Marijane Ceruti, Assistant Archivist of the U. Roberto Romano Papers, is a 2014 BFA graduate of the UConn School of Fine Arts. Since graduation, she has worked as a freelance photographer and photography assistant in addition to exhibiting and gaining notoriety for her fine art photography work. She has an extensive technical background in addition to her knowledge of the history of photography.

My first day on the job as the Assistant Archivist of the U. Roberto Romano Papers was a good one. I was handed the torch by fellow UConn alumnus and friend Brooke Foti Gemmell who was taking a different position within the UConn library through her work here. “The first couple of weeks will be intimidating, but you’ll get the hang of it” were words that I heard come out of her mouth more than once. As I got settled in and took the time to dive into the collection I began to realize I shared a lot with the photographer whose work I would be getting to know. Robin and I were both Italian-American photographers who spoke French, liked crass humor and made a lot of the same choices in photography. Robin cited the greats like Henri Cartier-Bresson and Robert Frank as some of his inspirations and I too could count them as some of my own.

As I sifted through memory card after memory card of born digital images in the first couple of days, I started to notice that Robin and I made the same aesthetic decisions in our work. Photographers holding their subjects hostage in front of the lens until finally giving into the moment, making corrections to posture and hair as shoots progressed and even down to...
equipment choices. Without being prompted I found myself collecting my favorite images of Robin’s in a folder on my desktop titled “Notable Images”. Now the folder is 600 images strong and I’m sure it will continue to grow. As I look at them, I am reminded of how unique of a person Robin was as he exhibited equal parts compassion and ruthlessness, humility and prestige, documentarian and artist. These traits are necessary and rare in someone that captures such emotionally charged scenes and shares them with the world. I look forward to sharing this information with the public so that they can see the truth behind child labor, the life of an artist and the complexities that come with processing such a large and vast collection that spans a revolution in photography.

Now that I have been in this position for 6 months, I am starting to get comfortable curating and archiving with Robin’s voice in mind. I see the choices he made and feel confident that I can respect his vision as well as his compassionate and strong voice when representing the collection. I am so grateful that I was given this opportunity to take a peek inside the collection of such an empathetic and talented photographer. I feel blessed that I get to hold a position that is important and valued within the university and the world alike. I hope that I am able to share Robin’s work in the way in which he intended, care for it in the way that it deserves and bring my talents of exhibiting and marketing to the collection for students and scholars to learn from and enjoy.

I’m proud to say I will bring pieces of Robin’s work into my own as an artist. In a world that is hurting, I am honored to be able to represent a body of work that was founded by the desire to end suffering.

Thank you to the University of Connecticut Library for this opportunity and to everyone that donated to the Robin Romano Foundation to make this position possible.

---

Wilfred B. Young Building

Posted on June 20, 2018 by Laura Smith
Since its founding in 1881, the University of Connecticut has undergone many changes, and the Wilfred B. Young Building perfectly embodies this dynamic history. In the years after World War II, a surging student population spurred a raft of new construction under the tenure of President Albert N. Jorgensen. The building that later became known as the Young Building appeared during this period, officially opening in the fall of 1953.

Along with the growing student population, the building also reflects the changing academic climate at UConn. When it first opened, the building housed the College of Agriculture. In the 1960s, it became home to the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Now it holds the College of Agriculture, Medicine, and Natural Resources. The multiplying specialties illustrate how the university’s educational mission has developed over the years, shifting to meet the needs and interests of students and the wider society.

The building’s namesake, Wilfred B. Young, also played an important role in UConn’s history. Born in Indiana in 1903, Young spent his early life learning agriculture and animal husbandry, as well as working in the famed Chicago stockyards. He came to Connecticut in 1931, recruited by Professor Harry L. Garrigus to teach and conduct research through the Agricultural Experiment Station. He served as Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources from 1945 to 1966. Young retired in 1966 and died in 1978. The building was named in his honor the following year in recognition of his many contributions to the university.

This post was written by Shaine Scarminach, a UConn History Ph.D candidate who is a student assistant in Archives & Special Collections.
J. Louis von der Mehden, Jr., was born July 20, 1873, in San Francisco, California. A musician and composer, von der Mehden held several positions in San Francisco before moving east to New York City after the 1906 earthquake. He was steadily employed as a cellist or conductor with theatrical or commercial bands and worked for a year as the musical director of Herald Square Theater before becoming involved full time in the recording industry, working at different times for five different phonograph studios: U.S. Phonograph, Pathé Frère, Columbia, Lyraphone and the Victor Talking Machine Company. On some recordings he played cello in the orchestra; more regularly he would conduct performances, often arranging the music the night before the recording sessions. In 1926, von der Mehden and his wife Susan moved to Old Saybrook, Connecticut, full-time, having purchased a house in 1911.

J. Louis von der Mehden, Jr. died on August 27, 1954, in Middlesex Memorial Hospital and was buried in Cypress Cemetery at Saybrook Point.

In 1956, UConn President Albert N. Jorgensen reported to the Board of Trustees that under the provisions of the will of the late Susan Evelyn von der Mehden, who died less than one year after her husband, the University was to receive a considerable sum from the estate. There were three provisions: first, the University was to receive all of the original compositions of the late J. Louis von der Mehden; second, the University was to erect a building to be used as a concert hall in which this music could be performed; and third, the University was to provide a vault for the safekeeping of the music. The von der Mehden’s had no obvious connection to the University of Connecticut so it is unknown why Mrs. von der Mehden chose to make such a large donation to the university.

The J. Louis von der Mehden Recital Hall was completed in 1961 and has been in regular use as a recital and performance hall.

Archives & Special Collections holds Mr. von der Mehden’s papers, which consist of diaries, newspaper clippings, correspondence, notes, financial records, photographs, musical manuscripts, scores, publications, and celluloid cylinders. The finding aid to the collection can be found here: http://archives.lib.uconn.edu/islandora/object/20002%3A860140533

Homer Babbidge Library

Posted on June 1, 2018 by Laura Smith

Homer Daniels Babbidge, Jr., was born in West Newton, Massachusetts, on May 18, 1925. His father was a captain of merchant ships and the family soon moved to New Haven, Connecticut; in 1935 the family moved again, this time to Amherst, Massachusetts. Babbidge graduated with his undergraduate and doctoral degrees from Yale University, and taught at Yale’s Department of American Studies before taking positions with the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and acting as the Vice-President of the American Council on Education.

