, including canning, leatherwork and pottery. Aware that they were part of a larger craft revival, the Sisters studied handicrafts in Quebec, imported table looms and specialized materials from Central Canada, and visited Appalachian quilters in Kentucky.



The Coady International Institute opened on campus in 1961, to extend the principles of the Antigonish Movement to the world community. St. FX recruited the Marthas to create a welcoming home for 65 students from 25 countries.



Packing books for St. FX, Extension circulating libraries. When emptied, the crates converted into library shelves.



"The People's University of the Air": CJFX Radio

Several community partners, including the Marthas, established CJFX in 1943. Amid news, sports, and music, the Antigonish radio station offered Extension programs that targeted study groups ("*thinking groups*"). In 1947, for example, Extension distributed weekly bulletins to 200 discussion groups as well as to 425 individual listeners.

By 1950, CJFX included listeners throughout the Maritimes and Newfoundland. CJFX frequently featured Marthas, who chatted about books, hospital care, or school topics.



Sister Irene with Sister Joanne, Coady International Institute

“Knowledge for the People”: *The Marthas and the Antigonish Movement*

In the 1920s, the Antigonish Diocese encountered widespread economic decline: failing family farms and outmigration; depressed prices in the fisheries; low wages and unemployment in industrial Cape Breton. Diocesan clergy, notably Dr. Moses Coady and Father Jimmy Tompkins, believed that **Adult Education** and **Community Action** would solve local distress. Their model encompassed **study groups** that identified local issues and pragmatic, collaborative solutions, such as cooperatives and credit unions. Described as the Antigonish Movement, the initiatives mobilized farmers, fishers, and miners. The **St. Francis Xavier Extension Department** opened in 1928, under Dr. Coady as director, to implement these principles of the Antigonish Movement.

Dr. Coady invited the Marthas to staff the newly-created **Women’s Division, Extension**. The intent was to increase the involvement of women in the cooperative movement and to establish a handicrafts program. The Marthas researched, compiled, and distributed Extension literature; provided bookkeeping services for community credit unions; established lending libraries; and organized people’s schools and conferences.

The caption, **“Knowledge for the People”**, is inspired by Father Tompkins’ provocative pamphlet on adult education and social reform, published in 1921 under the same title (1921). [stfx-xznz.pdf](#)



[Sr. Marie Michael \(Mary Sarah\) MacKinnon](#), a former teacher and recent X graduate, was appointed the first director of the **Women's Division** (1933). She was joined by [Sr. Mary Anselm \(Irene\) Doyle](#) - only 22 years old - to head the **Handicrafts Section** (1935).

In addition to their assigned duties, the Marthas also researched and wrote educational literature, including (unsigned) articles for **The Extension Bulletin** and **The Maritime Co-operator**; provided bookkeeping services for community credit unions; established lending libraries; and organized people's schools and conferences.



Extension field workers and office staff, St. F.X., Antigonish, 1952.



Reading as Activism

The **Antigonish Extension Library** (1933-1964) provided books, pamphlets, and educational materials to study clubs and to interested individuals. In 1936, assisted by a \$30,000 Carnegie grant, St. F.X. expanded its Extension Library, opened a second branch in **Glace Bay**, and added many small community libraries, often in local credit unions.

Sr. Marie Michael initially assisted in the Extension Library. From the early 1940s, she focused on the Library's mission to provide reading materials to rural communities, especially those without libraries. Impatient with procedures and formalities, she envisioned libraries as welcoming spaces, vivid with conversations and debate.

Sister Mary Reginald (Eunice) MacKinnon packs a "book box" for Extension lending libraries, Antigonish [between 1943 and 1947]. When emptied, the wooden crates converted into library shelves. Extension staff also mailed books to individual study club members.



Sisters Mary Athanasius (Jenny) Smith and Mary Celene (Jean Catherine) Richard, instructors, adult pottery class, St. Andrews School, Antigonish County [1938 or 1939]

Community Crafts

“Usually, when I went to an area such as Inverness, I tried to discover who knew how to do what and let the women teach each other.”

Sister Irene Doyle

Sister Doyle was inspired by a Founding Martha, [M. Marcella \(Leah\) Beaton](#), formerly a weaver, Glendyre Mills, Mabou. She recalled that *“I learned a lot from her about what a Martha was.”* Sr. Beaton was skilled in spinning, in dyeing flax and wools using local plants and barks (*“lichens, ragweed, lilac, black birch, alder...”*), and in weaving tartans. Until the transfer of the crafts program to the N.S. government in 1942, Sister Beaton taught textile skills, St. Andrew’s, Antigonish County.

The Marthas promoted other traditional crafts in rural schools, including woodworking, canning, leatherwork and pottery.

The Marthas were aware that they were part of a larger craft revival: the Sisters studied handicrafts in Quebec; imported table looms and specialized materials from Central Canada; and visited Appalachian quilters in Kentucky.



