

# **Upton Sinclair: Gossip, Scandal, and Health Fanaticism**

Mini University, IU

Tuesday, June 11, 2013 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

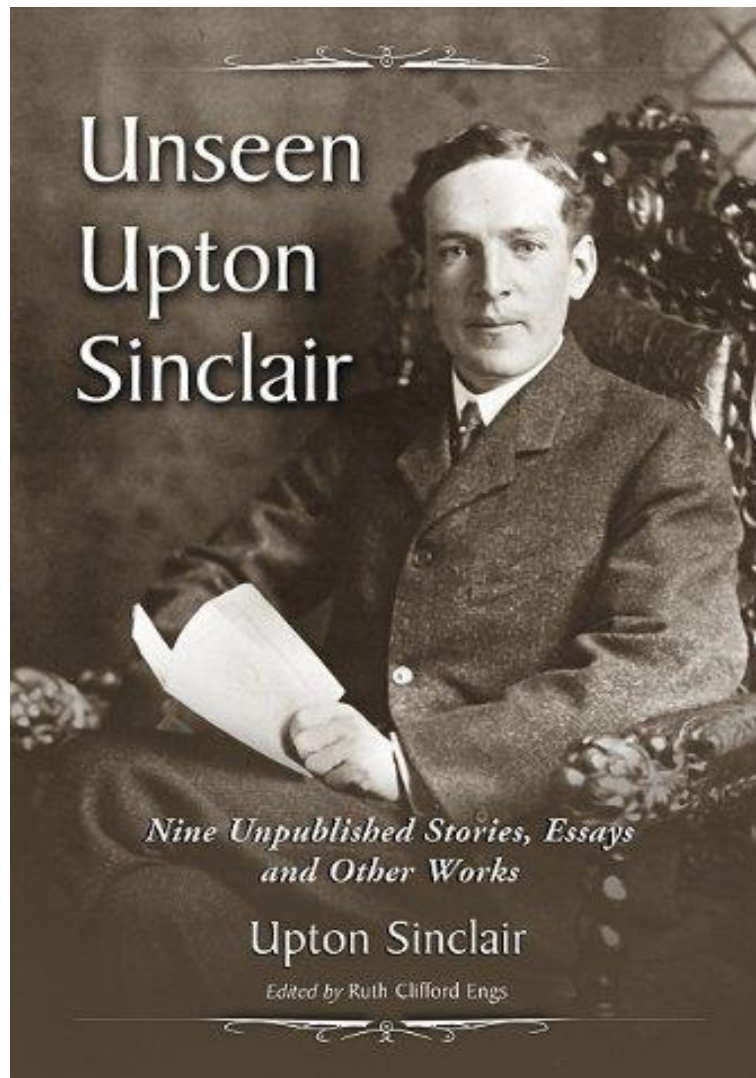
**Prof. Emerita, Ruth Clifford Engs**

This downloadable version of the powerpoint lecture has eliminated most photos

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# Primary Reference for the Class



Engs, Ruth Clifford.  
***Unseen Upton  
Sinclair: Nine  
Unpublished  
Stories, Essays and  
Other Works.***  
Jefferson, NC:  
McFarland. 2009

- ▣ Sinclair wrote over 90 books many on institutional corruption.
- ▣ Information for book and some lecture material from Lilly library collection.
- ▣ Health and women's issues were mostly written in the first two decades of the 20th century

## DIET AND HEALTH RELATED BOOKS

*Good Health and How We Won It* -1909

“Perfect Health,” Contemporary Rev.

1910

The Fasting Cure – 1911

Physical Culture –1910-1914

“Little Algernon” health satires

Diet articles for Physical Culture mag.

*The Book of Life* – “Experiments in diet”

1921.