In 1962, at the age of 37, Babbidge became the 8th President of the University of Connecticut. In his Inaugural Address on October 20, 1962, he said “The task of a public university is to wed the new spirit of democracy to the old values of learning.”
In 1962 total enrollment at the University of Connecticut was 12,000 at the main campus in Storrs and across the regional campuses; by 1971 enrollment had grown to over 23,500. During Babbidge’s tenure he oversaw the development of a Junior Year Abroad program, the elimination of the rule that women students be forbidden to wear slacks in the Student Union, and the formation of the Benton Museum of Art on the Storrs campus, the School of Social Work on the Torrington campus, and the UConn medical and dental schools, including the UConn Health Center in Farmington. While serving as President he also taught classes in the Department of History on the History of American Higher Education.

Babbidge led the university at a challenging time. As it was on almost every campus in the country, UConn students demonstrated against the war in Vietnam and on racial discrimination. On November 26, 1968, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) demonstrated against the recruitment on campus of students for the chemical company Olin-Mathieson. Sixty-seven students were arrested for demonstrating and Babbidge called it “the saddest day of my life.”

For what he stated was a promise he made to himself to not hold the job for more than ten years, in October 1971 Babbidge announced that he would resign from the Presidency of UConn on October 1, 1972. More than 7000 students, staff and faculty petitioned his resignation, asking him to reconsider, but to no avail.

After his time at UConn Babbidge returned to Yale as Master of the university’s Timothy Dwight College; in 1976 he became the Hartford Graduate School’s first president. He even briefly dabbled in politics, running for Governor in 1974. Babbidge died on March 27, 1984, from cancer.

During Babbidge’s tenure the UConn library gained its 1,000,000th book. Even before Babbidge left office plans were drawn up to build a new library, given that the space in the Wilbur Cross Library had exceeded the limits of the collection and library services. A study done after 1972 determined that the Wilbur Cross Library had space for just 753 students, less than 5% of the student population.

Groundbreaking for a new library costing $19 million was on July 10, 1975. The library had seven floors with a total 385,000 square feet and shelf space for 1.6 million volumes.
The building opened in 1978, known then as simply the University of Connecticut Library. After Babbidge’s death in 1984 the name was changed to honor the university’s 8th president.

The Search and Struggle for Intersectionality
Part II: Other Minorites and the Feminist Movement

Posted on May 18, 2018 by Melissa Watterworth Batt

Anna Zarra Aldrich is majoring in English, political science and journalism at the University of Connecticut. As a student writing intern, Anna is studying historical feminist publications from the collections of Archives and Special Collections. The following guest post is the final post in the series.

The feminist movement has long struggled with incorporating different groups’ concerns and modes of oppression into the movement. This problem was exacerbated by the multifaceted, turbulent U.S. political atmosphere that characterized the 1960s and 1970s. The differences between black and white women’s views of the movement clashed on several essential dimensions. But the issues of other minority groups were given less attention by the feminist movement, and by society in general, due to the fact that their ethnic/racial factions were much smaller than African Americans’.

Another marginalized group that galvanized in the activist culture of the 1960s and 1970s in America were Native Americans. These men and women sought to have their tribal autonomy recognized. They were also fighting issues such as environmentally harmful mining practices on their resource-rich lands and high rates of substance abuse and poverty within their communities.

Native American women had a unique relationship with the feminist movement because the issues this minority group faced were different from those that white or black women faced, and the ethnic population of which they were a part was a severely marginalized minority. U.S. Census data from 1970 shows that a whopping 98.6 percent of the total population was either white or black/African American (87.5 percent and 11.1 percent respectively). Native Americans constituted less than .004 percent.
The March 1977 issue of “Off Our Backs” includes an article summarizing the findings of a report by the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA), a non-profit organization founded in 1922 to promote the well-being of Native Americans and Alaskan Natives. The report found that Native American children are placed outside of their families at a rate 10 to 20 times higher than that for non-Native American children.

The AAIA argued that this practice deprives Native American children of the ability to be raised with a proper awareness of and appreciation for their culture. This concern emphasizes the fact that Native American women who were involved in the feminist movement during this time were simultaneously combatting the United States government’s systematic efforts to diminish their independence and culture as well as the wide-spread sexism that was the feminist movement’s main concern.

Native American culture celebrates its strong connection to and appreciation of nature. When Native American tribes were forced off their lands in the nineteenth century, they were put on reservations in states like Oklahoma and South Dakota. The U.S. government later came to realize these areas were rich with natural resources such as oil and uranium.

“In the days of diminishing U.S. energy resources, the push is on to take what’s left of Indian land,” according to an article in “Off Our Backs.”

The U.S. government used environmentally hazardous practices to extract these resources, exposing people living on the land to cancer-causing radioactive materials. It also paid the Native Americans working in these hazardous mines very low wages. These practices led to outcry by Native American men and women.
bring attention to threats to tribal lands pose by several pieces of proposed legislation.

"In effect, these bills could force Native Americans to complete assimilation into the U.S. mainstream and destroy all sovereignty of the Indian nations," the article on the march said.

In the same August/September 1978 issue that covered the march, "Off Our Backs" included coverage of a conference in New Mexico that addressed the upsurge in domestic violence against Navajo women. This increase was attributed to a “pressure cooker syndrome” created by white culture: “women-battering and child abuse (were) once practically non-existent…and has now reached crises proportions.”

The attempted forced assimilation of native people into white culture created a class system that did not exist in Navajo tribal society. This led to high poverty and unemployment rates which in turn came to be correlated with high rates of substance abuse and domestic violence.

The writers draw attention to the fact that few of the speakers at the conference were from the Navajo or from any other Native American community. Calling attention to the lack of authentic representation at this conference may be an indication of the evolution of “Off Our Backs” in how it dealt with minority issues. When the paper first began in 1970, it struggled to expand their coverage to minority women’s issues, as evidenced by its problematic coverage of a black feminist group’s conference in 1974.

