

Guide to Helen H. Bacon Papers

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Barnard Archives and Special Collections
Creator	Helen Hazard Bacon, 1919-2007
Title	Helen H. Bacon Papers
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1958-2001
Date [inclusive]	1919-2004
Extent	8.17 Linear feet ; 15 document boxes, 1 oversize box
Location note	This collection is stored offsite and advance notice is required for access. To use this collection, please contact the Barnard Archives and Special Collections at 212.854.4079 or archives@barnard.edu .
Language	English
Abstract	This collection consists of the research papers and class materials of Helen H. Bacon, a former faculty member of the Greek and Latin Department at Barnard College and Columbia University. It includes materials related to her published works, lectures and talks as well as course outlines, exams and notes for classes, student papers, transcripts, diplomas, travel journals and personal correspondence.

Preferred Citation

Helen H. Bacon Papers, 1919-2004; Box and Folder; Barnard College Archives and Special Collections, Barnard Library, Barnard College.

Biography

Helen Hazard Bacon (1919-2007), Classics scholar and teacher, was born in Berkeley, California and spent part of her childhood in Florence, Italy. After graduating from Bryn Mawr College in 1940 and pursuing graduate studies at UC Berkeley and Harvard (1940-42), she joined the U.S. Naval Reserve as a Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). She served actively until 1946, reaching the rank of Full Lieutenant. Along with fellow classicists, she worked in Washington, DC in the Navy's Communications Annex, where she was a cryptanalyst decoding Japanese radio communications.

After the service, she returned to Bryn Mawr to pursue her doctorate. She taught at Bryn Mawr and the Woman's College of Greensboro, N.C. before she joined the Classics Department at Smith College in 1953 and completed her Ph.D. in 1955. She also traveled to Greece on a Fulbright fellowship and studied at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens (1952-1953).

At Smith, she was promoted from Instructor to Associate Professor (1953-61) and served as Department Chair (1959-61). In 1960, Bacon organized Smith faculty and students on behalf of two colleagues who had been arrested and dismissed from the College on charges of possession of pornography. She managed to have the Board of Trustees reverse their decision and her colleagues received their back pay, but they were not rehired. The events are recorded in Barry Werth's *The Scarlet Professor Newton Arvin: A Literary Life Shattered by Scandal* (2001). After the publication of the book, and fifty years after the original events, Bacon was presented the David Burres Award for Civil Liberties by the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts in an April 29, 2002 ceremony at the Smith College Archives.

In the fall 1961, Bacon arrived as a Visiting Associate Professor at Barnard College's Greek and Latin department, where she would remain for the next thirty years. A few months into her first year, and with President McIntosh's support, she presented a proposal to the Committee on Instruction to merge the department's advanced course offerings with Columbia's. She was named department chair for the following year and given "full equality" so she could teach undergraduate and graduate courses at Barnard and Columbia. During her tenure as department chair (1962-1974), Bacon was instrumental in securing Barnard's sponsorship of the Center for Classical Studies in Rome, before the College had a standard policy on study abroad (1966). With the support from the Institute on East Central Europe, she added Modern Greek to her department (beginning in 1967-1968). She also joined the faculty of the Philosophy department at Columbia in 1976, and became Emeritus in 1991.

Helen Bacon wrote two books: *Barbarians in Greek Tragedy* (1961) and a translation and introduction of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, co-authored with Anthony Hecht (1973), which was nominated for a National Book Award. William Arrowsmith, the editor of the Oxford Greek Tragedy series, contracted her for a second translation on Euripides' *Suppliants* with poet (and then Columbia faculty member) David Ignatow. In the summer of 1974, Bacon and Ignatow received a four-week fellowship at the Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, NY to begin the work on their collaboration.