# WOMAN SUFFRAGE AND INDEPENDENCE

The Nature Woman – eugenics,  
women's independence, exercise

In Unseen Upton Sinclair  
most have emancipation, suffrage,  
sexuality and eugenic themes

# VENEREAL DISEASES (STD'S) AND WOMEN'S ISSUES

*Damaged Goods* - 1913

*Sylvia* - 1913

*Sylvia's Marriage* – 1914

## ALCOHOLISM

*The Wet Parade* - 1931

*The Cup of Fury* – 1956

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*Love's Pilgrimage* – 1911

*American Outpost* – 1932

*The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair*  
–1962

## BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND BIOGRAPHIES OF UPTON SINCLAIR

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# THE MIND SET OF TURN OF 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

- Tight corsets, double standard
- Divorce & illegitimacy  
immoral
- Women not emancipated.
- Poor women worked  
outside of the home

# SINCLAIR'S EARLY LIFE - RAGS AND RICHES

- ▣ Born: Baltimore  
MD Sept 20,  
1878
- ▣ Uncle J. R.  
Bland founded  
US Fidelity &  
Guaranty
- ▣ Came from  
long line of  
naval Officers

## PARENTS

Father (**Upton Beal Sinclair**) part of “dissipated southern aristocracy” who was alcoholic liquor and hat salesman

His mother **Priscilla Harding’s** father Sec/Treas. Western Maryland RR. She was anti-tea, coffee, smoking alcohol

# IN 1888 HIS PARENTS MOVED TO NYC

- ▣ Stayed at Weisner's boarding house for former southern genteel families when his father was earning money and not drunk
- ▣ Met Meta Fuller there as a child. Their mothers were friends

- Learned to read age 5
- Started school at age 10
- At age 14, 1892 enters College of City of NY and starts selling articles as a hack writer; graduates 1897
- 1897 goes to Columbia to study law and earns a living writing short stories.

He wrote for *Army*  
*Navy Magazine*  
1897-1900 under pseudonyms  
of Ens. Clark Fitch,  
USN & Lt. Frederick Garrison, USA

- ▣ He did not study law and left Columbia spring 1900 as he became disillusioned with academic politics
- ▣ He rents an island cottage in upstate NY, and writes *Springtime and Harvest*. It was later rejected and he self publishes it.
- ▣ This set a lifetime pattern of self publishing.

Meets Meta Fuller

Their mothers, and  
Meta, were  
vacationing near to  
his island cottage.  
He acted as her  
teacher.



Meta Fuller Sinclair  
Keen Stone (1880 -1964)



- Sinclair returns to NYC in the fall 1900 when *Spring Time and Harvest* had been completed. He spends much time teaching Meta and **to make her into the perfect woman**
- Uppie and Meta elope in October 1900.
- Both mothers against the marriage and they live with his parents in small room.

- Early 1901 Meta becomes pregnant.
- Uppie didn't want child and they consider an abortion.
- in June 1901 both went to Leek Island and he writes *Prince Hagan* (1904).
- *Springtime and Harvest* published as *King Midas* in the fall 1901. First time he wrote as Upton Sinclair

- Meta is unhappy with the isolation on the island. In the fall 1901 she moves in with her parents.
- David is born Dec. 1, 1901
- He becomes a well known physicist
- Meta's parents refused to let Sinclair visit his son until he got a real job.
- Sinclair lived in a garret room and writes "potboilers."

Summer 1902 Uppie goes to Leek Island alone while Meta and David go with her parents to Catskills.

- Writes *Journal of Author Sterling* published by regular publisher (Feb. 2003). Instigates hoax to get attention for book and meets publishing editor.
- While working gets stomach problems

Fall 1902 back in NYC he is  
introduced to George Heron  
and  
Gaylord Wilshire  
and becomes a socialist.

In 1905, establishes with Jack  
London intercollegiate socialist  
society

Winter 1903 he lives in rooming house with alcoholic farther and maternal uncle

Writes *Captain of Industry* but it is not published until after the *Jungle* (1906)

In February 1903, after *Journal of Arthur Sterling* published, he obtains loan from Herron and rents farm near Princeton. Meta and David join him. He works on *Manassas* in tent.

Manassas (1904) Civil War

story of “Battle of Bull Run”

(South calls it “Manassas ”and, “War between the States as it was not civil”)

During the summer 1903, Meta becomes completely isolated and almost commits suicide due to loneliness, lack of sex, and attention. They live like “brother and sister” to avoid having any more children.

She and baby David move to NYC to her parents for the winter.