Similar to black women who were involved with groups like the Black Panthers, politically active Native American women were part of efforts led by men. Women of All Red Nations (WARN) was a Native American women’s group that brought attention to issues that affected their community including the displacement of their children, forced sterilization, tribal rights, resource exploitation and racism in the educational system. The group invited several Native American men to speak at a conference it held in South Dakota in 1978 as it did not “believe in the separation of men and women who were working for the same objective." This serves as a perfect parallel to black women activists who wanted to be a part of the black and feminist movements.
In the December 1978 issue of "Off Our Backs," the editors printed a letter from Burning Cloud, a self-described "Filipina/Indian Dyke." In the letter, Burning Cloud shared a sentiment common with those expressed by black women — that she was "Indian first and above all other matters."

Burning Cloud felt she could not be both an Indian and a gay woman in society. She also expressed frustration with the fact that non-black minorities’ concerns are much more widely disregarded because there are comparatively few of them in number.

Burning Cloud’s letter included a call to action for environmental activism which, from her perspective, was something of which native people were much more conscious due to their spiritual cultural connections to the earth.

“If Mother Earth is to die WE ALL D!E. Think about that one. What is the future of your children and sisters and mothers to be?” she wrote. “Are we not killing each other because we allow such things as racism, classism, separatism right here in the Lesbian community. How shall wimmin be totally free when three-quarters of the (Coloured Wimmin) are dying?”

(Feminists took to using alternative spellings of “women” and “woman” in order to avoid using the masculine root of those words.)

Native American women also faced the issue of forced or coerced sterilization. In "Off Our Backs"
article from December 1978, WARN said that 25 percent of Native American Women were forcibly sterilized.

During this period, the United States government instituted polices of population control that targeted minority, underclass women. One third of Puerto Rican women of reproductive age had been sterilized in 1976. This policy was veiled as a necessary method of population control that would help Puerto Rico develop economically. However, many argued that the problem was not overpopulation, rather that the available resources were concentrated in the upper echelons of society.

In her 1976 University of Connecticut Ph.D. thesis “Population Policy, Social Structure and the Health System in Puerto Rico: The Case of Female Sterilization,” Peta Henderson found that in addition to medical reasons, the law in Puerto Rico regarding female sterilization allowed for women to be sterilized or use other contraceptive methods in cases of poverty or already having multiple children. Henderson found that most sterile Puerto Rican women said they voluntarily chose to have the operation. However, she explores how this choice was corrupted by the fact that government actors worked to persuade these women that sterilization was in their best interest.

These kind of population control polices were also implemented elsewhere in Latin America.

The April 1970 issue of “Off Our Backs,” a female member of the Peace Corps who went to Ecuador said, “Providing safe contraceptives must be a part of a comprehensive health program,” Rachel Cawan said. “Most importantly, however, there must be available other emotionally satisfying alternatives to child raising.”

The prevailing feminist interpretation of these population control programs was that they masqueraded as liberating family planning alternatives when, in fact, many of these women were being coerced or forced to stop having children.

The Young Lords Party was founded in 1960. The men who founded the organization had a
series of objectives including self-determination for Puerto Rico, liberation for third-world people and, problematically, “Machismo must be revolutionary and not oppressive.”

Early in the party’s history, the men in the movement did not listen to women’s ideas and concerns during meetings. These women were limited to essentially being glorified secretaries for the party according to a November 11, 1970 New York Times article.

The women in the movement soon tired of this dynamic and demanded to be taken seriously – and they succeeded. Several women were able to assume leadership positions in the party and the pillar relating to machismo was changed to one supporting equality for women. However, this victory did not mean women were automatically able to achieve true political and social equality within the party or on a larger scale.

In a subsequent issue of “Off Our Backs,” a black/Native American woman wrote a response to Burning Cloud’s letter, which had also said black people should support Native Americans’ issues, saying that: “There is a need for Dialogue, a conversation, between Indian people and Black people...We have been divided in order to be conquered, even though for many, our blood flows together.”

A theme that emerges again and again when studying the second-wave of the feminist movement is that by separating women into sects with seemingly irreconcilable differences, men have managed to prevent them from forming a powerful united front capable of combatting not only sexism, but racism and other social ills that afflict them.

-Anna Zarra Aldrich

This summer the Dodd Research Center Gallery exhibits Season 1 of d’Archive, the archives podcast hosted by WHUS campus radio. After wrapping up a 15 episode season over the course of Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 semesters, which is available on itunes or wherever you catch podcasts, materials featured on the show are currently on display.
The Search and Struggle for Intersectionality
Part I: Black Women and the Feminist Movement

Posted on May 14, 2018 by Melissa Watterworth Batt

Anna Zarra Aldrich is majoring in English, political science and journalism at the University of Connecticut. As a student writing intern, Anna is studying historical feminist publications from the collections of Archives and Special Collections. The following guest post is one in a series to be published throughout Spring 2018.

The feminist movement has long struggled with incorporating different groups’ concerns and modes of oppression into the movement. This problem was exacerbated by the multifaceted, turbulent U.S. political atmosphere that characterized the 1960s and 1970s.

“Chrysalis,” a quarterly women’s periodical that was self-published in Los Angeles from 1976-1980, struggled to incorporate African American women’s issues into its editors’ ideals for the movement. In an issue of the magazine that came out in spring of 1979, poet Adrienne Rich wrote an article called “Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism and Gynophobia.”

“Chrysalis’s” article sharing the story of Annie Mae was a clear attempt to give a black woman a voice in the publication.
Rich’s article emphasized some of the inherent similarities between the struggles of black people and women in America. She wrote that all women and all black people in this country live in fear of violence being committed against them solely due to their gender or race without the hope of justice being served.

Her article went on to explain that dividing women against each other has historically been a means by which men have maintained their oppression: “The polarization of black women in American life is clearly reflected in a historical method which, if it does not dismiss all of us altogether or subsume us vaguely under ‘mankind,’ has kept us in separate volumes or separate essays in the same volume.”

Rich urged women that they “can’t keep skimming the surface” of the women’s movement by refusing to engage with black women’s issues.

“Chrysalis’s” winter 1980 issue featured a story called “I am Annie Mae” which was the story of Annie Mae Hunt, a 70-year old black woman from Texas. Annie Mae’s story was told through a transcript of hours of interviews.

