

from the staff

This is one of the staff worriers speaking. As a staff member of the paper, there are plenty of things to worry about--whether or not that book review is going to get here in time for layout, whether or not anybody really reads the paper, whether or not it's going to snow so some of us can't get to the weekly meetings, whether or not we have the right kind of press type to do the headlines without going out to buy more, whether or not the FBI knows about us and is watching. But one thing we really worry about is money. Don't skip to the next paragraph--I know you're tired of hearing about it, but we do need your support. If your subscription is up, please renew. If it isn't tell your friends to subscribe. And if you can spare it, we need to your financial contributions. Right now, we can't even afford to pay the publisher for the Dec./Jan. issue, let alone the current one. Thanks. Oh, also we have publications for sale (see the announcements section). Oh, and don't forget the feminist music night to benefit the paper. (also in the announcements)

One thing I mentioned we worry about is if anyone reads the paper. If you have ideas on how to improve the paper, suggestions, etc. please write us. Or better yet write an article that will improve the paper. Feel free to send in poems, articles, whatever. Better yet join the staff. Some people on the staff are moving, and we would welcome new staff members. (a healthy core of eight is really needed). For those not in the wider Portland area, don't hesitate. We need staff people from other areas to make sure we're reaching Maine women from all over.

Next issue we're thinking of doing a focus on food. If you'd like to write an article or have ideas on women farming, nutrition, food stamp hassles, available garden plots, coops, where to get good food, the politics of food, etc. please let us know.

By the way, if you've sent us material we will probably publish it eventually, or we'll be in touch. Anyone who wants to distribute the paper in their area, let us know and we'll send you extra copies. Thanks.

We'd like to thank Olivia Records for their very generous ad. If you haven't heard any of their albums they are excellent. If any-

one wants to distribute their records in Maine, where currently you can't get them, contact Olivia at the address on the ad. We'd also like to thank Dorothy Healy of Westbrook College and the Maine Women Writers Collection, for her help with this issue. The collection is to be applauded as an invaluable herstory; quite an intrigue.

Bye, 'til next time.

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Susan Neustadt, Joanne Costanza,
Pat Wurtz, Joanne Forman, Kitty
Maher, & Dee Dee.

Maine Freewoman's Herald
193 Middle Street
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MAINE FREEWOMAN'S HERALD

vol. III issue 4 FEB/MARCH 1976

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maine freewoman's herald



IN THIS ISSUE

Tribute to Women in Maine History

by Lynn Salisbury

We (the women) have, as they (the men) say, "Come a long way." Yet even today women find it tremendously difficult when trying to attain equal power, recognition and opportunity in a male-oriented society. We have the second wave of the women's movement, and the knowledge and strength of the first women's movement in the late 1800's. We have the acceptance (if only a token gesture) of an International Women's Year and other nice-sounding programs, both corporate and governmental, for footage in our struggles.

But what did women in the 1800's have in their favor? How did any women in that time period ever become who they wanted to be? How did they escape the traditional restrictions women faced? Yet, numerous women led creative, independent, successful lives when they did not even have the right to vote. Perhaps Emma Goldman was right on target when in 1911 she said:

"The right to vote, or equal civil rights, may be good demands, but true emancipation begins neither at the polls nor in courts. It begins in woman's soul. History tells us that every oppressed class gained true liberation from its masters through its own efforts. It is necessary that woman learn that lesson, that she realize that her freedom will reach as far as her power to achieve her freedom reaches."

And so on the following pages of this issue we are concentrating on a few of many outstanding women of Maine in the 1800's and early 1900's. These women must have been courageous and strong. And their lives touched other "rebellious" women such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Susan B. Anthony and George Sands. Referring to several 19th century Maine women, including Margaret Sweat and Elizabeth Allen Akers whom we feature in this issue, one publication states: "Some of them were.... surprisingly free spirits with the vitality and initiative to make life a crusade."* One contemporary observer said Margaret Sweat's talent was comparable to Longfellow although, of course, she never received the recognition.

But we must remember, too, that many poor women did not have even the economic freedom to pursue their own interests. The author of the article on Sarah Orne Jewett in this issue notes that Jewett was born into the upper class, which allowed her flexibility and mobility. Other women were not so lucky. The author also notes, "...without a father's active or tacit permission, a respectable woman could not even leave the house, much less become a writer. Behind every woman who achieved in the 18th and 19th centuries, there is an at least acquiescent male. And those who were not so lucky, not so strong? We will never know their names."

By dedicating this issue to the remembrance of these strong, fascinating Maine women (and all those who weren't as strong or lucky) we are exposing the value of their contribution to our society. It seems that historical data, textbooks in particular, have overlooked or chosen to disregard the worth of many female forebearers.

Sojourner Truth, a feminist of the 19th century, would be glad to know that the women's movement is on the rise, for in 1853 she said:

"I come forth, to speak, about Women's Rights...we have all been thrown down so low that nobody thought we'd ever get up again; but we have been long enough trodden now; we will come up again."

*from *The Mirror*, Vol. V, No. 2, Westbrook Junior College, Portland, Maine.



Cover photo on right:
Self-portrait by
Chansonetta Stanley
Emmons

Cover photo of
Elizabeth Akers
Allen taken
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MARGARET JANE MUSSEY SWEAT
(Mrs. Lorenzo de Medici Sweat)
Photograph of a watercolor on
ivory painting by Franz Xavier
Stoppel. An item from her
bequest to the Portland Museum
of Art.

MARGARET SWEAT

an unsolved mystery...

by Meg McMullen

You have an inheritance to collect from Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat. The riches will not pay your rent, nor will they cover the next installment on your new tv. The wealth is in the knowledge, the volumes of her diaries, the books this Portland native penned a century or so ago -- among which is "Ethyl's Love Life", a book touted by many as the first American novel to deal with lesbianism. She also willed her home, the McLellan - Sweat house, to the Portland Museum of Art, in addition to funds for a gallery wing in memory of her husband.

Margaret Jane Mussey, born in 1823 to a merchant - wealthy family who lived at The Elms at the corner of Danforth and High in Portland, began her painstakingly detailed accounts of her life during her teens. Her passion for the recording of the daily business of living was unflagging, and her accounts of her extensive travels, her literary criticisms and her personal correspondence with scores of outstanding figures of the last century (George Sand, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Stoddard, Harriet Hosmer) leave us awed at the mere mass of the writing -- to say nothing of the precision and quality. How this woman with so many household and social responsibilities could lay aside the time for reflection and writing she must have required is among the several mysteries of her life.

In 1849, at the age of 26, Margaret Jane Mussey married one Colonel Lorenzo de Medici Sweat, a 31-year-old Bowdoin graduate, who was a Portland lawyer and businessman. Sweat was elected to a term in the United States Congress in 1863, and despite his accomplishments there and at home was eclipsed by Margaret.

Of their wedding, she almost detachedly writes in her journal, "...married October 30, 1849 -- 11:00 AM...50 friends...no tears were shed and there was, of course, less stiffness than usual as no one was called upon to look melancholy."

Her reserve and reluctance to make anything exceptional of her wedding day are typical of the notations in her journals. She writes with the attitude that someone is peering over her shoulder, and consistently seems to withhold from us the things we would most like to know. Page after page she records births, deaths, weddings, what she had for breakfast, household financial transactions, what the weather was like ("Jan. 27, 1870 -- Went on board ships with Admiral Farragut and his party. Weather warm as May."), club meetings she attended and how many others were there, favorite recipes, from whom she had gotten letters -- but seldom are we allowed a glimpse behind the obscuring curtain of minutiae.

This is not to say that all the entries in the journals are of the driest sort. Our benefactress was a woman of ample humor, although it too is held in check with other of her warmer qualities. She was also a woman whose strength is evident in her brief daily jottings: "Jan. 8, 1903 -- With all my pluck to the front and because no one dared to forbid me -- and for many reasons I decided to run the risks of pneumonia and took 10 AM train to New York."

She makes typically extensive notes in her journals of the numbers of social calls made on various days, and to whom, and those who fail to reciprocate and social propriety dictates are chided in her records. At home, it was not an exceptional afternoon in which she would make ten or a dozen calls. Even with the carriage we imagine was waiting to whisk

her from one to the next, we must assume that at least some of these visits must have been outstanding for their brevity.

She was an enthusiastic and adventurous traveller, not only in the relatively tame United States, but bounding off to Egypt, Japan, Cuba, Ceylon, France, Lapland -- wherever her fancy (and sometimes barely adequate transportation) takes her. She recorded these forays with characteristic eye for detail, noting particularly the habits and dress of the women in each new place. Several magazines and papers, from New Orleans to Portland, printed her travel articles, as well as her essays and poetry. She was one of a select few women, for instance, whose material appeared in the North American Review.

Margaret Sweat was also an active clubwoman, both in Portland and in the Washington, D.C., area, where she maintained a home for many years. The level of these organizational affiliations was generally more intellectual than purely social, more the mental square meal than the airy tea cake.

Most interesting among the Washington activities is the wryly named Cobweb Club. Margaret, a founder, offered the name and inserted into the club's intentions a tongue-in-cheek declaration that one of their missions would be to improve the reputation of spiders. To this end she also authored a "Natural History of Spiders", and the club's motto, "The cobwebs of one generation make the cables of the next."

The membership was an elite group, pretty much limited to about a dozen wives of prominent men. The club emphasized the importance of careful selection of members, and of encouraging a secretive atmosphere, so the women would feel free to discuss controversial and personal matters openly. In many ways, these qualities are similar to those of today's consciousness - raising groups.

Eventually, however, there was agreement that the membership should be broadened, and this move marked the beginnings of the well-known Washington Women's Club.

