

# Who Were the Women? In-Depth Analysis of Four Additional Early Women Adult Educators

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## Who Were the Women? In-Depth Analysis of Four Additional Early Women Adult Educators

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In the early years of the field of adult education in the United States, women were prominent contributors to the growth of the field, particularly to the literature base. Previous publications provide some explanation for why women moved from the center to the margins as contributors to the field's literature base after the early period, but no extended analysis of the early women contributors has been conducted. This research project is designed to address that gap. The initial phase of the project, reported during a 2008 AERC Roundtable, examined the roles of women in developing the literature base from 1926-1941, the types of literature produced, and the connections or networks that may have fostered their efforts. The initial work investigated the *Journal of Adult Education*; and the series *Studies in the Social Significance of Adult Education* in the United States, both published by the American Adult Education Association (AAEA). It also identified some of the connections among many of the women.

The current phase of the study focuses on a more in-depth analysis of some of the women identified in the first phase of the project. AERC Roundtables in 2009 and 2011 reported on eight additional women who were selected for further investigation during this phase: Lucy Wilcox Adams, Eve Chappell, Jesse Charters, Mary L. Ely, Mae C. Hawes, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Ruth Kotinsky, and Bonaro Wilkinson Overstreet. The contributions of these women were assessed based on findings from a number of sources. An in-depth analysis of four additional women is being reported in the 2012 Roundtable.

### Jean Carter (Ogden)

While a high school Latin and English teacher, Jean Carter (Ogden) took a prominent part in the workers' education movement, working with Hilda Worthington Smith. She and Smith co-authored *Education and the Worker-Student* that was published in 1934 by the Affiliated Schools for Workers. In 1937 she joined the study staff of the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE) and became an active contributor to AAAE publications, authoring a total of five articles for the *Journal of Adult Education* and two books that were part of the series *Studies in the Social Significance of Adult Education in the United States*. In addition to workers' education, she also wrote on drama, and parent education. She married Jesse Ogden, and they worked in community development at the University of Virginia. They conducted an extensive study designed to locate community projects that had been planned and executed by the community members who benefited from them. The Ogdens disseminated information on the projects so they could be replicated in other communities. Carter Ogden was part of the planning group that resulted in the founding of AEA-USA.

### **Virginia Estelle Randolph and the Jeanes Teachers**

Jeanes Teachers were African-Americans working in the rural south from 1907 through 1968. Although funded primarily to work as industrial education teachers, they also engaged widely in community development activities working with adults to improve communities. In 1907, Virginia Estelle Randolph, the daughter of former slaves, was appointed the first Jeanes teacher, and her work became a model for the program. She used a number of strategies to involve specific community groups, particularly parents. A focus of her efforts was on beautification of schools, including improving the grounds by planting trees and shrubs. Before Randolph retired in 1949, she had developed a teacher training program and written a plan that became a model for schools using Jeanes teachers. The work of the Jeanes teachers has been criticized for reinforcing the status quo for African Americans.

### **Dorothy Rowden (Loemker)**

By the early 1930s, Dorothy Rowden was at the center of the action in the new Association. She edited both the 1934 and 1936 *Handbook of Adult Education in the U.S.* For her book *Enlightened Self-Interest: A Study of Education Programs of Trade Associations* (1937) she consulted about one hundred trade union executives and many educators. She frequently contributed to and edited many Association publications and reports, and other educational and library publications; she served as the AAAE Secretary. She worked as staff with Lyman Bryson at Columbia Broadcasting System doing radio education, including co-authoring with Bryson Radio as an Agency of National Unity. She was on the staff of the Institute for Adult Education at Teachers College Columbia. Later, she became assistant to the president of the John & Mary Markle Foundation.

### **Hilda Worthington Smith**

From early college, Hilda (Jane) Worthington Smith worked with women's suffrage and social work. She graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 1910, and went on to earn a masters and then another degree in social work. In 1921, five years before AAAE began, Bryn Mawr opened the Summer School for Women Workers in Industry with Hilda, college dean, as director. It drew women workers from a wide range of ethnicities, occupations, and locations; it ran, later as the Hudson Shore Labor School, until 1938. The programs were liberal, non-vocational and the education included writing and public speaking; they included worker-student self-governance. Hilda believed this education could be a non-violent path to social change. Hilda was involved in the adult education movement, contributing articles to the *Journal of Adult Education*, chapters in the 1934 and 1936 handbooks, and serving on the Council of AAAE. She worked tirelessly for decades as educator, activist, and lobbyist for workers education for women. A colleague, Lawrence Rogin, wrote in the forward to her *Selected Poems*, "Jane has many causes; education and workers, but mostly I think it was women. When it was less popular than today, she never let me forget that our society was sexist, although she didn't use that term; and that unions and education were among the sinners" (p. xiii).