

Lucy Lee Lancaster

“Much Loved Public Spirited Lady”

Presented by Jody Booze-Daniels
YMCA at VT - International Woman’s Day
Celebration, 8 March 2022

**“According to those who knew
Lancaster, her gifts were rare: her
charity, curiosity and sense of
adventure.”** Justine Elias

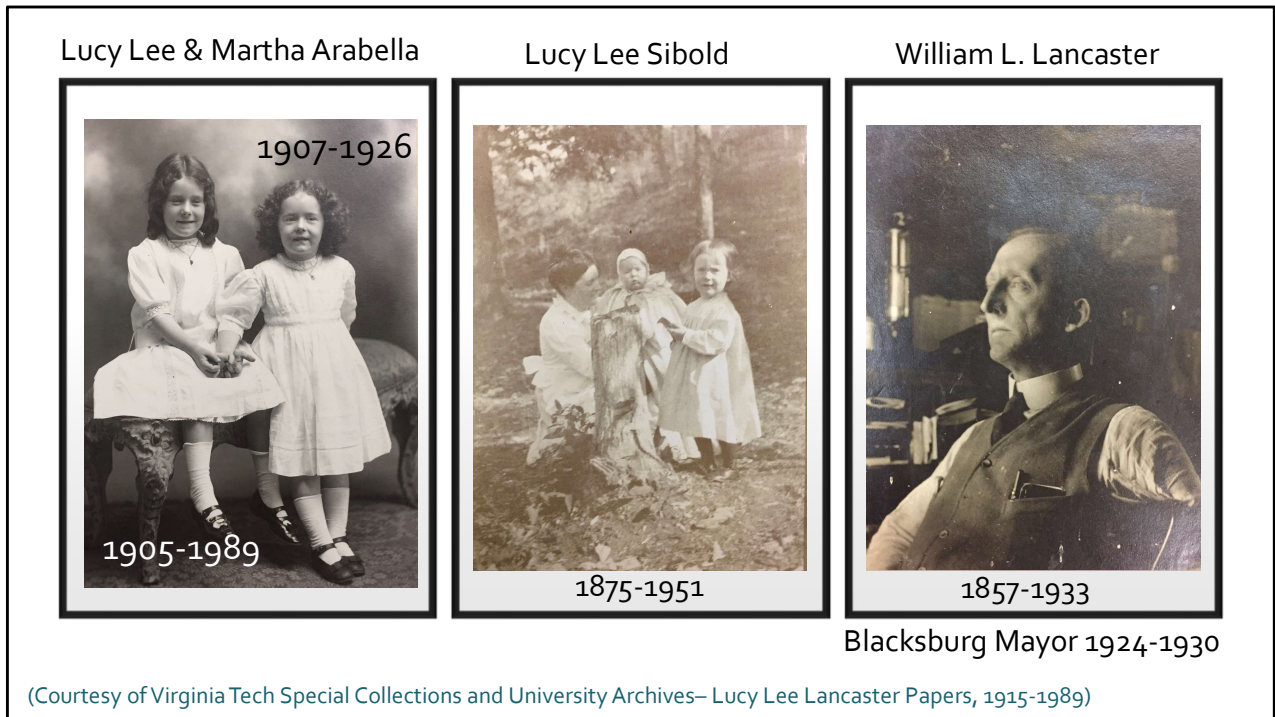


Lucy Lee on a Y Hike

When I retired from VT last July I took a deep dive into Blacksburg History, specifically on the topic of schools. As I have gathered information from primary sources held by the Montgomery and Blacksburg Museums and the VT Archives, I bumped into Lucy Lee at every turn. When I found Justine’s 1991’s RT article on the Y, her words caught my attention, mainly because this also described my late mother. I always felt that if a name from the past comes across my path, I should listen. This is one of my favorite photos of Miss Lucy Lee, by the way.