While there was certainly some time taken up with traditional women's busy work -- needlepoint, crochet -- as time went on courses were also offered in activities like fencing, piano and French. In addition, at each meeting, one woman was to present a paper on a topic of interest which was then discussed by all. The women dealt with cremation, the occult, Browning, Ibsen, evolution (Darwin's "Origin of the Species" was published in 1859, the same year as Sweat's "Ethyl's Love Life"), and women's rights.

The Cobwebbers were also an audience to many remarkable women of the day, among them Susan B. Anthony, who delivered an optimistic progress report on women's suffrage. She engaged the group in a discussion of her cause, and responded capably to some fears that alliance with the struggle might result in the loss of feminine refinement and attractiveness. She also emphasized the importance of involving women from the upper class in the movement, a goal still being strived for.

And in the midst of the endless journals, the afternoons of socializing, the zigzagging travels around the world, the lengthy letter writing, the cataloging of events and possessions -- in 1859 comes "Ethyl's Love Life", a book now purported to be "Sapphic" in nature. And this not many years after her writing of a series of

Among all the women you must have met,
I'm not sure you'd notice one small Mrs. Sweat.

She saw with her eyes and walked with her feet,
And said many a thing we dare not repeat.

Twas said that she thought a great deal of herself,
And never was willingly placed on the shelf.

Some loved her, some hated and some didn't know
When she left this world to which other she'd go.

heavy religious essays. (It is interesting to speculate about what kind of reaction a modern congressman's wife would draw at the issuance of such "romantic" fiction.)

"Ethyl's Love Life", written a decade after her marriage, is unlike her other writings in at least one important quality -- its emotional content. The book's structure is that of letters from Ethyl to her fiancée Earnest -- hardly a Sapphic premise. The novel serves as a vehicle for Ethyl (perhaps Margaret?) to describe to Earnest some of her past relationships with men and women. In this process, Sweat creates some very sharp character studies.

It may be that she has written of lesbian relationships in the book. However, that conclusion is debated; there are no explicitly homosexual passages. The answer is up to the reader, and the doubt is created in part by the style, which bears a likeness to Victorian furniture -- the heavy, rigid form complicated by the elaborate filigree.

Are we reading, in the scenes of enthusiastic embrace, portions of

the first American lesbian novel, or are we reading embroidered Victorian prose about a close female friendship? Unfortunately, there is no solid way to tell.

Margaret gives us no clues. The book, so uncharacteristically emotionally charged and imaginative for her, seems to be something she'd sooner forget in later years. It may signal for her a kind of purging of the early part of her life (although she was in her middle thirties when she wrote it), or it may have been an experiment, an exercise in form for her. Frustratingly, Margaret Sweat leaves us again with no answer to this question, and what's more, makes it clear she wished we'd never asked.

At the time of her death at 85, on January 16, 1908, she bequeathed the McLellan - Sweat house and funds for the memorial gallery for the purpose of an art museum. Several years ago, during renovations at the 111 High Street structure, many of her personal correspondances and papers were sold. Attempts have been made, so far unsuccessfully, to trace and recover this material, for it may be that additional hints for the solving of the mysteries lie in some of these currently unavailable writings.

Bringing what we know of her and her art to light is very much like following a short story along in a magazine, only when you come to where the exciting climax should be, you find someone's cut out a coupon on the other side of the page and it's missing.

So here we have an outstanding woman writer of the last century, we have the inheritance of hundreds of thousands of words easily accessible to us, and a few thousand words acknowledging her legacy in this century. It is high time we, as Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat's heirs, begin drawing on her wealth. The situation brings to mind the old riddle about a hole, wherein it is a thing that becomes greater the more you take from it.

The Freewoman's Herald extends appreciation to Jennifer Blaisdell and Nora Fornas Quinn for allowing us use of their research for this article. We also thank Bill Barry of the Portland Museum of Art for his time, interest and information. Many of Margaret Sweat's works are available in the collection of women writers at Westbrook College, and some may be found at the Portland Public Library.

nettles by Meg McMullen

It was Ann who first raised my consciousness about sweating. Ann, who describes herself as having "pores like little faucets." Ann, to whom nervous is a synonym for wet.

"How did your speech go?" I ask her.

"Oh, Margaret, I wet right through my shields..."

And Ann, who chooses clothing for any social occasion by how much darker a color gets when it's wet, and how resistant a fabric is to perspiration stains. Who dresses giving as much attention to what is likely to go on under the arms as how to conceal a 40D third breast.

"Ann, it's 93 degrees. Why are you wearing a navy blue sweater over a turtleneck?"

"Someone might notice I'm sweating."

And Ann, who rates anti-perspirants in the same light one might judge the effectiveness of the Hoover Dam. I recall once she had purchased a new brand which required application at night to prepare you for the next day's deluge. Why is that? I asked her. "I think it sets up like concrete," Ann replied, with high hopes for the product. High hopes which were, of course, as damp as her underarms by the next noon. I recall once suggesting she purchase a caulking gun and install tiles around her upper torso, but she was not amused.

And neither was I, as time went on and I began to see that she was serious...this is a problem of some magnitude for her. I was and am curious. I am not a soaker of sweatshirts or drencher of denims. I am not in a position to comprehend the social humiliation (or whatever it is) which drives Ann to somehow equate dry pits to social superiority. I admit I do not understand. But I do wonder.

Is it that sweating equals (oh, horrors) masculinity? (Remember the old adage: "Horses sweat, men perspire, women mist.") Or does the soaking circle betray uncoolness? Have we perhaps been brainwashed to a more frightening degree than we suspect and believe sweat means smell? (It doesn't, of course. Not wet, anyway.) Or what is it, when strong, thorough, together feminists still center their apparel around whether or not? (One thing it is is ridiculous--this much I'm sure of.)

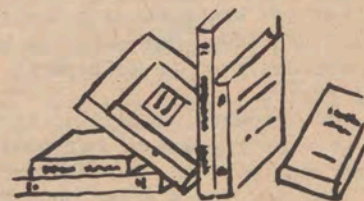
So what can we do, sponsor a workshop on sweat? There seem to be in-depth weekends on everything these days. Ann reported from her California vantage a few weeks ago that she had signed up for several. One had to do with personal growth and involved pretending you were a tree; another was a white-water trip down Killerdyke Rapids in an inflated Hefty bag (or something like that) which was to be a test of Ann's courage.

"My god, Ann," I said, upon hearing the latter. "You'll be so nervous you'll expire before you hit the first falls!"

"I'm scared to death," she admitted, seriously. "Three people got killed in one trip last year. I am petrified. But you know what," she said, brightening, "It'll be so wet no one will notice I'm sweating."

LIBRARY RESOURCE FOR WOMEN

Established in 1959 the Maine Women Writers Collection of Westbrook College has earned a distinctive place in Maine literature. Over 325 writers of the 19th and 20th century are represented in this treasurehouse of writings by Maine women. Always growing, the Collection currently consists of about 1500 volumes and several hundred manuscripts, diaries, letters, memorabilia, by and about Maine women. Our state is extraordinarily rich in the great variety and brilliance of the prose and poetry created by the women of Maine. So rich and varied, in fact, that we can name no names in this brief sketch. Visitors are welcome to find out for themselves the quality of the Collection. The Curator is Dorothy Healy who will be happy to introduce you to our Maine women writers, past and present. Call the College for an appointment.



The University of Maine at Orono has the first 23 reels of the 90 reels of women's journals, newsletters, and newspapers called HERSTORY. They do not, however, have the supplemental sets to HERSTORY, nor do they have Women and Health/Mental Health, and Women and Law microfilms. The acquisitions librarian indicated she was not interested in getting the rest of the materials because the faculty had not recommended it. If anyone knows faculty there, urge them to see that these materials are included in the budget, so everybody will be able to use the collections soon at Orono, or on interlibrary loan.

MAINE TIMES MAINE TIMES

Phyllis Austin
Peggy Fisher
Jack Alely
Barbara Riegel
Peter Cox
John Cole
and others write about
the issues facing Maine.

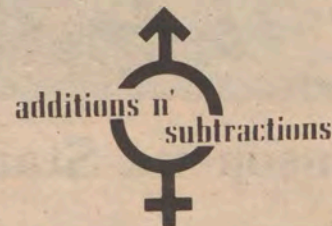
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MOLLY OCKETT

The last of the PEQUAKETTS

by Meg McMullen

*But one squaw among their number,
Lithe and handsome, young and bold,
Straight and slender as a sapling,
With her flashing eyes so black,
Stood the radiant Indian maiden
Pointing out the wild rough track.*

A.K. Mason

What comes down to us about her is sketchy. A handful of legends, a few definite dates, some differing renditions of her exploits. What we do know is that an Indian woman died in Andover on August 2, 1816. At the time of her death, her age was guessed to be somewhere between 100 and 140. Her name was Molly Ockett but variations have it Mollockett, Mollynockett and Mollyockett.

Written accounts attempting to fill in the eighty or ninety years of her adult life are few. We read that she saved Hannibal Hamlin's life. That she was a great huntress. That she was well-known for her herbal doctoring. That her strength and stamina were awesome. That the earliest settlers of Bethel, Fryeburg and along the Saco and Androscoggin Rivers were

well-acquainted with her and she earned their respect and admiration during a time when others of her race were at best feared.

It is recorded that she was born on a point of land in the Saco River, below the falls, and lived with the Rokomeko, or St. Francis, tribe around the Bethel area. She was there about the time the first white settlers arrived, in the 1750's and was midwife to the first of their children.

Molly Ockett had four children of her own. The eldest, Molly Susup, attended the public school in Bethel and was said to be exceptionally bright and strong, "being often more than a match for the boys," says Arthur Woodrow (*Story of Metallak*, Rumford Publishing Co., 1928).

