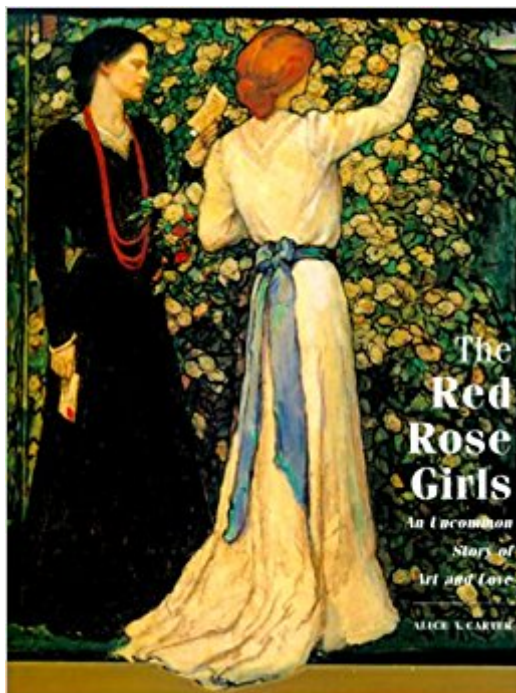


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# The Red Rose Girls: An Uncommon Story Of Art And Love



## Synopsis

This is the biography of illustrators Jessie Wilcox Smith and Elizabeth Shippen Green, and Muralist Violet Oakley, who took over the Red Rose Inn, a picturesque estate on Philadelphia's Main Line. They made a pact to live together forever - until one of them created havoc by marrying.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Alice Carter's *The Red Rose Girls* traces the lives of three talented artists: Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green, and Violet Oakley. After studying together under the sympathetic guidance of Howard Pyle in Philadelphia, the three (all youngest siblings) decided that they could work best away from the distractions of the city. In 1900, they established their home and studios in a rambling country house called the Red Rose Inn, leading Pyle to dub them the "Red Rose Girls." Strengthened by the emotional support and artistic inspiration that each gave the others, their careers blossomed. Green was a successful illustrator, especially for Harper's Magazine; Smith produced charming portraits of children; and Oakley was famous for huge murals commissioned to decorate state buildings. With their friend Henrietta Cozens acting as "housewife," their unconventional living arrangement attracted much interest, not all of it positive. Carter, a professor at San Jose State University, claims that it freed them from the domestic responsibilities and isolation that could cripple an artist, especially a female artist in pre-emancipated society. For eight years the four led an almost idyllic existence of genteel lifestyle and artistic productivity, but eventually the group disintegrated, with Green's marriage causing an especially painful break.

Carter's sympathetic, easy prose perfectly complements the women's idealized art and their uncomplicated belief in the goodness of life. Combining delightful photographs of their domestic lives with examples of their work, *The Red Rose Girls* re-creates a vanished world of optimism and grace. --John Stevenson

Three of the first American women artists to achieve fame and fortune in the Victorian era--Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green and Violet Oakley--lived unconventional lives marked by a remarkable degree of collaboration. In this fascinating but incomplete study, Carter explores the trio's internecine artistic and romantic relations, sparked during their studies at the renowned Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Smith's idyllic representations of children in her *Child's Garden of Verses* remain well known. Green's art-nouveau paintings graced the covers of most of the popular magazines of her day, including *Collier's* and *Harper's*. Oakley, the youngest of the group, was the first American woman granted serious commissions, including a series of murals for the Pennsylvania State Capitol in 1911. For 17 years, the three committed themselves to each other as "sympathetic companions" and artistic collaborators, sharing a studio in Philadelphia and then an estate, the Red Rose Inn, in Villanova, Pa., where another companion, Henrietta Cozens, served as the "wife" of the household. As the women's fame grew, the press lauded their accomplished ménage à quatre (not considered a disgrace in the days when "Boston marriages" were presumed to be asexual). But when Green married at 39 after a seven-year engagement, Oakley's devastation created a scandal and severed the group's artistic partnership. Carter builds a solid foundation but never fully fleshes out the artists or their romantic association, though the exquisite illustrations are worth the price of admission. 115 b&w and 60 color illus. Agent, John Campbell. (Mar.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Women of the early twentieth century ART scene, from different walks of life live together in harmony. I loved how you follow their progression in their various fields. Each has become famous in her own way. Early hints of homosexuality give this beautifully illustrated book some modern day relevance and you wind up with a reality of genuine understanding of the culture in that historical period. As you become acquainted with each you form a desire to learn more about their individual art forms and I felt it was wonderful getting here\_to\_for unknown insight into lives of once very famous women.

Named the "Red Rose" girls by Pyle, Jessie Wilcox, Elizabeth Shippen Green and Violet Oakley

managed to establish careers, at a time when art done by women was considered less valuable, or worthy of attention. The exception was in areas traditionally the domain of women; portraits of children, domestic situations, for articles in magazines and periodicals. This beautifully written book, by Alice Carter is wonderful reading. It shows a time from the recent past when The "Red Rose Girls" managed to create a life of art and security fueled by the growth of magazines read almost exclusively by women. It almost certainly has application to the present time and the position of great women in the art field, illustration area, and communications.

I bought this book with the idea of finding out more of the types of relationships women shared at the beginning of the twentieth century. I was astonished to find more than I bargained for. The Red Rose Girls provided more than insight into these relationships, it also provided a look inside the rise and fall of the progressive and arts and crafts movements. Pre Freud, the relationship of these woman was accepted and cherished as they lived together, and created their art. Post Freud, their relationships deteriorated as did their careers. All in all I found this book extremely entertaining, as well as heartening (a forty year relationship between two of the women) and the pictures are absolutely beautiful. If nothing else, as an art book it is extraordinary.

I am so glad I bought this, even if it was used. A beautiful story about a group of women who shared their dreams of becoming artists.

This book is in excellent condition although it is an ex-library book. It gives more information on the Brandywine illustrators. It is well illustrated.. A lovely book.

Little known story of female illustrators during the Golden Age of illustrators.

AS STATED!

Terrific, fascinating book.

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