Annie Mae’s story shared the hardships of her life, including her dropping out of school after fifth grade, getting married and having her first child when she was only 15. Annie Mae was pregnant a total of 13 times in her life and had six living children at the time of the article’s publication. Annie Mae said she was never educated about birth control and was told having more children was better for her.

“Birth control – that wasn’t in the makings then. I mean the black people didn’t know it. Poor people like me. There may have been some well-to-do people that knew about it,” Hunt said.

While this article was an earnest effort by “Chrysalis” to tell the story and plights of a woman of color, it was only through a white mouthpiece that Annie Mae was able to share her story; the reporter who conducted and organized the interviews was white as was the staff and, presumably, much of the magazine’s readership. Furthermore, aside from Rich’s essay and this article, examples of “Chrysalis” covering women of color’s issues are sparse.

“Off Our Backs,” a bi-weekly newspaper printed in Washington D.C. (1970-2008) did put forth a more valiant effort to communicate the struggles of black women in America through their own voices even if they often fell short of true intersectional understanding.

In the April 15, 1971 issue of “Off Our Backs” an unnamed black woman, identified as someone who held a “high position in the Health, Education and Welfare Department,” was interviewed about her response to the women’s liberation. She pointed out at that time the women’s movement was predominantly led by and composed of white, middle class women. She said that black women do not want to be a part of what they considered to be a, frankly, racist movement.
The 1960s and 70s were a period rife with tension in multiple dimensions, only one of which was the women’s lib movement. This period saw the continuing struggle by African Americans for equality and civil rights. The woman interviewed for the April 15 article emphasized that she, and many other black women, identified as black first and a woman second in terms of their identity and sources of oppression.

In 1977, the Kitty Genovese Women’s Project, named for the woman who was murdered while numerous people who were aware of what was happening did nothing, posted a list of 2,100 male sex offenders in Dallas County. A group of 30 women handed out over 20,000 copies of the list. Many black feminists took issue with the list as black men were disproportionately represented due to a higher conviction rate among blacks for all crimes due to the racial bias of the criminal justice system.

In 1966, the militant civil rights activist group the Black Panthers formed in Oakland California. Many black women were involved in the black movement and wanted to work with the men in that movement to achieve their collective goals. Many white feminists, however, argued for a complete break with men.

This argument originated during the first wave of feminism in the United States. Some male abolitionists argued that it was the “Negro’s Hour,” during the last ninetieth century, to quote Wendell Phillips. Men such as Phillips, and Frederick Douglass believed the main focus of the period had to be black men’s rights and that women’s suffrage would have to be pushed to the back burner.

This led women’s suffrage leaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony to found the women’s-only National Woman Suffrage Association. This break from the abolition movement may be viewed as a break from black issues in general, which sowed the seeds for the division that reemerged in the next phase of the movement.

In June 1979, “Off Our Backs” published a special “Ain’t I a Woman” issue, named for a famous speech given by Sojourner Truth at the 1851 Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. Truth’s speech confronted the stark differences between the treatment of white and black women: “Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And
The special issue included a statement from the Combahee River Collective, a black feminist group from Roxbury, Massachusetts. The statement said: “As black women, we see black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppression that all women of color face.” They emphasized that, “Black women’s development must be tied to race and class progression for all blacks.”

A much larger proportion of black women were in poverty than white women during this period. The U. S. Census (Current Population Survey and Annual Social and Economic Supplements data) from 1975 shows that 27.1 percent of black families were in poverty compared to 9.7 percent of all families. Those statistics become even more staggering when we look at poverty rates for single-female households. 50.1 percent of black families with a single mother were in poverty compared to 32.3 percent of all other single-female households.

Intersectionality hinges on the idea that people have a complex identity that is shaped by a variety of demographic and experiential factors such as race, class and education. Black women were dealing with a variety of issues and sources of oppression during this period that, evidently, many of the white leaders of the feminist movement did not see as falling in line with their goals.

In the winter of 1974, some of the “Off Our Backs” staff attended the first meeting of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO). The group’s mission was to “fight racism and sexism jointly.” “Off Our Backs” coverage of the event acknowledged that black women have an ethos to
speak about issues that white women are unable to assume: “While ‘Off Our Backs’ has never been vague about its commitment to cover the issues and to carry messages about them to feminists, only a group like NBFO deeply immersed in the survival struggles of low-income black sisters and their own experiences, can be a valid messenger and a forceful mover of these issues.”

The coverage of the event emphasized that racism has kept women systemically divided by making minority women feel they could either be black or a feminist. Unfortunately, the article is critical of the fact that many speakers ranked racism over sexism in terms of which was a more pressing issue. This clearly displays that many white feminists could not grasp the fact that these women felt they needed to confront the systemic racism in the country in tandem with, and perhaps, some would argue, before, sexism.

The “Off Our Backs” article said that black men did not want black women to join the feminist movement and point out that male-dominated black media outlets like “Jet” or “Ebony” did not attend the meeting when many white feminist presses did. The writers also criticized black feminists for not utilizing these feminist outlets. This provides an interesting area to use to examine the underlying issues here – black women’s issues were not covered well by most white-dominated feminist media outlets, yet the writers of “Off Our Backs” suggest that these women were not reaching out to allow their stories to be told by these papers.

It is necessary to mention that there is a conspicuous lack of exclusively black feminist publications in Archives and Special Collections’ holdings at the Dodd Center. This may be attributable to gaps in the collection or there may have been few publications that served this specific interest group. It seems that black women’s issues were split between the feminist and black movements with some overlap in the media for each.

-Anna Zarra Aldrich

Charles Lewis Beach’s Legacy at UConn

Posted on May 7, 2018 by Melissa Watterworth Batt
Wisconsin in 1886, and came to the Connecticut Agricultural College as an instructor in Dairy Husbandry in 1896. He stayed with the college until 1904 when he then went to the University of Vermont, but returned to Storrs in 1908 to take the position of the CAC’s 4th President, a role in which he served until 1928.

Under Beach’s leadership the CAC grew and prospered. In 1908 the college had just 165 students enrolled; by 1928 there were 518 student enrolled. Beach sought to increase the number of women enrolled so in the same approximate time period the number of women students grew to 133 from 22. In 1908 there were 18 bachelor degrees granted; by 1924 that number increased to 78. Beach recognized that the growth of the college depended upon increased funding from the state, and, as Walter Stemmons wrote in his book Connecticut Agricultural College – A History, “Beach compelled a reluctant State to take pride in its college.”