Much of this information was found in Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1915-1989, the Virginia Tech Archives,

<https://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=vt/vibl bv00218.xml#subseries9>



Brief Family History – Lucy Lee Sibold was from Eggleston and William Lancaster was from Blacksburg. His family had lived in Blacksburg since the early 1800's, most notably his father was the postmaster. Lucy Lee and William married in 1902, she was 27 and he 45. They had 3 children: William, Jr in 1903 who lived for less than a year, Lucy Lee 1905, and Martha 1907. Lucy Lee's father was enrolled in the first class of VAMC in 1872. He did not finish school. He, being a civil engineer, built local roads. Because of his occupation the family camped on the job sites in the summer and lived with the Sibold family in the winter. Lucy Lee's mother was not keen on camping with children, so they mostly lived on her parent's farm in Giles. In 1913 they built this lovely home on the edge of Blacksburg. For context, only 875 people were listed in 1910 census, all could fit into the Moss Arts Center with nearly 400 empty seats. Martha and Lucy Lee were very close, and when she tragically died at the age of 19, the family was devastated. Martha's room remained undisturbed until Lucy Lee's death.



Lucy Lee & Lucy Lee



Lucy Lee



Tin Horn 1924-1925



(Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives– Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1915-1989)

Lucy Lee started Blacksburg Public school in the 4th grade and graduated in the spring of 1921. In the fall of 2021, she was enrolled at VPI in the first coed class. She was one of 5 women who enrolled as full-time students that year. When asked how the cadets treated the coeds, Lucy Lee said in a 1964 interview, “The boys individually were very polite, but as a whole they didn't like the idea of coeds. Especially the upperclassmen. They thought we would spoil the sacred traditions of Tech”. One of those traditions was the Bugle Yearbook. No coed was included in this yearbook, so each of the five 1925 coed graduates received a handmade version, named the “Tin Horn” – Much humor was used to disguise the inequality!

1964 interview at VPI Alumni Association panel with Mrs Rusk and Mrs Sears.

<http://vtwomenshistory.lib.vt.edu/items/show/44>

Lucy Lee

First Graduating Class of Women from VPI
 L-R, Mary Brumfield, Ruth Terrett, Lucy Lee Lancaster, Louise Jacobs, Carrie T. Sibold

NY Library School
 1925-26; 1930-31

(Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives— Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1915-1989)

These five coed pioneers graduated in 1925, and this is the only known photograph documenting the event. All graduated with honors in the sciences - Mary Brumfield, Ruth Terrett, Lucy Lee, Louise Jacobs, Carrie T. Sibold. Lucy Lee had been working in the library since her junior year as an assistant. In 1925-26 she attended the NY Library School, worked in the VPI library for a couple of years, and finished her studies with the NY Library School after it became part of Columbia U., 1930-31. She was the school assistant librarian until 1975, a career spanning nearly 50 years.

Organizations & Groups

The Arts – **Blacksburg Art Association**

Athletics – **Hokie Club**

Civics & Government – **Civilian Defense 1940's**

Community - **YMCA**

Education – **AAUW**

Genealogy & History – **Archeological Soc**

Honor societies & sororities – **Phi Kappa Phi**

Library – **American Library Association**

Travel – **Travel Club**

“You name it,
she belonged
to it ...”

Emily Stuart

71 +

Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives– Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1915-1989

Emily Stuart was quoted in the 1991 Roanoke Times article, “You name it, she belonged to it...” Lucy Lee was a “super” joiner. From her papers, I found at least 71 groups she belonged to and am sure there were more to discover. Here are some of the categories with examples; her interests were diverse.

American Association of University Women

- ◆ Lucy Lee was a charter member of the Blacksburg Chapter, 1926 when she was 21 years-old.
- ◆ She was in a leadership role for most of her life.
- ◆ Honored three times for her lifetime contributions



Those attending the State Conference of the Virginia Division, meeting yesterday at the Hotel Jefferson included (left to right) treasurer; Miss Mildred E. Taylor, secretary; Miss Gillie Larew, A. D. Fraser, president.

Richmond Times Dispatch, 29 March 1941



AAUW Donation To Again Honor Lucy Lancaster

For the third time the Blacksburg Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) is naming its donation to the AAUW International Fellowship Fund in honor of Miss Lucy Lee Lancaster. When one thinks of the Blacksburg Branch of AAUW, one naturally thinks of Miss Lancaster. In fact, when mail comes to that organization with no individual's name, it is delivered to her.

This year Miss Lancaster will be the VPI representative at the State AAUW Convention to be held at Fredericksburg April 22-24.

