

Lucia True Ames Mead: Publicist for Peace Education in the United States

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In 1937, at a memorial meeting of the Twentieth Century Club in Boston, the noted women's rights leader and peace reformer Carrie Chapman Catt referred to Lucia Mead as "the best informed woman in the United States on the subjects of war and peace" (quoted in Craig, 1990, p. 4). Born on May 5, 1856, in Boscawen, New Hampshire, Mead was the third child of Elvira and Nathan Plummer Ames. A farmer by occupation, her father served as a colonel in the Union Army during the Civil War. Her mother died the same year the Civil War broke out and when it ended, her father moved his family just outside of Chicago. Lucia remained there until she was fourteen. In 1870, she moved back east and settled in Boston. She lived with her older brother Charles who worked for a publishing company. In Boston, she attended high school and studied music, which led to her early career as a pianoforte teacher in the late 1870s and 1880s.

Though infused with reformist ideals and enamored of the suffragist movement, the Boston schoolteacher was not drawn into the peace movement until a year before the outbreak of the Spanish-American War of 1898. Her interest in peace and peace education, however, was actually an extension of her exposure to the New England antislavery tradition and Transcendentalism as a youth. Before the age of forty, she had published three books on educational and literary topics and championed municipal reform and the settlement-house movement.

She was well prepared for her roles of peace publicist and peace educator as the nation embarked on its outward thrust from internal expansion to imperial conquest. Accompanying her future husband Edwin Mead,¹ to the 1897 Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration, Lucia offered her own philosophical reasoning in support of world peace and the importance of peace education. Given a receptive audience, she provided listeners with an inkling of transcendentalism humanism, which became the foundation of her peace views. She initiated her address by proclaiming that "We are not first of all Americans, we are, first of all, human beings; we are, first of all, God's children all over the face of the earth" (Mead, 1897, p. 99). Her address was warmly received and it earmarked her growing career in the larger peace movement. Although naïve in its failure to address the problem of national self-interest in international relations, her address argued that nations, like individuals, were capable of working in harmony. All that had to be done was provide the proper educational tools to get the job done.

The time in which Mead advocated peace education also marked the Golden Age of the "practical" peace movement in the United States. Prior to the start of World War I in 1914, the organized peace movement became a prestigious calling, devoted to the legal settlement of disputes and the scientific study of war and its alternatives. Between 1901 and 1914, forty-five new peace organizations appeared, among them the American Society of International Law, Church Peace Union, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the World Peace Foundation. A common assumption held by all was that war and the economies of war stifled prosperity, exacerbated social upheaval, and frustrated the evolution of harmonious social relationships. They maintained that an open commerce in goods and ideas would distribute power equitably, erect systems of exchange, and lessen the threat of military conflict. In their eyes, peace was the practical expression of social and international order and as largely good in and of itself.

¹ They were married in 1898. Edward Mead would later play a pivotal role in Edward Ginn's World Peace Foundation, © 2008 Encyclopedia of Peace Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.
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Encouraged by this surge of peace enthusiasm Mead, the teacher, hoped that educators would find it necessary and proper to instill an awareness of internationalism in the minds of American schoolchildren in an effort to eradicate the irrational and selfish motives among larger elements in society. Her efforts took hold in 1904, when the city of St. Louis hosted a world's fair. Seizing the opportunity to publicize the importance of the peace movement, she prepared a display for the American Peace Society's exhibit for the Exposition's Education Department. She arranged a set of twenty-five cards with distinct headings and illustrated with telling pictures criticizing the war system while highlighting the history and rapid expansion of the peace and arbitration movements. Soon after the exhibit, the American Peace Society turned Mead's work into a pamphlet, *A Primer of the Peace Movement*. Within three months, ten thousand copies were sold. It was reprinted numerous times. In *Primer*, Mead outlined the six steps required for permanent world organization: representative governments, World Court, general arbitration treaties among the major powers, creation of a world congress, gradual proportionate disarmament, and the creation of a small international police force. Especially important for educators was the work's inclusion of historical information on the peace movement, anti-war quotations from leading politicians and military figures, and a list of the causes of war such as "a large military class 'ambitious for activity and promotion,' racism, false Biblical interpretations, and a sensational press" (quoted in Craig, 1990, p. 87). Mead also singled out munitions makers and the dangers of market expansionism, noting that "Foreign investments are enormously increasing in weak and poorly governed nations" (Mead, 1904, pp. 10-12). In the back of her mind was the recent American-Philippine War, 1899-1902. In her final section, she offered concrete suggestions to businesspersons, editors, teachers, ministers, and parents as to what roles they could play in achieving the peace movement's goals.

Mead's popular pamphlet led to more ambitious and wide-ranging peace education efforts. She was a skilled advertiser and propagandist for the cause of peace education. While serving a chair of the Peace and Arbitration Department of the National American Woman Suffrage Association during the first decade of the new century she placed advertisements in Boston street cars. The longest routes in the Boston area witnessed displays such as "Uncle Sam's Dinner Pail" claiming that seventy percent of government revenues supported past and future wars, and "The Navy League's Bogeys" observing that the United States had never been attacked at the start of a foreign war and more than likely would not be. She also enlisted the help of a female composer to "write a marching song for school children full of the spirit of defence of country from real enemies, exalting firemen, police, doctors, and other public servants in an effort to counter the powerful appeal of military marching songs" (quoted in Craig, 1990, p. 88). Mead also created a prize-winning float for the 1913 Boston Columbus Day Parade appropriately entitled, "Law Replaces War."

