Maine Women Writers: A Special Collection

The Special Collections Department of Fogler Library has a large collection of works by Maine women writers, past and present. Some of the early writers were literary pioneers and some enjoyed success and renown during their lifetimes. Others were relatively unknown and their works were not appreciated until recent times. All provide insight into how American literature evolved and into the roles of women in early American society.

Known in her day as Madam Wood, Sarah Sayward (Barrell) Keating Wood was Maine’s first novelist. She was born in York, District of Maine in 1759, died in Kennebunk in 1855, and during her 96 years published five books of fiction, the first being *Julia and the Illuminated Baron* in 1800. She was also the first American writer of Gothic fiction (Stephen King’s popular style) and the first American writer to set a novel in Russia.

Those who followed Madam Wood include Ann Sophia Stephens of Portland (1805-1893) also authored dime novels. Her story “The Sagamore of Saco” was published in 1868 and told of the life of the albino daughter of Sir Richard Vines who settled in Biddeford Pool in 1616. She wrote several other novels plus poetry and stories for children.

Sarah Payson (Willis) Parton (1811-1872), pseud. Fanny Fern, also of Portland was the first woman columnist in the history of journalism. She was also the author of stories for adults and children, among them “Ginger-snaps,” “Play-Day Book,” “Fern Leaves from Fanny’s Port-folio,” and “Ruth Hall, a Domestic Tale of the Present Time.” In her biographical account of Fern, *Fanny Fern or a Pair of Flaming Shoes*, Florence Bannard Adams recounts how Fern’s need to earn a living prompted her to enter the journalism field.

Other early Maine women authors include Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat of Portland, born in 1823. She was the wife of Lorenzo Medici Sweat, lived in the Sweat mansion which is now part of the Portland Museum of Art, and wrote the first Sapphic novel.

Elizabeth Oakes Smith of Portland (1806-1893) also authored dime novels. Her story “The Sagamore of Saco” was published in 1868 and told of the life of the albino daughter of Sir Richard Vines who settled in Biddeford Pool in 1616. She wrote several other novels plus poetry and stories for children.

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Elizabeth Payson Prentiss (1818-1878) of Portland and Laura E. Richards of Gardiner (1851-1943) were fiction writers. Rebecca Sophia Clarke of Norridgewock, pseudo Sophie May, (1833-1906) wrote the *Little Prudy* series as well as other stories, while Kate Douglas Wiggin of Hollis is remembered particularly for *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*.
The Listening Center has a Computer Scanner

The Fogler Library now houses a workstation with the ability to scan print materials into digital format. The workstation currently includes a computer with Windows-based software, and a scanner that scans face up, eliminating pressure on the bound material. Located in the Listening Center on the second floor of the Library, it will eventually include both Internet and e-mail access.

The Listening Center scanner will allow students to incorporate into their presentations and research projects text, photographs, charts, and other images from all types of library materials, including those that do not leave the building. The workstation was acquired through an Instructional Technology Grant. The purposes of these grants, which are funded by the students' technology fee, are to make technology available to students and to enhance the teaching and learning mission of the University. Many thanks to Jim Bird, Head of the Science and Engineering Center, and Joyce Rumery, Access Services Division Head, for authoring this grant proposal.

For more information on the workstation, you can call Joyce Rumery at 581-1676.

Meet a Work-Study Student: Mary Thompson

Mary Thompson is a fourth-year psychology student who will be graduating this year. She is involved in Psi Chi, the national honors society for psychology majors, and is a member of the Collegiate Chorale and the Athena Consort, two of the University’s choral groups. She also plays intramural basketball and softball. Mary hopes to enter graduate school and receive her master’s degree in counseling psychology.

Mary works for the circulation/stack maintenance department at Fogler Library. Her responsibilities include shelving bound journals, books, and newspapers. She also works at the checkout desks. Desk coverage involves checking out items to patrons, renewing items and answering general questions and concerns about the library. When necessary she works on various moving projects undertaken by the library staff.

Who’s Reading What

John Alexander, Interim Vice President and Provost for Academic Affairs
- The Last Hurrah by Edwin O’Connor.
- Snow Falling On Cedars by David Guterson.
- The Loved One by Evelyn Waugh.
- The Shipping News by E. Annie Proulx.

Virginia R Gibson, Dean, College of Business Administration
- Mozart: A Life by Maynard Solomon.
- The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst by Nicholas Tomalin and Ron Hall.
- The Chess Garden by Brooks Hansen.
- Intellectual Capital by Thomas Stewart.

Kenneth Nichols, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration
- Earth by David Brin
- Consider This, Senora by Harriett Doerr.
- Locked in the Cabinet by Robert B. Reich.
- October Light by John Gardener.

Muriel Sanford, Department Head, Special Collections, Fogler Library
- Personal History by Katherine Graham.
- Penobscot Man by Frank G. Speck.
- Jane and the Unpleasantness at Seagrave Manor: Being the First Jane Austen Mystery by Stephanie Barron.

