Between 1929 and 1931, when all the pieces moved into place for what Morris Bishop called the University Press Redivivus—the university press reborn—a key figure who emerged was Woodford Patterson ’95, the university publisher and secretary of the university. Patterson, a Newark Valley native, had worked for the New York Evening Sun and served as editor for the Cornell Alumni News. He cared deeply about the art of bookmaking, later designing many books for the press. A gift he left behind, recently rediscovered in the back of a closet at Sage House, was a collection of several dozen of his own books, meant to serve as examples of good book design. Many contain brief notes attached inside the front covers, extolling the use of particular ligatures, generous margins, or marginal subheads.

One of these books, a history of Oxford University Press, also includes a handwritten account from Patterson of how the Wall Street Crash of 1929 led to President Farrand’s recommendation that the press be reopened. The economic hardships precipitated the decision of Longmans, Green & Company to cancel their contracts for the listing and sale of two Cornell Studies series, Philosophy and Classical Philology. In 1930, on Patterson’s request, Farrand persuaded
the trustees to set up a new Cornell University Press, which would be under Patterson’s management and handle all university publishing previously conducted by outside agencies. This included the two series at Longmans, the Cornell Studies in English series, the Baker Lectures in Chemistry, and the university library publications. Storage space was found in Morrill Hall and Patterson agreed to handle orders, shipments, and the publication of an annual catalogue.

The press was officially reestablished at the June 1930 board of trustees meeting and allocated a subsidy of $5,000 per year from the alumni fund for a period of five years. The writer of an editorial in the Cornell Daily Sun considered this a meager amount but a good step forward. The following year, when the ownership of Comstock Publishing was transferred to the university, the press’s chances for success were further increased.

The reorganized Comstock Publishing was incorporated in 1931, with Gage as president and Woodford Patterson as general manager. At the board of trustees meeting in June 1931, the net profits of Comstock Publishing were dedicated to the support of the university press so that the funds would be used solely for publishing scholarly works and not absorbed into the general university budget. At the same meeting, it was determined that the press should also be housed in the Chalet and its business operations managed by Comstock. In this way, the newly reborn university press was kept under the protective wing of Comstock Publishing. They were separate entities, but shared space, staff, and expenses.

The press also benefited from the income of an established backlist from the Cornell Studies series and the library publications, some sixty titles in all. The goal was to eventually publish additional works of scholarship and scientific research by Cornell faculty. Probably the most notable press publication of this first decade was Nobel Prize–winner Linus Pauling’s
Nature of the Chemical Bond, part of the Baker lecture series, while Comstock published the first edition of H. H. Dukes’s Physiology of Domestic Animals, a classic in veterinary studies, and the Handbook of Frogs and Toads, by Anna Allen Wright and Albert Hazen Wright.

By 1938, the management of two independent but intertwined publishing concerns was becoming unwieldy. Comstock Publishing was providing the press with office space, storage, shipping facilities, and business management, in addition to handing over all its profits. But oversight from the university was different for each, with the press reporting to a Committee on Publication and a University Press Council, while Comstock reported solely to its directors. A committee formed by President Edmund Ezra Day proposed that the operation of the university press be managed by a board of directors and a board of editors. The directors were to be the same directors who oversaw Comstock, while the editors would be the director of the press and four members of the faculty. And yet, despite sharing so many aspects of its business with the university press, it was not until 1951 that Comstock Publishing Company was officially liquidated as a corporation and redesignated as an imprint of Cornell University Press.

In 1940, Woodford Patterson retired as director of the press, though he remained as a consulting editor for several more years. Stanley Schaefer ’28, who had come to work at Comstock Publishing as an undergraduate, moved from his position as the business manager of Comstock to the joint position of director of Comstock and the press. Schaefer then left in 1943 to become manager of production and head of the editorial offices at F. S. Crofts and Company of New York, publishers of college textbooks. He was replaced by Victor Reynolds, who had formerly worked at Macmillan Company as a promotion director, as well as at F. S. Crofts and Ronald
Press. During his twenty years at Cornell, Reynolds also served as president of the American Association of University Presses (AAUP, now AUPresses) from 1953 to 1955.