Roanoke Times
1970

Administered by the national AAUW, this fellowship fund offers financial help and incentive to women taking graduate and post graduate studies. Last year 58 United States women and 35 in foreign countries were beneficiaries of this fund.

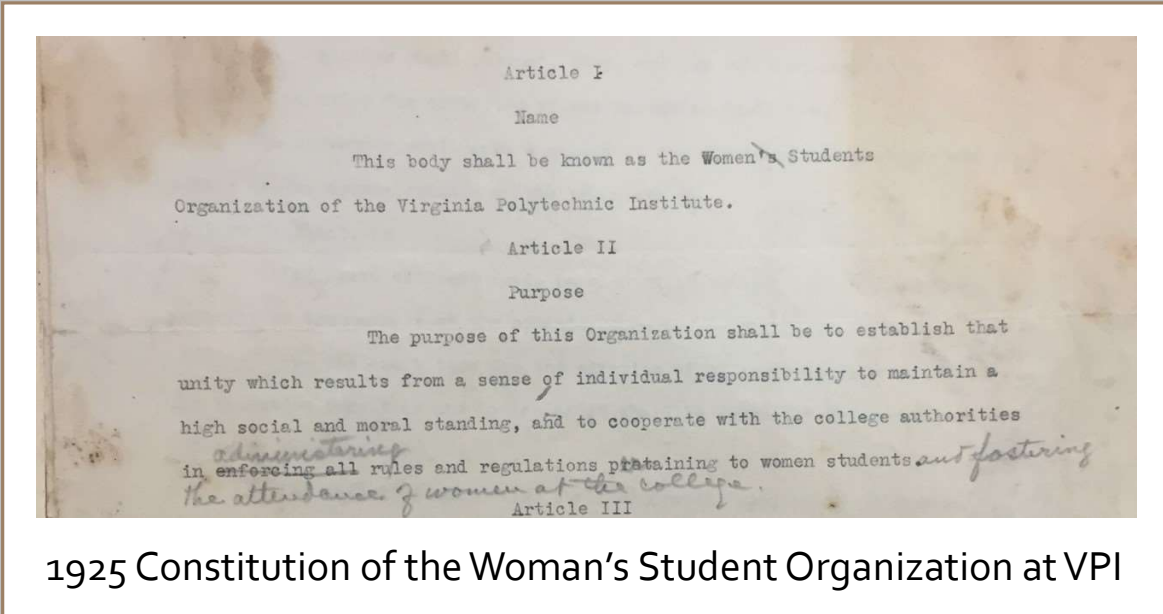
When contributing more than \$500 a year to the fellowship fund, a local branch may honor a local woman by placing its contribution in her name. From the sale of pecans and cookbooks the Blacksburg Branch will make a \$650 contribution this year.

In 1925 Miss Lancaster joined the Blacksburg Branch of AAUW as a charter member. During these 44 years in the organization, she has held every office in the branch and served Virginia as division treasurer.

Over the years she has taken annual vacations in such interesting places as Spain, Africa, Brazil, Cambodia, Easter Island, Ceylon, and Indonesia. Now an assistant science librarian at VPI, she was a member of the first class of women admitted to VPI where she was graduated in 1925 with honors. She holds a master's degree from Columbia. Miss Lancaster is a native of Montgomery County, her family have settled here about the time of the Draper's Meadows Massacre. Her father served as mayor of Blacksburg.

(Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives— Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1915-1989)

Through her life she was often one of the founding members of an organization – Often she was the behind-the-scenes force and other times she was the voice of the group. This was true of the AAUW as she was a charter member. She was proud of her work with the AAUW.

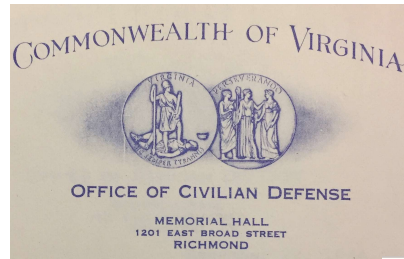


Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives, 1915-1989

In concert with her involvement with the formation of the AAWU local chapter, in 1925 she helped draft the constitution for the Woman's Student Organization of VPI. This is Lucy Lee's handwriting in the draft of the constitution.