Other initiatives under President Beach included an expanded curriculum that included courses in the liberal arts, a fairly radical idea for a college with such deep roots in the study of agriculture. He believed that “students graduating from the college [go] into the world equipped not only to be efficient farmers but also to be understanding individuals” as is written in his obituary.

Charles Lewis Beach retired from the presidency on July 31, 1928. He suffered a cerebral hemorrhage on September 1, 1933, and died on September 15, 1933.

Beach Hall is, of course, named in his honor. Built in 1927 for $343,000, it was originally used as an administrative building and held the library and science classrooms. An extensive renovation of the building was done in the 1970s.

You can find more information about the life of Charles Lewis Beach in this profile of him in our digital repository at Connecticut Digital Archive.

-Laura Smith
The students filed into the building, one after the other. They made their way to the east wing, where they fanned out among the tables and chairs. Some pulled pen and paper from bags, others opened books carried under arms. "Right on, this gives me a chance to tighten up on my studyin'," someone said. Most stayed silent.

For the staff on duty, nothing seemed amiss. It was April 22, 1974, an ordinary day at the Wilbur Cross Library on the University of Connecticut campus. Masses of students moved in and out of the building, and the staff served them as usual. The trouble came at closing time.

Just before midnight, an employee asked the 200 or so black students gathered in the library to leave. The students stayed put. They had come to study—in part.

But they had also come to protest.

The early 1970s were a turbulent time for the University of Connecticut. The social awakenings of the 1960s had taken their toll on the university and its beloved president, Homer D. Babbidge.

Toward the end of his term, Babbidge had to contend with a series of high-profile protests against the U.S. war in Vietnam.

In 1967-68, demonstrators led by the local chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) disrupted on-campus interviews held by recruiters for Dow Chemical Company and the Olin-Mathieson Corporation. At the time, both companies produced munitions and chemical weapons for the U.S. government.

During the demonstration against Olin-Mathieson in November 1968, President Babidge sent in 200 local police to disperse crowds and arrest protesting students and faculty. These events were later chronicled in a television documentary, Diary of a Student Revolution.

In 1970, Babidge faced continued actions on the part of SDS and other student groups. During the spring semester, students continued to protest the U.S. involvement in Vietnam with an occupation of the ROTC hangar and a general strike against the war. In need of a respite, President Babidge retired from his position in early 1972.

After a long and torturous search for a replacement, Glenn W. Ferguson became university president in May 1973. His tenure would at times be just as rocky as his predecessor's.
Ferguson faced a tangle of difficult issues from his first day in office: the coming of collective bargaining for faculty and staff, discontent over the campus bookstore, upheavals in the Anthropology Department, and the rising demands of women and minority students.

The latter concern pushed the group of black students to occupy the library. It also brought them into sharp conflict with their new president.

On April 11, a few weeks before the library sit-in, 300 black students marched to Gulley Hall, home of the university president’s office, to deliver Ferguson a list of demands.

Among other things, the students demanded that the university reunite the recently divided Anthropology Department; conduct an investigation into two professors the students accused of producing racist research; support the construction of an Afro-American Cultural Center; and provide greater recruitment and support for black and other minority students.

President Ferguson responded to the list of demands in a letter to Rodney Bass, Chairman of the Organization of Afro-American Students, on April 16, 1974, five days after the initial protest.

Ferguson wrote that “the demands are timely, well-presented, and deserve a definitive answer.” After an introductory note, he spent three pages answering each point in detail. He finished the letter by thanking Bass for bringing the issues to his attention and affirming that the University of Connecticut had an obligation to support its minority students.

Yet the coalition of black students deemed the president’s response anodyne and evasive.

In a reply delivered to Ferguson the following day, the students characterized his letter as “middle of the road.” It signified what the students had come to expect from administrators on campus —“vague and ambiguous procrastination.”

Absent any real commitment from the president, the students felt compelled to take their message beyond the confines of Gulley Hall. Ferguson’s lackluster response had pushed the students to further protest.

Studying together in the library after hours on the night of April 22-23, the coalition of black students sought to increase the pressure on administrators to meet their demands.

Not long after the sit-in began, campus police and other university officials gathered outside the building. Someone informed the students that the library was closed and they would have to leave.

The students refused, instead reading a prepared statement. They planned to occupy the library until President Ferguson and other administrators met with them at 6:00 am to discuss their demands. If the administrators failed to show up, the students would remain in the library until they did.
A tense stand-off ensued. Around 3:00 am, the students received a notice from Ferguson instructing them to leave in fifteen minutes or be in violation of university regulations and state laws. If they stayed, they would be subject to sanction and arrest. The students held firm, leaving the university administrators struggling to find a solution.

By 6:00 am, it had become clear that the students had no intentions of leaving the library, and President Ferguson and the other administrators had no intentions of meeting with them. By that time, around forty-five police officers had also amassed outside the library. After about an hour, the administration sent in the police to forcibly remove the students.

Police officers, sometimes four at a time, pulled and dragged the protesting students out of the library and then packed them onto waiting buses. They were brought to police stations in Mansfield and Stafford Springs, where they were charged with criminal trespassing and other offenses.

The protesting students reported being physically and verbally abused by police. One student was even admitted to the infirmary because of his injuries.

Ferguson’s decision to call in the police provoked an immediate uproar on campus and throughout the state. Praise and condemnation for both the students and Ferguson came from many quarters.

A number of individuals and groups offered their support for the students.

An editorial in Contact, the newspaper produced by the Afro-American Cultural Center on campus, described Ferguson’s decision to send in the police “an act of monumental stupidity and arrogance.” A student group at Trinity College went further, calling it “savage racism.” A letter from the parents of one UConn student wondered if Ferguson had considered how his “rash and callous action” would hurt the students’ future prospects.

Most notably, a group of about seventy mostly white students and a few faculty members held an identical protest in the library the following evening. The solidarity protest was again broken up by university staff and local police.