Woodford Patterson, press director 1930–1940

Stanley Schaefer, press director 1940–1943

Victor Reynolds, press director 1943–1963
By 1943, the publishing partnership had outgrown its offices. The upper floor of the Chalet had been rented to Simon Gage, who passed away in 1944, and the press moved into that space as well. By the end of the decade, the press also opened a warehouse in a Quonset hut in East Ithaca.

During World War II, restrictions on the purchase of paper limited the publication of new books and editions, but Comstock and the press continued to grow in size and explore new publishing ideas. By 1944, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the press, the backlist had grown to 250 books, plus nineteen new publications that year. In 1948, Victor Reynolds
estimated the press, with twenty-four new publications, to be among the top ten university presses in volume.

In 1942, an innovative partnership began between Comstock and the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell, with Comstock distributing wildlife recordings. These eventually led to the formation of the Cornell Records Division, possibly the first record business among university presses. The first album was *American Bird Songs*, a six-record set, followed in 1948 by *Voices of the Night*, recordings of North American frogs and toads. Other recordings, ultimately twelve in all, included jungle sounds, western bird songs, and insect sounds.
The press also took over publication of four journals: The Philosophical Review, Far Eastern Review, New York Folklore Quarterly, and Industrial and Labor Relations Review. In addition, the press managed the printing of many official publications of the university and began a joint imprint with the New School for Social Research in New York City.

The 1950s were a time of great growth for Cornell University, with many new buildings and an increased focus on research. The press also continued its trend of growth and change. While the press largely published books by Cornell faculty through the 1930s and 1940s, this number gradually shrank to one-half or perhaps one-third of the annual list in the 1950s and even less in coming decades as the press began to solicit more work from other academic institutions. The press also expanded beyond its foundational science, history, and literary criticism and theory publications to explore topics of interest to the post-war world through two series on civil liberties and the development of western civilization, in addition to books on the Middle East and the Soviet Union. Important publications included The Bill of Rights Reader by Milton R. Konvitz, one of the founders of Cornell’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations, and The Middle East in World Affairs by George Lenczowski.

In 1955, the press introduced another innovation in scholarly publishing, becoming the first university press to publish paperback books. Great Seal Books, named after the seal of the university, produced paperback reprints of classic works by leading scholars, continuing the joint press and Comstock mission of disseminating worthy scholarship at an affordable price. Selected from the fields of the humanities, sciences, and social sciences, these books included The Rise of Universities by Charles Homer Haskins, Ethical Systems and Legal Ideals by Felix S. Cohen, Science and Imagination by Marjorie Nicolson, and Bees: Their Vision, Chemical Senses, and Language by Karl von Frisch.
By the end of the 1950s, the press was publishing over thirty-five books a year and assisted with the editorial, design, and production needs of several journals: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *The Cornell Veterinarian*, *The Federal Accountant*, *Rural Sociology*, and *Student Medicine*. Joint imprints were cultivated with the American Historical Association, the Folger Shakespeare Library, Amherst College, and the New York Historical Association. The press also sought to expand its global reach, becoming part of the International Book Export Group (IBEG) with the presses at Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale.

To accommodate the press’s increase in publications, the number of staff had grown as well, creating space issues in the Chalet. Being a true Swiss chalet, it had always been an unusual place to work, with no interior stairs between the first and second floors. The publicity director’s office was reached by a flight of attic stairs and the assistant director’s office was surrounded by a balcony. When the press expanded to another chalet at 122 Roberts Place, staff members were even more scattered about—the director and several editors occupied offices in 122, the receptionist in 124, and, later, when the press had expanded into a third neighboring building (the former home of Leon Rothschild, owner of Rothschild’s Department Store in Ithaca), the manuscript editing department was located in all three buildings. Adding to the list of the Chalet’s quirks, Simon Gage left an instructional note for Victor Reynolds on which water taps to open and doors to leave ajar to avoid frozen pipes in the depths of winter.

Heading into the 1960s, the press experienced a record year of sales at a time of growth for university presses generally. The AAUP boasted fifty-three members and scholarly presses were publishing one out of every four books in the United States. A new organization formed at Cornell, the Prelis Cornelliensis Amici Fidelissimi, a group of all former
and present members of the board of editors. The purpose was to meet annually to hear a progress report, and to discuss old times and new books. Sadly, this tongue twister of a club has not survived.