In the spring 1904, Meta move back to small cabin and Sinclair finished *Manassas*. Macmillan promptly accepted it and published it in August 1904. Life was on the upswing.

His father-in-law now accepted him and the two went on a canoe trip in northern Ontario

After *Manassas* published, *Appeal to Reason*, a socialist magazine, asks him to investigate the Chicago meatpacking industry and in Oct. he collects data for the jungle on “Wage Slavery”

- ▣ In the meantime, Sinclair explains Meta's situation to Rev. Savage, gets a loan and buys a farm with a large house
- ▣ While Sinclair is collecting data in Chicago, Meta has an operation, and almost dies. In late fall they moved to farm house and Sinclair hires a nurse to take care of Meta

- He begins writing  
Xmas day 1904
- Experiences severe  
stomach pains, could  
not write, and goes to  
Florida for a few  
weeks and finish the  
book in 1905
- Publishers reject it

- So it was serialized in *Appeal to Reason* 1905 and published 1906 as book.
- Pres. Teddy Roosevelt's commission found it accurate.
- It led to Pure Food and Drug laws 1906.

However, Roosevelt labeled  
investigative reporters as  
Muckrakers  
--reporters who delighted in  
digging up dirt

In the meantime, Meta remained  
on the farm isolated and sick

A friend introduced her to

Christian Science –

Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1921)

which brought relief

Sinclair oppose the practice

Meta gave it up and her pains return

Sinclair sent Meta to Florida and while there she met a young man and fell in love. She said it was an emotional relationship and tells Sinclair who became upset although they had agreed to be open with each other concerning any relationships.



From *Jungle* royalty (\$30,000), Sinclair establishes Helicon Home Colony 1906

- ▣ Sinclair Lewis

- ▣ Meta becomes more independent and Uppie has affair

- ▣ “Free love scandal”

- ▣ HH burns down  
March 7, 1907

- ▣ They live with Wilshire's

- Meta has abortion, almost dies and suffers a nervous breakdown
- In Aug., she goes to The Battle Creek Sanitarium in Battle Creek, MI.

The Battle Creek Sanitarium, or the “San,” was a popular treatments Spa for nervous breakdowns, alcoholism, and other ailments in early 20<sup>th</sup> century founded by John Harvey Kellogg, MD (1852-1943)

- Sinclair goes to the Adirondacks to finish *The Metropolis*.
- He meets the founders of British Fabian socialist. In the pre-World War I, years he meets them again and was introduced to suffragettes which influenced his writing on these topics. Three short works are in the *Unseen* book.

- ▣ While writing, he lives on rice, beans, prunes, and fish and suffers from stomach problems and reads health pamphlets on curing this.
- ▣ Goes to see Meta at the San in the fall and is introduced to their various treatments which he undergoes

## THESE TREATMENTS INCLUDE:

- Whole grains, fruits, nuts, legumes  
yogurt – no meat
- Water therapy, enemas with yogurt,  
bathing
- Exercise and physical  
activity
- Electric shock, radium
- Nude sunbathing
- No alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, spices
- Pure water only to drink

Sinclair now becomes obsessed with diet, health, and treatments

- ▣ “Feast or famine childhood” likely cause of food crazes
- ▣ Calls himself a “food drunkard”
- ▣ Equates rich food with dissipation and wealth

- ▣ He probably learned his workaholicism and food obsession from his father's alcoholism and his mother's Puritanism. Heredity or environment?
- ▣ He is so obsessed by diet that he controls the eating of first wife and son



- ▣ In the meantime, Meta meets Alford Kuttner, a Harvard graduate student who is like a “Greek God” and whom she later has an affair.
- ▣ Sinclair meets Michael Williams a former colonists at Helicon who was attempting to cure his alcoholism.
- ▣ Sinclair, David, and the Williams family go to Bermuda for the winter.

- Sinclair writes *The Millennium*- an utopian science-fiction
- Meta was released from San and joined Sinclair in January 1908.
- Sinclair maintains a strict vegetarian diet for everyone in the household. Meta and Sinclair argue about food and the diet

Sinclair and Williams co-author *Good Health and How We Won it* (1909).