Ferguson also received his fair share of support. One letter sent to the president’s office praised the “hard line” he had taken against the students. Another letter commended his “prompt and decisive action.”
Although some of the supporting letters acknowledged that the students had a legitimate grievance, some reflected condescension or outright racism. One letter writer not only praised Ferguson’s decision to call in the police but offered his own assessment on the issue of an Afro-American Cultural Center: “I have been to Africa, and if what I saw there represents black culture, I think the world is just as well off without it.”

After intervention by local chapters of the ACLU and NAACP, among others, the president’s office helped get a nolle verdict for the arrested students. Instead, they faced internal discipline from the dean’s office.

The library sit-ins illustrate the dramatic changes underway at the University of Connecticut in the early 1970s. On the Storrs campus, students and staff strained under many of the same pressures felt throughout the United States at this time.

The letters in support of Ferguson’s actions signaled a growing backlash against radical protest, while the students’ actions highlighted the increased militancy of the movements for black and women’s liberation. The university, in short, had become one battleground in a wider conflict threatening to tear the nation asunder.

Many more photographs of this event are available in our digital repository, at [http://archives.lib.uconn.edu/islandora/search/black%20student%20protests%20in%20Wilbur%20Cross%20Library?type=dismax](http://archives.lib.uconn.edu/islandora/search/black%20student%20protests%20in%20Wilbur%20Cross%20Library?type=dismax)

Anna Zarra Aldrich is majoring in English, political science and journalism at the University of Connecticut. Anna is a student writing intern studying historical feminist publications from the collections of Archives and Special Collections. The following guest post is one in a series to be
In February of 1970 a terrorist group took over a prominent underground newspaper in New York. The Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (W.I.T.C.H.), a direct-action political group, along with several other women’s groups and female “RAT” staffers took over the newspaper for what was supposed to be a single, token issue of the paper. The headline on this issue read, “Women Seize RAT! Sabotage Tales!”

The women’s issue featured an essay by Robin Morgan, an American writer and noted feminist activist, titled “Goodbye to All That.” The essay sharply criticizes the advertisements using photos of women that bordered on pornographic and the continual exclusion of a feminist viewpoint from the paper.

“We have met the enemy and he’s our friend. And dangerous,” Morgan wrote.

Morgan’s article rallied against the white, male domination of the radical anti-war/anti-establishment movement. She said, “Goodbye, goodbye. To hell with the simplistic notion that automatic freedom for women – or nonwhite peoples – will come about zap! with the advent of a socialist revolution. Bullshit.”

Grievances against male radicals were common among feminist writers during this period. A pamphlet written by Andrea Dworkin in 1973 titled “Marx and Gandhi Were Liberals” stated that men permitted women to take part in their vision of the revolution so long as they kept their own demands moderated and subsumed within the male-dominated agenda.

“Liberal gestures of good will are made when we are shrill enough or when we are fashionable.
enough as long as we do not interfere with the ‘real revolution.’ Increasingly we understood that we are the real revolution,” Dworkin wrote.

The January 25-February 9, 1970 issue of “RAT,” the last one published by the male editorial staff, included numerous articles on pornography and masturbation. An article by Uncle Leon Gussow argued that pornography gives young men unrealistic views of sex and creates a separation between him and the act of sex. The women who worked at “RAT” took issue with how this topic was approached by the male staff; they believed this article, and the paper in general for quite some time, promoted pornography. Many women saw pornography as problematic as it often portrayed violence against women and this became a major issue in the women’s liberation movement.

The women also disliked the fact that the tongue-in-cheek titles that appeared on the masthead of each issue were often demeaning and stereotypical to women, referring to them as “princess” or “muffin purchaser.”

After the women of “RAT” published their issue they were loath to return control to the men who had been running the paper since its inception in 1968. So they didn’t.

In the next issue, the women still made up the entirety of the editorial staff, but some men came back temporarily as production staffers to ease the transition. In a letter to the readers, the editors said they were trying to “work it out” with the men. All male staff members were eventually asked to leave the paper and control remained in exclusively female hands.

A letter to the readers from former editor Paul Simon explained that after a “stormy” meeting between the men and women of the paper, it was decided that the paper would continue to be published by the women.

The takeover at “RAT” inspired women working at other papers across the country to follow suit. In the April 4, 1970 issue of “Vortex,” an underground paper published out of Lawrence, Kansas, W.I.T.C.H. wrote a letter to the paper saying, “you are a counterfeit left male-dominated cracked-glass-mirror reflection of the American nightmare.” The letter said the group was preparing to organize a boycott of the paper.
This letter was published in the issue of the paper following issue on the women's liberation similar to the one that initiated the permanent takeover of “RAT.” In September of that same year, “Vortex” moved to a collective model of publication. This altered the existing editorial structure at the paper and gave women a larger say in its production beyond their single issue which, unfortunately is not available at the Dodd Center Archives.

“RAT” continued its coverage of issues like the Vietnam War and the trial of the 21 members of the Black Panther Party who were charged with coordinating attacks on a series of New York City buildings. However, the new editors made sure to make women’s issues and the accomplishments of female activists more prominent.

They featured letters from Mary Moylan, one of the Cantonsville Nine, a group of activists who burned draft files to protest the war. Moylan went underground, hiding from the authorities for a period and her letters about her time underground were published in “RAT” and other publications like the women-run “Off Our Backs.” “RAT” also featured articles about women’s role in the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

In March of 1971, the paper changed its name to the Women’s LibeRATion.

One thing the women sought to dissemble with their takeover was the hierarchical structure that had allowed men to squelch their voices for so long. This led them to establish a newsroom that was much more free-flowing and less rigidly structured. In a letter to the readers, the editors describe the RAT work collective’s meetings as “un-chaired and chaotic.”

The paper continued publishing with relative consistency through 1972 and then stopped abruptly for several months. Then, in April of that year, a newsletter came out.

The single printed sheet explained to readers that the fate of “RAT” was in limbo due to internal fractionalization. A group of six black gay women had seized control of the paper after airing their grievances against the white feminist viewpoint that had been almost exclusively featured by the paper.

The black women writing the article said there were too many fundamental misunderstandings between the white and third-world women in the movement to be reconciled into a cohesive
vision in which all voices could be heard.