In the late 1750's, the brave Sabattis was brought to Fryeburg by a Colonel Rogers

In the late 1750's, the brave Sabattis (who later accompanied Arnold on the march to Quebec) was brought to Fryeburg by a Colonel Rogers. Molly Ockett and Sabattis lived together for a number of years, and had three children.

Throughout the accounts of her life run three clues to her personality. She was a great huntress, frequently striking off into the forest alone and returning with kills of the largest and most dangerous of prey such as moose and bear. We can appreciate how outstanding her skills must have been to have warranted their being around some 200 years later.

Coinciding with this trait was her passion for travelling the countryside. Even in her old age, she frequently hiked the distance from Andover to Bethel and then on to Paris Hill. On one of these journeys, she performed the healing of Hannibal Hamlin.

She was known for her healing powers, having halted outbreaks of dysentery in the Bethel area and performing numerous individual cures. From those who wanted to pay for her services, she would only take one penny, and this she'd keep in a small purse hung on a string around her neck.

The Hamlin legend comes to us, of course, not because it was an unusual accomplishment for Molly, but because the patient became Lincoln's first vice-president. By some accounts,

Molly Ockett was telepathically called to the Hamlin home in Paris Hill, and by others she happened there in mid-winter after having been turned away from other doors.

She administered herbs, ointments, and a diet of warm cow's milk to the seriously ill infant Hannibal, and he recovered. On his regaining health, Molly Ockett predicted a life of fame and fortune for the young patient.

Assorted tales of other predictions, blessings, curses and intriguing mentions of buried treasure appear in accounts of her deeds.

Molly Ockett, who was herself a noted story teller, claimed that when most of her tribe fled to Canada during an epidemic of smallpox in 1755, they buried some gold in Paris. The cache, she avowed, was marked by two traps in an elm tree. Molly's tale was treated lightly at the time, though it passed down over the years, and in about 1860 a man noticed an ingrown trap chain hanging from the crotch of an elm. Suddenly local residents gave credibility to the woman's claims, and began digging in earnest, but failed to find the treasure. The area has been known as Trap Corner ever since.

Another account has it that she herself possessed a quantity of money, buried in a teapot on a small rise called Farmers Hill. Supposedly the treasure was stolen by two white men. Still another treasure tale--a kind of blend of the previous two--comes to us from a poem called, "Moll Lockett's Curse", by Addie Kendall Mason, published in the Bethel News in 1895.

The fiercely independent Molly lived by her own hunting and healing skills until the very last years of her life, when she was offered lodging and care with the Capt. Thomas Bragg family, of Andover. Her final request, in the last moments of her life, was that she be carried outdoors and allowed to die under the stars, and those attending her granted the wish.

Molly Ockett was buried in Andover, and for many years no stone marked her grave. Around 1860 the Ladies Aid of the Andover Congregational Church procured a stone for her. It reads, "Mollockett, Baptized Mary Agatha, Died in the Christian Faith, August 2, 1816. The last of the Pequaketts."



Photo/Colby College Art Museum

Chansonetta Stanley Emmons/Photographer

Chansonetta Stanley Emmons was born in Kingfield, Maine, in 1858. She did not begin photographing till the 1880's, around the time when her brothers (the Stanley twins who developed the Stanley Steamer automobile) were manufacturing a revolutionary dry-plate process. This enabled her to be unrestricted from the limits of straight studio photography and portraiture and allowed her to photograph her subjects in a quasi-candid manner in their natural setting.

The original prints of Emmons' work give us a strong sense of the people and landscape of rural Maine at the turn of the century. Her approach to her subject matter is as candid as she could have been for the time considering she was confronting it with a camera that was awkward and difficult to move around and no less able to catch her subject totally unaware. The people in her photographs seem accustomed to the camera's presence and go on about their business: women doing household and farm chores - churning butter, spinning

wool, cooking, drinking tea; young girls feeding chickens and cows; children fishing and wading. Her indoor photographs of kitchens, parlors, workshops, and attics show that she had a special awareness and feeling for the natural lighting of her subject matter.

It would be presumptuous to try and categorize Emmons as a feminist in her time; she did not go out of her way to show the women of her time as strong or independent spirits. Yet she gave us a very true picture of the day to day realities of a rural woman's life, and in doing so Ms. Emmons was an exception in a time when women photographers were rare, and has left us with pictures that capture a vanished way of life.

The 45 original photographs signed by Ms. Emmons are in the Colby College Art Museum collection and are reproduced here through its courtesy. (The reproductions of her work do not do justice to her fine photographic skills. The original prints must be seen to be fully appreciated.)

FOOTNOTES -Sarah Orne Jewett-page 5

1. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Siberia also had a "wild west", but they never developed as fervid a movie industry as the U.S.!
2. This was true a hundred times over for minority women; it was, for instance, illegal to teach a slave to read.
3. George Sand and George Elliott.
4. Willa Cather is omitted from this list. She is one of the very few women writers who has "made it"; much has been written about her.
5. This attitude, regarded as quintessentially "Victorian", died hard. I, born 85 years after Sarah, was "delicate", and sure enough, I was sickly and scrawny much of my childhood. Since leaving "home", I have been seriously ill once, the week (predictably) my mother died.
6. Harriet Beecher Stowe's husband was a teacher at Bowdoin College.
7. Sarah Orne Jewett by Francis Otis Matthiessen.
8. Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett, ed. by Annie Fields.
9. Letters, op. cit. (1902)
10. Letters, op. cit. (1880)



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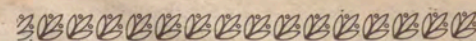
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Nothing is deeper in the American consciousness than the Frontier. Almost unique in human history, the rapid conquest of a continent has given rise to mythic images: the wagons rolling west, the cattle drive, the Indians whooping on their way to oblivion, the lone sheriff walking that eternal dusty small town street. It is, of course, an overwhelmingly male picture: men decide, men do, men conquer. They have a love/hate relationship with the land they seek to beat into a semblance of Europe: the squared-off town, the freehold farm they never had in the old country....this was the dream, no matter how recalcitrant the stony New England soil, how unsuitable the terrifying reaches of the Great Plains.

Women, unconsulted, were ancillary but vital. After all, their labor was absolutely necessary, and who else would produce the next generation of hands, hands to break and hold a continent. Their roles, defined by men, were at least tacitly respected--so long as women didn't challenge them. The stalwart pioneer mother in her sunbonnet; her opposite and sister, the dance hall girl (always with a heart of gold), are archetypes as familiar as the Princess and the Witch.

These figures, hovering mostly in the background of male consciousness and literature, were virtually mute. 120-140 years ago, the vast majority of women were illiterate. The crushing burden of work left no time.² This was the era when, even in sophisticated Europe, Aurore Dupin de Dudevant and Marian Evans³ had to publish under male names. The letters, journals, the private writings of women, have only recently begun to emerge from archives and attics.

However! Our foremothers do have a small clutch of literary spokeswomen. Their work is still all too obscure, seldom rendered "official" by being included in college English classes, denied their rightful place among novelists who chronicled the Frontier. Who has ever heard of Mary Austin, Mari Sandoz, Harriet Arnow, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Ellen Glasgow, Sarah Orne Jewett.

The particular thread that ties these writers together is a *sense of place*. Not for nothing have they been called "regionalists"--often a term of dismissal. They all grew up in a predominantly pre-urban landscape; the land belonged to them and they belonged to it. Their writings are saturated with this sense of place--a consciousness that has mostly disappeared from American life. Their lives and consciousness is bound up in the love of the land--or their hatred of it, their saving of it, or the loss; their acute observation of the way the land looked, smelled, felt. A sense of place.

SARAH

It may seem odd to speak of Sarah Orne Jewett in terms of the Frontier. But we must realize that our concept of the Frontier is mostly the post-Civil War west, beginning vaguely around Kansas. But Ohio was once the "Northwest Territory"; the vast reaches of New York State, of Virginia, of Tennessee were once "The West"; if Maine was technically not "west" it certainly had been wild.

The little village in York County (where Sarah was born) and its environs were tamed; mills were established, and with them began the influx on non-Yankee "hands". It was this place, already changing, her lifelong place, that Sarah Orne Jewett chronicled with patient and dispassionate meticulousness over a career of some forty years.

Sarah Orne Jewett was born in South Berwick, Maine on September 3, 1849, the daughter of the village doctor. (She did have a mother, but of course no one paid much attention to that.) It was the educated and, luckily, doting father who was the determining factor in her young life. She was "delicate", that catch-all term that included vague physical disabilities, social attitudes towards females, and whatever emotional projections the parents had going.⁴ This situation allowed her to go about the countryside with her doctor-father a great deal, though she did attend Berwick Academy. She had no doubt that these peaceful years by her father's side formed her, and indeed she developed what might be called a medical power of observation, both of place and people.

Berwick Academy and her mother made her a



Sarah Orne Jewett

A SENSE OF PLACE

by Joanne Forman

genteel young lady, but it was her father who opened the door to something more. This is not surprising at all, since without a father's active or tacit permission, a respectable woman could not even leave the house, much less become a writer. Behind every woman who achieved in the 18th and 19th centuries, there is an at least acquiescent male. And those who were not so lucky, not so strong? We will never know their names.

Sarah was blessed not only with the right kind of father, but by being born into the right class. She did not need to earn her bread. Too, that father was a doctor, with rather wider contacts than "proper" for a young lady, was beneficial. It was from the many lesirely chats with him, her grandparents, and the people of all estates about the village and countryside that she peopled her novels and, more voluminously, her short stories.