Bacon published articles mainly on Aeschylus, Plato, Vergil and Apuleius, but also wrote on Robert Frost and Edith Hamilton. Over the summers she taught Classics in translation at the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College (1966, 1968, 1973 and 1975), where she received an honorary doctorate in

1970. She was also actively involved in the American Philological Association, serving in the position of Director (1976-1979); Vice-President (1983-1984) and in 1985, as its elected President, the ninth woman to do so in over 100 years of the organization.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

Helen Bacon's papers document her research process. Her published articles and lectures are well documented; however, there are few materials relating to her two books. For *Barbarians in Greek Tragedy* (1961), the contents of the file are just a dust jacket, copies of reviews and some correspondence. For the National Book Award nominated translation and introduction of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, co-authored with Anthony Hecht (1973), there are reviews, clippings, correspondence and notes to one lecture on the translation.

While the collection is primarily focused on Bacon's work in the Classics, there are materials related to her reading of the works of Robert Frost. Bacon also gave talks on her days in the Navy's WAVES and on her work as a consultant on a grant-funded translation project for the National Institutes of Health.

In her classes, Bacon covered a range of authors and genres, in particular Aeschylus, Plato, Vergil, and the comic novel. In addition to her work at Barnard and Columbia, there are also papers from her time at Smith and at Vassar as the Blegen Visiting Professor in the fall of 1979. The summers at the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury are also well represented.

The earliest materials in the collection are Bacon's student papers, written after her undergraduate degree at Bryn Mawr before joining the U.S. Navy (1940-1942). There are also journals and notebooks from her time at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens (1952-1953) and from a hiking expedition in Glacier Peak, WA (1956).

Collection Arrangement

This collection is arranged in three series. The series are as follows:

Series 1, Scholarship

Series 2, Course Materials

Series 3, Class Notes and Journals

Administrative Information

Publication Information

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Access

Some items in box 13 are restricted as they pertain to private information.

Publication Rights

Permission to publish material from the collection must be requested from the Barnard Archives and Special Collections. The Barnard Archives and Special Collections approves permission to publish that which it physically owns; the responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

Reproduction Restrictions

Photocopies or scans may be made for research purposes.

Accruals

No additions are expected.

Acquisition Information

Gift of Deborah Roberts and Laura Slatkin in 2008. Additional materials gift of Deborah Roberts in December 2009.

Processing History

This collection was processed by Marcia Bassett, Archivist, and Joanna Rios, Intern. Finding aid written by Joanna Rios in April 2011. The finding aid was updated by Alice Griffin BC'15 in July 2015.

Descriptive Rules Used: Finding aid adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Encoding: Machine readable finding aid encoded in EAD 2002.

Finding aid written in English.

Controlled Access Headings

Subject(s)

- Barnard College
- Classicists
- Universities and colleges--Faculty
- Women classicists

Scholarship,

Collection Inventory

Series 1. Scholarship, 1958-2004 6.92 Linear feet 12 document boxes, 1 oversize box

Box
1-11, 15-16

Scope and Contents Note

This series contains paper proposals, drafts, revisions, research notes and bibliographies as well as conference announcements and programs. Published articles appear first, followed by lectures and papers, and notes on more informal talks, covering a wide range of subjects.

In her published works files, Bacon kept a record of articles sent out for peer-review and the recipients' response. In addition, Bacon received numerous article off-prints from colleagues and former students, some inscribed or accompanied by a letter. Notable names include Nancy Felson, Helene Foley, Bernard Knox, Anne Lebeck, Deborah Roberts, T.G.R. Rosenmeyer, Charles Segal, Seth Schein, Laura Slatkin, and Froma Zeitlin. The published works by others have been arranged alphabetically.

Box

"The Sybil in the Bottle" copy and correspondence, 1958

1

"Socrates Crowned" copy and correspondence, 1959

1

"Barbarians in Greek Tragedy" copy and correspondence, 1961

1

"The Shield of Eteocles" copy and correspondence, 1964

1

"Woman's Two Faces: Sophocles' View of the Tragedy of Oedipus and his Family" copy and correspondence, 1966

