1970. Throughout the decades, these feminist booksellers have been cultural workers in their communities.

After so many years of feminist bookstores closing, it is refreshing that we are now seeing new ones. In March 2018, Athenian Press and Workshops opened a feminist bookstore in Wilmington, NC, though it has since changed to a mobile bookstore with online sales. Combatting the high cost of overhead, two young women in Birmingham, AL, Katie Willis and Meagan Lyle, have started Burdock Bookstore Collective, a "pop-up" feminist bookstore. Until they found a home at the Quaker Meeting House, Burdock promoted and scheduled impromptu book sales through social media as they moved from one free location to another, hauling the books they stored in their apartment.<sup>37</sup> Alexis Pauline Gumbs and her life partner have started the Black Feminist Bookmobile in Durham, NC, creating pop-up "reading rooms" in parks and other spaces. With the opening of Alsace Walentine's Tombolo Books (tombolobooks. com) in St. Petersburg in December 2019, Florida is no longer without a feminist bookstore. Perhaps the unlikeliest placer to find a feminist bookstore in the South is in a small town in Mississippi. Jaime Harker opened Violet Valley Books in Water Valley, near Oxford, MS. Harker, runs the women's studies program at nearby Ole Miss, and describes her store's mission as making "feminist, queer, and multicultural books available to the Water Valley community, the state of Mississippi, and the South."38 She is an example of today's young feminists who seem to have the same brilliance and optimism that inspired that earlier wave of feminist booksellers to empower and transform women's lives through books.

# TIMELINE OF FEMINIST BOOKSTORES IN THE SOUTH, 1970–1999

Rose Norman and Jennifer Scott

Our research on feminist bookstores in the South focuses on the last three decades of the twentieth century, the boundaries of our overall project collecting lesbian-feminist activism in the South. Sources include interviews with twenty-one feminist booksellers in the South, ninety-three issues of *Feminist Bookstore News* (*FBN*), and a state-by-state list of "Lesbian/Women's Stores" published in *Lesbian Connection* (September 1977). Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish feminist bookstores from primarily GLBT bookstores. When in doubt, we included them. Note that the list includes only stores for which we have found an opening and/or closing date, and does not include mail order only stores, except those that had a physical store at some point.

#### **Resources:**

Charis Books and More maintains a list of feminist bookstores remaining in North America, https://www.charisbooksandmore.com/list-feminist-bookstores.

Feminist Bookstore News, 1983–2000 (it is missing vols. 1–6), is posted online through Independent Voices: An Open Access Collection of an Alternative Press, http://voices.revealdigital.com/cgi-bin/independentvoices. Searching this online source also helped establish store opening or closing dates from searches of other publications.

Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC) maintains a list of feminist bookstores with online sales: https://oloc.org/feminist\_bookstores/.

 $\operatorname{\mathsf{Q}}\square$  Bookstores with separate stories in this issue.

c. 1971–c. 1985 Hobbit Habit, Athens, GA

Feminist linguist and academic activist Julia (Stanley) Penelope, then teaching at the University of Georgia, bought this store

<sup>37</sup> See Rose Norman, "Transforming Birmingham with Feminist Books," MS Online, July 23, 2019, https://msmagazine.com/2019/07/23/transforming-birmingham-with-feminist-books/

<sup>38</sup> Quoted from their website (https://www.violetvalley.org).

for her mother Frances Smith to run. They stocked lesbian and feminist publications and textbooks and sponsored a lesbian softball team, The Hairy Hobbits. Frances Smith kept it going after Julia Penelope moved to teach at the University of Nebraska, and versions of the Hobbit Habit continued under other proprietors. It appears in *FBN* only once, in a brief story saying that the gay male co-owner wants to sell his share, but Frances Smith will remain (June 1985).

## 1973 (January)-1977

# First Things First, Washington, DC

Collective includes Casse Culver, Mimi Satter, and Susan Sojourner. Mostly mail order but with a "mobile unit" for events. Also sold through Lammas starting 1974. "We're chartered as a not-for-profit educational corporation to educate people about feminism, the sexist nature of society, the discrimination & oppression that resists." *Off Our Backs* (5.3, March 1975): 27. On financial and class issues, as well as store closing, see *Quest*, 5.4 (1982): 16–17.

