

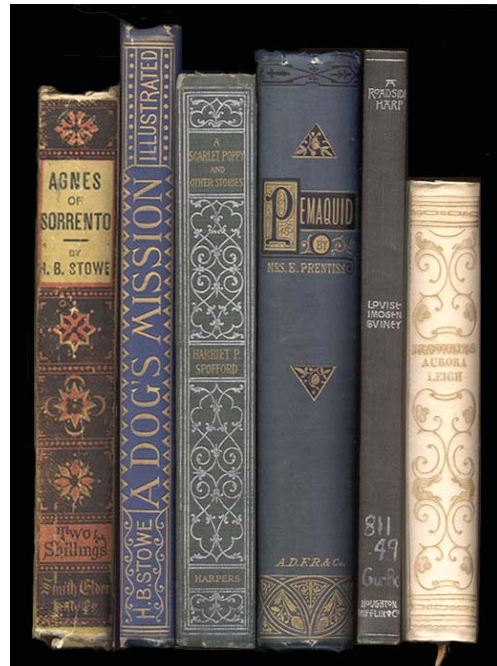
MWWC

MAINE WOMEN WRITERS COLLECTION
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND LIBRARIES

Welcome to the MWWC Newsletter

For years we struggled with writing a lively annual report to let our advisory committee and University colleagues see the progress and work of the Collection. We introduce a new format - a newsletter including progress reports, new projects and accomplishments, new goals and objectives, events and programs -- as well as interpretive pieces.

Please let us know what you think and what you would like to see in the future. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions. The curator's email is cgurley@une.edu. Her direct line is 207-221-4324. The MWWC Website can be found at this url: www.une.edu/mwwc.



The Future of History



What, some ask, is the future of archival collections ... of books? To me, a person who does daily hands-on work with historic artifacts, the answer is crystal clear: books and manuscripts will continue to be absolutely necessary. One very important way that our

culture engages in badly needed self-study is through the collection and analysis of resources that contain precious primary evidence of our history and culture.

Local institutions play a crucial role in maintaining and providing public access

to historic and cultural resources that broader national (generally published)

resources cannot. The MWWC was established in 1959 to document a very special and often underrepresented aspect of our culture, the literary work of Maine

women. By staying focused on this one important aspect of our history we provide a

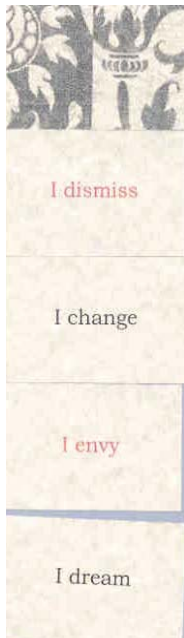
clear window into the past, providing a context for the future.



Cally Gurley
Curator

*Artists' books
have a lot
to say*

Jamie Thompson
2007 UNE Graduate
English Department



Many treasures of literary history reside on the Westbrook campus at the Maine Women Writers Collection (MWWC). The MWWC is a collection within the Abplanalp Library holding the books, manuscripts, and personal artifacts of hundreds of Maine women. Some of the unique items in the collections are the artists' books. The MWWC has recently acquired two artists' books by Maine artist Allison Cooke Brown. Brown's work is inspired by her "domestic life, both in subject matter and content," she says.

The world of women also features heavily in her work, from stereotypes of proper behavior to the intimate realm of everyday activities. Growing up, Brown struggled with the rigid ideals of femininity that she faced every day, through "an implied creed of the necessities of good behavior." Her piece, "Cuff: Dress Up," was born out of her desire to identify the positive aspects of that creed and to simultaneously "break from the mold" that she fell into as a young girl.

The piece is exquisitely crafted, consisting of delicate slips of paper strung onto hinged wire. When wrapped around the wrist, the book becomes a decorative accessory, calling to mind the dramatic frilled cuffs and collars of the Victorian era. On each page is a verb either stamped with black ink or blind stamped with no ink. The black words are the universal traits, such as cook, intend, organize, and touch. The blind stamped words are the ghostly presences of that societal code Brown wants to break away from. These are the words that tell women and girls what they are supposed to do: comply, mask, obey, and stifle are examples. Brown subverts the outdated concept of "women's work" by creating an object that represents the domestic duties that women were once expected to carry out. This underscores the control that women now have over their own destinies, in that Brown was able to impart her own message through the creative choices she made.

Not all of Brown's work has such specific associations, however. "Word Play," the other new book in the Collection, is a small bookcloth-covered box containing 218 glassine envelopes, each holding a verb laser-printed in black or red ink on decorative paper. The black verbs are positive attributes and the red are negative attributes. Brown, who is a self-described list maker, explains that the piece started "with my discovery of my father's stamp collection and unearthing boxes and boxes of the envelopes he used to arrange them." Brown became interested in the concept of categorization and list making in association with the hundreds of envelopes she found.

