

WOMEN at the CENTER

Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture
David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

Issue 35, Spring 2019

Remembering Anne Firor Scott (1921-2019)

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Professor Anne Firor Scott, a path-breaking historian, beloved professor, and fierce advocate for women's history. Professor Scott was a co-founder of the Sallie Bingham Center and remained a strong supporter of the Center as it has grown over the years. She was the first woman to chair the Duke History Department and recipient of countless awards and honors including the National Humanities Medal in 2013.

In 2001 the Bingham Center published a commemorative reprinting of Professor Scott's 1979 essay, "Self-Portraits: Three Women." The piece offers deeply nuanced, meticulously rendered



Scott in the classroom, 1985, University Archives

sketches of the lives of three Colonial women. Professor Scott suggested, "Doubtless it is hubris, but I believe-- could I be miraculously transported back to their time—I would recognize each of these women on first encounter." This observation is an example of both the lyricism and modesty for which she was well-known.

In her introduction to *Writing Women's History: A Tribute to Anne Firor Scott* (2011), Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, the Julia Cherry Spruill Professor Emerita of history at UNC-Chapel Hill, wrote: "We are indebted to her work, grateful for her mentorship, and humbled by her unflagging energy, her bracing engagement with the world."

Inside this issue:

- Remembering Anne Firor Scott 1
- Curating the Self: Profiles in Research 1, 2
- Art and Artists in the Archives 2
- Recent Publications 2
- Mary Lily Research Grant Recipients, 2019-2020 3
- Spring Instruction 3
- Lisa Unger Baskin Collection exhibition and events 4

Curating the Self: Dawn Langley Simmons and Transgender History

Contributed by Adrian Kane, doctoral candidate in History at the University of Washington, as part of our "Profiles in Research" series

I travelled to the Rubenstein Library this winter, with generous support from the new Harry H. Harkins Jr. T'73 Research Grants, to conduct research for my dissertation "Narrating Sex: Transitional Bodies and 'Expertise' in the British Empire and Commonwealth, 1945-1970." The Dawn Langley Simmons papers, a collection of correspondence and ephemera related to the English-born Charlestonian author, offer an unusually rich portrait of

the life of a woman of transgender experience in the 1960s and 70s—one all the more valuable because Simmons played an active role in the archive's construction.

Simmons, a prolific biographer in her own right, was keenly aware of the way textual evidence shapes memory. Her sequence of donations to Duke chronicle her 1968 transition and marriage to John-Paul Simmons—the first marriage between a white woman and Black man in South Carolina, she claimed—as well as her struggles with racist violence, housing instability and

(Continued on page 2)

Recent Publications

These titles are all by writers whose papers are held at the Rubenstein Library or whose research is based in part on materials from our collections.

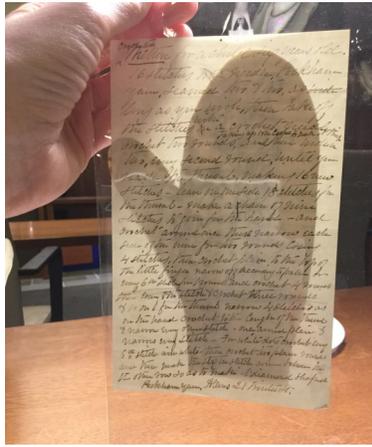
To Survive on This Shore: Photographs and Interviews with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Older Adults by Jess T. Dugan and Vanessa Fabbre. Kehrer Verlag, 2018.

Whisper Tapes: Kate Millet in Iran by Negar Mottahedeh. Stanford University Press, 2019.

Memoir of a Race Traitor: Fighting Racism in the American South by Mab Segrest with a new introduction and afterword by the author. The New Press, September 2019.

All Our Trials: Prisons, Policing, and the Feminist Fight to End Violence by Emily Thuma. University of Illinois Press, 2019.

Lost: Miscarriage in Nineteenth-Century America by Shannon Withycombe. Rutgers University Press, 2018.