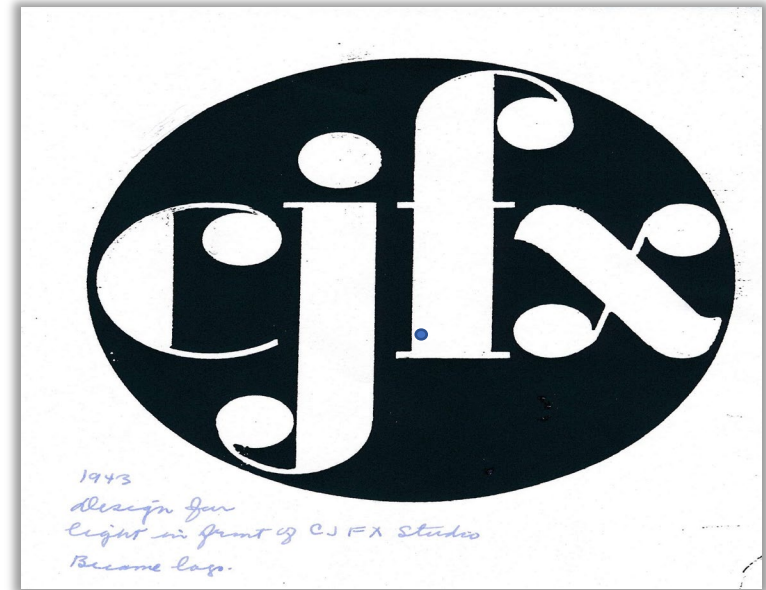
Students Cletus Boudreau and Jimmy Rhynold, possibly in Little Dover, 1952.

“The People’s University of the Air”: CJFX Radio

Several community partners, including the Marthas, established **CJFX** in 1943. Amid news, sports, and music, the Antigonish radio station offered Extension programs that targeted study groups (“*thinking groups*”). In 1947, Extension distributed weekly bulletins to 200 discussion groups as well as to 425 individual listeners.

CJFX frequently featured Marthas, who chatted about books, hospital care, or school topics. Sr. Marie Michael, for example, hosted a broadcast, *This is Your Library*, featuring books in the Extension library that were available on request to all listeners, at no cost. She also linked her talks to other public radio initiatives on CBC.

By 1950, CJFX included listeners throughout the Maritimes and Newfoundland.



CJFX logo / Sr. M. Anselm (Irene) Doyle,
1943 [linocut]



Above: *Sister Mary Helene (Mary Alberta) Wadden, broadcasting on CJFX Radio Station, Antigonish.*



Above: *Performing with pupils, CJFX, Mar. 1957.*

A former X instructor, **Sister Helene** began teaching music in Antigonish County schools (1948), eventually serving as Supervisor of Music. She recorded special music broadcasts for the schools, including the **Christmas Carol** program and **Let's Listen to Music**, a music appreciation initiative. Sr. Helene was the first Sister in Canada to serve as president of a provincial music teachers association.

Bringing the Antigonish Movement to the World: The Coady International Institute

The Coady International Institute opened on the St. F.X. campus in 1961, to extend the principles of the Antigonish Movement to the world community.

St. F.X. recruited the Marthas to create a welcoming home for 65 students from 25 countries. **Sr. Marie Michael**, pioneer Extension worker and fluent in Spanish, joined the Coady staff as librarian (1964-1971), where she was treasured as an empathetic friend to all. The Coady library later was named the **Marie Michael Library** in her honour.



Sisters Irene Doyle and Joanne O'Regan with Coady Institute students, at the gravestone of Dr. Moses Coady, Extension director, St. Ninian's Cemetery, Antigonish, 28 July 2007, the 50th anniversary of Coady's death. Sr. O'Regan was active in Peace Education at the Coady. Photograph courtesy of Coady International Institute.

Notes



For a discussion of Rev. Jimmy Tompkins' early writings on adult education and social change, including **Knowledge for the People**, see M. Welton, "[*Fraught with Wonderful Possibilities: Father Jimmy Tompkins and the Struggle for a Catholic Progressivism...*](#)". The article also explores the first Antigonish **Peoples' Schools**, the precursors to St. F.X. Extension Department.

The Coady Institute hosts an excellent virtual history of the St. F.X. Extension Divisions, including a section on "[*The Women of the Antigonish Movement*](#)". View: [Masters of Their Own Destiny | The Women of the Antigonish Movement](#)

For a view of Sr. Marie Michael as an agent for social change, see Catherine Irving and Sue Adams, "[*Not so Quiet After All: Librarians of the Antigonish Movement.*](#)" **Proceedings...Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education.**

For an exploration of crafts instruction as community development, as exemplified by another religious congregation, see Sasha Mullaly and Heidi MacDonald "[Arts, Crafts and Rural Rehabilitation: Sisters of Charity...and Vocational Education in Terence Bay, N.S.](#)"(2016), 25-52.

Mark McGowan, "[The People's University of the Air: St. Francis Xavier University Extension, Social Christianity and the Creation of CJFX](#)", **Acadiensis** (Winter/Spring 2012), 5-20.