The young Sarah had ample opportunity to read. It is significant that the other seminal influence upon her was a woman; she was deeply impressed by Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Pearl of Orr's Island*.⁵ As Sarah's biographer notes, "When she was 13 or 14 she had read *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel about the people who lived in the decaying shipless harbors of Maine. Its first chapter opened her eyes. Her father had already instilled in her his keen interest in the quiet village life and the dull routine of the farms. And now she began to follow the old shore paths from one gray, weather-beaten house to another, more eagerly than ever before."⁶

Did Sarah also think to herself, there in father's quiet library, "Why, I could do that too!" As late as 1889, she embraced Stowe's influence:

"I have been reading the beginning of *The Pearl of Orr's Island* and finding it just as clear and perfectly original and strong as it seemed to me in my 13th or 14th year, when I read it first. I never shall forget the exquisite flavor and reality of delight that it gave me...Alas, that she couldn't finish it in the same noble key of

simplicity and harmony; but a poor writer is at the mercy of much unconscious opposition. You must throw everything and everybody aside at times, but a woman made like Mrs. Stowe cannot bring herself to that cold selfishness of the moment for one's work's sake, and the recompense for her loss is a divine touch here and there in an incomplete piece of work."⁷

She had some understanding of a woman's problems trying to snatch moments away from a growing family. Is this why she never married? Ill-health? Some other secret sorrow? Or simply a matter of choice? She was reticent, as became a New England lady of her day. Neither her stories nor her letters hint at the corrosive neuroticism of, say, the two Brontes. If Sarah had dark frustrations, she kept them hidden.

The surface of her life was smooth. Despite being "delicate" she travelled, she had a wide circle of literary friends in Boston and elsewhere. From early on, when her first story was published in (then) William Dean Howells's *Atlantic*, she received encouragement and respect. Writers in those days had never heard of "writer's block" (and this before typewriters!) An upright New England woman like Sarah would not have regarded a lifetime of regular, disciplined work as anything but the norm.

She reminds one of her greater colleague, Jane Austen. Like her, Sarah liked best a country village, with a handful of characters. They might not be English gentry, but they maintain their own dignity and glamor. Sarah possessed not an iota of Jane Austen's deadly satirical sense, but she had a good eye and ear for what was passing away within her own lifetime. She herself noted the partial resemblance between her own precise characterizations and Austen's work:

"Yesterday afternoon I amused myself with Miss Austen's *Persuasion*. Dear me, how like her people are to the people we knew years ago! It is just as much New England before the war--that is, in provincial towns--as it ever was in old England."⁸

Then there is the haunting, deceptively simple *The White Heron*. Sylvia, a lonely country girl, is dazzled by (what else?) a handsome young man from the city. The city, of course, is the death bringer; the man hunts and stuffs birds. He is looking for a rare white heron; she knows where it is. Will she tell and thus (hopefully) win his regard? She doesn't and he departs, never to return.

It's the kind of understated writing that doesn't sell millions of paperbacks: It requires patience; a cold night with a good fire and the TV on the blink helps too. Nor is she an outspoken feminist. As an unmarried, hence independent, woman with a "competence" (as a modest inheritance was known), the income from her writing, inherited home, and a respected place in her community, she had as much freedom, for her time, as any woman--and many men. She probably didn't think to call herself a "suffragist" anymore than a respectable lady in South Berwick today calls herself a "woman's libber."

No one wrote the feel, the times of 19th century Maine like Sarah Orne Jewett, who died in 1909, in time to miss the further inroads of WWI. You have to go a long way back into the woods now to find this Maine:

"It is such clear cold weather that you feel as if you were under a great block of clear, shining ice... The wood-sleds are creeping out of the woods and into the village, and the oxen are like rocks from the pastures, or the tops of ledges, they look so hard and tough and frosted over."⁹

That Sarah Orne Jewett is not better known is our loss.

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footnotes on page 4

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Books

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book review



other WOMEN REMEMBERED

by Pat Wurtz

Diana Press has recently published a very exciting collection of short biographies entitled *Women Remembered*. The individual biographies were originally printed serially in the lesbian feminist newspaper, *The Ladder*, and the subjects are viewed from a lesbian feminist standpoint.

They are biographies of women, both famous and unknown. Here is your chance to see how women in our herstory have fought and struggled for their lives, for their rights in a male-dominated culture. Most of us have been taught myths about many women in history. It will take a long time to uncover the facts about these women. *Women Remembered* is an excellent take off point. It reveals astounding clues to our female past and uncovers areas where we only dreamed women could exist.

For example, an extremely enlightening fact about the life of Emily Dickinson is unearthed. Emily was in love with a woman, a woman who became the focus and subject of a very large number of her poems. Many of her poems are obviously written to/about a woman, but we have never allowed ourselves the space for lesbian interpretation because we were never "taught" that fact of her existence.

In fact, the introductions to most of Dickinson's books of poems detail the supposed love affair she had with a man. Often they say it was a married man, therefore giving reason for the failure of the relationship to actualize. So many different stories have been fabricated that it becomes quite clear they were a cover for the "strange" behavior that Emily donned. It is true that she was quite debilitated by her love for Kate--because of fear she and Kate were not able to pursue their love. Emily's poems and life are shrouded in mystery until we accept her lesbian identification. The material for this essay is substantiated by the bravely romantic biography, *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson* by Rebecca Patterson.



Susan B. Anthony

The following women's lives are also sensitively portrayed in *Women Remembered*: Queen Christina, the lesbian ruler of Sweden in the 1600's, who said she "felt such repulsion towards the marital state that she would rather choose death than a man"; the Trojan Women, who fought classically for their matriarchal rights; the Spaniard, Dona Catalina de Erauso, an escapee from a nunnery who became an adventurous cavalier and renowned swordswoman; Susan B. Anthony, whose ideas can best be summarized in her quote: "Away with your man-visions. Women propose to reject them all, and begin to dream dreams for themselves"; Gertrude Stein, who wrote in a refreshing new poetical style: "This is a list of my experiences. I cannot describe beauty. I cannot describe a square. I cannot describe strangeness. I cannot describe rivers, I cannot describe lands. I can describe milk, and women and resemblances and elaboration and cider. I can also describe weather and counters and water. I can also describe bursts of melody."

And there were Anne Bonny and Mary Read, two lesbian pirates who were very successful in their terroristic escapades, and in capturing for themselves a taste for the freedom and the fancy of a very adventuresome and predominantly male-oriented lifestyle.

These women represent only a glimpse in the realm of female culture and herstory. Yet they become extremely important to us once we've rediscovered them. They become important because they are our models, our only inspiring models. Models are very necessary for the continual growth of our self-image as proud women. We need to be constantly reminded of what women before us have done, how they've lived, how they've fought, and how they've loved.

They help us to combat our daily struggles and to keep our heads above water. Getting in touch with the accomplishments of our forebears is incentive for utilizing the abilities and strengths and controls we have on our own lives. The more sisters we unearth, the stronger and more united we will become. *Women Remembered* gives a wonderful feeling of connection to these exciting womanspirits.

Note: *Women Remembered* is available from Diana Press, 12 W. 25th St., Baltimore, MD, 21218. Other books available from Diana Press include *The Hand that Cradles the Rock* by Rita Mae Brown (poetry); *Class and Feminism and Lesbiansim and the Women's Movement*, both edited by Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch. The latter two books are essay anthologies.

Elizabeth Akers Allen (POET)

Elizabeth Akers Allen, born in 1823, adamantly believed in the suffrage movement and wrote forcefully about it. She was a pioneer in the field of woman editorship. Born in Strong, Maine, she later lived in Portland, where she was associate editor of the *Portland Daily Advertiser*. Most of the work she did while she officiated in this position went unsigned. Thus Elizabeth Allen never received the credit she was worthy of.

The poems in this issue are by Elizabeth Akers Allen, whose penname was Florence Percy. Her two poems, "The Good Time Coming" and "Resignation" are from *Forest Buds From the Woods of Maine* by Florence Percy, Francis Blake Co., Portland, Me., and Brown, Bazin & Co., Boston, 1856. Her poem, "In Washington" is from *Poems, 1869*, by Florence Percy, University Press: Welch, Bigelow, & Co., Cambridge, 1869.

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poetry

BY ELIZABETH
AKERS ALLEN

RESIGNATION

There is no sister-band, however tended,
But one young bride is there;-
There is no fire-side, howsoever defended,
But has one vacant chair.

Our home is full of mingled smiles and sighing,
Our fairest one has fled!
And baby Ned, for his lost sister crying,
Will not be comforted!

Let us be patient! these severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise,
But often times, celestial benedictions
Assume hymeneal guise.

We see but dimly through the mists and vapors,
But, drying sorrow's damps,
We read her marriage notice in the papers,
And trim hope's brightest lamps.

Marriage is nought;- what seems so is transition;
The life she lived of late
Is but a suburb to the life elysian
Yclept the wedded state.

She is not dead,- the child of our affection,
But gone unto that school,
Wherein she lays aside our fond protection
To own a husband's rule.

In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,
By his old mother led,
Safe from "young company" and mirth's intrusion,
She lives,- the same as dead.

Day after day we think what she is doing
In those dismal rooms,
Year after year, her toilsome way pushing
With stew-pans, mops and brooms.

Sometime will visit her, to keep unbroken
The bond which nature gives,
Thinking that our kind pity, though unspoken,
May cheer her where she lives.

Not as a girl shall we again behold her,
For when, with rapture wild,
In our embraces we again enfold her,
She will not be a child,-

But a staid matron, in her husband's mansion,
Clothed with a graver grace,
And beautiful with womanhood's expansion,
Shall we behold her face.