# 1973-2000

# Lammas Women's Books & More, Washington, DC

Founded in 1971 by Leslie Reeves and Judy Winsett as a women's craft and jewelry shop, the first all-women's shop in the country, selling all women-made crafts, pottery, art, and jewelry. They added books at the back of the store in about 1973 (hence our date here). Mary Farmer managed the store for a while, and owned the store from 1976 to 1993, switching the focus from crafts and jewelry to books, eventually moving to books and sidelines. Deb Morris managed the story during those years. The first Lammas was on Market Row and became a feminist gathering and organizing place. Farmer opened a second store on Dupont Circle and later closed the Market Row store. Farmer was a coorganizer of the second Women in Print Conference (1981), an important gathering of feminist publishers, printers, distributors,

booksellers, and authors. In 1994, Farmer sold the store to Jane Troxell, Rose Fennell, Marjorie Darling, and Susan Fletcher. In 1998, they sold to Denise Bump and Sylvia Colon.

#### 1973-1994

## 31st St. Bookstore, Baltimore, MD

Founded by Amy Gaver, who sold it in 1987 to a collective of 500 customers (mostly lesbian-feminists) to keep it from going out of business (*FBN* June 1988). The street also had the socialist workers party, the Lesbian Community Center, and the first Pride block party in Baltimore.<sup>39</sup> Jane Troxell and Rose Fennel of Lammas bought the 31st St. Bookstore Coop in 1994, but decided to close this location and focus on the DC store (*FBN* July/August 1996).

# $\square$ 1974 (November)–Present

## Charis Books and More,

Atlanta, GA, www.charisbooksandmore.com

First owners Linda Bryant and Barbara Borgman; currently coowned by Sara Luce Look and Angela Gabriel. Charis Circle Executive Director, E.R. Anderson. http://www.charisbooksandmore.com/

#### 1974-1977

# Herstore Feminist Bookstore, Tallahassee, FL

Founding manager Dorothy Allison says they founded it because "we needed an institution outside the university that could continue to do things. . . . I wanted a feminist community center that wasn't based in the university" (quoted from an oral history available online at https://www.smith.edu/libraries/libs/ssc/vof/transcripts/Allison.pdf.)<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Kate Drabinski, "Gay History on 416 East 31st St.," *Indypendent Reader*, June 24, 2013, https://indyreader.org/content/gay-history-416-east-31st-street

<sup>40</sup> There are surprisingly few references to this bookstore: a citation in Onosaka's *Feminist Revolution in Literacy* (p. 146), which says only that Allison read from her first book there; a mention in *Conversations with Dorothy Allison*, ed. Mae Miller Claxton (University Press of Mississippi, 2012), xvii; and a mention in a footnote in James Sears's *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), footnote 42, p. 379.

## 1975 (June)-1977

WomanStore (aka WomenBooks), Gainesville, FL

Operated by Women Unlimited, which also published a newsletter and ran a counseling center, the store sold women's arts and crafts as well as books. In 1977, new co-owners changed the name to Amelia's and moved it to an old house downtown.<sup>41</sup>

# 1975 (December)—Present

BookWoman, Austin, TX, www.ebookwoman.com

Founded by the Common Woman Bookstore Collective, it became BookWoman after Susan Post took it over when the collective dissolved in the 1970s. She has run it ever since. See also *Lesbian Tide* (March/April 1976): 24.<sup>42</sup>

April 1977-1980

Labrys Books, Richmond, VA

Co-owners: Theresa "Terri" Barry and Joan Mayfield ran the bookstore from their home and took the books to various events.

1977-1982

Amelia's Bookstore, Gainesville, FL

Co-owners: Gerry Green and Carol Aubin.

1977 (September 23)-1983

Womankind Books, Nashville, TN

Owner: Carole De Bra Powell.

Several other feminist bookstores had the same name, such as one in Santa Barbara, CA, and another in New York and later Arizona.

1981-present

**Resistencia Books,** Austin, TX, www.resistenciabooks.com Founded by Raúl "Roy" Salinas.

1981-c. 1982

Las Mujeres, San Antonio, TX

LGBT activist Martha Prentiss was a founder.