Blacksburg Civilian Defense

- ◆ Lucy Lee was one of the few women included in a leadership role
- ◆ She retained all the minutes and notes



Victory Book Sale

From 1941 Minutes

Assist in health education programs for parents.

9. Library Service. Miss Lucy Lancaster, Chairman.
Assist in Victory Book Drives.
Assist information committee in securing data for publicity purposes.
Select, secure, and organize books, pamphlets, clippings, posters or other materials for use of other workers.
Give advice on the selection of books for specific purposes.

10. Health. E. Y. Noblin, Chairman (Same as Health Committee of B. Com. Fed.)

Other committees that have not been appointed but may be needed to promote the war effort:

10. Agriculture	12. Housing	14. Recreation
11. Education	13. Service for Service Men	

General service opportunities for all committees:
Secure the necessary information to permit efficient functioning of your committee.
Add additional members to your committee as may be needed. Confer with the general chairman.
Determine what other related agencies are doing in your field and secure their cooperation.
Be prepared to act promptly when a new need arises.

Reference: O.C.D. Publications, Paper 5, Citizens Service Corps

(Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives—Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1919-1989)

Another example of her civic involvement was with the war effort. Not many women were in this room as noted in the minutes, which I assume she typed as they were in her papers. Thanks to Lucy Lee we have this valuable record from the 1940's.

Civic Leader

- ◆ First woman to run for Town Council - 1952
- ◆ Desegregation of Virginia Public Schools - 1959

First Woman Seeks Blacksburg Post

BLACKSBURG, VA., April 10—Miss **Lucy Lee Lancaster**, associate librarian at Virginia Tech, has filed as a candidate for the Blacksburg Town Council. She is the first woman to run for a post on the Town Council, election for which will be held here Tuesday, June 10. Closing date for filing is today.

After attending school here, she was graduated from Virginia Tech and obtained a master's degree from Columbia University. Her father was Mayor of Blacksburg from 1924 to 1930.

Miss Lancaster is the fourth to file for councilmanic election. Incumbents R. Lee Humbert and R. D. Michael, along with H. A. Clingenpeel, filed last week. Paul N. Derring, whose term also expires this year, has decided not to file for re-election.

The death last Friday of Dr. James M. Kyle, whose term would have expired in 1954, leaves another vacancy. The Council may appoint to fill that vacancy until the June election. Then the voters will elect for the two years of the unexpired term.

The three candidates who receive the largest number of votes will be elected for the four-year term expiring in 1956. The fourth highest, it is understood here, would be elected for the unexpired term of two years.

Two members of Town Council—S. H. Kessinger and John J. Pierce—and Mayor John M. Baringer are in terms that expire in 1954.

From 1952, Roanoke Times



Virginia Committee for Public Schools in 1959 Period of Desegregation

Blacksburg Area Committee for Public Schools
Box 210, Blacksburg, Virginia
183 Membership Card

I subscribe to the following Statement of Purpose adopted at the organizational meeting of the Virginia Committee for Public Schools on December 6, 1958:

"We affirm our determined support of free public education for every child in Virginia. We believe that this should continue to be guaranteed by the Constitution of Virginia."

I hereby express my willingness to join this Committee.

Signature _____
(Every card must have signature)

Name _____
(Please PRINT and include title such as Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.)

Address _____
(Street)

(City)

Telephone _____ Are you an eligible voter? _____

(Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives— Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1915-1989)

She did not shy from difficult issues of the day. In 1952 she ran for a position on the Town Council, the first woman to do so. In 1959, she was involved in supporting the desegregation of Virginia public school, which was tumultuous time at the very least. She was the secretary for this local organization, a branch of the State Committee for Public Schools. This group opposed the "Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties"

YMCA

- ◆ Board of Directors 1970-1989
- ◆ Hosting & Support International Students
- ◆ Y Hikes
- ◆ Lancaster House

(Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives— Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers)



The Intrepid Hiker

Winter with the Y

TUESDAY LUNCH - 12 noon weekly, Wesley Foundation. Join this informal group for food and friendship! 75¢ per person.

STUDENT'S MEETINGS - 8 pm every Thursday, 401 Washington St. Bring yourself and your ideas! All are welcome.

WALK DANCING - 8 to 11 pm every Friday, Squires Suburban Room. No experience, partner, or money needed!

