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Harriet Rouillard: “The Stamp of Its Editor” on the CAAE’s *Food for Thought*

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Abstract: This paper presents the results of an archival study of Harriet Rouillard, editor of the Canadian Association for Adult Education’s journal, *Food for Thought*, between 1947 and 1953. Rouillard’s background, education, and contributions to the association in its early years are discussed.

The contributions of women writers and editors to the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE; formed in 1935) has basically been unknown or, in some cases, given cursory attention, even though women such as Harriet Page Lane Rouillard (1904-1987), Jean Hunter Morrison, Ruth McKenzie, and Isabel Wilson ran the CBC/CAAE radio programs *Citizens’ Forum* and *Farm Forum*, wrote and edited books, journal and magazine articles, and produced pamphlets on a variety of adult education topics. Their educational levels were high and their political leanings were often socialist, yet their particular influence on the field of adult education is largely undocumented.

Harriet Rouillard was editor of the CAAE’s journal, *Food for Thought*, between 1947 and 1953 (volumes 8-13). During those years she led the publication and wrote editorials that influenced, and were influenced by, the policies of the CAAE. However, apart from a book she edited for the CAAE, *Pioneers in Adult Education in Canada* (Rouillard, 1952), which consisted of a collection of biographical articles from *Food for Thought*, her influence on the field has been largely forgotten. In contrast, the male leaders whom she worked alongside, such as Ned Corbett (1886-1964) and Roby Kidd (1915-1982), were to go on to very distinguished careers in adult education. Kidd, for instance, was arguably the best known Canadian adult educator in the 20th century, both as director of the CAAE and as founder of graduate degrees and professor of adult education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). As a way of ensuring that her contributions are known, this chapter provides some background on Harriet’s early life and then focuses on her specific contributions to adult education literature.

Harriet’s Early Years

Harriet was one of three children born to Susan Foster Lauriat Lane and Alfred Church Lane (1898-1983), a geologist and professor at Harvard and Tufts College, Boston (Lane, Alfred Church, 2009). Alfred was a graduate of Harvard and Susan a graduate of Smith College. Of her two brothers, Frederic and Lauriat, more is known of Frederic (1900-1984), who graduated from Harvard, and went on to a distinguished career as a professor of medieval history at Johns Hopkins University (Lane, Frederic Chapin, 2009).

Harriet, a tall and confident young woman, attended Smith in 1921 and graduated in 1925 with a BA. A collection of her weekly letters home during these years shows that Harriet was a curious young woman (H. Lane, 1921-1925). In a letter addressed to her father, she discussed what she

wanted out of life: “I hate the philanthropic societies—women’s clubs, church societies and such. I hate to give up time to them. I want a real job with intellectual stimulus and I want to do things for people I love” (15 February, 1924). Her zeal to be intellectually stimulated is reflected in the activities she involved herself in at the College. According to her yearbook, she was the music critic for the *Smith College Weekly*, involved in the Press Board club, and member of the Blue Pencil Club. She also sang in the choir and was a member of the Granddaughters Club. Her days were abuzz with stories of friends, lunches, and sororities such as Alpha and Phi Delta Kappa societies (see Smith College Class Book, 1925).

Life in Toronto

Harriet married Clarence Dana Rouillard (1904-1991) in 1928, after which she completed her MA at Smith, graduating in 1935 with a thesis on Henry James and art. She did this degree while Dana was teaching at Amherst College and completing his doctoral studies at Harvard. After Dana graduated with a PhD in 1936 in French literature, they moved to Toronto where he was an important figure in the development of the University of Toronto’s French Department. He taught there for the remainder of his career, with a brief 2-year interlude in Ottawa during World War II (1943-1945), during which Harriet took political science courses. In Toronto, Harriet and Dana lived in the upper class neighborhood of Rosedale and they became an integral part of the intellectual life of the city and the University, entertaining CAAE director Roby Kidd, international literary critic Northrup Frye, and many of the University faculty.