See Martha Prentiss papers, legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utsa/oo4o2/utsa-oo4o2.html, and FBN March/April 1993.

1981-1993

WomensBooks, Richmond, VA

A cooperative that started at the YWCA and later moved to the basement of Fare Share Food Co-op, substantially supported by Richmond Lesbian-Feminists.

1982 (April)-1983

The Well of Happiness, St. Petersburg, FL

Edie Daly and Doreen Brand started it, and Pam Morse and Tee Smith tried to keep it going.

♀□ 1983 (August)–1998

Rubyfruit Books, Tallahassee, FL

Started by Joan Denman, who sold it in 1996 to Susan Mayer, who moved it to an inconvenient location. The store celebrated its tenth anniversary with a publication, *Rubyfruit Anthology*, and its twelfth anniversary and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the women's suffrage amendment with *The Second Rubyfruit Anthology*.

1983-2002

Lodestar Books, Birmingham, AL

First owner, Linda James; longest-term owners, Sally Engler (feminist and lesbian ally) and Beth Gundersen until 1997; sold to customers David White, Connie Hill, and John Dantzler in 1997 (FBN Sept/Oct 1997). A year and a half later (c. 1999), they "gave" the store to Heather Rudzika-Furr and her husband. The couple relocated the store and tried to make a go of it by leasing part of the space to a vegetarian café.

c. 1983-unknown

Half the Sky, Dallas, TX

Owner: Johncy Mundo.

See Lesbian Connection, June/July 1983.

<sup>41 &</sup>quot;Nurturing the Intellectual Needs of a Community," Radical Women in Gainesville, http://ufdc.ufl.edu/rwg/womanstore. This website includes an image of an ad for WOMANSTORE publicizing "over 500 titles" and open 10-6 Monday-Saturday.

<sup>42</sup> Some sources give the starting year as 1974, but Susan Post's recollections and a letter to the editor of *Lesbian Tide* (March/April 1976): 24 indicate that 1975 is more accurate.

#### 1987–1997

On the Move, St. Petersburg, FL, and Tampa, FL

Cybilla Hawk operated this mobile bookstore from her VW van, taking it to various women's events in Florida and to five of the six Rhythm Fest women's music festivals in north Georgia and the Carolinas.

## 1987 (November)-199143

Southern Wild Sisters Unlimited, Gulfport, MS

Brenda and Wanda Henson ran this community bookstore, as well as a GLBT resource center and a food bank out of the bookstore. Bonnie Morris quotes Brenda Henson saying, "Instead of a community starting a bookstore, our bookstore started a community."44 Wanda Henson writes: "The foodbank started with the MS Gay and Lesbian Alliance to make available food for Gay men living with AIDS. We eventually got the local Catholic Diocese involved with our community. MCC started a church in our Quonset hut behind the bookstore. The local Black Nurses Association held their first meetings at SWSU because they could not find another place to meet. So much happened at Southern Wild Sisters Unlimited! Brenda and I loved making that space available."45 Morris says that the bookstore had become a flashpoint for harassment and intimidation even before the Hensons bought the land in Ovett, MS, for Camp Sister Spirit, which would get national attention in 1993–94 when neighbors violently harassed them.

1988 (August)-1995

Southern Sisters, Durham, NC

Founded by Cookie Teer and other investors, and managed by lesbian-feminist ally Melody Ivins.

1988 (November 15)-c. 1991 (August)

Mystic Moon Collective, New Orleans, LA

Owners Tahnya Giordano (and Barbara Trahan?) expanded space (FBN Mar/Apr 1989); moved to Magazine St. (FBN October 1990); then put it up for sale in 1991. "If no buyer is found, the store will close at the end of August when the lease runs out," but will continue mail order sales (FBN July/Aug 1991).

1988 (December)-2000 (December)

Inklings, Houston, TX

Founders Pokey Anderson and Annise Parker sold the business in 1998 to two young lesbians, Liz Brackeen and Stephanie Fulton. Brackeen and Fulton moved it to Salt Lake City, where they ran it until Christmas 2000.

