

# Guide to the Coburn Britton Papers

YCAL MSS 650



by Beinecke staff

2012-10-09

P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** YCAL MSS 650

**CREATOR:** Britton, Coburn

**TITLE:** Coburn Britton papers

**DATES:** 1919–1997

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 3.91 linear feet (6 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The collection contains correspondence, writings, and personal papers documenting the life and literary activities of American poet and publisher Coburn Britton. The correspondence features a nearly three-decade long exchange between Britton and Jack Sullivan, some of which was compiled and published as *Letters from Jack: Sex & Hell in Manhattan and Backwoods Maine* (2002). In addition, there are small groups of correspondence with others, including Glenway Wescott, Edward Dahlberg, and Lincoln Kirstein, dating chiefly from the 1970s, as well as approximately 150 postcards from graphic artist Willyum Rowe, with whom Britton collaborated on *An ABeCedarium for Poets and Readers* (1989). Many if not most of the postcards from Rowe are decorated, for example, with cutouts and stamps, providing a large group of postcard or mail art from the period. Writings include printed versions of Britton's *Second Seasons* (1982), *Lesser Goods and Other Poems* (1987), and *An ABeCedarium for Poets and Readers* (1989), and drafts of the later *Adrian Sonnets* (1995) and shorter works. Others materials include photographs of family and friends, printed materials, and documents.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.britton>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.britton>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Elizabeth Harries, 2002.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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### Conditions Governing Use

The Coburn Britton Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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### Preferred Citation

Coburn Britton Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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### Processing Information

This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and in some instances minimal organization.

As a rule, descriptive information found in the Collection Contents section is drawn in large part from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during initial processing.

This finding aid may be updated to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Former call number: Uncat MSS 377.

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## Coburn Haskell Britton (1935-1997)

Coburn Britton was born in Cleveland, Ohio to Mr. and Mrs. Brigham Britton of Bratenahl, Ohio. He attended University School, Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts, Yale University, and Trinity College, Dublin, as a Fulbright scholar, before settling in New York City. Britton was an editor at Doubleday and Company and co-publisher of Horizon Press in the 1960s and then founder of the magazine *Prose* in 1970. After closing the magazine in 1974 he divided his time between writing poetry and tending to his farm in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. Britton's works include *Second Seasons* (1982), *Lesser Goods and Other Poems* (1987), *An ABeCedarium for Poets and Readers* (1989), and *Adrian Sonnets* (1995). He died 26 November 1997 in Lebanon, New Jersey.

Biographical information taken from "Paid Notice: Deaths BRITTON, COBURN." *New York Times* 29 Nov. 1997. *Gale Biography In Context*. Web. 10 Oct. 2012.

## Scope and Contents

The collection contains correspondence, writings, and personal papers documenting the life and literary activities of American poet and publisher Coburn Britton. The correspondence features a nearly three-decade long exchange between Britton and Jack Sullivan, some of which was compiled and published as *Letters from Jack: Sex & Hell in Backwoods Maine* (1997). In addition, there are small groups of correspondence with others, including Glenway Wescott, Edward Dahlberg, and Lincoln Kirstein, dating chiefly from the 1970s, as well as approximately 150 postcards from graphic artist Willyum Rowe, with whom Britton collaborated on *An ABeCedarium for Poets and Readers* (1989). Many if not most of the postcards from Rowe are decorated, for example, with cutouts and stamps, providing a large group of postcard mail art from the period. Writings include printed versions of Britton's *Second Seasons* (1982), *Lesser Goods and Other Poems* (1987), and *An ABeCedarium for Poets and Readers* (1989), and drafts of the later *Adrian Sonnets* (1995) and shorter works. Others materials include photographs of family and friends, printed materials, and documents.

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## Arrangement

Organized into one grouping by date of acquisition: June 2002 Acquisition.

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## Collection Contents

### June 2002 Acquisition, 1919-1997

3.83 linear feet (5 boxes)