The Advisory Board Committees

The Advisory Board of the Friends of the Library has formed the following committees:
1. Collection Development
2. Development and Promotion
3. Internal Finance
4. Public Service
5. Project Planning

A committee on Membership will be formed in future. The Board is looking for interested volunteers to serve on committees. Please contact Dianne Hoff at 581-1500 with your preference.
UNIVERSITY AUTHORS’ RECEIPTIONS

Every two years since the early 1980s, the Library has hosted a reception for members of the University community who have authored or edited books. In 1997, the reception took place on February 27th, in the Lynch Room of the Library. The list of authors and titles included 65 authors from all areas of the University and 84 works. Especially prolific authors included Gordon Donaldson from Education and Ken Norris from English with four books each. Copies of the list are available by calling the Library Administrative offices at 581-1661.

Ruth Moore: An American Realist

Editors Note: This article was written by Jennifer Craig Pixley, Department of English.

Ruth Moore (1903-1989) is one of the Maine women writers represented in the Library’s Special Collections Department. She was born on Gott’s Island and lived in Maine for most of her life. Moore, a popular writer in the middle decades of this century, wrote thirteen novels and three books of poetry.

Moore was both a good storyteller and a trenchant social critic. Raised on an island, she was a sharp observer of human behavior, and her detailed descriptions of life in a small coastal village bristle with humor and drama. But she was also honest about limitations of life in those small villages. Before it was popular to do so, Moore described the inequities that women often face. She also wrote about the collapse of the once strong fishing and farming economy, the loss of family lands to people from away, and the shift in community values that follows such social change. Moore was not a romantic; she recognized that the way of life that had cohesion and a solid foundation was gone forever. And though she loved the Maine coast, she knew that it is deadly as well as beautiful. Her perception of the earth was closer to the sublime than to the picturesque.

Ruth Moore always had a small group of loyal readers, but it’s possible that a surge of interest in environmental literature may bring her work greater visibility. Moore wrote about the depredation of the environment in Candlemas Bay (1950) and published Second Growth, a novel with a decidedly environmental theme, in 1962. The pollution of the waters and the depletion of the fishing grounds are mentioned in a number of Moore’s other novels as well as in some of her poems.

How have Moore’s well-written stories with their prescient observations about our environment and our villages slipped from critical study and from the reading public’s attention? This has occurred partly because we have long ignored the tradition of women writers’ social critique and because we have not understood the value of a literature of place. However, recent scholarship in these areas has provided the perspective from which to re-examine Moore’s work. The critical study of her early novels has begun.

To assist in this effort in 1996, under the auspices of a Women in the Curriculum summer grant, I completed a research project which provides some biographical information about Moore’s life. This work culminated in an essay and a lecture, “Homesick for That Place: Ruth Moore Writes about Maine.” In addition, Blackberry Books began re-publishing Moore’s early novels in 1986 and, to date, The Weir, Spoonhandle, Candlemas Bay, Speak to the Winds and The Walk Down Main Street are in print, with The Fire Balloon scheduled for publication in the near future. Blackberry Books also published High Clouds Soaring, Storms Driving Low (1993), a collection of Moore’s letters edited and introduced by Sanford Phippen. The letters provide the inimitable sound of Moore’s sharp, humorous voice.

Because of these efforts, Moore’s novels can be studied, as in fact they are at the University of Maine at Orono and at the University of Southern Maine.

Ruth Moore would have appreciated this critical attention. During her lifetime critics compared her to Steinbeck, Caldwell, and Faulkner, yet she was labeled a regional writer rather than the important American realist that she really was. Moore detested the epithet “regionalist” because it suggested that her work

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Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909) of Berwick, one of the best known early Maine writers, captured the everyday lives of country folk in her stories. Celia Thaxter (1835-1894), a poet and artist from Kittery and the Isles of Shoals, was a writer of great talent who has often been overlooked. Harriet Beecher Stowe of Brunswick (1812-1889) aroused the conscience of a nation with Uncle Tom's Cabin as well as Dred, a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp. The Pearl of Orr's Island by Stowe was set in Maine.

Local early women writers include Frances Parker Mace, a poet who was born in Orono in 1836 and lived in Bangor and ultimately moved to California. She died in 1899. Blanche Willis Howard von Teuffel was born in Bangor in 1847 and before her death in 1898 wrote several books of fiction. Laura J. Curtis Bullard, another fiction writer, lived in Bangor and was writing during the 1850s.

Special Collections also houses the works of many contemporary women writers from Maine. Among them are Ruth Moore, Mary Ellen Chase, Gladys Hasty Carroll, Elizabeth Coatsworth, Rachel Field, Elizabeth Ogilvie, Margaret Deland, Louise Dickinson Rich, Marguerite Yourcenar, May Sarton, and Edna St. Vincent Millay.

