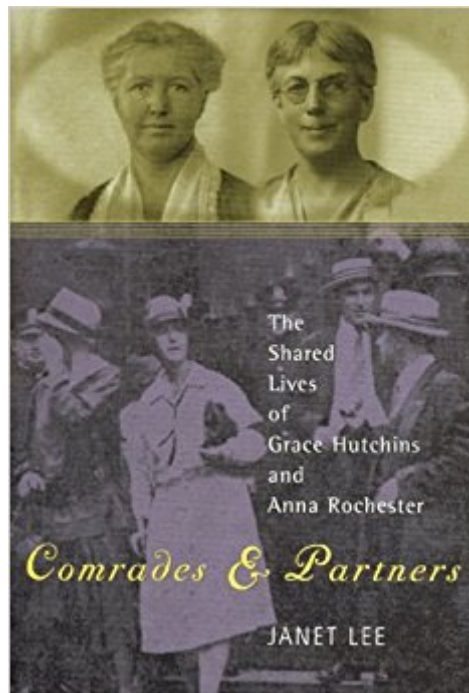


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# Comrades And Partners: The Shared Lives Of Grace Hutchins And Anna Rochester



## Synopsis

With intense passion and commitment, labor reformers and Communist Party activists Grace Hutchins and Anna Rochester dedicated themselves both to the cause of economic justice and to each other. Janet Lee traces Hutchins and Rochester's extraordinary ideological journey from Christianity to Communism in this engaging joint biography, regendering the history of the intellectual left at the same time that she shares the interwoven life stories of these remarkable women. This is a biography that explores the complex and multiple contexts that produced Hutchins and Rochester as political subjects and focuses on the tensions and contradictions of their public and private lives. Methodologically ground breaking, *Comrades and Partners* attempts to disrupt the realist frame of research and writing in relation to both subject and author: subject in terms of the myth of an unfolding, coherent self and author in terms of highlighting the boundaries between fact and fiction. Lee has produced an invaluable addition to the study of women's history, a volume which will prove indispensable to scholars of history, gender studies, and the postmodern approach.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grace Hutchins (1885-1969) and Anna Rochester (1880-1966), reformers and Communist intellectuals, were a remarkable couple in their time. Both were born to patrician Northern families in the late 19th century, both began their lives as dutiful Christian daughters, but as faith became transformed into action, they became Christian socialists and then members of the Communist Party. Lee asserts rather than explains the transition from church volunteer to socialist, noting

simply that between 1905 and 1908 Rochester "became very interested in the teachings of socialism," that she was "taken by" Eugene Debs and read Das Kapital. One wishes for a longer discussion of how the couple met and decided to live together. However, no one will be disappointed with Lee's commitment to historicizing lesbianism; she describes the women's relationship as a romantic friendship in an era when such intense relationships between single women were accepted as natural, especially among social activists. Lee litters the book with boxed asides, presenting quotes from her "research diary" and other self-conscious reflections on the process of writing: at one point, she offers a description of her first encounters with Hutchins and Rochester's papers; at another, she reflects that her subjects were in India during the month her own mother was born. The idea, presumably, is to take the reader behind the scenes into the writing of the book--but more often than not, these asides prove distracting rather than illuminating. Rochester and Hutchins's story is so fascinating, however, that, despite its many pitfalls, this account is worth reading. (Jan.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grace Hutchins and Anna Rochester dedicated their lives not only to the cause of economic justice but, in a deeply committed relationship lasting 45 years, to each other. This labor-reform biography travels from Christianity to Christian socialism and then communism at a time when lesbianism was not acceptable to either doctrine; hence, the pair never did officially "come out." Throughout, we are bombarded with small, thought-provoking asides--which Lee calls her "research diary"--that offer insight into her reasoning. Through Lee (women's studies, Oregon State Univ.), these two women, not currently remembered as monumental activists, are brought to life and given the accolades due them for the ground-breaking social changes they initiated. This work belongs in most women's studies collections.-Kay Meredith Dusheck, Univ. of Iowa, Iowa City Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Haven't read the book, so perhaps shouldn't comment, but Grace Hutchins was more than simply an activist and reformer, she ran a sleeper cell of spies and personally threatened a defector with death. Read Witness by Whittaker Chambers. Much reviled in his lifetime, Chambers was totally vindicated by the release of the Vedona archives.

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