Mead's contribution to peace education was addressed in the manner in which teachers presented the history of wars to their classes, how the subject of patriotism was being taught, and how they dealt with the movement towards international understanding. Before World War I, she wrote numerous articles for education journals encouraging teachers to provide new approaches to the study of history, literature, Civics, and geography and initiated the movement for establishing the celebration of "Peace Day" throughout the nation's schools—May 18th marking the anniversary of the day of the opening of the First Hague Peace Conference, 1899. Mead also presided over the first of its kind session, "Peace Teaching in the Schools," during the 1906 annual convention of the American Institute of Education (Mead, *Woman's Journal*, 1905, 70).

Mead's determination to assist teachers in planning lessons and activities for Peace Day led to her first comprehensive book on peace, *Patriotism and the New Internationalism* (1906). Selling for twenty-five cents the book encouraged teachers and students to separate "patriotism from mere military achievements" and, instead, look at the "great constructive work" of humanitarian

reformers like William Lloyd Garrison, Jane Addams, Jacob Riis, and Booker T. Washington. When it came to the issue of imperialism, it was critical for teachers to expose the shortcomings of expansionism marked by "one strong nation after another wrests by force or subterfuge rich, tropic lands from their untrained and helpless occupants." It was also time to dispel the doctrine of social Darwinism and the false scientific rationales of the "haves" being employed "to bolster up certain popular conceptions of national 'duty' and 'destiny' on which superior people have comfortably leaned when, looking about for future markets, they have cast envious eyes upon some Naboth's vineyard" (Mead, 1906, p. 17, p. 33, p. 98). The work also represented her transitional views on the practical working of peace mechanisms to more reform-minded goals of social and economic justice representative of the emerging modern peace movement of the World War I era.

The latter half of her work consisted of materials that could be used for Peace Day. It represented a carefully orchestrated plan in which younger students might begin the school day by reciting lines of Scripture related to peace and singing peace songs. Older children would be encouraged to plan and carry out a session of an international peace conference relying on speeches developed by Mead. The anti-war poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, and A. Lawrence Lowell or famous peace quotations of notable soldiers and political leaders were also offered for student consumption. Mead's program was not designed for any particular age group: it was her desire for all teachers to make use of her materials in the classroom.

As ambitious as Mead's program was, the threat of a world war did not silence her efforts. Two years before war began in Europe Mead published a popular work with a biblical connotation, *Swords and Ploughshares* (1912). A substantial portion of the book was a compilation of many of the issues she previously wrote or spoke. Much of her ire was aimed at militarists, especially the famed naval officer Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan. She vehemently disagreed with his analogy that armies and navies were national police. In her opinion, "a navy is a tool of government which is created for the settlement of difficulties through the maximum of force...irrespective of justice," while domestic police conduct protective work employing the "minimum [use] of force on a criminal before a court of law." She also called for Philippine independence and abandoning the principles of the Monroe Doctrine, insisting that it is "no mere coincidence that race hatred and civic corruption have had a recrudescence among us since we became imperialistic in our foreign policy" (Mead, 1912, p. 27, p. 49, p. 137).

Swords and Ploughshares, moreover, took direct aim at "False patriots," especially women's groups, who spend far too much time undertaking genealogical projects and promoting historical myths for the sake of national glorification. Mead felt that women's societies should do more than cultivate the virtue of antiquarianism by wrapping themselves in the flag of Americanism. Rather, if women want to prove their patriotism then they should provide assistance to the poor immigrants and work on settlement-house projects and better schooling: "Is it not personal friendliness which can alone bridge the chasm which yawns between culture and ignorance, between privilege and privation? Is it not that spirit of democracy which goes an arrow's flight above noblesse oblige and welcomes the less fortunate to our shores" (Mead, 1912, pp. 188-91).

America's eventual involvement in World War I also failed to silence Mead's efforts for world peace. She continued working with other women's groups, especially the Woman's Peace Party. Due to her position, she, along with other notable American citizens such as Jane Addams, was labeled "a dangerous American." Yet she remained an active participant in peace conferences and after the war continued her writing on behalf of education for world understanding. An active member of the National Conference on the Cause and Cure of War, Mead published her last book in 1928, *Law or War*. While certainly disillusioned by the totality of war, postwar domestic intolerance, and accompanying threats to civil liberties, Mead continued to caution teachers

about the attempts of "well-known capitalists who desire under the guise of patriotism to alarm the public with wild exaggerations as to menace to property in all movements that would tend to challenge the status quo." This particular book attempted to blend the best features of capitalism with that of socialism. It cried out for social justice with peace education as the instrument of change: "Failure to distribute justly and rationally to producers means poverty, slums, congestion in home cities, and desperate efforts to go far [a]field for customers. If the millions of poor whites in the Appalachians, and the millions in sordid tenements in Liverpool and London, were able to buy as much as they can produce...there would be few millionaires and fewer wars, and superior brains and organizing ability could have a due reward." It was obvious that she intended this book to be a summation of all her efforts to educate and "fertilize the workers for peace" (Mead, 1928, pp. 42-43; pp. 77-81; pp. 138-152; pp. 227-228).

Lucia True Ames Mead died on November 1, 1936. Many historians have devoted numerous pages to popular women peace activists such as Jane Addams, Julia Grace Wales, Emily Green Balch, and Alice Hamilton. Mead has earned her own place in the pantheon of the American peace movement. What truly separates her from other peace activists was her steadfast devotion to proclaiming the benefits of peace education. This tiny, red-haired disciple of peace relied on education to point out the economic catastrophe of modern warfare and that wars are a consequence of illogical reasoning. Perhaps more importantly, as her biographer notes, Mead "conducted an amazing personal campaign of public education....[S]he...delivered more addresses to groups of non-elites and published more popular writings than any other peace advocate of the period" (Craig, 1990, p. 197). She was the most representative figure in the peace movement to bridge the transition from practical applications to world harmony to that of modern techniques based on educational awareness calling for economic and social justice.

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