"I purposely did not arrange the "pages" alphabetically to encourage rummaging through the words and pulling them out at random," Brown says. Thus the reader is allowed to make his or her own interpretations of the words, adding yet another dimension to this complex and fascinating work.

Even though the ideas behind each book are very different, both highlight the importance of communication. These works encourage a dialogue between artist and reader, past and present. Brown hopes that her work will open up new channels of communication between people, to exchange ideas about the way we once were and who we hope to become.



From MWWC . . .

Since 2007, Healy Chair Jennifer Tuttle has served as co-editor for *Legacy*, the only scholarly journal to focus specifically on American women's writings from the seventeenth through the mid-twentieth century. Each issue's articles cover a wide range of topics: examinations of the works of individual authors; genre studies; analyses of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexualities in women's literature; and historical and material cultural issues pertinent to women's lives and literary works. In addition, *Legacy* regularly publishes profiles of lesser-known or newly recovered authors, reprints of primary works in all genres, and book reviews covering current scholarship in the field. *Legacy* is the official journal of the Society of American Women Writers.



During the 2007-8 academic year, Carol Farley Kessler, Emerita Professor from Penn State – Brandywine, filled in as the Acting Dorothy M. Healy Chair, replacing Professor Jennifer S. Tuttle, on sabbatical leave for that year. Carol has continued to co-edit with Jennifer the selection of essays from the 2006 Charlotte Perkins Gilman Conference co-sponsored by MWWC here at UNE/Westbrook: they are excited about the quality and coverage of this collection. Carol has also assembled files for a 50th anniversary history of the MWWC. She served on the evaluation committee for the MWWC research support grant applications, which selected applicants who worked this past summer with the collections of Sarah Sayward Barrell Keating Wood (1759-1855) and Blanche Willis Howard (1847-1898). During the year she provided students from the course on "Maine Women Writers" offered by Dr. Lori Power, with MWWC tours and an interview. This fall, Carol is serving on the planning committee for the 2009 MWWC 50th MWWC Anniversary Symposium and is reviewing the MWWC mission statement.

Professor Tuttle co-edits
*Legacy: A Journal of
American Women Writers*



Professor Jennifer Tuttle

Acting Healy Chair
Carol Farley Kessler
contributes expertise



Carol Farley Kessler, Ph.D.

news
Research and teaching

Students create book proposal for MWWC anthology under Professor Lori Power

Using UNE's Maine Women Writers Collection as a resource, Professor Lori Power's class set about using inquiry-oriented and social constructivist approaches to carry out a group project for the course on Maine Women Writers: to create an anthology of Maine women writers. The response to this project by the students was remarkable. Power said:

"I have never had a group of people more engaged in a course. Each student selected an author and became an expert on her work, using the Maine Women Writers Collection to obtain original documents and artifacts from each author (most of which are not available anyplace else in the world). They then shared their expertise with one another to make decisions about which authors should represent Maine in the anthology, and why. As you can imagine, this led to some thoughtful discussion. In addition, each student interviewed an editor of an anthology to learn what the process was like and to seek advice. A number of our UNE faculty shared their expertise and experiences, as did many other well-known anthology editors."



Professor of Visual and Critical Studies analyzes Chansonetta Stanley Emmons Photograph Collection

In June of 2008, the MWWC was fortunate to have a visit from Shawn Michelle Smith, Associate Professor of Visual and Critical Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The MWWC invited Professor Smith to examine the Chansonetta Stanley Emmons photographs and related material in hopes that her resulting published work would spark scholarship on this little-known woman photographer working in the late 19th century. Professor Smith is in the process of completing a journal article and an essay to be published on the MWWC Website about her findings. Smith is the author of *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Duke University Press, 2004) and *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1999).



MWWC continues its Research Support Grant Program

Research Support Grants are intended for faculty members, independent researchers, and graduate students at the dissertation stage who are actively pursuing research that requires or would benefit from access to the holdings of the Maine Women Writers Collection. We are currently evaluating this year's proposals. A complete list of previous recipients is available on the MWWC website.



Making the Collection accessible

Collection Assistants Gay Marks and Jamie Thompson, with volunteer Sue Walker, have catalogued new collections and updated existing collections with new and interesting items—collections of authors such as Elizabeth Coatsworth, Kate Douglas Wiggin, Elisabeth Ogilvie, Linda Tatelbaum, and the extensive MWWC Administrative Collection. This collection is a gold mine of documents, ephemera, and records, telling the stories of the MWWC's inspired beginning, the individuals who shaped its mission and its ever-expanding collection.