Roger Howley, press director
1963–1982

In 1963, Victor Reynolds resigned to become the first director of a new university press for the University of Virginia. He was replaced by Roger Howley ’49, a native of the Ithaca area who had worked for Macmillan and Johns Hopkins University Press. In that same year Bernhard Kendler came to work at the press, first as managing editor but then as the first acquisitions editor. Prior to this time acquisitions had been handled by the directors. Over the next four decades, Kendler developed strong lists in classics, literature, and art history, in addition to building the press into the leading publisher of academic philosophy in English. He is remembered for his skill in acquiring the best books and developing authors into better writers. His quick wit is also still cherished, as well as preserved in memos in the press archives. A typical comment about a manuscript, delivered with his usual good humor, reads: “There’s clearly still some pomposity, with jargonic interludes.”
As the press approached the hundredth anniversary of its founding, it had grown to approximately forty employees and surpassed one million dollars in gross annual sales. Cornell Paperbacks (originally Great Seal Books) numbered forty-six titles and had sold nearly half a million copies. Between fifty and seventy-five new titles were published each year in subjects covering the range of the university curriculum and including monographs, translations, advanced reference books, and serious nonfiction written for scholars and general readers. The new anthropology list included Victor Turner’s *Forest of Symbols*, and the new Cornell Publications in the History of Science series featured Henry Guerlac’s *Lavoisier: The Crucial Year*. David Brion Davis’s 1966 publication, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1967. Other authors whose books had been published by the press since its revival represent some of the most distinguished names in American scholarship: Carl Becker, Max Black, Lane Cooper, Mario Einaudi, Walter Gellhorn, George Kahin, Milton Konvitz, Linus Pauling, Clinton Rossiter, and Moses Coit Tyler, the first professor of American history in the United States.
In 1969, its anniversary year, the press hosted the annual AAUP conference. The main speaker at the banquet was Morris Bishop ’13, Cornell professor of Romance literature, university historian, poet, and author of *A History of Cornell*, published by the press in 1962. Bishop spoke on “The Lower Depths of Higher Education,” an amusing depiction of the imagined good old days of nineteenth-century university life that, in reality, were a time of physical hardship, frequent riots, and erratic education. It was a time of deep dissatisfaction with higher education that, though the written version of his speech does not explicitly do so, could be compared to the turbulent campus life of the 1960s. Bishop’s speech was particularly timely as the conference was held just two months after the thirty-six-hour student takeover of Willard Straight Hall, where armed members of Cornell’s Afro-American Society protested racial injustice and the university’s slow progress in establishing a black studies program. Three decades later, the press published an in-depth exploration of these events in *Cornell ’69: Liberalism and the Crisis of the American University* by Donald Alexander Downs.

In the 1970s, the press’s activities took on an increasingly international dimension, copublishing books that originated with British publishers, up to fifteen titles per year, and frequently licensing publishers to sell translated editions of Cornell books. Together with Johns Hopkins University Press and the University of California Press, the press opened an office in London for easier sale and distribution of books in the United Kingdom, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. By 1976, the press was publishing more than seventy books per year and selling more than a quarter million per year. The wide range of titles was particularly strong in the fields of history, literary criticism, philosophy, and Southeast Asian studies, in addition to the applied biology books of the Comstock
imprint. In this decade, the press published the first of twenty-one volumes of the Cornell Wordsworth series and the first edition of Diana Sammataro’s and Alphonse Avitabile’s popular *Beekeeper’s Handbook*.

The process of editing these and many other books was ably led for twenty-one years by Elsie Myers Stainton, who set a high standard as managing editor that continues to this day. After her retirement in 1976, Stainton published a series of books and articles about writing and editing, including the highly praised *The Fine Art of Copyediting*.

At the start of the 1970s, the press was a profitable and growing business, but Howley saw trouble on the horizon in the increasing costs of printing, promotion, editing, and general overhead. Increasing costs led to higher-priced books. In addition, university libraries, a key market for scholarly texts, were working with smaller budgets. In an interview, Howley said that “our books have long since been priced out of the reach of what should be our natural market—young scholars and students.” To counter this, the press continued its tradition of publishing affordable paperbacks of titles with trade or course adoption potential, about 5 percent of its list and a total of 150 books since 1955.

