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Friends of the Connecticut College Library

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Summer Newsletter 2005

Laurie M. Deredita
Connecticut College, lmder@conncoll.edu

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FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY
Fall Events

An interesting schedule of events and exhibitions is shaping up for the Fall Semester in Shain Library. We apologize for the missing dates and titles of some of the events but planning is still incomplete and you will be receiving announcements in the mail with complete information before they actually happen. Unless otherwise indicated, all of the events described below will take place in the Charles Chu Asian Art Reading Room in Shain Library.

Liane Hanson, the well-known host of National Public Radio's Weekend Edition Sunday, will give the Sound Lab Foundation Lecture for 2005. Ms. Hanson will speak on Wednesday, September 21, at 7:30 p.m. in the Ernst Room in the Blaustein Humanities Center. It is the eighth in this endowed annual lecture series that is co-sponsored by the Sound Lab Foundation and the Friends of the Connecticut College Library.

Library exhibition *Japanese Prints at Connecticut College* (September 15 – November 7) Curated by Ning Qiang, Chu-Niblack Professor of Art History and Curator of the Chu-Griffis Collection. There will also be a lecture by Professor Jim McClain of Brown University, a historian of Edo period (1603-1868) popular culture. Date, time and title of the lecture to be announced.

Lecture on Eugene O'Neill by Linda Herr, professor of theater, Friday, October 14, 4 p.m., with reception to follow. This lecture is scheduled to coincide with the annual Eugene O'Neill Celebration that takes place at the O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford on Saturday, October 15. The title of the lecture will be announced later.

There will be a Veterans' Day program on November 11. A library exhibition will feature items from the Irwin and the Fregosi Collections of WWII documents and memorabilia in Special Collections.

SUMMER EXHIBITION
"Got Ink?
Celebrating *CC: Connecticut College Magazine*"

Eighty years ago — give or take a year or two — the fledgling Connecticut College for Women published the first issue of its alumnae magazine. About 300 issues and several names later, the Office of College Relations has mounted a lively display in Shain Library to highlight the history and successes of this popular glossy magazine that now goes out to 26,0000 Connecticut College alumni, parents, donors and friends around the world four times a year. The exhibit opened at a Saturday afternoon reception during Reunion Weekend. Organized by College Relations staff members and Nova Seals, college archivist, using material from the College Archives, *Got Ink?* runs through the end of August. If you are on campus this summer, take a look.

MEMBERSHIP
in the Friends of the Connecticut College Library

Thank you to all of you who have renewed your membership in the Friends of the Library for 2005. Membership, new or renewed, is welcome at any time of year. The dues from the Friends are used to support the preservation of the collections, to purchase books, to sponsor lectures, exhibitions and receptions, to print the newsletter, and to fund the library scholarship.

During the last semester, money from Friends membership dues made possible a gallery talk by book artist Mary McCarthy and the opening of an exhibition of her work; a lecture on Chinese bronzes by Professor Wangheng Chen of Wuhan University, China; and a slide presentation on historic neighborhoods in new london by New London Landmarks.

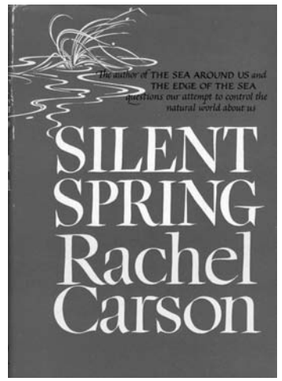
If you wish to join at this time, or know of someone who is interested, a check payable to "Connecticut College" may be mailed to the Friends of the Library, Charles E. Shain Library, 270 Mohegan Avenue, New London, CT 06320. Membership has the following categories: contributing ($30), associate ($50), patron ($100), and benefactor ($300 or more). All members receive the newsletter and invitations to lectures and other events but dues in the associate, patron and benefactor categories include library-borrowing privileges.

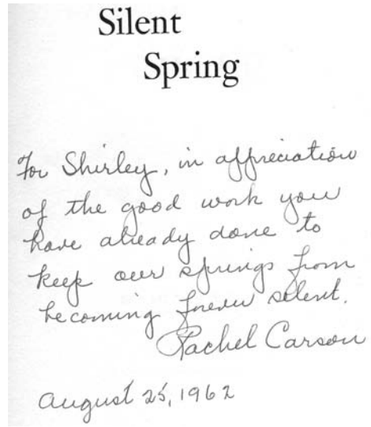
2005

Friends of the Connecticut College Library

Summer Newsletter

VALUABLE FIRST EDITION of *Silent Spring*





Linda Lear '63 recently gave to the library a very special copy of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, inscribed by the author to her dear friend and associate Shirley Briggs in 1962. Thirty years later Ms. Briggs in turn gave this book to Linda, Rachel Carson's biographer, who has generously donated it and three other Carson first editions to Special Collections to become part of the Lear book collection. Carson's denunciation of the use of chemical pesticides in *Silent Spring* was a wake-up call to American environmentalists and resulted in the first antipesticide legislation in the United States.