And though we see, with anger and emotion,
How poorly she is dressed,
In a cheap gingham, which with fond devotion,
She dignifies her "best,"

We will be patient, and assuage the feeling,
The little time we stay,
Our pity and our sympathy concealing
Until we come away!



Chansonetta Stanley Emmons/Colby College Art Museum

IN WASHINGTON

The burning sun beams on the pavement beat,
There is no pity in the brazen skies;
The air along the street quivers with scorching heat,
And its hot dazzle blinds the aching eyes.

In these long days, with dust and turmoil rife,
The sultry distance of the Avenue
Seems like some dreary life, full of unrest and strife,
Where there comes never either bloom or dew.

She sits there in the sunshine all the day,
Almost beneath the passers' hurrying feet,-
A woman, old and gray, beside the crowded way,
Blinded and choked with dust, and faint with heat.

A few poor matches in her basket lie,
Half hidden by her tattered garment's fold;
She waits there patiently, but no one stops to buy,
And her small merchandise remains unsold.

Her eyes are fixed upon the stunted grass,
Browned by the sunshine, in the dusty square,
While youth and beauty pass, but give no thought, alas!
To her who once was also young and fair.

In her now faded hair were golden gleams,
And youth shone on her forehead like a crown;-
Ah, how remote it seems, that time of joyous dreams,
Far from the hot streets of this tedious town!

Sometimes, I fancy, in her dull despair,
Across her thought this pleasant memory slips;
Once, as I passed her there, a sweet, old-fashioned air
Quavered in broken treble from her lips.

"THE GOOD TIME COMING"

I saw her on the sidewalk yesterday,
Tripping along with brisk and airy tread
Over the new-fallen snow, which thinly lay
Along her path;- she raised her pretty head,
Bringing to view a very lovely face,
And casting a coquettish glance around,
She set her foot upon a treacherous place
And down she went astonished to the ground!
Down,- yet no sooner down than up again
With an elastic spring the fair one came,-
And such a rosy rising! I maintain
I've seen Aurora wrap the east in flame
With blush less burning;- but with glad surprise
I joyed that woman had, at last, a "chance to rise!"

No matter whose rich skirts against her blow,
She never speaks, or turns her head, or stirs;
Oh, flutters to and fro, what can your gay hearts know
Of such an empty, hopeless life as hers?

She sees you, blessed with all that fortune brings,
Shake from your dainty robes the perfumed airs;
She sees white hands, and rings, and gems, and precious things,
And smiling eyes. I wonder if she cares?

Silent she sits, her chin upon her knees,
While proud and happy crowds go sweeping by;
I wonder, when she sees such differences as these,
If her sad soul rebels and queries, "Why?"

What thoughts may pain her heart, so lone and drear,
Who knows?- But though I never heard her speak,
Once, as I came more near, I thought I saw a tear
Lost in the mazy wrinkles of her cheek.

But if there be a law of recompense,
Which rights all wrongs, and gives us back our own,
In some sweet realm for hence, where toil and turbulence
Dwell not, and age and sorrow are unknown,

There she, with all her earthly troubles told,
And freed from all this weight of want and care,
No longer wan and old, and poor and unconsolated,
Shall be a radiant angel, young and fair.

And if, enfranchised from this dreary maze,
I, too, shall come into that rest serene,
And meet her, as she strays along the pleasant ways
Amid the waters still and pastures green,

Dowered with the deathless youth of Paradise,
I wonder if my memory will be true,-
If, looking into her eyes, my own will recognize
The Old Match-vender of the Avenue?



womanbriefs

UNION WOMEN PLAN TACTICS

Leaders of the Coalition of Labor Union Women say their 5,000 members will become more visible in 1976. The plan to join other women in a Washington rally for national health insurance, and organize rank-and-file women workers into lobbying teams for ratification of the ERA. Another top priority is enactment of a national day care program for children of working women.

According to the Wall St. Journal, delegates at their winter convention wanted to work within the union movement, rejecting radical efforts to create a pressure group against male-dominated unions and to open CLUW membership to women without union cards. But they cheered efforts to put a woman on the all-male AFL-CIO executive council. (from *The Wall Street Journal*)

WE AREN'T THE COOKS

Japanese feminists recently demanded from a manufacturing firm that a sexist TV commercial be taken off the air. In the ad for instant noodles, a teenage man says, "I'm the person who eats," while two teenage women hurry to get noodles, proclaiming "We are the people who cook." After protests by the Association to Take Action in International Women's Year, the company dropped the ad. The women are now demanding an end to all sexist ads. (from *News and Letters*)

DON'T RELY ON "RELY"

Women in Rochester, NY, where a new tampon called Rely is being test marketed, are complaining that the tampon is difficult to remove, causes severe irritation, and disintegrates within the body. The Rochester Patriot says polyurethane, which the tampons contain, has been shown to be a cancer causing agent. Currently, the product, manufactured by Procter & Gamble, is not being sold nationwide. After finding out the city was a test market, one former user said, "I really felt like a guinea pig." (from *Community Press Features*)

WOMEN FIGHT COAL COMPANIES

Although women are working in some coal mines, four women have filed sex discrimination charges with the Kentucky Human Rights Commission against several coal companies. The Appalachian Women's Rights Organization, has leafletted and organized support for the women. The women have tried for a year to get hired and have been refused. Although not many women are seeking jobs in the mines, the possibility of these

higher paying jobs opening to women is important because most women in the area get \$1-\$2 per hour for unskilled work with no benefits, sick pay or job security. (from *Community Press Features*)

ABORTION - IS LEGAL ENOUGH?

According to a nationwide study by the Institute of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, an estimated 400,000 to 900,000 women were unable to obtain legal abortions last year. More than one-third of these women were low-income, and a significant percentage under 20 years of age. Because safe legal abortions are inaccessible to poor women, an estimated 50,000 dangerous illegal or self-induced abortions are still performed each year. (from *HERA*)

IN THE POPE'S BACKYARD

About 850,000 Italian women have signed a petition for abortion on demand. The petition's circulator, Adele Faccio, has spent 36 days in jail for giving out abortion information. As a result of pro-abortion activities in Italy, there are three bills before Parliament: one from the progressive Socialists for abortion on demand, a bill from the Christian Democrats making abortion illegal except in cases of dire medical need, and a bill from the Communists which is similar to the Christians'. (from *HERA*)

THE FULL EMPLOYMENT ACT

Women are beginning to mobilize for passage of the Equal Opportunity and Full Employment Act, which would guarantee "useful and rewarding employment opportunities for all adult Americans willing and able to work." Believing that full employment is basic to equal opportunity and the economic survival of women and minorities, NOW has made the Act a legislative priority. One NOW observer says the Act's passage would mean "a giant stride towards insurance from dependence on any other person for economic reasons." The legislation defines full employment to include both full and part-time jobs and provides for adequate day care facilities. Write your congresspeople urging support and co-sponsorship of the Act (H.R. 50 in the House and S. 50 in the Senate) and commending them if they are already sponsors. (from *The Spokeswoman*)

STOP S-1

S-1, an omnibus bill in the U.S. Senate which would standardize the federal criminal code, has come under attack from radical, liberal and conservative papers as well as the American Civil Liberties Union. The bill, originally drafted by John Mitchell and Richard Klindienst of Nixon's administration, would among other things: 1) outlaw civil disobedience protests; 2) reinstate the death penalty for the federal crimes of treason, sabotage, and espionage; 3) reenact the Smith Act, used in the McCarthy witch hunt trials (Violation provides 15 years/\$100,000 fine for membership in an organization allegedly advocating "revolutionary change in government"). The ACLU contends that this section will allow the government to imprison people merely for talking about revolution--an activity fully protected by the First Amendment; 4) define a riot as "an assemblage of ten persons which creates a grave danger" to "property". Violation provides three years/\$100,000 fine. Leading a riot is construed as "the movement of a person across a state line" to assemble with ten persons or for use of the mail or telephone "in the course of planning, promotion" of a "riot". 5) frees federal officials (like Nixon, Haldeman, Mitchell) from criminal penalties for any illegal act so long as they believed "the conduct charged was required by or authorized by law." 6) establishes government authority to maintain wiretaps up to 48 hours without a court order. The bill, for example, would have made the publication of the Pentagon Papers illegal, and it clearly paves the way for recrimination against feminists. The bill has a good chance of becoming law, especially if sent through Congress piecemeal. Unless we stop it. Write your congresspeople explaining why you are against the bill, contact your local newspapers and urge them to run stories and editorials on the bill. For more information, write National Committee Against Repressive Legislation, 1250 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 501, Los Angeles, CA 90017. (from *Women Against Prison and Community Press Features*)

GAY RIGHTS BILL

A bill guaranteeing gay people freedom from hiring discrimination is currently before the U.S. Congress. The bill, originally introduced by Rep. Bella Abzug (D-NY), now has 25 co-sponsors. HR 5452 is the bill's number and the newsletter of the National Gay Task Force urges people to write their Congresspeople in support of the bill, explaining the need for the legislation. A similar bill is before the Connecticut State Legislature. For further information write Rev. Gail Robinson, 39 Dorothy St., Hartford, CT 06106. (from *Gay Community News*)

PREGNANT VICTORY

States may no longer deny women unemployment benefits in the last three months of pregnancy and the six weeks following delivery on the sole presumption that they are unable to work. So ruled the U.S. Supreme Court November 1 in the case of a Utah woman. The decision invalidated part of the Utah law and cast doubt on laws in 19 other states. (from *Off Our Backs*)

cont'd on page 9

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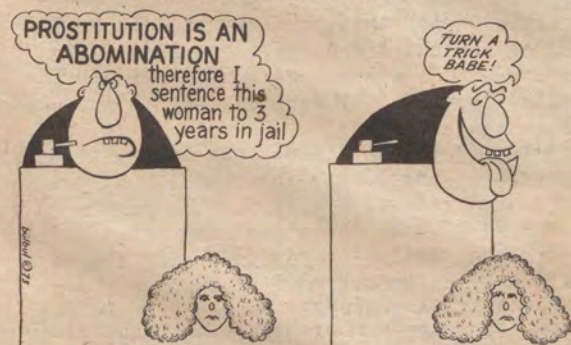
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womanbriefs

continued from page 8



(graphic from Cartoons by Bulbul, available from New Seed Press)

ARRESTS—FOR WOMEN ONLY

A woman judge in San Francisco has been barred from hearing prostitution cases, after she dismissed charges against 37 prostitutes on the grounds that their male customers went free. Judge Ollie Marie Victorire said the police use "intentional, purposeful, selective enforcement policy" in arresting the females. She added the customers are mostly "white, married, middle-class affluent males." She plans to appeal the superior court ban on her hearings. (from HERA)

THE GRAND JURY CONNECTION

On December 19, Ellen Grusse and Terri Turgeon were released from Niantic State Prison in Connecticut and their subpoenas were dropped. The two women had spent over eight months in jail for refusing to testify before a federal grand jury investigating the harboring of fugitives Susan Saxe and Katherine Power. According to the Grand Jury Project, the women are free because of the massive pressures on the judge and U.S. attorney by hundreds of people.