1

Scholarship,

"In- and Outdoor Schooling: Robert Frost and the Classics" copy and correspondence, 1974-1975	1
"Seven Against Thebes" notes and correspondence, 1974	1
"For Girls: From 'Birches' to 'Wild Grapes'" copy and correspondence, 1977	2
"Dialogue of Poets: 'Mens Animi' and the Renewal of Words" copies and correspondence, 1978	2
Copy of "Edith Hamilton" article published in "Notable American Women: The Modern Period," 1980	2
"The Contemporary Reader and Robert Frost: The Heavenly Guest of 'One More Brevity' and 'Aeneid 8'" copy, 1981	2
Copy of "Aeschylus" article published in "Ancient Writers Greece and Rome," 1982	2
"The Aeneid as a Drama of Election," 1986	2
"The Poetry of Phaedo" copy, correspondence, and notes, 1990	2
"Getting Among the Poems in Horace's 'Fons Bandusiae' and Robert Frost's 'Hyla Brook'" copy and correspondence, 1994	2
Correspondence about and copy of "Inez Ryberg" article published in "The Bibliographical Dictionary of North American Classicists," 1994	2

Scholarship,

"The Chorus in Greek Life and Drama" copies, 1995	2
"Mortal Father, Divine Mother: Aeneid VI and VIII" copies and correspondence, 2001	3
"The Furies' Homecoming" copies and correspondence, 2001	3
"Plato and the Greek Literary Tradition" copy and correspondence, 2001	3
Copy of "Frost and the Ancient Muses" article published in the "Cambridge Companion to Robert Frost," 2001	4
Book Reviews by Helen H. Bacon, 1961-1988	4
Peer reviews, 1958-1998	4
"The Unity of the Republic" copy and notes, 1966	4
"Basic Vocabulary for Plato's 'Apology of Socrates'" copy and correspondence, 1967-1986	4
"The Name of Eteokles" notes, correspondence, and research materials, 1970-1981	4-5
"The Comic Hero's Journey" research materials and notes, 1973	5
"A Neglected Theme in Euripides' Medea" copy, notes, and correspondence, 1975	5
"The Wings of Eros in Apuleius' 'Golden Ass'" notes and research materials, 1978-1980	5

Scholarship,

"Confronting the Gorgon: The Enhancing of Consciousness in Aeschylus' 'Oresteia'" or "The Gorgon as Image and Theme in 'Oresteia'" notes and research materials, 1983-1986	5
"The Drama of the Contest for Happiness in Plato's Republic" copy, notes, and correspondence, 1985-1986	5-6
"The Narrators of 'Symposium'" copy and notes, 1992	6
"Plato's 'Apology of Socrates': A Literary Perspective" notes and correspondence, 1994	6
"The Shield of Aeneas and the Site of Rome" copy, undated	6
"Petronius and Plato and Homosexuality" notes, undated	6
Notes, correspondence, and posters for talks and lectures, 1965-1988	6, 16
"My Experience as a Paid Consultant to NIH," 1974-1981	6
Research Notes on Frost, Petronius, Plato, circa 1970s	6
Research Notes on Plato and Plutarch, undated	7
Published Works by Others, 1919-2004	7-9
Research materials and notes on Aeschylus, Apuleius, Aristophanes, and Euripides' works, 1965-1993	10
Research Notes on Homer, Plato, Pindar, Petronius, Sophocles, and Vergil, 1966-1990	11

Course Materials,

"Medea" and "Wings of Eros" audio, undated	15
Epidauros Theatre Notes, undated	16
Series 2. Course Materials, 1957-1969 1.25 Linear feet 3 document boxes	Box 11-13
Scope and Contents Note	
In addition to the syllabi, reading lists and exams, Course Materials include her lecture notes from class announcements and discussions, to future assignments and grades and comments on student presentations. This series is organized alphabetically by author, followed by survey courses arranged topically.	
Series 3. Class Notes and Journals, 1919-2000 0.83 Linear feet 2 document boxes	Box 13-14
Scope and Contents Note	
This series contains materials outside of Bacon's professional papers. Included are her student papers from her early graduate student days before joining the Navy, as well as transcripts, diplomas and copies of her curriculum vitae. From her travels, there are slides from trip to Greece during the winter 1951-1952 and full journals and class notes from her time as a student at the American School for Classical Studies in Athens (1952-1953). (She revisited the School in 1990.) Also found in this series are journals of a hiking expedition in Glacier Peak, WA, in 1956, and one from a whale-watching cruise around Baja California in 1996. Materials from a symposium in her honor are also included in this series.	