Williams takes all of the advance and the two become life-long enemies

- Sinclair's return to New York City in the spring 1908
- He received advance for the *Money Changers*, rents a little camp on Lake Placid with Meta, David, many visitors
- Seventh-day Adventist friend stayed at camp. Meta attempted various types of mental healing to cure her pains
- G.B. Shaw visits

- Arguments continued between Meta and Sinclair over the strict vegetarian diet impose on the whole household. David secretly rebels against this regime.
- Sinclair after intense writing and arguments with Meta, traveled Southern California to visit Gaylord Wilshire

On the way to CA, Sinclair visits Harry Kemp, 1883- 1960 the “boxcar poet,” in Lawrence, Kansas and they become friends

In 1911 he and Meta had an affair

- ▣ In the meantime Meta in fall 1908, rented an apartment New York City and spent time with her parents
- ▣ She exerted her independence, took singing lessons, studied music, attended concert with her mother.

- ▣ She met with Alfred Kuttner and exchanged many letters
- ▣ In her diary she said she “felt wonderful and alive for the first time in her life.”



Sinclair meets **George Sterling**, (1869-1926) the noted poet, and realizes he is an alcoholic and see this as “a waste of a great mind.”

Sinclair relaxes in  
Carmel, CA and writes  
theater productions:

***The Machine, The  
Second-story Man***

And interacts with  
Sterling and other  
“Bohemians.”



- He produced the plays in several towns and lost money. This is another example of how he could not handle money.
- His stomach pains go away as he is not stressed out 1908-1909.

He stays with Dell H. Munger  
(1862-1932 ) for awhile in  
California, 1908, who is the model for  
independent women in his writings

Munger wrote: *The Wind Before  
Dawn*

He was interviewed by the newspapers, January 30, 1909. The *San Francisco Examiner* ran a story with the headlines:

“Sinclair sorry he is married to wife,”  
and “he thought married women were slaves” and “advocated trial marriage.”

By April 1909 Uppie missed Meta and David and he asked them to meet him in Coconut Grove, Florida an artist colony

They fight about food and she corresponds with Kuttner

Uppie not happy

Summer of 1909  
he rents a  
cottage on Long  
Island.

David Howatt, a  
vegetarian,  
teetotaler, and  
non-smoker was  
his secretary

Howatt, a friend of  
Kemp's, had spent  
time at Macfdden's  
Physical Culture Camp

Will Durant also  
at the camp

Bernarr Macfadden, a well known physical culture guru, had a rival sanitarium across the road from Kellogg and was the publisher of *Physical Culture* and other magazines.



Sinclair's health declines due to conflict with Meta and intense writing. He wrote Macfadden about his problems.

In the late summer of 1909, Sinclair, and his family, are invited to McFadden's institution for fasting treatment in return for his writing of health articles for *Physical Culture Magazine*

The visit to Macfadden's institution in 1909, became **the** pivotal point in Upton Sinclair's life in terms of

1. **relationships,**
2. concerns about his **health**
3. and **writings.**

- At Kellogg's San, Mary Craig Kimbrough, called "Craig," is there with her mother.
- Sinclair goes across the street to the San to present a lecture and meets her.



Mary Craig  
Kimbrough  
(1882-1961)

- ▣ The two women became close friends but several biographers see this friendship, on Craig's part, as a means to appropriate Sinclair for herself.
- ▣ Although there are many documents concerning this friendship, Craig never mentions it in her autobiography.

Sinclair becomes more obsessed with fasting and diet, a theme which emerged in many of his works for the next decade

- ▣ Horace Fletcher - Fletcherism 1908
- ▣ John Harvey Kellogg-vegetarianism 1908
- ▣ Dell Munger – Fasting and raw food, California, 1908
- ▣ David Howatt - “raw food” diet, Long Island 1908-1909
- ▣ Bernarr Macfadden fast and milk diet 1909
- ▣ Dr. Salisbury, meat diet 1910

Sinclair became a lifetime faster and vegetarian.

He satirized many of the cures use at the Battle Creek sanitarium in his writing including two works in the *Unseen* book. This mockery led to a falling out between Sinclair and Kellogg.

September 1909, Sinclair went to Fairhope, Alabama along with David who went to the experimental organic school.