Jill Raymond has been incarcerated in Kentucky county jails for nearly a year for refusing to cooperate with a similar grand jury. Letters for her release should be addressed to U.S. Attorney Eldon Webb, Federal Bldg., Lexington, KY 40501.

The December issue of *Off Our Backs* (OOB) reports that Native Americans have been illegally subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury investigation of a June 26, 1975 incident at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, where one Indian man and two FBI agents were killed. According to OOB, several Indians at first refused to testify. Later, four Indians were indicted for murder, although by all accounts, the testimony of the nine subpoenaed was unconnected to the June 26 incident. OOB states "It is essential to see the connections between the use of Grand Juries against Native Americans, and against lesbians in Kentucky and Conn., farm workers in California, and anti-war activists in the 1960's."

MONEYPower FOR WOMEN

The Feminist Economic Alliance, a national cooperative association of feminist credit unions and enterprises, has been formed to bring economic independence, power and self-help to American women, by assisting the development of feminist credit unions and enterprises. Organized credit unions will make themselves available to newly forming feminist credit unions in their region, and will publish a newsletter containing information on how to start and run a credit union. Many of the credit unions are less than a year old, although together they have assets of over a million dollars! Anyone interested in starting one in Maine? For more info write Susan Osborne, Connecticut FFCU, 170 York St., New Haven, CN 06510.

Maine women can join the Massachusetts Feminist Federal Credit Union by joining one of five women's organizations in Mass. to be eligible for membership. (Federal law requires a credit union to have organizational constituencies) But it's easy to join--just write for information at 186½ Hampshire St., Cambridge, MA. You have to put your money in, in order to be able to get a loan. MFFCU has 570 members, deposits of \$330,000 and has loaned \$130,000. Loans are made for abortions, legal fees, car purchases, consolidating debt and other needs. (from an FEA press release and CPF)

THE PILL—MORE BAD NEWS

The New England Journal of Medicine says that growing reports on side effects, including cancer, gallstones and abnormal blood clotting, raise "serious questions" about the basis on which birth control pills and other hormone drugs are prescribed to millions of women. Meanwhile the Food and Drug Administration is considering removing one type of oral contraceptive from the market because of safety concerns. The type of pill is known as sequential, and some brand names are: Oracon, Ortho-Novum, and Norquen. (from *The Wall Street Journal*)

WOMEN'S FARM PROJECT

Sixty Malay women, aged 18 to 25, have settled on 5,000 acres of land in Johore State, Malaysia to demonstrate that women can farm as well as men. They planted vegetables, nuts, and oil palms. The project, sponsored by the Johore State Government, at the insistence of the women's section of Malaysia's leading political party, was done so well that more are planned. (from HERA)

WOMEN & CRIME

The National News Council has censured *The National Observer* for publishing a story in October, 1974 that tried to establish a causal relationship between the women's movement and a rise in female crime. Proponents of the theory base their case on FBI statistics that show a marked increase in female arrests and "serious crimes" committed by women since 1969. Judith Hansen, information officer of the Pa. Program for Women and Girl Offenders, lodged a complaint against the story with the National News Council, saying the conclusions derived from the statistics do not make good sense. She asserts that the poor economic situation in the country and a burgeoning drug culture are responsible for a rise in the female crime rate, and notes that some of the goals of the women's movement--strong self-images, independent roles, and economic self-sufficiency--elude female offenders, who are "usually handicapped by a background of poverty and a low level of education." (from *The Spokeswoman*)

POLICE HAVE MINOR MORALS

A New York woman has been awarded \$8,000 in damages in a suit filed against Suffolk County police officers who arrested her on a charge of impairing the morals of a minor for bringing her 16 month old daughter to a lecture on birth control. (from *The Spokeswoman*)

TV RAPE

For several months gay groups and women's groups have protested NBC's airing of "Born Innocent", a film depicting violent rape, by a lesbian with a broomstick, of a 14 year-old-reformatory inmate. Protesters have criticized the network and five other corporate sponsors for misrepresenting lesbians and sensationalizing lesbians and the rape of women for profit-making ventures. However, the film has been licensed for syndication, and NBC may still replay it next year. For more information and present status of protest write Tayloe Ross, Lesbian Feminist Liberation, Inc., PO Box 243, Village Station, New York, NY 10014. (from *Media Report to Women and Gay Community News*)

NEW ZEALAND WOMEN UNITE

New Zealand's Working Women's Alliance formed in April of 1975. It is "an organization of working women and housewives who stand opposed to the exploitation of working people and further discrimination that women face." (from HERA)



announcements

You Could Make Beautiful Music Together !! WOMEN WHO MAKE MUSIC!

If you're willing to 1) donate an evening of your time and talent and 2) have fun (not necessarily in that order)--read on. *The Freewoman's Herald* is sponsoring a women's music night as a fundraising project. But we need music makers--amateurs, professionals, shower-stall singers, etc. Give us a call at 774-6071 or Lynn at 772-0706.

WOMEN WHO LIKE MUSIC

Got the Tuesday night blahs or the week night blues? Come and hear your sisters at the Friendship III Restaurant and Lounge, 189 Commercial St., Portland. The date is Tuesday, February 24 from 8-12. \$1 donation--benefit for the *Maine Freewoman's Herald*. Bring your friends!

KEEP THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Keep Abortion legal and safe. There is strong organized opposition in the state of Maine and on a national level to alter the legal status of abortion. Nonchalant, indifferent attitudes could permit legislation to sneak through the back door. Action is necessary to safeguard our rights, control over our bodies. Voice your concerns. The Portland Women's Center Steering Committee meets Mondays, 7:30 p.m., 193 Middle St. Write! Call! Organize!

OLDER WOMEN'S EXHIBIT

Gorham's older women exhibit on March 31, 1976. 10-2, art work and handicrafts exhibit; 11-1, a meal at no charge, but free-will donations accepted. It's an open house for persons of all ages. Senior Citizen's Drop-In Center, St. Anne's Church, Rte. 25, Gorham, Maine. Free painting classes (oil) and arts and crafts classes offered to men and women each Wednesday from 9-12. For more information call People's Regional Opportunity Program, 772-6543.

WOMEN'S COFFEEHOUSE

If you ever travel far south from the "Country of Pointed Furs" (Maine) stop in Washington, D.C. at the Rising Women Coffeehouse. Live feminist entertainment, good food and drink. Children welcome. 2121 Decatur Place, NW, off Florida Ave. below Connecticut Ave.

SMALL GRANTS OFFERED

The Center for Research on Women at Wellesley College has announced a small grants program for persons doing research on women. Grants ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 are available to researchers with no institutional affiliation that would provide access to funds. The grants may be used for ancillary activities (travel, manuscript typing, translating, etc.) but not for salary support. For further information, write to the Center for Research on Women, Cheever House, Wellesley College, 828 Washington St., Wellesley, MA 02181.

PORTLAND WOMEN'S CENTER

February 26, 7:30: Discussion of Female Sexuality.

February 14: Women's Center Party, \$1.00 donation at door.

(193 Middle St., Portland. 774-6071)

Pot Luck Supper! March 12, 1976

6:00 to 8:30 p.m. - St. Luke's Parish Hall, Park Street, Portland. Bring a dish to share. Open discussion following. Is there a need for a Women's Center in Portland?

PROJECT IMPACT--UMPG

Angela Davis, educator and political activist, will speak on March 16, 8 p.m. at the UMPG gym on Falmouth St. Admission is \$1 for the public and \$.50 for UMPG students.

"Women Sounds", a collection of seminars and lectures on a variety of topics will feature Mary Daly and Catharine Stimpson. Daly is a theologian, educator, and author of several books, including *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Stimpson is the founder of Barnard College's Women's Center, a writer and an educator. The women will speak the week of April 12. Times and places will be announced.

continued on page 11



Health Notes

by Joanne Costanza

for the Maine Feminist Health Project

D_x Trichomonas R_x Flagyl Read on...

Flagyl, the treatment for trichomonas, one of the most common vaginal infections has been demonstrated to cause cancer in animals. The F.D.A. (Food and Drug Administration) our supposed protectors, declined on October 28, 1975 to ban Flagyl as a treatment of trichomonas and to inform the public of its dangers. The following is a description of what seems to be very slick sidestepping by the F.D.A. and a very profitable victory for G.D. Searle and Company drugs.