Intern Ann C. Morrissey has processed a major literary collection: The Marie Donahue Papers. Donahue, from South Berwick, was a valued teacher, Jewett scholar, Berwick Academy supporter, and literary correspondent throughout her life. Contemporary literary Maine letters in this collection number in the hundreds.

The MWWC website has expanded to include individual web pages for many writers whose collections are particularly voluminous. This can be found under the "Research" portion of the website. More expansions are planned to bring greater Collection detail into the internet environment.

Research and teaching
nEWS

The MWWC 50th Anniversary Symposium, called “Women in the Archives: Using Archival Collections in Research and Teaching on U.S. Women,” will take place here at the Westbrook College Campus from June 11-14, 2009. The documentary film now being created on the 50-year history of the MWWC will be premiered during the symposium and be available to schools thereafter. On June 13th, we will host a reception to honor and thank all who have contributed to the MWWC’s success since its founding.

Planning for the 2009 MWWC 50th Anniversary Symposium, 50th Anniversary Reception, and a documentary film

Conferences, programs and events
NEWS

The Gathering of Writers creative writing program grows under the direction of David Kuchta, Ph.D. The newly initiated “Craft and Critique: Advanced Writing Workshops” serving advanced writers begins January 21st. This popular program ‘grows’ writers -- here, in the Abplanalp Library at MWWC.

The Gathering of Writers

The 2009 MWWC Author Series will be held in the MWWC, with all talks beginning at 7:00 pm:

2009 MWWC Author Series

- **Karin Woodruff Jackson** “Sarah Orne Jewett’s Consciousness of Nature.” Thursday, March 19, 2009
- **Patricia Pierce Erikson** “White Woman, White Snow, Blank Page: Josephine Peary as Arctic Author/Explorer.” Thursday, April 9, 2009
- **Lael Morgan** will speak on “Working with Native people and reporting at the Top of the World.” Thursday, April 30, 2009

In June 2008, the Curator attended the Transatlantic Women Writers Conference in Oxford, England and found colleagues! Sessions such as “New Englanders in Great Britain in the 1890s” fascinated with papers by international scholars:

Curator attends conference in England

- **F. Jane H. Silvey**, Independent Scholar, Worcester, UK, “‘The Sympathy of Another Writer’: The Correspondence between Sarah Orne Jewett and Mrs. Humphrey Ward”
- **Alison Easton**, Lancaster University, “How much closer Old England and New England have come together’: Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary (Mrs. Humphrey) Ward, and Liberalism”
- **Libby MacDonald Bischof**, University of Southern Maine, “A Summer in England: The Women’s Rest Tour Association of Boston”

Students from Professor Lori Power’s course working on their anthology of Maine women writers



New endowment fund supports the work of the Collection

Recently, Alice M. Savage, MD, PhD, FACP, '55 established the 'Friends of the Maine Women Writers Collection Endowment Fund' — recognizing the significance of this unique collection to students, scholars, and the University. The fund helps ensure the growth and longevity of this inspirational collection and its continued importance to scholarly endeavors on the lives and influence of Maine women writers. She said of MWWC founder, Grace Dow:

"Grace Dow, a gentle Maine woman, was inspirational in her passion for teaching the classic forms of literature. We could hardly wait to get to her class! As an English Literature minor, I kept in touch with Grace after WJC and experienced her love and enthusiasm for preserving the legacy of Maine women writers — which I continue to share to this day."

Westbrook Junior College afforded Dr. Savage, a native of Portland, Maine, the opportunity to pursue higher education. Throughout her long career in teaching, medicine, and Health Administration (Department of Veteran Affairs), her commitment to and affection for the Westbrook College Campus and the University of New England has been notable. Her endowed scholarships are enabling students to follow their dreams and contribute to society, while the marine science laboratory named in her honor provides a suitable atmosphere for teaching and research. Her recognition of the importance of special historic and literary resources for the students, faculty, and other researchers defines the profile of a true 'Renaissance Woman.'

The University has honored Dr. Savage with the Tower Award, membership in the Deborah Morton Society, and election to the UNE Board of Trustees.



Alice Savage with MWWC founder Dorothy Healy at Westbrook College in the late 1980's

New Reading Tables for MWWC!

Thanks to the Lillian G. McConkey Bequest to the MWWC, the Collection has purchased its first ever matching set of solid cherry reading and writing tables, in honor of its 50th anniversary. These beautiful tables, hand made by Huston & Company Furniture Makers of Kennebunk, will grace the Collection for many years to come and provide a place for many discussions!

From Elizabeth Babbott Conant, PhD.

“... I especially remember the early efforts of Grace and Dorothy in launching the Maine Women Writers Collection, Dorothy proudly showing me the two library shelves that held the nascent collection.

