

**Grace Harriet Macurdy** (1866-1946) by Sarah B. Pomeroy

Grace Macurdy was known as an author of works on royal women of the Hellenistic period and as a teacher at Vassar College for forty-four years. She was born in Robbinston, Maine on September 12 to Simon Angus Macurdy and Rebecca Thomson Macurdy. Through her maternal grandmother, she traced her descent back to Governor William Bradford of Plymouth.

Grace Macurdy was graduated from Radcliffe College in 1888 where she was admitted to Phi Beta Kappa. Her first teaching position was at the Cambridge School for Girls, but she began teaching at Vassar in 1893. From 1899-1900, she was able to attend the University of Berlin, on a fellowship from the Boston Women's Educational Association, and was awarded a Ph.D. by Columbia University in 1903. At Vassar she taught courses in Greek and Latin literature as well as in Greek art, history, and civilization. She also published many articles and reviews in British and American journals.

In the year of Professor Macurdy's retirement (1937), Henry Noble MacCracken, President of Vassar College, wrote in his annual report: "Her deep interest in the achievements of women and in their opportunities both for political and for social equality has led her studies of late into the history of Greek women. Her humor, her gaiety, and her eloquence have combined with her rare learning to bring distinction to the classical studies that have made graduates of Vassar desired in every graduate school."

Dr. Theodore Erck, who had been her colleague at Vassar, wrote: “Grace Macurdy was a splendid representation of that generation of emancipated women who distinguished the faculties of American women’s colleges during the first third of the Twentieth Century, women who spurned marriage and devoted their entire lives and their entire energies to their chosen professions and careers.”

Dr. Macurdy spent many summers traveling and doing research abroad, mostly in England. During World War II, she played an active role in Greek and British war relief. In July, 1946, Great Britain awarded her the King’s Medal for Service in the Cause of Freedom.

Grace Macurdy died in Poughkeepsie, New York on October 23, 1946. Her correspondence with Gilbert Murray, John Masefield, Jane Ellen Harrison, W.W. Tarn, and other scholars was given to the Bodleian and to the Vassar College library.

#### Works by Grace H. Macurdy

##### Books:

*The Chronology of the Extant Plays of Euripides* (Ph.D. diss.) Lancaster, Pa. 1903.

*Troy and Paeonia with Glimpses of Ancient Balkan History and Religion*, New York, 1925.

*Hellenistic Queens: a study of woman power in Macedonia, Seleucid Syria, and Ptolemaic Egypt*, Baltimore, 1932.

*Vassal Queens and Some Contemporary Women in the Roman Empire*, Baltimore, 1937

*The Quality of Mercy: the Gentler Virtues in Greek Literature*, New Haven, 1940

“Queen Eurydice and the Evidence for Woman Power in Early Macedonia,” *AJP*, 48 (1927), 201-14.

“The political Activities and the name of Cratesipolis,” *AJP*, 50 (1929), 273-78.

“The Grammar of Drinking Healths,” *AJP*, 53 (1932), 168-71.

“Roxane and Alexander IV,” *JHS*, 52 (1932), 256-61.

“Julia Berenice,” *AJP* 56 (1935), 246-53.

Source Material for Grace Macurdy

*Vassar Alumnae Magazine*, January 11, 1936.

Obituary: *New York Times*, October 24, 1946.

*Herald Tribune*, October 24, 1946.

Biographical File, and oral history tapes, Vassar College Library.