WALLINGFORD HALL,
I. ITS HISTORY

In September 28, 1920, Wallingford Hall, our residence for women students, officially opened its doors. The fact is one of great significance in the development of McMaster University,—but the true measure of its significance can only be appreciated when it is considered in its relation to the development of the McMaster Women's Student Body.

If the history of that development were ever to be written, our archives would show but fragmentary details. In one place we read that in the year 1894 McMaster graduated its first women students—two in number. Elsewhere, at about the same period, we read that the enrollment included seven women, and the class lists of those days, and the pages of The Monthly, tell something of the high calibre of these pioneers. About 1903-4 we find the first mention of the Ladies' Literary League, the forerunner of the present Women's Literary Society; and in 1906 the women had become a strong enough element in the college life to control a department of The McMaster Monthly. Since that time we have a more complete record of the growth in numbers and needs of our university women. But, even so, the records are dull concerning what must ever have been a very vital, and often vexing, problem,—the Housing Question.

In the early days McMaster women frequently found a refuge for the year at Moulton College, but it was not long until development there rendered such a privilege impossible, and one pictures the commencement of that autumnal pilgrimage in quest of shelter, which has been one of the most serious difficulties our women have had to face. Little need to go into dreary details of that quest; any Alumnae group could wax eloquent on the subject. Some of us even remember ephemeral attempts among groups of students themselves to form a transient University residence—attempts which had discouraging psychological and financial results. There
is no higher testimonial to the power of the McMaster spirit than the fact that it maintained its hold over ever-increasing numbers in the face of the strong attraction of well-equipped women's residences of other institutions. With the advent of the war period and its aftermath of economic and social problems the situation became more and more difficult — and by now the women students were eighty in number. Fortunately before the housing crisis of the present year had to be faced a solution had been found.

It was in the year 1909 that the graduate women of McMaster found themselves strong enough to organize as an Alumnae Association. At first no great or definite aim other than that of union and occasional intercourse was possible. Later, the war brought an opportunity for co-operative effort in Red Cross work, and when that was no longer necessary, the Association found itself with empty hands — and empty pockets — but with the knowledge that it could cooperate for greater aims. Women who had experienced the discomfort of the non-resident college girl's existence, now appreciated that the old method was fraught with danger as well as disadvantage and discomfort. One began to hear on all sides the insistent demand for a Women's Residence.

Those of us who were present at the annual meeting held at The Selby in November, 1918, were all inspired and impressed with the feeling that the great opportunity of McMaster women had come, to contribute as a unit to a big social need. As we listened to the addresses of the various speakers, the needs and possibilities of the situation kindled our enthusiasm, and we pledged ourselves to the undertaking.

The original Residence Committee was there and then installed, consisting of Mrs. Harry Stark '94, Convener; Mrs. J. H. Cranston '07; Miss J. M. Norton '02, and Mrs. E. J. Zavitz '00. On their shoulders has fallen the brunt of the miracle-making with all the attendant immeasurable work and worry — for miracles are unfortunately not automatic. The big developments of the campaign are familiar to most of us: the generous thirty-thousand-dollar donation from Mr. William Davies which made the dream come true; the long search for, and final securing of the site; the upbuilding of maintenance and endowment funds from the gifts of other friends, that the residence might not be an added financial burden to the University. We have been kept in touch with this part of the task. What we do not know, and may never know, is the amount of time and energy the Committee had to expend in the so-called "petty details" — the procuring of knives and forks, and
pillows and sheets, and fruit jars and the million other trifling cogs necessary in the wheel of a well-regulated college residence. There is a hackneyed phrase to the effect that a task well done needs no testimonial; the work of the Committee speaks too ably for itself to require any verbal tribute. In less than three months after the house at 95 St. George Street had been vacated by its former owners, it had been repainted, redecorated, and remodelled to serve its new purposes; furnishings had been bought and put in place; a Dean and house staff had been installed; and the name "Wallingford Hall" was chosen for it, to commemorate the little English town, the birthplace of the donor.

Back of all this activity was the feeling that this residence must be something more than a mere shelter and dining-hall. Its purpose must be to build character and to endow culture as well as to provide physical comfort. A Dean had to be chosen with this in mind, and there was universal satisfaction when it was known that Mrs. Trotter had consented to accept the office. The house staff was secured with equal success, both Miss Dickson and Miss Grace having a warm interest in the enterprise. For nearly two weeks now, Wallingford Hall has ministered to the needs of nearly thirty students with an efficiency, even in these trying initial stages, never possible before.

But though the Residence is at last an accomplished fact, it is not complete; it probably never will be complete; for it is the way of linen to wear out, of fruit-jars to become empty, of money to become spent. It will always be the responsibility of the Alumnae Association to see that they be restored, and it is well that this is so. The work that has so far been accomplished has created in the Association a spirit of enthusiasm and unity such as never existed before. New sympathy has arisen between the graduate and undergraduate women, through working for a common cause. From having to depend on the assistance of the women of the Baptist denomination throughout the Province, the Alumnae Association has become broader in its interests, and more alive to the activities of the denomination as a whole. Therefore we are grateful to all who have helped us in our undertaking, and we are grateful to the undertaking for the renaissance it has given to the Alumnae Association.

—Enid A. McGregor, '12.