



# **Viola Florence Barnes, 1885-1979: A Historian's Biography (Studies in Gender and History)**

*John G. Reid*

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Viola Florence Barnes was one of the most prominent women historians in the United States from the 1920s to the 1950s. Born in 1885, Barnes was educated at Yale University and began teaching at Mount Holyoke College in 1919. She was an instrumental member of the 'imperial school' of historians, who interpreted North American colonial history within a British imperial framework. Specializing in New England and Canada's Maritime provinces, her best-known book was *The Dominion of New England*, published in 1923.

In this probing biography, John G. Reid examines Barnes's life as a female historian, providing a revealing glimpse into the gendered experience of professional academia in that era. Reid also examines the imperial school, which, although rapidly losing favour by the 1950s, had yielded results that were crucial to the study of North American colonial history.

Viola Florence Barnes was cited as one of 100 'outstanding career women' in the United States in 1940. The later years of her life were marked by difficulty and disillusionment, as she tried in vain to have her last book published. Yet, despite retiring in 1952, Barnes remained an active scholar almost to the time of her death in 1979. This exhaustive work is the first biography of Barnes - a major figure in the study of North American history.

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