The newsletter closed with a request for feedback from readers, “Your responses will determine the outcome of the almost defunded ‘RAT’.” The paper also asked for monetary donations to help keep the presses running.

Unfortunately, it appears these women were unable to keep the paper afloat either due to a lack of interest or lack of funds.

The downfall of “RAT” showcases the lack of an understanding of the idea of intersectional feminism during this time. Perhaps it also demonstrates a lack of will on the part of white feminists to create connections with minority women and engage in meaningful dialogue to understand their issues. Minority voices were not generally included in the more-prominent feminist outlets, or if they were given a space, it was still through the good graces of white editorial staffs. This is an unfortunate truth that the feminist movement continues to grapple with today.

-Anna Zarra Aldrich

The letter published on the back cover of the single-sheet issue asked readers to respond with feedback and monetary donations to support the continuation of the publication.

The newsletter closed with a request for feedback from readers, “Your responses will determine the outcome of the almost defunded ‘RAT’.” The paper also asked for monetary donations to help keep the presses running.

Unfortunately, it appears these women were unable to keep the paper afloat either due to a lack of interest or lack of funds.

The downfall of “RAT” showcases the lack of an understanding of the idea of intersectional feminism during this time. Perhaps it also demonstrates a lack of will on the part of white feminists to create connections with minority women and engage in meaningful dialogue to understand their issues. Minority voices were not generally included in the more-prominent feminist outlets, or if they were given a space, it was still through the good graces of white editorial staffs. This is an unfortunate truth that the feminist movement continues to grapple with today.

-Anna Zarra Aldrich

Edwin Way Teale’s Photographs of American Nature

Edwin Way Teale’s Photographs of American Nature

Posted on April 16, 2018 by Melissa Watterworth Batt
Photographs of nature may be many things. Some may be primarily artistic; some may be primarily scientific. In their simplest, most matter-of-fact forms, they are merely “catalogue” pictures of objects or creatures. The best nature photography, however, records both the object and the setting. It arrests, in its normal surroundings, some form of life, portraying it in a characteristic moment of its existence. Such pictures possess emotional as well as intellectual impact and carry us on an adventure of discovery. …


During his sixty-year career as an author and naturalist that began around 1930 with regular submissions to Popular Science magazine, Edwin Way Teale produced over fifty thousand pictures documenting his travels, nature observations, and personal discoveries. A self-taught (and self-financed) photographer, Teale worked with the utmost economy — careful in framing his shots, utilizing consumer-grade cameras and equipment, writing letters seeking advice from other photographers, and processing prints in his household dark room. By 1966, when Teale was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction, and nearly a million copies of Teale’s books had been sold, the artistic value of his photographs was recognized throughout the world.
For his book *Photographs of American Nature*, published when the Connecticut-based author was 73 years of age, Teale hoped to showcase the “strange and beautiful” creatures he had encountered in his lifetime. Teale selected two hundred and eighty-nine pictures from his archive of photographs to be included in the book. Half of those pictures selected appeared in print for the first time. As Teale’s choice of images for *Photographs of American Nature* reveal, depicting the beauty and fragility of the natural world is simple and “matter-of-fact.” Ultimately, the best nature photographs are ordinary and spontaneous, a consequence of our human instincts not only to observe the world around us, but to recognize and to bear witness.

The exhibition “Edwin Way Teale’s *Photographs of American Nature*” explores Teale’s skill and creativity as a photographer and the role of photography in his writing and storytelling. The exhibition features Teale’s photographs and cameras alongside a selection of notebooks, manuscripts, letters, and drafts from the Edwin Way Teale Papers preserved in UConn’s Archives & Special Collections. A highlight of the exhibition is a collection of original photographic prints on loan from the Connecticut Audubon Society Trail Wood Sanctuary, the former home of Edwin Way Teale located in Hampton, Connecticut.

**Edwin Way Teale’s *Photographs of American Nature***

On view: February 12 through May 4, 2018
Thomas J. Dodd Research Center Gallery
University of Connecticut

Exhibition is free and open to the public Monday through Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm
Presented by: Archives & Special Collections, UConn Library

Contact: Melissa Watterworth Batt, Curator

---

**Aphradisiac**

Posted on April 3, 2018 by Melissa Watterworth Batt

Anna Zarra Aldrich is majoring in English, political science and journalism at the University of Connecticut. She is a student writing intern studying historical feminist publications from the collections of Archives and Special Collections. The following guest post is one in a series to be published throughout the Spring 2018 semester.

During the 1960s and 1970s feminist writers established themselves with a distinct and demanding voice. In order to accomplish the feat of integrating a prominent female presence into the literary world, women created and utilized exclusively female publishing mediums. Women took to using alternative methods that allowed them to cultivate this unique literary culture outside the realm of the traditionally male-dominated publishing world.
In 1985, noted librarian and author Celeste West published a book titled “Words in Our Pockets: The Feminist Writers’ Guild handbook on how to gain power, get published & get paid.” The book provided an in-depth look at the publishing world through a feminist lens and provided women with resources and options for alternative paths to publication.

The cover of the book depicts a woman’s portrait composed of the words of a poem by Denise Levertov’s from which the book gets its title. It reads: “But for us the road/ unfurls itself, we count the/words in our pockets.”

The introduction of the book states that, “The present wave of feminism is…creating a women’s cultural renaissance, the first since matrifocal times. At last, we are building, in large numbers, our own literary tradition, finding our own audience, and from these, shaping a world view.”

This book emphasizes the fact that many of the most influential members of the movement have been writers who use the power of the written word to express the urgency and necessity of the changes they demanded.

West’s book begs the question: “Who among us can afford silence?” West wanted to encourage women to make their voices heard through the literary mire that was oversaturated with male perspectives.

The book goes through a basic how to process for practical elements of publication including writing proposals, making sense of the legal jargon in contracts and financing options. The book also deals with the sexism of the industry. The book provides advice on how to deal with people, namely powerful men, who refuse to take women writers seriously and list feminist publishers and a guide on self-publishing as a means to circumvent discouraging male publishers.

“You are a writer, not a wallflower. Why wait for some gentleman publisher to sweep you into his arms and carry you off to the Big House?” West proposes.