INTERNATIONAL MIDDAY - Meet 'round with special events as announced. Make a friend from a different culture, U.S. or International. CALL 811-2411 for more information.

FREE UNIVERSITY - Each quarter. Faculty only and coffee, music, entertainment, literary, and more, with no presentation and minimal fees. Call 931-4131 for more information.

YOGA THERAPY SHOP - Sun - Fri 11:00 am to 2, Sat 10:00 am to 2, 1001 S. Main St. phone 332-2812. Second-hand furniture, clothing, housewares. Low priced. Assorted donations & volunteers.

SUNDAY HIKES
Meet at 1:30 pm under tree in CEC Parking lot.
Hikes may change due to group, leader, or weather!

SLIDE SHOWS
12-1 pm every Thursday, Squires Dogwood Room. **FREE!!**
Lunch available in cafeteria.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>108 9 SINKING CREEK MEN App. St. from Hoopert to ridge, steep</p> <p>16 SINKING CREEK MEN Trail from 611 to A2 on ridge, steep</p> <p>23 SPENCE MEN Trail from 114 to ridge tower on top</p> <p>30 SPENCE MEN MEN Steep trailless climb near Hoopert</p> <p>PER 4 BRUSH MEN Steep brushy path to ridge and firetower site</p> <p>13 BRUSH MEN Heavy woods of 60 and along ridge to Austin Murphy memorial</p> <p>20 NEW MEN Use old on JOHN BRIDGEMAN near Palanki. Short & steep to overlook - Don Brown, leader</p> <p>37 CARBONS Easy trail along Little Sloop Creek to falls</p> <p>268 6 NEW MEN Use old on JOHN BRIDGEMAN near Palanki. Easy - Don Brown, leader</p> <p>13 PAULS MEN Steep trail from N St. Kanawha River to ridge</p> | <p>JAN. 13 Snow Wildlife Refuges - John Murray</p> <p>20 Unsettling Labors - Harry Rejas</p> <p>27 Mountain England - Harry Wain</p> <p>FEB. 7 The Millstones - Mark West</p> <p>10 Amosites - Wm. Wehner</p> <p>17 History Class & Canal Tunnel - Gerald Young</p> <p>Further slideshows to be announced.</p> |
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...events are open to all!!
for more information:
Call the Office... or visit us:
361-3468-1989 304 Squires

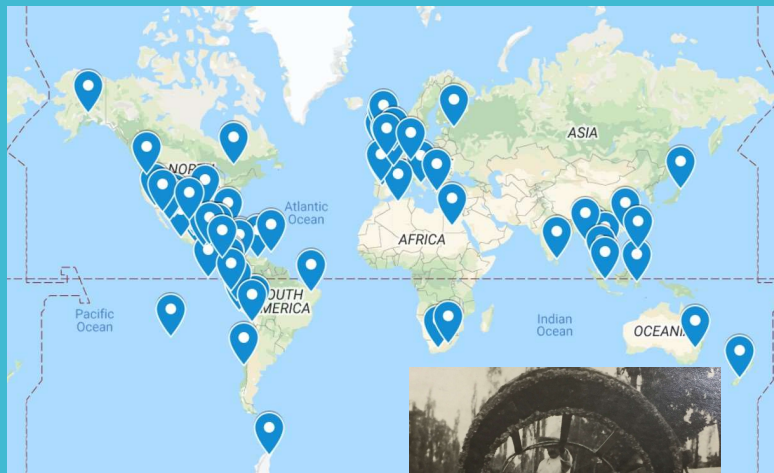
I have not found Lucy Lee's records on the Y, but hopefully they will be located. But there is little doubt that she had a very active role in the organization. Besides being on the Board of Directors for 19 years, she loved to host teas and international students; her cookies were famous. She was an avid Y hiker, and she donated her house with all its belongings to the Y. And Emily Stuart was with her to her end.

Travels from 1935 to 1984

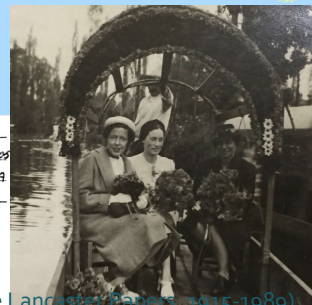
1935 - San Diego, California Pacific International Exposition - models of the ruins in Mexico.