Trichomonas, or trich, is a single celled, microscopic organism, a parasitic protozoa, that can be present in the intestine, rectum, urethra, or vagina. Women who have trichomonas may notice some or all of these symptoms: there is more vaginal discharge than usual, it is thin, foamy and yellowish or greenish and has an unpleasant odor. This discharge irritates the vulva (crotch) and vagina which can become itchy (very), red or spotted, swollen, sore, or bleeding. There may be a burning feeling upon urination or sometimes when not urinating.

Trichomonas is most often transmitted through genital contact in homosexual and heterosexual lovemaking. The trichomonad can survive for several minutes on warm moist surfaces, so towels, washcloths, and bathtubs are also a possible source of infection. Both sexual partners should be treated to avoid reinfection.

Flagyl is the brand name for the drug metronidazole and has been the treatment of choice for trichomonas for more than ten years. Flagyl comes in the form of oral tablets and vaginal inserts (used by pregnant women). The recommended dose until recently has been three 250 mg. tablets (two tablets for men) per day for ten days, thirty tablets all together. A reduced dosage of eight tablets taken all at once has been found to be equally effective.

G.D. Searle's application to market Flagyl was first approved by the F.D.A. in 1963. Nine years later in 1972 the Journal of the National Cancer Institute published the findings of scientists M. Rustia and P. Shubik that metronidazole produced cancer in mice--lung cancer in females and males and leukemia in females. The F.D.A. then found that the data in their files submitted to them by Searle corroborated these findings. Apparently the F.D.A. had accepted Searle's assertion that Flagyl was not a carcinogen in the face of Searle's raw data that did not support this assertion.

The F.D.A., despite their own data, which reveals an increase in the incidence of mammary tumors among female rats exposed to metronidazole, and the Rustia and Shubik findings, chose in the summer of 1973 not to ban Flagyl but merely to add the following, misleading paragraph to the informational insert that comes in every package of Flagyl (an insert that patients rarely see).

"Animal Pharmacology and Toxicology: In a lifetime study in Swiss mice, metronidazole was reported to increase the incidence of all tumors (primarily adenomas) over those found in control animals. The report also indicated that an increase in malignant lymphomas occurred in female mice. Increases in the incidence of mammary tumors among female Sprague-Dawley rats administered metronidazole were noted in two long-term studies. However, mammary tumors occur commonly in female rats of this strain."

The Health Research Group, a Washington based, non-profit consumer protection organization has this criticism of the insert:

"These words are apparently intended to soothe doctors, rather than give them plain information. They do not say the METRONIDAZOLE caused cancer in three separate laboratory tests and in two species of animals. Instead they cite a 'report' of 'increases' in tumors, together with an account of the rat studies which gives the false impression that the rat studies were uncontrolled. The package insert is a trivialization of very serious findings about the drug, and as such appears to be a public relations victory for the drug company."

According to an F.D.A. regulation, the choice of the label "Animal Pharmacology and Toxicology" rather than "Warning" allows Searle to avoid including this information in its advertising for Flagyl. Advertising is where most physicians get their information for prescribing drugs.

In June 1975 the Medical Letter, a non-profit publication on drugs and therapeutics cited studies that reveal the danger of gene mutations from the use of Flagyl. Genetic mutation is one known cause of birth defects. "This is the first report of a drug not used for cancer chemotherapy having mutagenic activity in concentrations found in the body fluids of patients taking recommended doses."

The Medical Letter concludes: "Metronidazole is carcinogenic in rodents, mutagenic in bacteria, and should thus be regarded as potentially dangerous in humans."

The Health Research Group has unsuccessfully petitioned the F.D.A. to ban Flagyl as a treatment for trichomonas and to inform the public of its dangers. Their petition asserts that trichomonas is not life threatening and has no effect on "longevity or general health," that is, the disease is far less dangerous than the treatment.

There is some controversy about whether trichomonas can cause any real damage to vaginal or cervical tissue. The Health Research Group takes the opposite view. Their petition quotes the following. "Trichomonas/ produces no permanent or generalized tissue damage; the major threat of this condition is to comfort rather than health."

In answer to the H.R.G. petition the F.D.A. makes the following outrageous statement: "Vaginitis is an important disease, causing much suffering among its victims. . . . If the fears, the resulting psychosocial maladjustments, physical discomforts, and even the shame the patient suffers are taken into account, it is no exaggeration to state that vaginitis causes more unhappiness and

mental suffering on this earth than does all genital cancer."

If you suspect that you have a vaginal infection, you should first determine what kind of infection it is. This can be done accurately only through a microscopic evaluation of vaginal discharge. You should find someone with a microscope and experience in diagnosing vaginal infections--an experienced health worker.

Although various infections have distinctive appearances and odors--for example, a monilia (or yeast) infection will produce vaginal discharge that looks white and lumpy like cottage cheese and smells like yeast (baking bread) while a trich infection will produce a discharge that is generally thin and foamy yellowish or greenish and has a foul smell--often times infections are mixed and symptoms are not clearly defined. This is why you should insist on a microscopic test.

If it is determined that you have a trichomonas infection, it is your decision whether or not to take Flagyl. Weigh the benefits against the risks.

A good alternative treatment is a douche of one tablespoon of white vinegar in one quart of warm water repeated every three days or twice a week. This reduces the alkalinity of the vagina--makes it more acidic. Daily tub baths will help (soap is acidic). Other possibilities are using a spermicidal jelly or an acid based non-spermicidal jelly, such as Aci-jel.

Nylon underpants, girdles, pantyhose restrict the airflow to the vulva and give the trichomonades (and other infections) a wonderful environment in which to grow. Cotton underpants or none at all (admittedly not too practical for Maine winters) are recommended.

The new drug that the F.D.A. refers to for the treatment of trichomonas is tinidazole (Ortho) and has also been found to cause cancer in test animals.

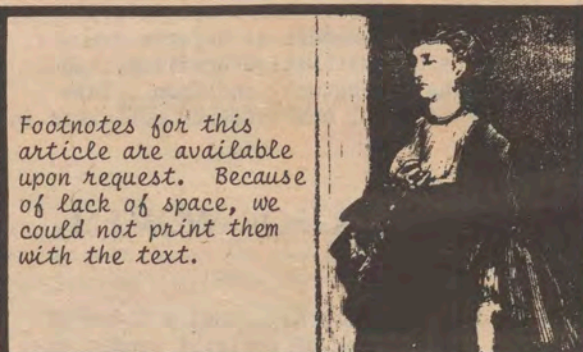
Tricofuron is a drug that was used for the treatment of trichomonas before Flagyl was approved. This is still available as an alternative but you should investigate possible side effects or allergic reactions.

If you decide to take Flagyl, you should know that: Flagyl should not be used by pregnant women or by women who are nursing babies. It is also contraindicated for women with a disease of the central nervous system or a history of blood disease.

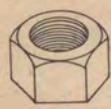
Flagyl blocks the metabolism of alcohol and more than one drink will make you sick and vomit. One drink will effect you like several.

Other possible side effects of Flagyl are nausea, diarrhea, cramps, dizziness, metallic taste, itching, dry mouth and vagina, yeast infections, birth defects, and cancer.

It's up to you.



Footnotes for this article are available upon request. Because of lack of space, we could not print them with the text.



nuts to bolts

by Kitty Maher

MAKING A HANGING SHELF

STOCK NEEDED

- 1 Ceiling Hook
- 2 Screw Eyes
- 90" Canvas or other fairly strong material--8" wide.
- 3 pcs. pine board or plywood 16x8x1/2"
- 6 pcs. half round moulding 16x1/2"
- 1 pc. pine board or plywood 1x2x10
- 24 Upholstery Tacks
- 18 1" Brads (nails w/o heads)

Hammer
Hand Saw
Rule or Tape Measure
White Glue (Elmers)

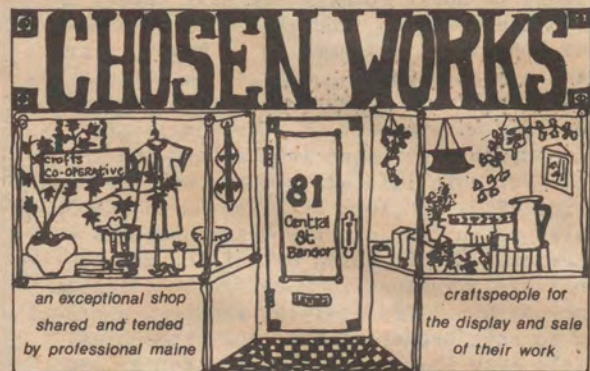
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Any type of fairly strong material can be used for these ceiling hung shelves--canvas is ideal--but a strong cotton doubled over will provide enough strength.

Glue and nail moulding onto long edges on both sides of each shelf. Sand for a smooth finish. Paint or stain the lumber before assembly. The small piece (1x2x10) can be found by rummaging through the lumber yard's scrap pile (it's free).

When everything is dry, assembly is fast. Fold your material in half lengthwise, insert small piece of wood (1x2x10) in the middle, nail three upholstery tacks on each side, measure down 15 inches and nail three upholstery tacks on each side of shelf--the same for the remaining two shelves. If there is any excess material, fold it under before tacking on the bottom shelf.

Screw the screw eyes into the ends of the top hanger and tie rope or whatever. A decorative plant hook can be used to hang from the ceiling anywhere you like.



HELPING HAND
natural foods

JUST OFF RTE 1
DOWNTOWN BATH CENTRE ST

under
new
management
28

announcements

cont'd from page 9.

GAY PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE

Weekly meetings at University of Maine/ Portland, 7:30 Thursday, 92 Bedford St.