And, equally, faces of students come to mind when I think of Westbrook that year. Faces are clearer than names, though I was destined to know Alice Savage pretty well as she was in nearly all of my classes. I proudly watched Alice go from Westbrook to Mount Holyoke to Brown for her PhD, and on to her MD at the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. To celebrate her MD, I bought a fossilized nautilus that had been split and polished to a high sheen. I gave one half to Alice and kept the other half in my office over the years. Little could I have guessed that forty-plus years later Alice and I would collaborate in support of adjacent marine science labs on the UNE campus, the two halves of the fossil re-united and mounted for display in the Marine Science Center.

So much has happened since 1953-4. Westbrook Junior College became Westbrook College and then merged into the University of New England. The Maine Women Writers Collection filled a small room in the new Westbrook library in the 1970's and now constitutes one of the important curated collections in the University library system, housed in a temperature-controlled archival environment.

I learned recently that Alice established the Friends of the Maine Women Writers Collection Endowment Fund to anchor perpetual financial support for the Collection. Now I, too, have named the Collection in my Will, which will augment the endowment.

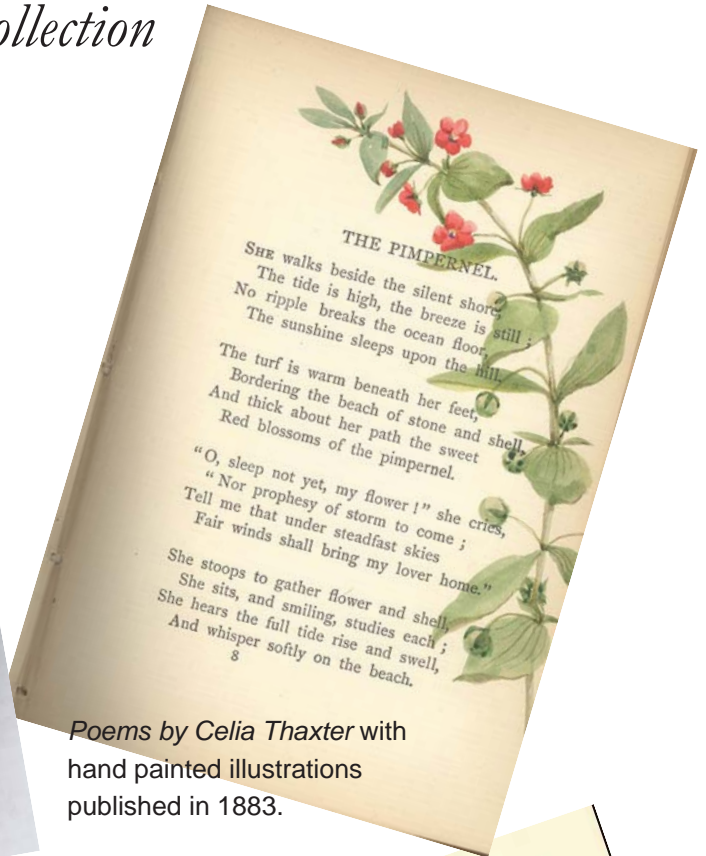
That 1953-4 Westbrook year clinched my trajectory as a college biology teacher and still reverberates 54 years later. I'm deeply happy to know that the connection will last far into the future.”



Grace Dow

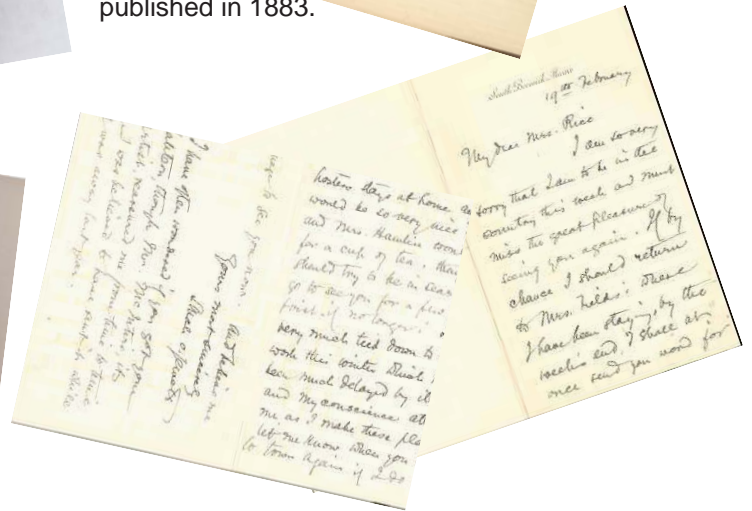
New at Maine Women Writers Collection

A sampling of political buttons from the Nancy Dibner Collection



Poems by Celia Thaxter with hand painted illustrations published in 1883.

World War II Navy memorabilia from the Ruth Hawkins Collection



Newly purchased original sketch by Kate Douglas Wiggin, captioned, "My heart going out to the kindergarten."