In an article published in the summer 1979 issue of “Chrysalis” magazine, West wrote “Book publishing, like all industries, is controlled by rich, white, heterosexual men. To retain this power, their books naturally reinstate status quo attitudes of privilege and discrimination.”

The article cites the figure that 70 percent of books published were produced by 3.3 percent of the over 6000 publishing houses that existed at the time. West calls independent, alternative press outlets “the slice of tomorrow.”
The book’s engagement with the challenges female writers faced showed that even as women encouraged each other to write, the established system often operated to keep them excluded. This created a space for female-run literary publications that provided a platform for women writers who were not welcomed into traditional literary circles.

“Aphra” was a feminist literary magazine published quarterly from 1969 to 1976 out of New York City. The magazine got its namesake from the pioneering English poet, playwright and author Aphra Behn (1640-1689) who was the first woman known to have earned her living by writing.

“Aphra’s” mission statement was “Free women thinking, doing, being.” In the preamble to their first edition, the editors state that the purpose of the magazine is to provide women with an outlet to express themselves: “We submit that one reason for the form of the current upsurge in feminism…is that the mass media provides such biased and commercially oriented material. The literary and entertainment scene are dominated by male stereotypes, male fantasies, male wish fulfillment, a male power structure,” echoing West’s complaints.

The magazine was a clear response to the male domination of the literary field in contemporary American society and historically. Each issue contained a collection of “Aphra-isms” which were quotes from feminist figures such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Sojourner Truth and more modern feminists like Kate Millet. The section also featured historical and modern examples of sexism from literature and the news.

“Aphra” published work from a variety of authors, including Margaret Atwood and Alice Walker, who each provided a unique take on feminist issues of the day yet they all had an underlying tone that was unapologetic and focused on confronting the problems they observed in society.

In a short story by one of the magazine’s editors, Elizabeth Fisher, titled “My Wife,” she explores the downside of the sexual revolution which allowed and encouraged women to enjoy the sensual pleasures of sex. The story is told from the perspective of a man who believes he has the honor of sexually awakening his future wife. The man becomes disenchanted with his wife soon after they are married and her body changes as a result of her pregnancies and their sex life naturally dwindles. The kicker of the story is the conclusion when the husband overhears his wife admitting to a friend that she faked every single orgasm he thought she had had with him. This sends the narrator into a devastating existential crisis as his fragile male sexual ego is absolutely destroyed.
"I look at the children. They’re my daughters, but they’re hers too. Will they, too, grow up to betray me and their husbands, a man’s whole raison d’etre?…There’s nothing left. How can I live now, how can I go on?"

This desperate conclusion to the story shows how a female writer revealed the negative side of the sexual revolution. Since women were now allowed to admit they enjoy sex, they were expected to. Despite this revolution in sexual philosophy and the growing availability of a variety of birth control methods, male views of sex remained chauvinistic and self-centered. The narrator displays a kind of toxic masculinity that created a culture in which women felt obligated to fake orgasms and feign pleasure. These women felt they had to play the role of the sexually liberated woman even when reality remained stalled in antiquated sexual attitudes that prioritized male sexuality and pleasure.

An unsigned editorial in the second issue of the magazine addresses the difficulties the second-wave feminist movement faces in terms of measurable accomplishments. The first iteration of the women’s movement in the early 20th century was focused primarily on women’s suffrage. The passage of the 19th amendment in 1920 was a clear victory for the movement and led to its dormancy for the next forty years. The goals of feminists in the 1960s, aside from fighting to achieve the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, were geared toward largescale social change. The author of the editorial astutely observes that, “It is an aim which all too often proves illusory since you can’t legislate orgasm — produce it by fiat, despite all the promises which seem to say, ‘Let there be orgasm!’”

In the spring of 1971, “Aphra” had a special “Whore Issue”. This issue dealt with problems of women being condemned for sexual promiscuity as well as the exploitation of women as sex workers.

An editorial by Fisher argues that the problem with sex is that it has been made into a commodity. Women are defined by their sexual relationship with men as a wife, a mother, a mistress or a whore. Fisher writes that by viewing sex in these terms, female pleasure is devalued and the woman is transformed into a dehumanized sex object.

While “Aphra” was primarily a literary journal, through Fisher’s editorial leadership it engaged questions of the sexist nature of sex. Fisher also wrote repeatedly on the role of men in procreation, which had recently become optional given advancements in invitro fertilization.

A similarly satirical take on issues of sexual freedom can be found in a 1973 issue of another
feminist literary magazine, “Velvet Glove.” A story by Susan Watkins follows a woman working in a pharmacy who is required to inquire if a customer is married before she is allowed to sell them contraception. The female protagonist asks her condescending male manager if people could not just easily lie and he tells her she must ask anyway in compliance with the law. The protagonist's retort is to wonder if she should also be required to ask young women buying menstrual products if they're 12-years old. This story is another example of satirical writing which was clearly a way feminists saw fit to combat the social ills they observed.

Feminist have long been thought of as humorless and in modern times many even refer to them as “feminazis.” While much of the work published in literary journals like “Aphra” and “Velvet Glove” is of a serious nature, it also provides women with a platform to express a brand of humor that would not have been well-received by a male audience.

Even “Words in our Pockets” participates in this emergence of a female comedic culture as the copyright information on the inside of their front cover warns readers that “a Surveillance Microblastchip™ embedded in this spine will blow you to bits in the event of unauthorized copying.”

When women were writing to and for other women, they embraced the satirical and humorous side of the movement. Women could rarely do this publicly for fear of being dismissed as frivolous; but women’s publications provided women with an outlet for their special brand of ingroup feminist humor.

Women began working their way into the literary world earnestly and consciously during the 1960s and have not turned back since. In 1960 only 24 percent of the books that landed on the New York Times Bestseller List were written by women. That number fluctuated each year but never rose above 40 percent until 1992. Since then, the gender divide has been roughly equal, though never exceeding 50 percent. It is not a stretch to say that publications like the ones described here have helped establish the feminist literary tradition that has allowed modern female writers to have much more proportional representation in the field.

“Words in our Pockets” ends on a poignant and unmistakably optimistic note. The second to last page contains the words “The End.” When the reader turns the page, she reads: “The statement on the other side of this page is false.” And clearly, that latter statement was correct.

-Anna Zarra Aldrich