The positive trends continued into the 1980s. In addition to maintaining the subsidiary office in London, the press had twenty sales representatives in contact with nearly one thousand retail stores across the country. Sales in Latin America were managed through UNILIBRO, a corporation operated by the presses at Cornell, Johns Hopkins, and Texas. A partnership with Phaidon Press of Oxford, UK, a publisher of art history books, was expanded to give Cornell University Press first North American rights to all Phaidon books. And a 1981 *Daily Sun* article reported an increase in books by and about women, particularly in literary criticism.
But the successes obscured deeper problems and the 1980s brought tumultuous times for the press, with several crises to navigate. In June 1982, a fire in a rented warehouse destroyed over 160,000 books valued at over half a million dollars. This disaster added to the financial difficulty already facing the press, precipitating a financial review by the university. Unlike most of the top university publishers, Cornell’s press has never had an endowment to help it weather difficult times, though the university has made substantial contributions over the years to defray deficits and invest in improvements. Recommendations from the university included a comprehensive financial plan, closer oversight, and modernization of the press’s practices.

Later that same year, Roger Howley left and Marilyn Sale, the managing editor, stepped in as interim director. This was an extremely difficult time for the press and it was largely through Sale’s steady hand and intelligent leadership that staff confidence was restored as the press sought its new director. She was succeeded in 1983 by Walter Lippincott, who had been working as the press’s acquisitions editor in New York City.

Lippincott arrived at a press with strong lists in the humanities—classics, literary criticism and theory, philosophy, music, and art history. The scholarly publishing landscape continued to pose challenges, and the press responded with tighter financial controls, an increased focus on acquiring the very best manuscripts, and an expansion into subject areas that might have an appeal beyond academia. Lippincott sought to strengthen the press’s offerings in American history, Soviet studies, political science, agricultural and food policy, and certain scientific areas. The diversity of fields mirrored the broad mission of the university as both an arts and sciences institution and a land-grant school. The changes he
implemented marked a turn to the editorial profile the press still maintains today.

Even during these difficult days, the press continued to publish many high-quality books, including *The National Question in Yugoslavia* by Ivo Banac, *Diseases of Trees and Shrubs* by Wayne Sinclair, Howard Lyon, and Warren Johnson, and *The Meaning of Nuclear Revolution* by Robert Jervis. The last won the first of six Grawemeyer Awards presented to Cornell authors over the next three decades, the most of any university press.

It was Lippincott who initiated the implementation of the first database at the warehouse, which gave the press the ability to undertake fulfillment and storage for other presses. With the energetic leadership of Dohn Barham, the chief financial officer, CUP Services (CUPS) expanded rapidly through the late 1980s and into the 1990s, diversifying the press’s income stream at a crucial time. “The future of scholarly publishing is perilous,” Lippincott admitted in a 1985 *Cornell Chronicle* article. But the university press is “absolutely essential for the publishing of quality scholarship. . . . It is here that we bring either credit or discredit to Cornell University.”

Lippincott did much to turn the fortunes of the press around, though he stayed only until 1986, when he moved on to become director of the press at Princeton University, his alma mater. David Gilbert, who had been director of the University of Nebraska Press and associate director of the University of Texas Press, as well as a former president of AAUP, next took the helm. Through his hard work and knowledge of the publishing industry, he continued Lippincott’s work of putting the press on more stable financial footing and increased the number of annual publications to over one hundred. Gilbert retired in 1989 and in an interview in the *Cornell Chronicle* left another ominous portent of the future of scholarly publishing. Citing the financial pressures on
libraries and publishers, plus the advent of new technologies, he predicted that “there are going to be big problems to solve in the next decade.”

This challenging decade, in which library budgets continued to tighten and publishing costs to rise, was ushered in by the press’s next director, John Ackerman. Ackerman had worked at the press since 1980, first as associate manuscript editor, then acquisitions editor in 1983, and editor in chief in 1985. His tenure brought a period of stability after the many difficulties of the 1980s—and some welcome changes.