1988-c. 1991

Curious Times, Dallas, TX

From FBN: this "new women's bookstore is scheduled to open May 1, 1988... send information to Kay Vinson" (June 1988); "open and things are going great!" (September 1988). LC lists them as a distributor in their July/Aug 1989 issue, and New Directions lists them as a distributor in March/April 1991. Nothing turns up in Independent Voices after that.

1989 (April 29)-c. 1990

Book Oasis, Nashville, TN

Owner Arlene Samowich started this store with inventory from Womankind Books, working out of her home. *FBN* announced that it was opening in May/June 1989, and moving to a new location in its October 1990 issue. After that, silence.

1989 (July 1)-2003

Brigit Books, St. Petersburg, FL

Founder Patty Callaghan, who had previously managed Crazy Ladies in Cincinnati (1986–89), ran it for eleven years, then sold

<sup>43</sup> FBN October 1991 says they "finally had to choose between festivals, concerts, activist work and such. The store was in part a casualty of the Gulf War." There were five military bases in the area, and sales dried up when soldiers were deployed. See also Marideth Sisco, "A Saga of Lesbian Perseverance and Steadfast Resolve': The Hensons and Camp Sister Spirit," Sinister Wisdom 98 (Fall 2015): 150-56.

<sup>44</sup> Otd. "Women's Festivals on the Front Lines," in *Out in the South*, ed. Carlos L. Dews and Carolyn Leste Law (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), p. 58.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted with permission from email received 10-2-19.

it to twenty-four-year-old Helen Roman in June 2000. The store never recovered from expenses of an unanticipated move in 2001, which doubled their square footage and increased parking, but got less foot traffic.

1989-1991 (August)

First Page, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Owner Sue White originally planned to open this bookstore in a side room of the local women's bar, JJ's Other Side (FBN January/February 1989), but instead opened it a few doors down (FBN May/June 1989), and closed two years later (FBN September/October 1991).

1990 (September)-1998 (August)

Meristem Books & More for Women and Their Friends, Memphis, TN

Audrey May and Vickie Scarborough were the original owners, with May as full-time store manager.<sup>46</sup> Meristem was the only feminist bookstore in Tennessee for the eight years it was in operation. Since it closed, there has been no feminist bookstore in Tennessee.

c. 1990-unknown

Womanstuff, Annandale, VA

One mention gives the owner as "Jag" (FBN October 1990).

**♀**□ January 1991–1994

Bluestocking Books, Columbia, SC

Owner: Teresa Williams.

1991–1997

Rising Moon Books & Beyond, Charlotte, NC

Founded by Barb Park and Sue Henry, Charlotte's first openly gay candidate for mayor, this was the second gay and lesbian bookstore in Charlotte (the first was Friends of Dorothy, founded by Don King, a gay man). "Henry worked to create space for the

community to learn, network and organize for change. Henry says she considered the store a de facto community space, offering room for community organizations' announcements and more."<sup>47</sup> In 1996 they briefly opened a second store in Wilmington, managed by Paula McGlamery.

1992 (December 5)–1999 (November)

Textures Books & Gifts, San Antonio, TX

Founder Martha Cabrera was the first member of the Feminist Bookstore Network to apply for and receive an SBA Loan (FBN Jan/Feb 1995). Cabrera describes Textures as "a safe place for women to talk" (FBN March/April 1993). Purchased by Naiad authors Frankie Jones and Peggy Herring in 1997.

1992-2017 (Dec 23)

Wild Iris Books, Gainesville FL

Dotty Faibisy and Bev White bought the store from its original owners, Susan Keel and Karey Godwin, in 1996. The last owners were Cheryl Calhoun and Erica Rodriguez Merrell. Originally known as Iris Books, the store added the "Wild" after their third anniversary (FBN November/December 1995).

1992-unknown

Athena's Attic, Denton, TX

Owners Nova Adamson and Robbie Nodine described it as a "new feminist/lesbian/gay bookstore in TX" (FBN, February 1992).

