

**Women Themselves: Women's History Sketches for a Radio Series  
A Register, 1979 – 1980**

**Creator:** WEPR

**Collection Number:** Mss 283

**Title:** Women Themselves: Women's History Sketches for a Radio Series, 1979 – 1980

**Abstract:** Women *Themselves* was a series of twenty-six half hour radio programs produced and broadcast by WEPR, a national public radio station located in Greenville, South Carolina. The project was jointly sponsored by WEPR and Alan Schaffer of the Department of History at Clemson University.

**Quantity:** 0.10 *cubic* feet consisting of nine audiocassettes in one box.

**Scope and Content Note**

This collection contains nine audiocassettes. Five of these recordings document research that was conducted by the writers and producers in preparation for the broadcasts. The first four cassettes document a conference on women's studies held at Emory University in 1979. The topics of the four academic sessions are: *The Southern Woman*, *New Sources in Women's History*, *Incorporating Women's History*, and *Women in the Workforce*. One additional research recording documents an interview with Dr. Herbert Gutman. The exact date and location in which this interview took place is unknown [c. late 1970s]. Three cassettes are from *Women Themselves* radio broadcasts. These productions highlight the lives and social contributions of Mary Antin, Sara and Angelina Grimke, and Jane Hunter. One cassette is from a National Public Radio broadcast series entitled *Options*, in which correspondent Susan Stamberg interviews writer and feminist Tillie Olson.

**Additional Collection Information**

Cite as: [description of items such as "Jane Hunter: A Nickel and a Prayer"], box number, Mss 283, Women Themselves: Women's History Sketches for a Radio Series, Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, SC.

**Historical Note**

*Women Themselves*, which first aired in 1980, was a series of 26 half hour radio programs produced and broadcast by WEPR in South Carolina. These programs focused on the lives and accomplishments of some of the prominent women of history.

The impetus for this project stemmed from the recognition by historians in the late 1970's that many of the achievements of prominent women had been underexposed in the classroom in regards to textbooks and other media. The project was spearheaded by Alan

Schaffer, head of Clemson's History Department, with help from Lily-Roland Hall, station manager of South Carolina educational radio station WEPR, and Laura Becker and Charlotte Holt, who were responsible for the production, writing, and research for the programs.

This series highlighted the accomplishments of women despite the disadvantages and restrictions that they were subject to in a male-oriented society. The content focused on the words of the woman themselves, as found in autobiographies and diaries, accompanied by dramatic readings from voice actors. The voice acted material was then interspersed with commentary and analysis through interviews with eminent historians.

### **Related Material**

Series 68 -- Department of History, 1956 – 1986

### **Collection Item Indexed Terms**

Clemson University. Department of History

Schaffer, Alan

Public radio—United States

National Public Radio (U.S.)

American prose literature—Women authors

Antislavery movements—United States—History—19<sup>th</sup> century

Phillis Wheatley Association

Women abolitionists—South Carolina

Antin, Mary (1881 – 1949)

Grimke, Angelina Emily (1805 – 1879)

Grimke, Sara Moore (1792 – 1873)

Gutman, Herbert (1928 – 1985)

Hunter, Jane Edna (Harris) (1882 – 1971)

Olson, Tillie

### **Added Entries**

Hall, Lily-Roland

Becker, Laura

Holt, Charlotte

### **Document Types**

Audiocassettes

### **Administrative Information:**

Acquired from Charlotte Holt on April 11, 1988.

Formerly accession number 88-31.