The press continued to expand its lists in agriculture, the biological sciences, and the social sciences, with a political science list considered among the best in the nation, plus Ackerman’s distinguished list in Soviet and Russian history. Executive Editor Roger Haydon, who came to the press in 1985, built a substantial list in Asian studies and played a crucial role in deepening and expanding the press’s expertise in social and political science with two prominent series established by Lippincott, Cornell Studies in Political Economy and Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. New directions for the press included more feminist studies and African American studies—among them Isabel Hull’s *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815* and Charles Mills’s *The Racial Contract*. In a *Cornell Chronicle* interview in 1991, Ackerman explained that part of Cornell’s tradition was “to take what is at the forefront of research and bring it to the field where it can be applied practically.” This, he continued, was the role of the press as well.

In the early 1990s, the press began looking for a new home that would be more functional and accessible than the three Roberts Place buildings. The search committee settled on Sage House, an elegant Victorian mansion located off campus. Once the home of Cornell trustee Henry Williams Sage
and his wife, Susan Linn Sage, Sage House was designed by William Henry Miller, the architect of many important buildings on campus. Despite Henry Sage’s numerous frustrations with the progress and quality of the construction, at its completion in 1880 he was very pleased by the elegant building with its bird-themed stained glass windows, fairytale fireplace tiles, and elaborate woodcarvings of owls, bats, and flowers. It was described in the local paper as looming up like a castle at the head of State Street and a “scene of rare beauty and magnificence.”

After the death of Henry Sage in the late 1890s, the building was given to the university to be used as the student infirmary. The large dining room was converted into an X-ray room, a corner room on the second floor served as the operating room, and beds were installed throughout. It remained the university’s infirmary, expanding into an extension wing, until the early 1980s. During those years, many students passed through what they nicknamed “the Morgue”—recuperating from the flu, having broken bones set after sledding accidents on the steep slope of nearby Buffalo Street, and suffering through the tragic typhoid epidemic of 1903 that filled the infirmary with nearly sixty patients.

Sage House officially became the new home of Cornell University Press in 1993. Like the old Roberts Place offices, it is an unconventional workplace with uneven heating, the occasional live bat, and rumored ghosts, but the staff loves it for its history and beauty.

In 1995, the press expanded in another new direction by merging with ILR Press. Cornell’s Industrial and Labor Relations School began its publishing endeavors in 1948 under the unwieldy name of The Publishing Division of the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University, producing brochures, pamphlets, and books. The
ILR School and the press had worked together in the past on *ILR Review* (a separate entity) and produced some books, though the details of that arrangement are lost or buried deep in old file drawers. The long-time director of ILR’s publishing division, Frances Benson, revitalized the press in the 1980s, shortening its name to the snappier ILR Press, broadening its scope by seeking authors outside Cornell, and building a reputation independent of the ILR School. ILR Press’s publishing focus is labor, management, and the workplace, addressing issues that are relevant beyond the academic community and often anticipating trends, such as the role of women in the workplace in the 1970s and the culture of health care more recently.

Ackerman convinced Benson to stay on as the director of the new ILR Press imprint, and to become the editor in chief of Cornell University Press. The ILR imprint retained its editorial independence over book projects and its own editorial advisory board, an arrangement that continues to this day. In
2011, Benson was honored with an award from LERA (the Labor and Employment Relations Association) for the work she has done since the early 1970s to build ILR Press into a leading publisher of books on labor relations.

The century closed with one more innovation for the press, initiated by Design and Production Manager Deborah Bruner. In 1999, *A Living Wage*, by Lawrence Glickman, was the first book in the world to be printed on paper carrying the Forestry Stewardship Council logo, signifying that the trees harvested for the paper were grown using sustainable practices.

But the true end to this era of Cornell University Press could be said to have come a few years later, in 2004, when Acquisitions Editor Bernie Kendler retired after a remarkable forty-one years at the press, patiently prodding authors to produce their best work and teaching his coworkers by example. While the adoption of a database and newfangled desktop computers had hinted at the technology-infused world of publishing to come, it was Kendler’s departure that in some ways marked the fading away of “traditional” university press publishing. New staff and new publishing realities were entering the scene to push the press into the digital age.