Mitten pattern by Sarah E. Goodwin

Art and Artists in the Archives

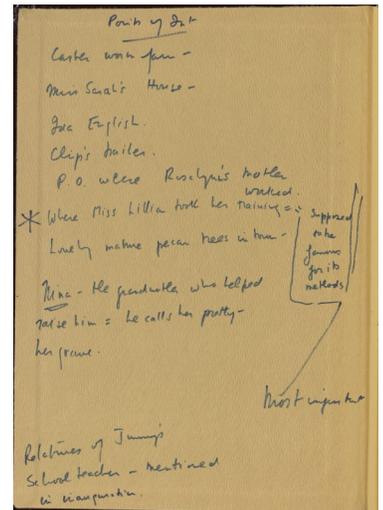
In her search for imagery of “tangible elements of daily life, mainly needlework, made by women across the U.S. up until 1920,” Emily Fleisher, one of our 2019-2020 Mary Lily Grant recipients, found this mitten pattern in the Sarah E. Goodwin needlework patterns, c. 1865-1898. Fleisher writes, “They’re a knitting pattern for mittens, with the mitten template attached. The translucency of the flat paper, with the directions for building the form, and the implied negative space of the body all come together in a fleeting way.” The sources she found will inspire and inform the expansive body of layered, translucent drawings on mylar as part of her current exhibit project.

Curating the Self by Adrian Kane *continued from page 1*

single-income working motherhood. Many of the documents bear Simmons’s marginal comments in colorful ink, explaining in-jokes or clarifying her relationship to the correspondent. Her 1975 diary, for example, closes with a list of “Points of Int.” written on the inside flyleaf, while the bland, newsy letters from her sister Fay assume a different tone in light of Simmons’s comment that Fay and her right-wing “Powellite” family refused to see her in person after her wedding.

What is largely absent from either the letters or the marginalia, however, is the suggestion that transition was a central part of her identity or a primary source of adversity in her life. Of all the letters she chose to donate only one expresses disapproval of her transition, and her friends in the United States and England alike seem to have readily adopted her new name and pronouns. This may, of course, reflect curation on her part. But even if there are deliberate gaps in the archival record, it is significant that Simmons chose to preserve vacation postcards and programs from her daughter’s Christmas pageants rather than accounts of her changing body or any hostility she endured because of it. Even today, after all, trans people are expected to recount feelings of gender-based misery in order to access basic healthcare and legal

support, and as an historian, I had assumed that the pressure to reproduce the “correct” narrative would have been still greater in the early days of the Johns Hopkins gender identity clinic. Yet Simmons seems to have taken active steps to ensure that no future biographer could reduce her life to a simplistic tale of suffering and its surgical redemption. She was a writer, a mother, a lover of antiques and old houses, a bon vivant, a restless soul with one foot planted on either side of the Atlantic—all of these aspects of her identity come to the fore in the Dawn Langley Simmons papers, and serve as a reminder that published or institutional records of transition cannot fully represent the way mid-twentieth century trans people understood themselves.



“Points of Int[erest]” noted on the flyleaf of Simmons’s 1975 diary

Mary Lily Research Grant Recipients 2018-2019

The Bingham Center is pleased to announce the recipients of this year's Mary Lily Research Grants. These grants support the work of students, scholars, and independent researchers who will travel to Durham to use the Bingham Center's rich collections. We gratefully acknowledge our faculty reader, Amanda Wetsel, Thompson Writing Program, who offered valuable insights during the review and selection process.