Howatt, now married, was Sinclair's secretary again

Sinclair wrote essays and satires concerning diet, health, cures, and relationships for *Physical Culture* from October 1909 through August 1914 in almost every issue.



In the meantime Meta stayed with Craig at Macfadden's and went to Fairhope in early 1910s.

He wrote *The Nature Woman*,  
into a day-and-a half featuring his  
idealized woman which was very  
controversial.it was published in  
1912 in *Plays of Protests*.

# ***Nature Woman* (1912) was too risqué for the time**

Protagonist, Oceana, had knowledge of sexuality, against marriage, was independent, promoted woman suffrage, a healthy lifestyle with exercise and vegetarian diet, defied middle-class conventions, anti-corsets.

He meets Dr. J. H. Salisbury (1823–1905) and tries his all meat diet.

Uppie writes about this diet and is considered traitor by vegetarians

When Meta arrived they decide to write a book together on their marriage.

The book was to reflect the unhappiness in their marriage and to show how a couple who agreed to part could remain friends.

In April 1910, Sinclair and David went to Arden, in Delaware, another single tax community and remained there through early 1912.

Sinclair rented a lot and installed three tents- one of them for Meta as she was not ready for divorce. He hired a young secretary, Ellen Barrows, with whom Meta was friendly.

- Uppie has an Affair with Ellen.
- Uppie suggests that Meta and Alford Kuttner should get together for “trial marriage.”

They tried it for a month  
in summer 1910

but it did not go well as

Kuttner was likely homosexual

He finished *Loves Pilgrimage*  
with Meta's input

He also wrote the serialized novel  
*Health of Little Algernon* published  
from December 1911 through  
June 1912 in *Physical Culture*.

Unpublished fragments are in the  
*Unseen Upton Sinclair* book



He completed *The Fasting Cure* based upon his articles in *Cosmopolitan* magazine.

Book was published March 1911

Fall 1910, Craig arrives in New York and Meta introduces her to various socialist

- ▣ Sinclair meets Craig in New York City to consult him about book she was writing.
- ▣ In March 1911, Meta and Craig traveled to Gulfport, Mississippi.
- ▣ Sinclair has an affair with Inez Mulholland a socialist worker.

# **1911 the most traumatic year in the life of Upton Sinclair**

- ▣ Meta and Craig go to Arden in June and move into Sinclair's newly built house
- ▣ Craig and Sinclair begin secret affair.
- ▣ Harry Kemp comes to Arden and he and Meta begin affair.
- ▣ Sinclair asked Meta to leave and she and Craig go to New York. Harry soon follows

Meta's mother goes to Arden to look  
after David

- ▣ George Sterling comes a week later and went to visit Meta at the Fuller's apartment, sees Craig, and immediately falls in love with her
- ▣ Over next year Sterling wrote Craig numerous letters they may have had an affair

- ▣ August 23, 1911 Sinclair telegraphs his attorney to file for divorce and telegraph operator leaks this information to the press.
- ▣ Newspapers print Meta and Kemp affair
- ▣ Meta and Harry go to Jersey shore to escape press and Craig went to a hotel
- ▣ Sinclair arranges press conference with Meta, himself, and Kemp

- ▣ Craig joins Meta and Kemp at West Point Pleasant, New Jersey shore during October. After a month, Meta went back to New York City and writes Harry that she has found another lover.
- ▣ Sinclair sues for divorce with Harry as correspondent, however, the courts turned them down on collusion.

- ▣ Although Craig says she lived “quietly” in New York and only interacted with Sterling, Sinclair secretly met her.
- ▣ Craig had a “drop box” at Sinclair’s mother’s
- ▣ Craig was given legal custody of David if Sinclair should die unbeknownst to Meta.
- ▣ February 1912 Sinclair and David depart for Europe to obtain a divorce in Holland.

He writes articles on health in different countries for *Physical Culture* while in Europe 1911-1912

Craig lives in New York and interacted with Meta through the winter of 1912 She encouraged Meta to write letter saying she had no objections to divorce.