Shirley Briggs, an illustrator, writer and editor who died in 2004 and outlived her friend by forty years, met Carson when they both worked at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the mid-1940s. After Carson's death in 1964, she helped establish what is now the Rachel Carson Council, an organization that educates the public about the environmental dangers of pesticide and chemical use, and served as its executive director from 1970 to 1992. Also part of the recent Lear gift is a lovely watercolor painting by Briggs of "East Quoddy Head light, obscured by sudden fog" in which two small figures in yellow slickers in the foreground, who are Rachel and her nephew and adopted son Roger, walk toward the headlands. Once it is professionally mounted, this picture will hang in the Palmer Room and, along with the books, be used in a library exhibition devoted to Carson that is planned for 2007.

Thanks to Linda Lear's interest in encouraging the use of primary resources in undergraduate research, the library now houses the Lear/Carson Collection, which is the archive of her research for the biography *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature*. Interest in the life and work of Rachel Carson continues to be very strong forty years after the publication of her most famous book, and scholars and admirers of Rachel Carson use the Lear/Carson Collection frequently.

CHARLES E. SHAIN LIBRARY
GREER MUSIC LIBRARY

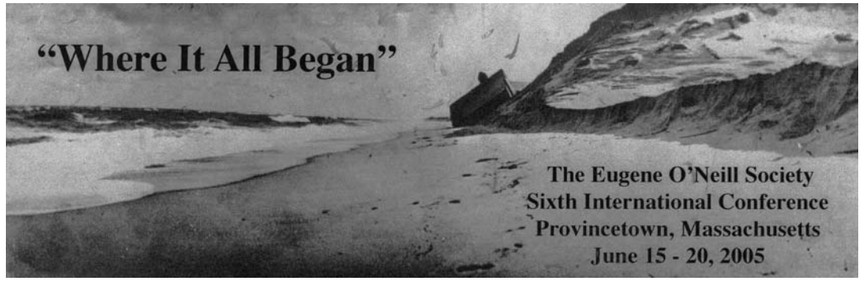
The Friends of the
Connecticut College Library

W. Lee Hisle
Vice President for Information Services and Librarian of the College
Laurie M. Deredita
Director of Special Collections and Archives and Newsletter Editor
Susan Lindberg,
Office of College Relations, Designer

Charles E. Shain Library
Greer Music Library
Connecticut College Archives
Connecticut College
270 Mohegan Avenue
New London, CT
06320-4196
Telephone (860) 439-2654
E-mail: lmder@conncoll.edu

Special Collections
Home Page:
<http://www.sc.conncoll.edu>

June 2005



In mid-June, 2005, eighty-nine years after Eugene O'Neill first went to Provincetown, Massachusetts, the Eugene O'Neill Society gathered there together with the Susan Glaspell Society for a six-day conference titled "Where it all began." If New London, Connecticut may be said to be O'Neill's hometown, Provincetown may legitimately lay claim to being the place "where it all began," "it" being the start of his dramatic career and the place where he was "discovered." O'Neill spent nine critical summers in Provincetown. There he found a place where the townspeople and the visiting artists and writers had established a harmonious climate of mutual respect and economic symbiosis, creating a congenial social and intellectual milieu where his creative process flourished.

Susan Glaspell, the journalist, novelist and playwright co-founder of the Provincetown Players, later wrote, "Quite a little time ago something happened in this town which reached so far, and in influence lasted so long, as to amaze the people who began it. A group of writers, some of them very young, dissatisfied with what is called Broadway, and wanting to write the kind of plays they felt worth writing, said: 'We will write and put on our own plays.' They began here on a wharf, and later put on their plays in New York … They called themselves the Provincetown Players, and it was Eugene O'Neill who proposed the subtitle, The Playwrights Theatre … None of us got rich, but it has been pretty well agreed the American Theatre became a little richer."

An almost penniless young man living on an allowance from his father, O'Neill stepped off the steamer onto the Provincetown wharf in 1916 with only his knapsack and some one-act plays. During that first summer he lived rough in a shack across the street from the house on Commercial Street that his friends Jack Reed and Louise Bryant were renting. But on the evening of July 18, the improvised theater on nearby Lewis Wharf "shook with applause" at the end of the production of O'Neill's *Bound East for Cardiff* by the Provincetown Players, marking the beginning of a career that would be recognized with four Pulitzers and the Nobel Prize.

O'Neill moved to an apartment on the top floor of Francis's Flats to which he brought his second wife Agnes Boulton as a bride in 1919. But O'Neill's first real home of his own, a wedding present to the young couple from his father, was the former Peaked Hill Life Saving Station, situated in the dunes on the Atlantic side of the Province Lands. Extensively renovated by bohemian socialite Mabel Dodge and several miles out of town along a sandy trail, the Peaked Hill house was remote enough to appeal to the playwright's need for solitude but large enough to house visiting friends and relatives. It was in Provincetown that his son Shane was born and here that he learned that he had won his first Pulitzer Prize for *Beyond the Horizon* in 1920. The Provincetown Players soon moved to more permanent quarters on MacDougal Street in Manhattan. O'Neill returned to Provincetown until 1924 but by 1931, when the house collapsed into the sea after a severe winter storm, he had turned the page on this part of his life and moved to another part of the world with his third wife, Carlotta Monterey.