More contemporary women writers from the Bangor/Orono area include Dorothy Clarke Wilson, who wrote 20 books including biographies and novels as well as 70 plays. Her works have been translated into dozens of languages, and one of her best known works, The Prince of Egypt, was later turned into the movie The Ten Commandments starring Charlton Heston. Tabitha King's fiction works include The Book of Reuben, Caretakers, Small World, The Trap, and Survivor. One on One is a story about basketball and Playing Like a Girl: Cindy Blosdell and the Lawrence Bulldogs Season of '93-'94 represents another manifestation of the author's enthusiasm for the sport. Other contemporary women writers represented in the collection include Constance Hunting, Eleanor Mayo, Ruth Mendelson, and Ina Ladd Brown. Constance Hunting, a poet and writer, also established the Puckerbrush Press located in Orono. Works by and about these and other Maine women writers can be found in Fogler's Special Collections Department. For more information, please contact Muriel Sanford, Head of the Special Collections Department, at 581-1688.

Ruth Moore, from page 3

was picturesque, quaint or sentimental, and she retreated from the public eye rather than endure such misunderstanding. However, she would surely be pleased to know that readers today are enjoying her works and that she is represented in collections of women's writing in Maine and beyond.
Extended Reference at the Science and Engineering Center

Science and Engineering Center librarians are providing extended reference sessions in addition to quick “ready reference” service. These sessions can last anywhere from ten minutes to three hours. They provide University of Maine students, faculty, staff and others with a chance to discuss their research needs with a librarian expert in the literature of their field. For more information you can call 581-1691.

Some Readings on Women's Studies

- Regulating the lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present by Mimi Abramovitz.
- Enlightened Women: Modernist Feminism in a Postmodern Age by Alison Assister.
- Business and Feminine Principle by Carol R. Frenier.
- Women and Public Policies: Reassessing Gender Politics by Joyce Gelb and Merian Lief Palley.
- Word of Mouth: Body Language in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf by Patricia Moran.
- Beyond Hierarchy: Gender, Sexuality, and the Social Economy by Sarah Oerton.
- Girls, Boys, and Language by Joan Swann

Spanish Cabinet: A Treasure of the Special Collections Room

Mr. and Mrs. Harrison Bell of Hancock Point Maine have donated to the library an antique Spanish Baroque vargueno, or writing desk, which belonged to Hannibal Hamlin (1809-1891) when he served as Minister to Spain in 1881-1882. As seen here, the vargueno is fitted with a fall front that opens to reveal an arrangement of carved drawers decorated with girt. Much of the exterior and interior has wrought metal fittings, including locks and carrying handles. The vargueno rests on a very decorative, four-drawer cupboard. This piece is currently housed in the Special Collections Department adjacent to the portrait of Ellen Vesta Emory, Hannibal Hamlin’s second wife.

Library Gifts

If you have been considering making a gift to the Library, here are some suggestions:

- Electronic database subscriptions: $5,000 to $28,000/year
- Journal subscriptions: $35 to $5,000/year
- Primary source materials on Maine: $100 to $5,000
- Reference and circulating books: $35 to $1,000
- Patent and Trademark Depository support: $35 to $11,000
- Library furniture and computer workstations: $100 to $10,000

Please contact Dean Albright at 581-1655 for more details about these categories or to discuss additional options for giving.
FOGLER LIBRARY NEEDS YOU!
BY BECOMING A FOGLER LIBRARY FRIEND, YOU WILL HELP SUSTAIN A VALUABLE RESOURCE.

Yes, I want to support the collections, programs and services of the University of Maine Fogler Library at the following level:

☐ Benefactor, $1000 and over
☐ Patron, $500
☐ Sponsor, $100
☐ Advocate, $60
☐ Contributor, $30
☐ UMaine Student, $10

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Please make checks payable to University of Maine/Library Friends, and return to 5729 Fogler Library, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469-5729.

WE NEED AND LOVE YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS! Thank you for your support.

Message from the Dean

This summer promises to be an exciting time for the Fogler Library and its staff. Major renovations, including asbestos removal, installation of fire and safety systems, new lighting, carpeting and overall face lifting activities will be taking place. Starting May 18th, the first floor of the 1946 portion of the Library will be closed to visitors and all Library functions will be moved to the 1975 addition. It is anticipated that all work on the first floor of the Fogler Library will be completed by the beginning of the school year, but renovations will continue on the upper levels throughout 1998 and 1999. I will try to keep the Library Friends informed about our progress and share with you some of our experiences during the up-coming year. If you are on campus, please come by and see for yourself what is happening to your facility. I have been pleased with the support you and the Friends have given us and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the events scheduled for the Friends.

UPCOMING FRIENDS EVENT

Alumni Reception, Friday, May 29, 1998, 2:00-4:00 p.m., The Special Collections Department, Fogler Library. The theme for this year’s gathering is “The Changing Library 2000 and Beyond.” It will be a great time to catch up with old friends.