Through the Wilshire's, Sinclair meets Lady Russell and use her small cottage for writing for several months in England

- ▣ Lady Russell invites Craig to England and her parents agree to let her go
- ▣ Craig used Lady Russell as a “drop box,” did not go to England, and went directly to Holland and lived with Sinclair in a cottage as David’s “governess.”

- ▣ The divorce is finalized May 24, 1912 and Sinclair was given sole custody of David.
- ▣ In early fall 1912, they go to England and live in Molly Russell's cottage. David is sent to boarding school in England.

Based upon Craig's stories of life in Mississippi as a Southern Belle, Sinclair writes *Sylvia*.

- ▣ in December 1912, Craig returns to the US and attempts to persuade her father to allow her to marry a divorced man.
- ▣ Sinclair returns to New York under separate ship to market *Sylvia*.
- ▣ Sinclair and Craig were married April 21, 1913 in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Her father did not approve of the marriage and did not attend the wedding.

- ▣ Craig was happy to be his prodigy, let him control their lives, and reigned in his spending. She organize his papers over 48 years of their marriage.
- ▣ After the marriage Craig, her sister, Dolly, David and Uppie, spend the summer in England and associated with suffragettes.

He now writes short stories on woman suffrage and also sexually transmitted diseases and eugenics.

End of summer 1913, Sinclair and Craig go back to New York and David stays at an English boarding school

- - ▣ The Sinclair's spend the winter in Bermuda and he finishes *Sylvia's Marriage*, a sequel to *Sylvia*, which detail eugenics, STDs, sex education and Sylvia's emergence as an independent woman.
  - ▣ In April they go back to New York and become involved with political activity

- ▣ Craig's father invites them to stay at Ashton Hall the family vacation home in Gulfport, MS in late spring 1915
- ▣ Meta comes to Mississippi to get custody of David but Sinclair is given primary custody.
- ▣ November 1915, Sinclair goes to California by himself and Craig is told by her father she must follow



- ▣ David is shuffled from one boarding school to the other as he reminded Craig of Meta and she did not want to be around him.
- ▣ **Sinclair's move to California coincided with his waning interest in writing about health topics, woman suffrage and diet.**
- ▣ He becomes involved political causes and novelizing them

Based upon letters concerning  
health and personal matters from  
readers in *Appeal To Reason*,  
Macmillan published  
*The Book of Life* (1922)

In 1922, he supports and promotes Dr. Albert Abrams of San Francisco

Adams uses electricity and radio to cure illnesses.

Craig tries this and Christian Science cures. Was she also under extreme stress like Meta?

Miami News, Nov. 22, 1922

1927 he wrote *Oil!* that was banned in Boston because of its sexual content which was taken directly from the song of Solomon in the Bible.

*Wet Parade* (1931) Semi  
autobiographical Novel about  
alcoholics he had known

- ▣ Father
- ▣ Uncles
- ▣ George Sterling
- ▣ Jack London
- ▣ Sinclair Lewis
- ▣ “Jerry Calhoun”

Craig becomes sickly, practices CS and experiments with ESP resulting in book (1930) and the creation of the parapsychology department at Duke University.

- ▣ In the 1930s he ran for governor and became involved with film production
- ▣ He won a Pulitzer for *Dragon's Teeth* part of the Lanny Budd series written in the early '40s

The Cup of Fury is an ANTI-ALCOHOL  
Novel 1956

Profiles the various people he has  
known who have died of alcoholism



**Mary Craig died April 26, 1961**

Sinclair met and married May Willis, a widow, within 6 months of Craig's death. She liked her cocktails

Meta married Lester Keene of New York (1916); her son with him, Lester, was also a physicist.

When widowed she married John Stone of Florida (1947) who corresponded with Sinclair

**Meta died Oct. 3, 1964**

**May died Dec. 18, 1967**

**Sinclair Died November 25, 1968** in a nursing home near his son, David, and May's daughter. He was buried besides May in Rock Creek Park, MD

# Living descendants of Sinclair ?

His only son, David is married twice. He and his second wife, Jean, had a long happy marriage but no children

Diana Sinclair, was his only grand-child, and child of David and his first wife, Frances. There is no reliable information on what happened to Diana.

# THE END

Photos from Lilly Library, Sinclair  
Manuscript collection.