Emily Fleisher, Artist: Artistic project will include a series of drawings based on historical needlework that create a narrative about the lives of American women before 1920 (See "Art and Artists in the Archives" at left)

Charlie Jeffries, Faculty, University of East Anglia: *Your Best American Girl: Construction of Adolescent Sexualities in the US Culture Wars*

Laura Kenner, Doctoral Candidate, Harvard University, History of Art and Architecture Department: *Text, Sex, and Video: New York City's Downtown/Underground Scene (1973-1996)*

Nell Lake, Doctoral Candidate, Brown University, American Studies Department: Research for dissertation that will link 20th century moral discourse around care and domestic labor with 20th century politics of women's work

Jessica Lapp, Doctoral Candidate, University of Toronto, Faculty of Information: *The Provenance of Protest: An Exploration of Feminist Activist Archiving*

Kaja Marczevska, Research Fellow, Coventry University, Centre for Postdigital Cultures: *Distribute-it-Yourself: Judy Hogan and the History of North American Small Press in Circulation (1960s-1990s)*

Jennifer Withrow, Doctoral Candidate, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Economics Department: *Three Essays on Labor and Marriage Markets: Farm Crisis, and Rural-to-Urban Migration in the United States, 1920-1940*

Harry H. Harkins Jr. T'73 Research Grants

The Rubenstein Library provides grants for researchers whose work would benefit from access to our gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender history collections. The grants are named in honor of Harry H. Harkins, Jr. T'73 for his generous support of this program and ongoing support of LGBT history and sexuality studies collections in the Duke University Libraries. This program is separately funded from the Mary Lily Grants.

Jonathan Coleman, Independent Researcher: *Anywhere, Together: A Queer History of Kentucky*

Benjamin Serby, Doctoral Candidate, Columbia University, History Department: *Gay Liberation and the Politics of the Self in Postwar America*

[library.duke.edu/rubenstein/
ingham/grants](http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/ingham/grants)

Spring Instruction

American Culture Wars

Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies

Archival Appraisal

UNC School of Information & Library Science

Building Feminist Worlds

Writing 101

Condoms and Counseling

House Course

Gender and the Global Political Economy

Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies

Women, Gender, and Sexuality in the U.S.

Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies

Publishing and Marketing Pop Fiction

History

DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Sallie Bingham Center for
Women's History and Culture

David M. Rubenstein
Rare Book & Manuscript Library
Box 90185
Duke University
Durham, NC 27708-0185

Laura Micham, Merle Hoffman Director
Kelly Wooten, Research Services and
Collection Development Librarian
Megan Lewis, Technical Services Archivist

919-660-5967 • special-collections@duke.edu
library.duke.edu/rubenstein/bingham



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Durham, NC
Permit No. 60

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Five Hundred Years of Women's Work: The Lisa Unger Baskin Collection

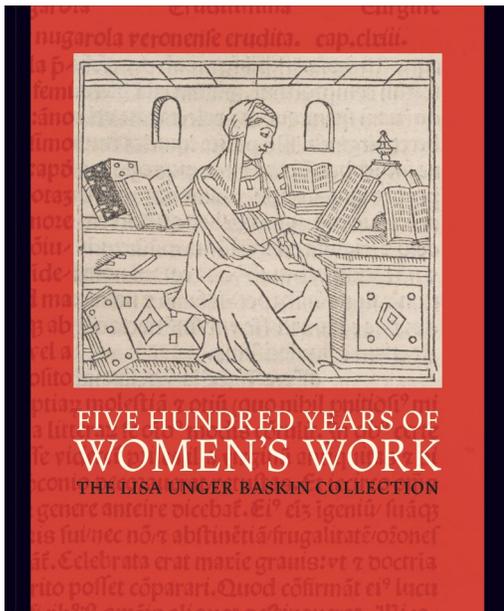
The exhibition of materials from the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection continues to be on display at the Rubenstein Library through June 14, with weekly tours offered on Fridays at 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. Please visit the website below to sign up for a tour or view the online version of the exhibit with beautiful pictures and descriptions of these treasures. Copies of the exhibit catalog (pictured at left) are available for sale online through Oak Knoll Books: <http://bit.ly/LUBcatalog>. The exhibit will travel to the Grolier Club in New York in December 2019.

Grolier Club, New York, NY

December 10, 2019 Exhibition Opening Reception

Dec 11, 2019 Exhibition open to the public
– Feb 8, 2020

January 21, 2020 Symposium on Women in the Book Arts
Keynote by Dr. Nell Irvin Painter



<https://library.duke.edu/exhibits/2019/baskin>