

Women's Studies Interest Group

Thirteen women of the Women's Studies Interest Group met in Amherst, MA on Friday, June 20th for a visit to the Amherst College Special Collections Department and the Jones Library that house Emily Dickinson manuscripts and the Emily Dickinson Museum, where the poetess spent most of her life.

Marian Walker of the Amherst College Archives & Special Collections Department, where half of the Dickinson manuscripts reside, discussed and displayed their holdings, including fascicles of her poems, fragments of poems, land deeds, letters, a lock of her hair, a silhouette and an original daguerreotype of Dickinson. The Dickinson Papers are contained in some thirty boxes. The College has copied all of the manuscripts and is planning a project to digitize the papers. Amherst has an especially rich collection that has been used widely by Dickinson scholars. The other half of the papers are at Harvard University.

The group then assembled for a tour of The Emily Dickinson Museum on Main Street, which is now owned and run by Amherst College. The tour included the parlors and dining room on the first floor and Emily's bedroom on the second floor. At the end of the tour, we gathered outside under a large tree and read several of Dickinson's poems and were given one as a souvenir. The museum shop is rich in Dickinson literature and souvenir items.

In the afternoon, we met at the Jones Library, where curator Tevis Kimball spoke about the holdings of the Special Collections Department that scholars have used to research Emily Dickinson. They include Amherst Directories, photographs, business journals, tax records, newspapers, and fourteen original Dickinson poems and eleven letters, which were on display. The most recent published scholarship on Dickinson was available as well. The collection also holds manuscripts of poets Robert Frost and Robert Francis. The library is hoping to partner with local colleges and universities to digitize their collections.

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