### **Processing Information:**

This collection was processed by Carl Redd, Project Archivist in 2005 as part of a re-grant project from the South Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

## Detailed Description

Box 1

9 Cassettes

### CASSETTE ABSTRACTS

1. Emory University Conference on Women's Studies (1-4)
2. Herbert Gutman Interview (5)
3. Women Themselves -- Jane Hunter (6)
4. Women Themselves -- Mary Antin (7)
5. Women Themselves -- The Grimke Sisters (8)
6. Options -- Tillie Olson (9)

### Research in preparation for the radio broadcasts (1 – 5)

#### **Emory University Conference on Women's Studies**

**4 Cassettes**

**Location**-Emory University -- Atlanta Georgia

**Date**-November 14, 1979

#### **Cassette 1**

**Session I** -- *The Southern Woman*

**Speakers**-James Laney, Molly Davis, Julia Kirk Blackwelder, Sharon Harley, and Jacqueline Hall

**Audio Quality**-Good

#### Side 1

**00:30** -- Emory University President James Laney gives opening remarks.

**4:50** -- Molly Davis begins the session by making brief comment regarding historical scholarship as it relates to women before introducing the first speaker.

**6:51 – 24:06** -- Julia Kirk Blackwelder, Professor of Urban History at the University of North Carolina – Charlotte, presents her paper; *White Gloves, Mops, and Typewriters: Atlanta's Working Women in the Early Twentieth Century*.

**25:02 – 43:40** -- Sharon Harley, Professor of African American Women's History at the University of Maryland, presents her paper; *The Elite and the Non-Elite: Black Women in the District of Columbia 1890 – 1920*.

**44:52 – 48:27** -- Jacqueline Hall, Director of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, presents her paper; *Oral Sources and the New Women's History: Strategies for Research on Southern Working Women*.

**48:27** -- Audio ends.

#### Side 2

**14:49 – 30:06** -- Jacqueline Hall continues her presentation.

**30:50** -- Audio ends.

## **Cassette 2**

**Session II** -- *New Sources for Women's History*

**Speakers**-Acensione[?] Larvin and Darlene Roth

**Audio Quality**-Good, though Ms. Larvin has a heavy accent.

### **Side 1**

**3:40 – 59:51** -- Acensione [?] Larvin, Department of History at Howard University, gives a lecture concerning methodologies of research as they relate specifically to scholarship regarding Latin American women.

**59:51** -- Audio ends.

### **Side 2**

**3:30 – 16:27** -- Ms. Larvin continues her lecture.

**17:41 – 43:25** -- Darlene Roth, Professor of Women's Studies and Public History at Emory University lectures on how the fields of archeology, architecture, and costume provide interesting sources regarding women's studies.

**42:25** -- Audio ends.

## **Cassette 3**

**Session III** -- *Incorporating Women's History*

**Speakers**-Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Gary Riechard

**Audio Quality**-Good

### **Side 1**

**00:07 – 31:37** -- Elizabeth Fox-Genovese gives a lecture highlighting problems and oversights regarding the written narrative account of women's history.

**31:46 – 59:51** -- Gary Riechard discusses the problems and successes he and other writers faced while attempting to incorporate women's history into a textbook entitled *America: Changing Times*.

**59:51** -- Audio ends.

### **Side 2**

**3:21 – 15:04** -- Riechard continues relating his experiences regarding the development of the textbook.

**15:30 – 17:02** -- Questions and comments from the audience.

**17:02** -- Audio ends.

## **Cassette 4**

**Session IV** -- *Women in the Workforce*

**Speakers**-two unidentified female speakers

**Audio Quality**-Initially very poor

## **Side 1**

**00:07 – 25:11** -- Unidentified female speaker begins her lecture by pointing out demographic trends such as life expectancy; marriage; children; divorce; education; and the labor force as it relate to women before discussing the importance of planning personal and professional careers.

**25:34 – 59:31** -- A second unidentified female gives a lecture regarding women and the academic marketplace circa late 1970s.

**59:31** -- Audio ends.

## **Side 2**

--Blank--

## **Cassette 5**

### **Herbert Gutman Interview**

Herbert Gutman (1928 – 1985) was a professor, social historian, and writer. His most famous work was entitled *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1850 – 1925* in which he argued against the idea that slavery destroyed African American family life. According to Charlotte Holt, this interview may have been utilized as a source for the Emma Goldman and Jane Hunter radio broadcasts.