Much of what is known of Harriet’s personal and professional life in Toronto can be gleaned from Dana’s diaries (1928-1982), which are housed, along with his other papers and effects, in the Archives of the University of Toronto. Dana wrote every day a veritable list of activities that both he and Harriet were involved in. These diaries resemble calendars more than personal journals or reflections, yet their detailed listing of events is insightful and reflective of a remarkable partnership between them. Harriet had a full life as a volunteer, editor and leader in many organizations such as the YWCA; she wrote for the YWCA *Quarterly*, served on committees, and researched the history of the association. The diaries reveal an active social life; it is a rare day that Dana and Harriett they do not have lunch or dinner with another couple or colleague, either at their home or at the University, or during one of their many European trips. A typical day travelling would be Friday, August 13, 1937 when they were summering in Europe: Dana and “H. go off on an excursion. Bus to Monte Carlo, an hour at the Casino... Climb to old villages ... wonderful lunch.” They were quite a team: on occasion, Dana typed for Harriet (D. Rouillard, August 19, 1951) and helped her make marmalade (September 19, 1962), and she entertained and supported his career. Testimonials from some of the 300 people who attended her funeral indicate that she was an integral part of the building of the Department of French and the University in the major expansion of the 1960s. Yet, she remained a loyal American, true to her New England intellectual roots, and did not take out Canadian citizenship until late in life (personal correspondence, John Riddell, February 1, 2013)

Harriet also took an active role in St. Andrew’s United Church, participated in the University Women’s Club for which she co-wrote a history, and pursued her lifelong interest in learning (see McCool, Pratt, & Rouillard, 1978). She became a teaching assistant for Instructor Chase at Smith College from 1932-37; attended classes at Cambridge 1935 to 1937, and joined numerous study groups in Toronto on topics such as Germany, Russia, the American Constitution, and Brazil. Over the years, she took lessons in Italian, dance and spinet, sang in choirs and spent her

summers with Dana in their rustic cottage called *Heyday* in a remote part of Georgian Bay, Ontario, Canada (personal correspondence, John Riddell, February 1, 2013).

Following their sojourn in Ottawa during the war, Harriet became chair of the Public Affairs Committee for the YWCA, which led to co-organizing a major conference with the CAAE in Toronto in 1947. Here she likely drew the attention of Roby Kidd who was looking for an editor for the journal *Food for Thought*. Harriet became the editor that year and continued this work until 1953.

Harriet Rouillard's Editorials (1947 – 1953)

When Harriet began working for the CAAE, it was still a relatively young organization. It had been formed in 1935, under the directorship of Ned Corbett, and when his tenure was complete, Roby Kidd became the director. The influence of an editor is not always known in academic circles yet it is the editor who chooses the articles, solicits contributions, sets the general tone of the discussion, and writes the editorials. She is the one who sets the agenda, and in the absence of specific policies, the one who establishes them. In short, she has a great influence on what was said and how it was said. As the CAAE director, it was Ned Corbett who welcomed her onboard *Food for Thought* in the opening Opinion column in October 1947.

Harriet's first meeting of the editorial board was held in September of 1947 at her home at 8 pm, presumably a dinner meeting (Minutes of the Board Meeting, September 15, 1947). She wrote her first editorial in November of that year (Volume 8, no.2) in a special issue on cooperative housing. Her editorial argued for a Canadian Commission for UNESCO, especially since the government seemed all too quick to prioritize having a place at the Security Council of the UN rather than supporting education at UNESCO. In this editorial, she drew attention to gaps in public policy and spending, and pointed out that Canada was not adequately represented on the world stage; her next editorial in December expressed great concern over increased militarism (p. 4). In short order, she established herself as an editor with strongly held and well informed arguments.

Like Ned Corbett and Roby Kidd, her vision for adult education was concerned with all matters in civil society—use of school buildings, housing, immigration policy, consumer spending, voluntary organizations, mental health, culture, aboriginal rights, responsibilities of the press, and the United Nations. In contrast to the somewhat myopic interests of adult educators in the twenty-first century, Harriet's vision seems global, broad and forward thinking by comparison. When it came to women and their rights, she was most assertive, dismissing patriarchal comments of a certain Professor McHenry of the Ontario Educational Association who argued for the place of women in the home. She abhorred essentialism, patriarchy, idealization, and tokenism of women. Presumably in defense of her own role and keeper of house and part time employee, she said, “good cooking and a sense of social responsibility are not mutually exclusive” (Volume 8, no. 8, 1948, p. 4). Following a leave from the *Journal* for an extended European tour in 1951, she came back to the issue of women, this time their virtual absence from public office: “In this respect Canada is one of the world's most backward nations” (Volume 11, no. 5, 1951, p. 3). At times in these editorials Harriet could seem a bit preachy. In her January 1948 (Volume 8, no. 4) editorial, for instance, she spent considerable time telling readers what it meant to be a good citizen and what their civic duties were. Indeed, in one of the tributes at her memorial service, a friend noted that she could be somewhat blunt.