<sup>46</sup> May acquired full ownership of Meristem Books as of June 15, 1993, buying out Vickie Scarborough's half of the business.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted by Matt Comer, "Then & Now: Women's Place in Charlotte's LGBT Movement," QNotes, May 23, 2014. http://goqnotes.com/29530/thennow-womens-place-in-charlottes-lgbt-movement/. Comer also says that the Charlotte Women's Center (where Sinister Wisdom was born), "one of the longest lived Women's Collectives in the South, closed in 1993, though some of its lesbian leaders continued working on social and political causes through groups like the Lesbian Avengers. FBN (July/Aug 1996 and January/February 1997) says that Sue Henry opened a second Rising Moon store in Wilmington, NC, managed by Paula McGlamery, but closed it in 1997 to focus on keeping the Charlotte store open.

1993 (August)–unknown

Purple Moon Women's Bookstore, Fredericksburg, VA

Owned by Suzy Stone (Free Lance–Star, September 24, 1993).

FBN says, "The Purple Moon, 1,600-square-foot store, full-service feminist bookstore with art, cards, pottery, woodwork and other unique crafts" (August 1993).

1993 (October 18)-c. 1996

Wittershins Bookstore and Café, Easley, SC, Greenville, SC, Raleigh, NC

Robin Moneypenny and Anne Moser originally announced that the store was opening in March 1993 in Easley, SC (FBN November/December 1992), and Carol Seajay reported that Wittershins attended the 1993 Feminist Bookstores Conference in Miami Beach (FBN August 1993). In the March/April 1994 FBN, they announced having opened October 18, 1993, in Greenville, SC, and that "sales are booming" (p. 53). They were still open in Greenville as of the September/October 1995 FBN, but are announced as reopening in Raleigh, NC, in January 1996 (November/Dec 1995). After that, silence.

♀□ 1994–2004, reopened 2009–2011

Sisterspace and Books, Washington DC

Co-owners Faye Williams and Cassandra Burton specialized in African American women's books at what is possibly the first African American feminist bookstore in the country.

1994-unknown

Bad Habits Etc., Norfolk, VA

Opened by Michele Keller as a mostly feminist and lesbian store (*FBN* July/August 1994), it changed its name to Two of a Kind (*FBN* Nov/Dec 1996).

1994-unknown

Above and Beyond, Fort Myers, FL

Owner: Susan Aguirre (FBN Sept/October 1994).

1994-unknown

Illusions, Tuscaloosa, AL

Owned by Ricki and listed as the second Feminist Bookstore Network member in Alabama—"we're taking over the American south!" (FBN Mar/Apr 1994).

1994-c. 1998

Rainbows, Ltd., Huntsville, AL, later Madison, AL

Owned by Yvonne Boudreau and Linda Ballentine, Rainbows focused on gay and lesbian, feminist, recovery, AIDS, ethnic, and black women's issues (*FBN* Dec 1994 and Aug/Sept 1997).

c. 1994-unknown

Moore Magic Womyn's Bookstore, New Orleans, LA

Owned by Anne Moore and listed in the first two *FBN* holiday catalogs, and in their 1994/95 list of feminist bookstores. A May 26, 1996, posting that came up on a Google search reads: "Tucked away in the French Quarter is Moore Magic Womyn's Bookstore. We are an oasis from the heat and stupidity. Besides carrying a wide range of items from locally handmade jewelry and statuary to herbs and magical tools, we are, to date, the only feminist bookstore from Houston to Tallahassee." http://www.qrd.org/qrd/usa/louisiana/moore.magic.womyms.bookstore.

1995 (March 1)—present

The Bag Lady, Charlotte, NC, the-bag-lady.biz

Hope Swann started the store, focused on gifts, books, crystals, and jewelry. She sold it in 2004. It has changed owners several times and is now owned by Susan Burns. From the beginning, it has supported the local Battered Women's Shelter, and currently hosts a variety of feminist spirituality events.

1995 (March 12)—unknown

Lavenders, Naples, FL

Owned by Sandi Sprenger and Vicki Fraser, who say that 85% of their stock is by/for/about women (FBN, May/June 1995).

# 1995 (December) - unknown

Pandora, Knoxville, TN

Owned by Peggy Douglas and Susan Godseaux (FBN November/December 1995; March/Apr 1996).

June 1996-c. 1998

Sissy's Inc., Satellite Beach, FL

Owned by Jocelyn Croft and Becky Jeffers; listed as a feminist, lesbian/gay gallery and bookshop (July/Aug 1996 FBN).