**Speakers**-Herbert Gutman and two unidentified female speakers

**Audio Quality**-Good

**Date**-Circa late 1970s

**Location**-Unknown

## **Side 1**

**00:07 – 17:15** -- The bulk of this short interview focuses on issues regarding single black women and their migration northward from the southern regions of the United States. The interviewers make parallels between Gutman's thoughts regarding the subject as they relate to the experiences of Jane Hunter, to whom they would later devote a radio program.

## **Side 2**

-- Blank --

## **Women Themselves Radio Broadcasts (6 – 8)**

### **Mary Antin – *The Promised Land* (6)**

Mary Antin was born in Polotsk, Russia on June 13, 1881. She emigrated to the United States in 1894 with her family, and after a successful education began writing and lecturing in order to educate the public on issues concerning immigration. Her first book was *From Plotsk to Boston* (1899), followed by *The Promised Land* (1912), and *They Who Knock at Our Gates* (1914). Antin died on May 5, 1949 in Suffern, New York.

## **1 Cassette**

**Producer**-Charlotte Holt

**Co-Directors**-Lillie Roland Hall, Alan Schaffer

**Writer/Host**-Laura Becker

**Consultant**-Deborah Dash Moore

**Actress**-Ruth Ilg

### **Side 1**

**00:07** -- Biographical information regarding Mary Antin is revealed through the words of the actress and by analysis from the host.

**6:20** -- Antin notes the unequal treatment of males and females in her community; there is much frustration over the fact that there is no avenue for intelligent females seeking a better education.

**12:20** -- Traditional marriage arrangements among European Jews (of which she is one) are discussed.

**17:28** -- Aspects of her mother's lead role in the family business are touched upon.

**19:05** -- Social and religious life in her community are discussed. Ceremonial bathing in public baths and religious traditions such as the "Feast of Tears" are related by the host and actress.

**22:57** -- As Antin's family faces hardship, she asserts herself as a headstrong and determined woman; this untraditional role leads to friction between Antin and her community.

**25:32** -- Antin's frustrations shift to anticipation; she learns that the family will soon move to United States.

**30:02** -- Audio ends.

### **Side 2**

-- Blank --

#### ***The Grimke Sisters* (7)**

Sara Grimke (1792 – 1873) and Angelina Grimke Weld (1805 – 1879) were both originally from Charleston, South Carolina, the daughters of John and Mary Grimke. They were both notable 19<sup>th</sup> Century educators and writers who were among the early advocates of women's rights and abolitionism in the United States.

## **1 Cassette**

**\*\*Note\*\*** this program appears to have been performed live before an audience. One must note that the program is not introduced in the familiar way of the other *Women Themselves* radio broadcasts. It is unclear whether this program was aired as part of the original *Women Themselves* broadcasts, or rather was intended to be utilized as research. Records within Clemson University Series 68 -- Department of History 1956 – 1986, folder 101, "Final Report – 1981" state that the *The Grimke Sister's* broadcast was the 19<sup>th</sup> aired program in the series, which occurred on August 2.

## Side 1

**00:14** -- Actresses portraying Sara and Angelina Grimke give short biographical notes, express their hatred of slavery, and give the general impression that they were seen as “outsiders” in their own family.

**3:12** -- The sister’s were greatly dissatisfied with the educational opportunities open to women. Sewing, reading, writing, and proper manners were all that were offered it seems. One of the sisters secretly studied her brother’s textbooks. She was not allowed to further pursue any higher education by her parents.

**5:04** -- Sara moved north to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and became influenced by the Quaker religious sect. While there her anti-slavery views hardened. Angelina joined her in the 1828 and both became involved with the Anti-Slavery Society. While there they met an influential advocate named Theodore Weld. The actor portraying Mr. Weld gives his philosophical outlook regarding social activism. The Grimke sister’s began to be much sought after public speakers.

**19:10** -- Theodore Weld and Angelina Grimke’s courtship are depicted.

**29:20** -- The marriage ceremony of the two are covered.

**31:41** -- Audio ends.

## Side 2

**00:35** -- The marriage ceremony continues.

**3:40** -- Even in Philadelphia, there was much opposition to the work of social activists. Angelina speaks with an impassioned voice condemning slavery, as an angry mob shouts insults. Violence erupts in the streets.