True to her intellectual roots, she opposed the introduction of television (Volume 9, no. 4, January, 1949) and quoted routinely from the *New Yorker*, *Saturday Night*, and *Atlantic Monthly*. Along with being the editor (helped by an assistant editor), Harriet was involved in an intercultural relations sub-committee of *Food for Thought*, as well as participated in later years in an Indian-Eskimo association. Not surprisingly, the theme of race surfaced in a progressive editorial on race relations (Volume 8, no. 4, January, 1948, p. 4). While these are liberal not radical views, they certainly reflective of a keen mind, and great socio-cultural understanding. The editorial board minutes show that the Journal tried to avoid party politics but Harriet's editorials were very political (Minutes of the Editorial Board, April 11, 1946).

The CAAE directors were most appreciative of her editorials. When she retired from the *Food for Thought* in March 1953, Roby Kidd was effusive in his praise. He said,

for more than a year we have been trying to brace ourselves for the shock, but it is still very upsetting. HR has left the editor's chair which she inherited back in 1947.... This journal is the product of many minds and hands, in the best sense a cooperative project, but it has always displayed the stamp of its editor. Like her it cared for things: for people and causes, for ideas and principles, and for a good English sentence. Its editorials were clear and vigorous but never did they rant. Few journals with a comparatively tiny circulation enjoy the respect that this holds." (Volume 13, no. 6, p. 1)

Harriet was involved in shaping the field of adult education early in its history. Under her leadership, the field of adult education made clear policy pronouncements, called government to task and rallied for human rights. It was current in its issues and adamant in its causes.

Editor and Co-Writers of Books

One of Harriet's greatest contributions to *Food for Thought* was commissioning profiles of eminent adult educators. These biographies are reminiscent of her graduate thesis on Henry James, and they culminate in an edited volume, *Pioneers in Adult Education in Canada* (H. Rouillard, 1952). While the editorials are largely discussions of public policy, the profiles are a significant means of talking about leaders in educational circles. *Pioneers* was one of the 11 books funded by the Ford Foundation (Fund for Adult Education) and became an important means of documenting adult education in Canada in that time period. Leaders included in *Pioneers* were Alphonse DeJardins, founder of the cooperative movement; Jimmy Tompkins and Moses Coady of the Antigonish Movement (both written by fellow Nova Scotian Ned Corbett). Harriet was also willing to stretch the boundaries by including essays on artists such as Arthur Lismer, written by Helen Frye (wife of literary theorist Northrup Frye). Harriet's interest in this artist was likely heightened by the fact that her close friend Kay Riddell had worked as Lismer's assistant while she was a student, and Helen Frye who also knew him, was a friend of the Rouillards. Intellectual circles in the city of Toronto in the 1950s were tight and Harriet was deeply ensconced in them. The selection of writers and topics was reflective of Harriet's social circles. She invited seven women and four men to contribute essays to the journal. Although only 2 of the final 16 essays focused on women (Adelaide Hoodless & Helen Gordon Stewart), *Pioneers* remains one of the few historical records we have of women in Canadian adult education. It, and the journal itself, routinely showcased the work of women writers in the field,

long before Canada had its own academic journals and guilds for adult education. This growth in adult education as an academic field did not happen until decades later in Canada.

Shortly after *Pioneers* was released, Harriet resigned as editor of the *Journal*. In the minutes of several meetings prior to her resignation, she complained of the terrible amount of work she had to do, so when she stepped down there was likely no surprise. She resigned and became a member, and then chair, of the board until 1957 when Miss Charity Grant replaced her.

Conclusions

Harriet's contributions to adult education were typical of the world in which she was reared and lived—a prosperous intellectual elite—and she had a vision of making the world a bit more literate, literary and civilized. Although it is unlikely that Harriet thought of herself as an adult educator, she was both polished and scholarly, and contributed a great deal to establishing the field in Canada. She displayed the finest adult education trait possible: she was fully aware of her responsibility as a citizen of this nation and supporter of lifelong education.

When Harriet died in 1987, her CAAE colleague Clare Clark spoke of her abilities, “Harriet had the instincts of an investigative reporter heightened by her human and intellectual qualities. She finessed the role of colleague and wife.” Her good friend, Kay Riddell, remembered her in a similar way at the funeral:

Harriet took such a scholarly approach to being a housewife. She was a Mary and a Martha all in one. Each home that she and Dana created became a hub of cultural interests—music, art, literature, current affairs. Whenever friends gather there was bound to be good talk around the Rouillard table. (Harriett Page Rouillard Files, January 24, 1987).

As editor of *Food for Thought*, Harriet showed herself to be a progressive woman for her time. She put her partnership with Dana at the center of her life and she contributed greatly to many causes, including the Canadian Association for Adult Education. Even in her spare time, she made an impact on the Association that was to last for years to come.

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