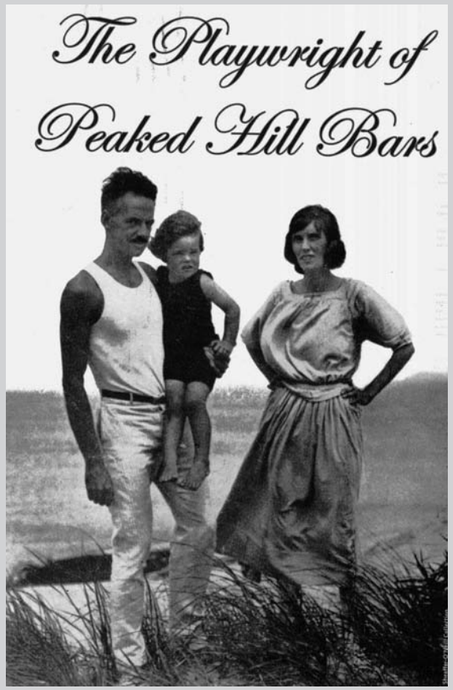
Weathered houses, old-fashioned flower gardens, sea, sun, sand, salt air, sea gulls … Provincetown was in its full summer glory when 110 O'Neillians and Glaspellians descended on the Surfside Hotel for the Sixth International Conference of the Eugene O'Neill Society. Just a few steps from the place where O'Neill had slung his hammock during his first season in Provincetown and near the house where playwright Susan Glaspell lived with her husband Jig Cook, the charismatic first director of the Provincetown Players, it was easy to see what originally attracted O'Neill and his circle of artists and writers to this place. The conference events were planned to highlight Provincetown's many charms, with a staged production of *Thirst* on Fisherman's Wharf with the back of the stage open to a view of the sea, a concert of songs from the Eugene O'Neill Songbook at the Unitarian-Universalist Church in the center of town, a tour through the dunes and a lobster bake on the beach.

Conference attendees from all over the United States mingled with scholars and O'Neill and Glaspell enthusiasts from Canada, Israel, Japan, Russia, Greece, Spain, Brazil and India. Southeastern Connecticut was represented by former curator of the Sheaffer-O'Neill Collection Brian Rogers and current curator Laurie Deredita, Monte Cristo Cottage co-curators Sally Pavetti and Lois MacDonald, Director of Arts Programming at Connecticut College and O'Neill scholar Rob Richter, Sheaffer-O'Neill Collection volunteer Jeanette Astrauckas, emeritus professor of history Michael Burlingame, and assorted spouses and companions. We heard lectures and panel discussions about many topics both literary and biographical. Eugene O'Neill's work and that endlessly fascinating dysfunctional family the Tyrone-O'Neills continue to provide fertile ground for interpretation and discussion. We were treated to readings of *Long Day's Journey into Night* by Provincetown resident Norman Mailer and his wife and son on one night and Mary Tyrone's monologues interpreted by actress Salome Jens on another.

One of the most interesting aspects of the O'Neill Conference was its pairing with a meeting of the Susan Glaspell Society. Susan Glaspell was born in Davenport, Iowa in 1882 and died in Provincetown in 1948, where she had lived since 1913, spending winters in New York. As the co-founder of the Provincetown Players she became a friend and mentor to Eugene O'Neill. Her own work was recognized with a Pulitzer Prize in 1931 for her play *Alison's House* based on the life of poet Emily Dickinson. During the conference there were lectures and panel discussions about Glaspell's work as well as a staging of her play *Trifles*, readings of several of her one-act plays and a screening of the short film *A Jury of Her Peers* by Sally Heckel, based on one of Glaspell's short stories.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: EUGENE O'NEILL

Acclaimed documentary filmmaker Ric Burns, founder of Steeplechase Films, has been working for several years on a movie about the life and work of Eugene O'Neill, and one of the highlights of the O'Neill Conference was a discussion by Burns about the making of the documentary followed by a showing of outtakes from the film. Burns has been working on the project with O'Neill biographers Arthur and Barbara Gelb, who also gave a presentation at the conference: "Looking Back: The Gelbs' Half-Century Researching Eugene O'Neill, 1946-2006." The O'Neill documentary is part of the American Experience series and will be shown on WGBH early in 2006. Many of the images used in the film come from the Sheaffer-O'Neill Collection at Connecticut College.

THE PLAYWRIGHT OF PEAKED HILL BARS

The Playwright of Peaked Hill Bars: Eugene O'Neill in Provincetown is the name of an exhibition that will run for seven months at the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum. Written and arranged by Curator of Collections Jeffory Morris and other museum staff, this illustrated narrative of O'Neill's years in Provincetown relies heavily on images and documents from the Sheaffer-O'Neill Collection at Connecticut College. The image of Eugene and Agnes O'Neill with their young son Shane on the dunes at Peaked Hill Bars is from the Connecticut College collection and was used on the postcard announcing the exhibit as well as on the tee shirts available for sale in the museum shop.