**8:41** -- Discouragement sets in. During the Civil War, they moved to New Jersey in a sort of utopian cooperative community. It was during this time that some tensions between the sisters are revealed. This rift is eventually healed.

**15:45** -- They followed news of the war, and were delighted to hear that Lincoln had emancipated the slaves, which reassured the activists that their efforts had not been in vain.

**18:58** -- The sisters are well pleased that the slaves were finally free, but feel much distress at the fact that women were still without basic rights. The two stay active despite the advancement of their elderly years.

**20:15** -- The sisters are surprised to find after moving to Hyde Park, Boston that they had a mulatto relative who had been fathered by their brother Henry. Archibald Grimke had attended Harvard and later became Vice-President of the NAACP, President of the American Negro Academy, and was known for his written works.

**28:16** -- A short question and answer session with the cast follows the conclusion of the program.

**31:41** -- Audio ends.

### **Jane Hunter** – *A Nickel and a Prayer* (8)

Jane Edna Hunter was born on December 13, 1882 in Pendleton, South Carolina. She was the daughter of Edward Harris and Harriet Millner. She graduated from Ferguson College in 1896, Hampton Institute -- Virginia in 1904, and after attending Marshall Law

School at Cleveland State University passed the Ohio bar examination in 1925. The focus of Hunter's life became the improvement of conditions for African American women; specifically providing guidance to poor young black women from the south that migrated north looking for work, just as she herself had. In 1911 Hunter founded the Working Girls Association in Cleveland, Ohio which in 1912 became the Phillis Wheatley Association. This organization provided lodging, training, and work placement for young black women. In 1940, she penned her autobiography, *A Nickel and a Prayer*. Jane Edna Hunter died on January 19, 1971 in Cleveland, Ohio.

## **1 Cassette**

**Speakers**-Laura Becker (Clemson University), Alan Schaffer (Clemson University), Richard Long (Atlanta University), Grace Jordan McFadden (University of South Carolina), Rebecca Thompson (91 year-old cousin of Jane Hunter -- from Pendleton, SC), and Flora Walker (portrays Jane Hunter in the radio broadcast).

### **Side 1**

**00:11** -- The broadcast begins with introductory words from the actress in the role of Jane Hunter.

**2:14** -- Laura Becker and Alan Schaffer discuss aspects of Jane Hunter's life, writings, and accomplishments.

**6:34** -- Aspects of Jane Hunter's youth, and the environment in which she grew up are discussed in depth. Interview excerpts from Dr. Richard Long provide a look into post-Civil War segregated society.

**10:54** -- The actress portraying Jane Hunter recalls childhood memories of growing up near Woodburn Plantation in upstate South Carolina.

**12:57** -- Becker and Schaffer discuss Hunter's relationship with her parents, grandparents, and aunts.

**14:47** -- The actress portraying Hunter recalls her grandmother.

**16:33** -- Dr. Richard Long makes comment on the difficulties that rural children faced in regards to getting a good education.

**20:23** -- The actress portraying Hunter describes her brief, unhappy marriage to a man forty years her senior.

**21:24** -- Becker and Schaffer note that Hunter's feelings upon the disillusionment of her marriage were quite unique for a woman of her time. She felt a great relief and a sense of freedom when her marriage ended; she was very much a counter-culture individual.

**24:27** -- Becker and Schaffer discuss Hunter's early employment experiences.

**25:09** -- The actress portraying Hunter explains how an early influence on her was a woman named Ms. Ruby, whom Hunter worked for when she was young.

**27:41** -- Excerpts from an interview with 91 year-old Rebecca Thompson (a cousin of Jane Hunter) provide a unique first-person account of Jane Hunter the individual.

**31:49** -- Becker and Schaffer remark that Hunter apparently was greatly concerned while working as a domestic to guard against sexual abuse, which may have been a common fear among young black women.