Dances February 28 and March 20 at 8:00 p.m. in Payson Smith Hall on the Portland campus. \$1 donation.

GAY SYMPOSIUM

Third Annual Maine Gay Symposium will be held April 23-24. For more information contact Maine Gay Task Force, Box 4542 ds, Portland, Maine 04112 or call 773-5530.

LITERATURE AVAILABLE

The Freewoman's Herald has some feminist literature for sale. Reprints put out by KNOW, Inc. The articles have to do with class, race, sexism. Read about women in the Russian Revolution, women in China, the Politics of Childhood, male liberation, Politics of Housework. There are also some paperbacks by Daughters, Inc., and Times Change Press. Subject matter pertaining to personal change and worldly change. Write us for a list (perhaps you could request specific publications or send some topics/issues of your concern).

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT

A photographic exhibit entitled "Images of Woman" with expectations of exploring photographically "the paths, or directions women have taken and are taking...and the status of women in this bicentennial year" will open at the Portland Museum of Art in December, 1976.

The exhibition will be open to both amateur and professional photographers, and final selections will be chosen by two panel of jurors. Deadline for submission of photographs will be mid-May. Inquiries may be addressed to YWCA Images of Woman Committee, PO Box 15001, Portland, Maine 04104.

RAPE CRISIS CENTER

Center at 335 Brighton Ave., Portland. Call 774-3613.

FEDERAL INCOME TAX CREDIT

Families with a total 1975 income of less than \$8,000 may be eligible for a \$400 payment or credit on their income tax returns. The adjusted gross income from 1975 must be less than \$8,000, (amount located on line 15 of Form 1040 or line 12 of Form 1040-A). You must have at least one child who lived with you in the U.S. the entire year and must be entitled to a dependency exemption for that child. In addition, you must have paid more than half of the cost of maintaining your home. Even though you might not owe any federal income taxes at all for 1975 because your income is below the level on which taxes are assessed you have to file with the IRS to receive the bonus. Ask for IRS Form 596 at the local IRS office for further information.

MAINE FEMINIST HEALTH PROJECT

Women's Health Slide Show and Vaginal Self-Examination Presentation is available to groups of five or more women. Contact the Maine Feminist Health Project, 183½ Water Street, Augusta, 04330, phone 622-4945, or Portland 772-7673.

We need help! Are you interested in women's health? Education? Fund raising? Counselling? Publicity? Planning? Good times? Older women, Franco-Americans, poor women, high school women, handicapped women and Native Americans are especially welcome. Come to the open meeting 7:00 p.m. Thursday February 19th at 183½ Water Street, Augusta. Women needing rides call 772-7673 Portland, or 622-4945 Augusta.



Daily World/cpf

Freewoman Classifieds

FOR SALE

Books, posters, comix, from Amazon Reality, a women's distribution collective. Brochure from PO Box 95, Eugene OR 97401.

Photo note cards for and about women. Send for brochure, c/o Annu Unlimited, 1314 Morningside Way, Venice, CA 90291.

1976 Women's Birthday Calendar (poster size, black ink, white paper). \$4 from Carol Vanderschaaf, The Art Works, 475 Lakeshore Dr., NE, Atlanta, GA 30307.

Publications, pins, stickers, labels, etc. available from Women's Equity Action League, 829 National Press Bldg., Washington, DC. 20045. Send for a listing.

BIRD News Makes History--illustrated, annotated calendar which records 8 years of struggle in Atlanta, the South, the country, the world. Send name and address plus \$2.50. Great Speckled Bird, Box 7847, Atlanta, GA.

Sister Heathenspinster's Almanac and Lunation Calendar. Staplebound, 7"x10", 14 pages, covering the dates March 20, 1976 to March 19, 1977. \$2 per copy or \$1.70 for orders of five or more. Write Michelle Brody, Box 111, Marquett, IA 52158.

Stereo 2-record set, "Women's Work"; three centuries of works by 18 European women composers, 1587-present. 44 page booklet with the album. For current prices send to Gemini Hall Records, 808 West End Ave., New York, NY 10025.

PUBLICATIONS

Women and Health, bimonthly academic journal. Yr. sub-\$10. Write Women and Health, Biological Sciences Program, SUNY/College at Old Westbury, Old Westbury, NY 11568.

Artemis, newsletter for women in business. \$12 for 10 issues. 525 West End Ave., New York, NY.

Scarecrow Press, Inc. has a catalog of books available on women. Write 52 Liberty St., PO Box 656, Metuchen, NJ 08840.

The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook, available at many bookstores. \$5. Large list of resources for women, covering many topics.

Thinking Like A Woman by Leah Fritz. Afterword by Barbara Deming. Collection of articles from 1965-1975 on feminism and other issues. \$3.25 from WIN Books, Box 547, Rifton, NY 12471.

The Gay Bibliography, 5th edition, published by the Task Force on Gay Liberation of the American Library Assoc., (25¢) For info on this and other resources write c/o Lesbian Front, PO Box 8342, Jackson, MS. Directory of Lesbian Publications also available from Helen Diner Memorial, Women's Center, PO Box 811, E. Lansing, MI 48823.

Violet Press has lesbian-feminist books available. Write PO Box 398, New York, NY.

Hecate--A Women's Interdisciplinary Journal from Australia. Analytical articles, poems, 100 pages. Twice-yearly. Subs \$4/yr. G.P.O. Box 99, St. Lucia, Queensland, Australia 4067.

Resources, eight page newsletter of items about useful products and services, new publications, interesting organizations, new ideas and events. Feminist listings included. 12 issues plus six back issues. \$5 or \$1 for three trial issues, \$2 for six trial issues.

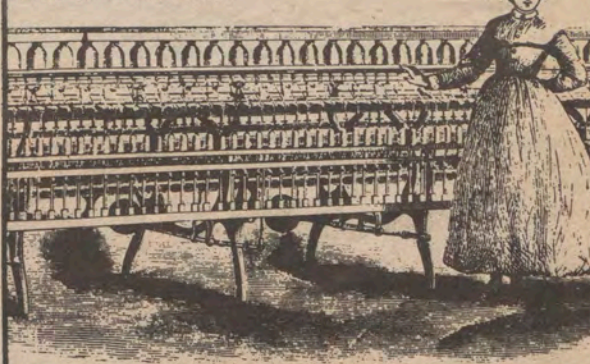
Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. New quarterly from U. of Chicago Press. Articles and criticism in a range of academic fields, voice for scholarship about women. \$16/yr. sub. U. of Chicago Press, 11030 Langley Ave., Chicago, ILL 60628.

A Guide to Lobbying for Women, special issue of the Woman Activist, 2310 Barbour Rd., Falls Church, Va. 22043.

The Women's Guide To Books, bibliography. Two sets available. \$2 each from MSS Information Corp., 655 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10021.

Free 42 page booklet. "Women in America"--about women's achievements in many fields. Write Sperry and Hutchinson Co., 2900 W. Seminary Dr., Fort Worth, TX 76133 for up to six copies.

A woman textile worker.



MISCELLANEOUS

WOMAN AND DOG need small, inexpensive home in the country. Anywhere between Portland and Augusta. Call Rockie at 772-7673 or 622-4945.

Training as community organizer for women's causes. Write The Midwest Academy, Inc., 600 W. Fullerton, Chicago, IL 60614.

Clairol, Inc. has scholarships for women over 30 who plan to enroll or are enrolled in a vocational school, 2-4 year college, or graduate school. Inquiries to BPW Foundation, 2012 Mass. Ave., NW, Washington, DC, 20036. "Educational Financial Aid Sources for Women" pamphlet from Clairol Loving Care Scholarship Program, PO Box 975, Yonkers, NY 10701.

Graduate Fellowships for women with interrupted academic careers. Full-time or part-time basis for Masters or Doctoral in preparation for teaching. Write GF for W, Danforth Foundation, 222 S. Central Ave., St. Louis, MO.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (Joan Little's defenders) needs contributions. Send to SPLC, 1001 South Hull St., Montgomery, Ala. 36101.

I am a highly motivated woman desiring work in Portland area. Will do farm work, painting, repairs, or any odd jobs. Want something consistent so I can stay in So. Maine. Own a car and can travel. Contact through Susan at 772-6076 or Lynn at 772-0706.

Clothing alterations done in my home. \$1.50 for straight skirt hems, \$3 for full skirts. \$2 per hr. for major alterations on dresses, coats, suits, etc. Call 774-6040, evenings.

Info on seasonal employment in fire control div. of Me. Forest Service and in Bureau of Parks and Recreation, write Dept. of Conservation, Augusta. Jobs filled in early March. (Affirmative action programs)

DISTRIBUTORS MAINE

AUGUSTA

University Bookstore/Mr. Paperback

BATH-BRUNSWICK

Bookland/Day's Variety/Grand Orange/Helping Hand Natural Foods/Moulton Union-Bowdoin College

BANGOR

Bangor Int'l Airport/Fire Escape Upstairs/Post Office Pharmacy/Record Warehouse

BELFAST

The Grasshopper Shop/Johnson's Lunch/The Workshop

CAMDEN

McKay's Drugs/Nash Market

CORNISH

Cornish Pharmacy

GORHAM

Gorham Pharmacy/UMPG Bookstore

PORTLAND

Books Etc./Erebus/Good Day Market/Paper Patch/Portland Int'l Jetport/St. Clair's Pharmacy/UMPG Bookstore/Westbrook College

ROCKLAND

Reading Corner/State News

SEARSPORT

Searsport Drug

THOMASTON

Corner Giftshop

WISCASSET

Wiscasset Newsstand

KEZAR FALLS

Locke's Store/Goodwin's

ORONO

University Bookstore

BOSTON AREA

New Words Bookstore-Somerville