1996-unknown

Healing Rays, Charleston, SC

Alexandria Ravenel-Gainor planned on opening this store in March 1996, listing it in the March/April 1996 FBN as a "feminist bookstore and gift store, specializing in self-help, metaphysical, women's health, spirituality, political and other areas, with themes that will change from month to month." It also appears in the FBN core mailing list at 57 Broad St., Charleston as late as 2000.

1997 (March)-unknown

Out of Bounds, Greenville, SC

Owned by Suzanne Couch and Jennie Allison (FBN Spring 1998).

c. 1999-unknown

First Women's Books, Washington, DC

Owner Leslie Smith describes this as a traveling bookstore that takes books by/about/for and of interest to women of color to festivals/conferences, and other events (FBN May/June 1999).



Locations of Southern cities with feminist bookstores 1970–99

# Feminist Booksellers in the South, 1973-99

\* booksellers interviewed in 2001

\*\* booksellers interviewed 2012–19

\*\*\* booksellers interviewed in both 2001 and 2012–19

#### Alabama

Illusions, Tuscaloosa, 1994–unknown

\*\*\*Lodestar Books, Birmingham, 1983–2002

Rainbows, Ltd, Huntsville, Madison, 1994-c. 1998

## Arkansas

[Women's Project, Little Rock, FBN core mailing list, 1994 and n.d.]

# **District of Columbia**

First Things First, 1973-unknown

First Women's Books, c. 1999–unknown

\*\* Lammas Women's Books & More, 1973–2000

\*\*Sisterspace and Books, 1994-2004, 2009-11

#### Florida

Above and Beyond, Fort Myers, 1994-unknown

\*\*Amelia's, Gainesville, 1977–82

\*\*\*Brigit Books, St. Petersburg, 1989-2003

First Page, Fort Lauderdale, 1989-91

Herstore, Tallahassee, 1974–77

Lavenders, Naples, 1995–unknown

\*\*On the Move, Tampa, FL, 1987-97

\*\*Rubyfruit Books, Tallahassee, 1983-98

Sissy's Inc., Satellite Beach, 1996-c. 1998

\*\*The Well of Happiness, St. Petersburg, 1982–83

\* Wild Iris Books, Gainesville, 1992–2017

\*\*WomanStore, Gainesville, 1974-77

# Georgia

\* Charis Books and More, Atlanta 1974—present

Hobbit Habbit, Athens, GA, c. 1971–c. 1985

#### Louisiana

Moore Magic Womyn's Books, New Orleans, c. 1994–unknown

Mystic Moon Collective, New Orleans, 1988-c. 1991

## Maryland

31st St. Bookstore, Baltimore, 1973-94

# Mississippi

Southern Wild Sisters, 1987–91

#### **North Carolina**

Rising Moon Books & Beyond, Charlotte, 1991–97

\*\*Southern Sisters, Durham, 1988-95

\*\*The Bag Lady, Charlotte, 1995–present

## **South Carolina**

\*\*Bluestocking Books, Columbia, 1991–94

Healing Rays, Charleston, 1996–unknown

Out of Bounds, Greenville, 1997–unknown

Wittershins Bookstore and Café, Greenville, 1993–unknown

#### Tennessee

Book Oasis, Nashville, 1989-unknown

\*Meristem Books & More, Memphis, 1990-98

Pandora, Knoxville, 1995-unknown

\*\*Womankind Books, Nashville, 1977–83

#### Texas

Athena's Attic, Denton, 1992–unknown

\*\*BookWoman, Austin, 1975-present

Curious Times, Dallas, 1988-c. 1991

Half the Sky, Dallas, c. 1983–unknown

\*Inklings, Houston, 1988–98

Las Mujeres, San Antonio, 1981–c. 1982

\*\*Resistencia Books, Austin, 1981–present

Textures Books & Gifts, San Antonio, 1992–99

## Virginia

Bad Habits, Norfolk, 1994-unknown

\*\*Labrys, Richmond, 1977-80

Purple Moon Women's Bookstore, Fredericksburg, 1993–unknown

Womanstuff, Annandale, c. 1990-unknown

\*\*WomensBooks, Richmond, 1981–93