**37:00** -- The actress portraying Hunter tells of her dream to establish a social program that would help women.

**40:07** -- Becker and Schaffer note that Hunter is always conscious of color (she is light-skinned). She always felt closer to her father, who was of a mixed racial heritage, than her mother, who was dark. It was much later in her life before Hunter fully accepted her Negro heritage.

**42:37** -- The actress portraying Hunter recalls how she finally reconciled with her Negro heritage after for many years associating it with hardship and bondage.

**43:48** -- Becker and Schaffer point out that the accomplishments of Hunter are just as significant as many of her contemporaries, but knowledge of her work is likely not as well known because of her race.

**45:35** -- Excerpts from an interview with Grace Jordan McFadden and Dr. Richard Long reveal their views of segregation and how it created an intense mindset for a will to accomplish among blacks in order that they escape it.

**53:09** -- Becker, Schaffer, and the words of the actress point out the fact that Hunter was proud of the accomplishments of the women who came through her Phillis Wheatley Society, whether it was through education or through blue-collar work.

**54:14** -- Becker and Schaffer comment on how anyone reading the book *A Nickel and a Prayer* might be disappointed to find that the work is in some ways impersonal and doesn't give the reader a window into Hunter's soul and personality.

**55:54** -- Hunter's cousin Rebecca Thompson makes closing comments.

**58:01** -- Audio ends.

## Side 2

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## **National Public Radio – Options Broadcast**

*Tillie Olson – A Profile* (9)

Tillie Olson was born on January 14, 1913 in Omaha, Nebraska, the daughter of Samuel and Ida Lerner. Her written works, though few, were hailed as powerful insights into the inner lives of the working poor, women, and minorities. *Tell Me a Riddle*, which consisted of three short stories and a novella, was critically acclaimed upon its publication in 1961. She followed up this work some years later with the publications of *Yonnonidio: From the Thirties* in 1974, and *Silences* in 1978.

## **1 Cassette**

**Speakers**-Tillie Olson, Susan Stamberg.

**\*\*Note\*\*** this is a National Public Radio broadcast of an interview that took place in 1980. Susan Stamberg of NPR conducts this interview in which Ms. Olson discusses the conflict between responsibilities and creativity, especially as they affect the working mother who aspires to write. Reproduction of this broadcast may be covered by copyright laws.

## Side 1

**00:14** -- Stamberg introduces Tillie Olson. The interview takes on an informal, conversational pace. Olson recalls employment in her youth, and how several jobs affected her health.

**2:43** -- Olson reads excerpts from "I Stand Here Ironing," a short story from her work *Tell Me a Riddle*.

**6:14** -- Stamberg provides a plot synopsis for *Tell Me a Riddle*. Excerpts from the story are given.

**10:45** -- Olson states that her prime years for writing were lost due to work responsibilities. She comments that even now she rarely writes, as her life continues to have distraction and seldom can find undisturbed moments.

**23:52** -- Olson's work *Silences* was not well received. Olson explains her need to write a book which reflected the frustrations of busy "working people" who are artistically gifted and feel a great burden and need to express themselves through writing, but cannot achieve their goal on account of the frustrations of life. Olson reflects on her own writing philosophy. For Olson, satisfaction is achieved through the experience of writing creatively, not through the final completion of the work. This feeling goes a long way in explaining why she has had so few published works since her initial success in the 1960s.

**41:36** -- Excerpts from Olson's *Yonnonido: From the Thirties* are read aloud. Stamberg provides commentary regarding the work.

**43:38** -- Olson and Stamberg discuss the work at great length. During this time, Olson again divulges her writing style and her own experiences of constant struggle between her writer and parent selves. She feels that she has had so much more to offer than what is publicly available, yet has never had time to fulfill her muse. She expresses regret, and feels the "...pain of living when times are not right for you."

**55:04** -- Stamberg gives closing comments.

**58:14** -- Audio ends.

## Side 2

-- Blank --