|     |  |                         |
|-----|--|-------------------------|
| b.1 | Correspondence with Jack Sullivan<br><i>32 Folders</i>   | [circa 1971-1997]       |
| b.1 | <i>Letters from Jack: Sex &amp; Hell in Backwoods Maine</i> , draft, computer printout<br><i>5 Folders</i> | [circa 1997]            |
| b.1 | Correspondence with Jack Sullivan<br><i>17 Folders</i>   | 1971-1978               |
| b.2 | Correspondence with Jack Sullivan<br><i>4 Folders</i>  | 1989-1979               |
| b.2 | Letter from unidentified correspondent   | 1994 June 9             |
| b.2 | "Letters to Betsey Harries + Jennifer Whiting..."  | 1990-1995,<br>undated   |
| b.2 | Printed material   | undated                 |
| b.2 | Material relating to Margaret Anderson<br><i>2 Folders</i>   | 1973, undated           |
| b.2 | Unidentified manuscript  | 1954, undated           |
| b.2 | Certificate of Occupancy form, completed (copy)  | 1968                    |
| b.2 | Material relating to Deerfield   | 1952-1954,<br>undated   |
| b.2 | "Letters from the 1950s..."  | 1950s                   |
| b.2 | Genealogical and other material  | 1977, undated           |
| b.2 | <a href="#">Photograph album and other material</a>  | 1964-1975,<br>undated   |
| b.2 | Printed and other material   | 1970s                   |
| b.2 | Photographs<br><i>2 Folders</i>  | undated                 |
| b.2 | Letter from [Hussey?]  | 1973 October 4          |
| b.2 | Miscellaneous material<br><i>3 Folders</i>   | 1942-1962,<br>undated   |
| b.2 | Photographs<br><i>4 Folders</i><br>Also stored in: Oversize, Box 6   | 1919-[195?],<br>undated |
| b.3 | <a href="#">Photographs</a><br><i>6 Folders</i>  | 1964-1995,<br>undated   |

|      |  |                       |
|------|--|-----------------------|
| b. 3 | Correspondence with Jack Sullivan<br><i>37 Folders</i>                                 | 1980-1991             |
| b. 4 | "Adrian letters + poems"   | undated               |
| b. 4 | Correspondence and other material<br><i>3 Folders</i>                                  | 1928-1978             |
| b. 4 | "John Pope-Hennessy"   | 1970-1972             |
| b. 4 | "Robin Magowan"  | 1972, undated         |
| b. 4 | "Paul Metcalf"   | 1972-1973             |
| b. 4 | Glenway Wescott  | 1972                  |
| b. 4 | "Patrick White"  | 1970                  |
| b. 4 | Clippings and other material<br>Also stored in: Oversize, Box 6                        | 1970-1985,<br>undated |
| b. 4 | "Edward Dahlberg"  | 1976-1977,<br>undated |
| b. 4 | Lincoln Kirstein   | 1970-1973             |
| b. 4 | "Jonathan Williams"  | 1970-1973             |
| b. 4 | Alex Gildzen   | 1970 November<br>16   |
| b. 4 | Miscellaneous material   | 1945-1995,<br>undated |
| b. 4 | Unidentified poem  | undated               |
| b. 4 | Stories by Britton   | undated               |
| b. 4 | Correspondence<br><i>2 Folders</i>   | 1978, 1996            |
| b. 4 | "Letters about Adrian Sonnets"   | 1996, undated         |
| b. 4 | "Willyum Rowe"<br><i>9 Folders</i><br>Includes photographs                             | 1972-1981,<br>undated |
| b. 4 | "Sonetto XXV," drafts  | 1997, undated         |
|      | "Tovarish Archimedes and Co.," draft by Howard [Hassey?]<br>Stored in: Oversize, Box 6 | undated               |
|      | Pastel by [Lunda?] Britton<br>Stored in: Oversize, Box 6                               | 1983 November         |
| b. 4 | Printed materials<br><i>2 Folders</i>  | 1982-1989             |

|      |   |                       |
|------|---|-----------------------|
| b. 5 | "Colby's Own Stuff"<br><i>3 Folders</i>               | 1965-1995,<br>undated |
| b. 5 | Correspondence and other material<br><i>4 Folders</i> | 1954-1996,<br>undated |



**Oversize***0.08 linear feet (1 box)*

|      |  |                    |
|------|--|--------------------|
| b. 6 | Photographs  | 1919, [195?]       |
| b. 6 | Clipping   | 1985 December<br>8 |
| b. 6 | "Tovarish Archimedes and Co.," draft by Howard [Hassey?] | undated            |
| b. 6 | Pastel by [Lunda?] Britton                               | 1983 November      |

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

American literature -- 20th Century  
Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Archives  
Authors and publishers -- United States  
Poets, American -- 20th Century -- Archives  
Publishers and publishing -- United States

### **Genres / Formats**

Mail art -- United States -- 20th Century  
Photographic prints

### **Occupations**

Authors -- United States -- 20th Century  
Poets -- United States -- 20th Century

### **Names**

Britton, Coburn  
Dahlberg, Edward, 1900-1977  
Kirstein, Lincoln, 1907-1996  
Rowe, William, 1946-  
Sullivan, Jack, 1936-  
Wescott, Glenway, 1901-1987