In 1936, LL & Esther Derring traveled aboard ship to Veracruz, Mexico by way of Cuba. Thereafter, Lucy Lee traveled every year. She visited every continent, often returning more than once. Esther remained her travel companion for many years.

At least 52 trips.



Surname	Given Name	Date	Passport Number
LANCASTER	LUCY ABE		692263
Issuing Country	Issued At	Expires	
AMERICAN	EXHISTON, VA.	JUNE 21, 1908	
United States Address	Passport Address		
303 W. WASHINGTON ST. BACKSBURG, VA USA	SAME		
Was issued at	Date Was Issued		
Vessel Name or Airline and Flight No. of Arrival	Imm. & Nat. Serv. No. of Arrival	Admitted	
WIDE-FAT-820 JAN-11-1961		JAN 11 1961	
Passport Granted At			
BELEM - BRAZIL			

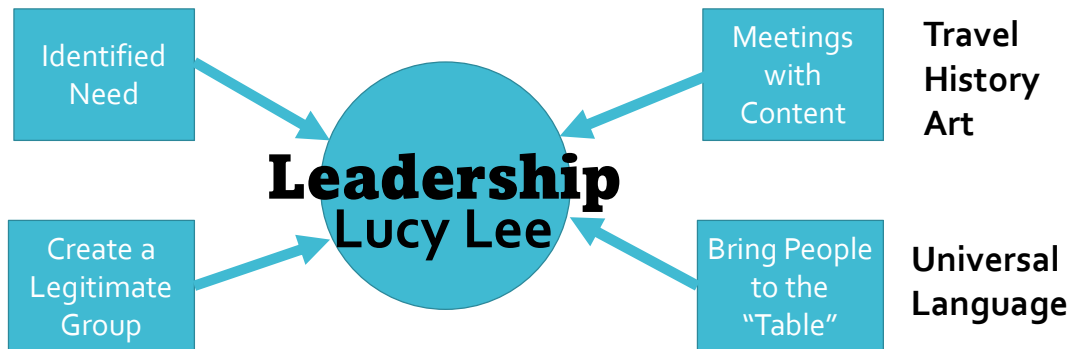


(Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives—Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1915-1989)

Changing direction just a bit - Lucy Lee LOVED, LOVED, LOVED traveling the world. Starting in the 1930's she made over 50 trips and hit every continent. How do we know this? She kept all her travel records, as all good librarians should! Esther Derring, Paul Derring's sister, was her trusty traveling companion for many years. They especially enjoyed visiting ancient archeological sites. On her own, Lucy Lee would visit Germany & British Isles to work on her family history. Did I mention her love of genealogy?

According to the Rev. Al Payne's vision of the role of the YMCA Role (his words quoted)

- 1) Interpret needs and problems**
- 2) Provide a channel for groups to achieve legitimate ends**
- 3) Stimulate thought and awareness of issues**
- 4) Break down barriers between individuals and groups**



This is International Woman's Day with the #BreakTheBias – I had this in mind when I was combing through my notes on her papers. When I read the brochure on the history of the Y, it occurred that Lucy Lee's way was very intentional. I don't know if it was innate or learned, but Al Payne's words described her map for Leadership. It appears Lucy Lee was trying to #BreakTheBias all her life. How did she do this? She enticed attendance by providing an interesting presentation, which usually included travel, history or art. And what better way to bring people together, but with food!

The Legacy of
Miss Lucy Lee
Lancaster

Charity

Curiosity

**Sense of
Adventure**

(Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives– Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1915-1989)

Miss Lucy Lee’s legacy is loud and clear, and her grave marker says it best, “Much Loved Public Spirited Lady”

Lucy Lee Lancaster in Her Office



(Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives– Lucy Lee Lancaster Papers, 1915-1989)

This was presented for the YMCA at Virginia Tech's celebration of International Woman's Day at the Lancaster House, 403 Washington Street, Blacksburg, VA.

Jody Booze-Daniels

March 8, 2022

Gathering.Blacksburg.History@gmail.com

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For more information about Lucy Lee Lancaster please visit,
<https://gatheringblacksburghistory.org/lancaster-helm-sibold/>