

MAKING THE BOOK

In my whole life, by far the most rewarding, most challenging, and most satisfying period has been the past year and a half spent in the writing and the production of this book. Virtually every aspect of it – down to the last footnote – has been enjoyable, and all this was enhanced by the fact that it was accomplished in a totally independent capacity.

Having money enough to support myself for a year, I was able to plunge into the project wholeheartedly. Home Town Publications is a local organization which encourages area authors by offering technical advice and moral support, but is as yet unable to totally underwrite printing costs. The total bill, including living expenses, amounted to about five thousand dollars. Five thousand copies of the book were printed and priced at two dollars a copy. One dollar of that pie goes toward covering costs, fifty cents goes to stores for carrying the book, and fifty cents is ice cream for me. Thus the book can sell for a reasonable price; the readership is happy, and so am I.

Making a book is like fixing an elaborate dinner – the finished product is disproportionately impressive. But the process of compiling this book was no more than a long series of short steps: research, writing, collecting graphics, typing, layout, printing, and distribution.

Knowing virtually nothing about local history and the resources available, I was introduced by a knowledgeable friend to the various card catalogs around town. After spending what amounted to days in each (The DeWitt Historical Society, Seneca & Cayuga Streets, Ithaca; the Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Olin Library, Cornell; the Tompkins County Library, Cayuga & Seneca Streets, Ithaca), virtually every scrap of information concerning local women was retrieved and recorded.

By this time I had gleaned a preliminary, sketchy understanding of the subject, and the next step was to take each topic, one by one, and do some in-depth digging. Approximately one week was allotted for the research of each of the thirty sections (in my zeal I found myself devoting from twelve to sixteen hours a day). During the week a large number of graphics – photographs, drawings, etc. – pertaining to that section were also collected. This process took approximately six months. I found the research and graphic-hunting procedures especially enjoyable, they being relatively easy and consistently rewarding activities. Collating the information into a final draft was another story, but though for me this was by far the most laborious stage of the operation, ten hours and a neatly-stacked pile of pages later, I couldn't help but feel good.

However when a friend volunteered to edit the script, much information

was found to be lacking and the writing process was prolonged. It took an additional five months, in fact, to rewrite and clarify each section to both our satisfaction.

We worked section by section, and as each was finished it was typed up in its final form. An ordinary typewriter prints: *like this*, while a *composer* prints: *like this*. In anxious pursuit of a composer, I was discouraged to learn that the market rental rate was \$160/month for a minimum of six months. Fortunately, on a tip from a fellow historian I discovered a composing machine owned by a small local business – the *Grapevine* – and they agreed to rent it to me at night for a reasonable fee. This composer, luckily, could also *justify* columns, that is, make the columns flush on both sides. This was the process: I would type up my material first, in the regular fashion. When finished, I would push the “play back” button, and the machine would rat-a-tat-tat type the copy all by itself, resulting in a perfectly justified column. Despite a basic fear of machinery, I developed quite a fondness for the composer, and for the twilight hours we would spend together.

As the typed copy started to accumulate, I began the “layout” (this refers to the process of arranging columns and pictures on a page). I made a preliminary “dummy layout” in which I used scraps of paper the same length as the typed copy. This way, if corrections or changes had to be made, the original would not have to be repeatedly cut up and reglued together; it could remain happily intact.

With approximately half the book arranged on “dummy” layout pages and the rest in process, the former could be mounted on final “layout sheets” (large flats of paper drawn with blue lines – blue does not reproduce when printed – to aid in lining up all the various pieces). As the remainder of the book was edited and typed, it too was mounted on “dummy” pages and then on the final layout sheets.

I found the layout process to be totally delightful – it was like arts and crafts time in kindergarten – cutting, drawing, and pasting till everything looks just right. And as I worked I watched the gradual transformation of twelve months of random scraps of paper into a finished product.

At last the layout sheets were packed up and taken to the printer. There a large negative was made of each one. From this a “plate” was fashioned, which, when mounted on the printing press, transferred the image to the paper. The machine was turned on and presto! – out came the folded pages of the book. These five thousand copies, twined into bundles, were loaded onto a truck and hauled back to Ithaca where they were covered, bound and trimmed.

Viola! The finished product you hold in your hand.





PARTING WORDS

If you or I were to be deposited in the middle of a strange road late at night and left to our own devices, we would no doubt step gingerly, not knowing what is behind or what's yet to come. But when we are placed along the grassy and overgrown path that leads to our own back door, the hesitation vanishes, and the footfall becomes confident and even eager.

When women are denied their rightful place in history, they are much like the former, functioning in a void, unaware of where they have come from and what direction they should take in the future. This book seeks to help fill that void and create a context so that women need not hesitate as they make their way in life.

The book is also intended as a wholehearted disavowal of the assumption that because there are so few women's histories in print, the data does not exist; it is simply that little effort has been devoted to its pursuit. The result is a preponderance of stories and glories of the male culture. All persons are enthusiastically encouraged to partake in the further revelation of women's misplaced but certainly not lost history. The information I did not use would easily fill many more such volumes.

Finally, the book attempts to convey a sense of continuity. We, it so happens, live in a time commonly designated 1976, a mere blink of an eye along the continuous stream of time. Surely the heritage of our foremothers has laid the foundation for the quality of our own lives, just as the history which is today will affect our daughter descendants tomorrow.

MAIL ORDER INFORMATION:

Send name and address and \$2.50 to:

WOMAN'S ROOTS
The History of Women in Tompkins County
Box 385
Ithaca, NY 14850

Specify if the book is intended as a gift, and a note will be enclosed.



1976

ALSO BY HOME TOWN PUBLICATIONS:

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Box 385, Ithaca, Ny.