

by June W. Kennedy

STORY OF SHEILA YOUNG
AS RELATED BY ALLISTER
MACDOUGALL

This story is about a girl with a great deal of natural talent and imagination who grew up and shared her talents with thousands of people in a very unique way. Her name is Sheila Young and she became famous for her paintings of paper dolls. Every month for eleven years, 1909-1920, in the Ladies Home Journal, she had a page of her paper dolls. They included whole families, as the Lettie Lane Paper Family, or the Betty Bonnet Family, with all of their activities. Besides her paper dolls, she often sketched, or painted other illustrations for magazines, sometimes telling the story of her pictures by original poems.

Because of the early connections of her father and mother with the Town of Westford, Massachusetts, the story would not be complete without telling about them also.

Her father, Reverend George H. Young, was born in Slater'sville, Rhode Island, March 14, 1841. He studied four years in the Theological School at Meadville, Pennsylvania and graduated in June 1866. On August 1 of that same year, an Article was considered in Westford, "to see if the parish will concur with the church of said parish in giving Mr. George H. Young an invitation to settle with them". It was voted unanimously and he was ordained in the church, October 25, 1866. The salary voted for the first year was \$900. and after the first year, it was to be \$1000., paid in quarterly payments. It is interesting to note that when he asked permission to preach Sunday afternoons during the summer, at the Graniteville church, (part of Westford), it was granted, with the understanding that any money received was to be deducted from his regular salary. He continued in office for nearly six years, resigning in April, 1872 to accept a call to a church in Troy, New York.

During his ministry in Westford, many important changes were made in the life of the church. It was voted to fix up the ladies parlor and also it was voted to admit female members, as authorized by Chapter 246, Acts of 1869. It is interesting to note that it was voted to rent the pews by auction. A big change was made by asking the town to cease using the vestry of the church for town meetings. This resulted in the town building, for the first time, its own Town House in 1870, and the Meeting House being used exclusively for religious purposes. To make

it complete, the town was asked to remove the hearse house on the east side of the church. This eventually happened, with its being moved to a new location opposite the Town House. — (Present garage of the David Anderson Family).

At the time of Mr. Young's resignation, a resolution was passed giving "most unqualified testimony to his great and earnest effort in behalf of the Society, to increase its usefulness, socially, morally and spiritually and also to elevate the students of education and culture in the community".

When Sheila's father came to Westford to start his career as a minister, there lived in town the family of Phillip R. and Amelia Dexter Southwick. They lived in the three-story, brick-end house on Main Street, built by John Abbot in 1801. It was known for many years as the Southwick House. Mr. Southwick was an instructor of Anatomy at Harvard College and at one time Boston's City Physician. He was also a naturalist of some note and was particularly fond of flowers. It is said that he moved the family to Westford in order that his older children could attend the Academy. It is known that Edward Elizabeth, Joseph and probably Abby and Phillip attended the Academy.

The Westford house was used by Mr. & Mrs. Southwick more or less as a summer home with a housekeeper, during the winter, in order that the children could attend the Academy, with Mr. Southwick being in Boston for his duties at Harvard.

There were eight children in the family, Emma, born in 1834, Edward 1836, Elizabeth 1838, Joseph 1839, Abby 1844, Philip 1846, Charles 1849 and Jacob (date unknown). Our young minister, George Young, married Abby, the fifth child in the Southwick family, on July 18, 1870. Their first daughter Ann was born in Boston in 1871 while they were living in Westford and Sheila, the second daughter was born December 6, 1874, after they moved to Troy, New York.

Because the Southwick family and its long association with Westford often brought back Sheila to visit her aunts and cousins, more should be said about some of the members of the family. Emma, the oldest, was said to be the youngest nurse in the Civil War. She also had the distinction of being the first white woman to cross the Sahara Desert. Elizabeth, the third child, married John W. Abbot of Westford, co-founder with Allan Cameron of the Abbot Worsted Company, long

Westford's leading industry. They lived first in the John W. P. Abbot house next to the Unitarian Church and then in 1870, Mr. Abbot built a large Victorian house on the location next to the Common, part of the property now being used by the Post Office. The old original Abbot house that stood between the new house and the then Allan Cameron house, now the Nursing Home, was moved to a new site on Boston Road. They had four children, Emma, Catharine, Lucy and John C. Lucy married Julian A. Cameron and spent the greater part of her life in Westford living in the house they built on Graniteville Road. They, in turn had three children, Alexander, Eleanor and Marjorie. Mr. Cameron and later Alexander were president of the Abbot Worsted Company for many years.

John C. married Anna Fletcher, daughter of J. Var-num Fletcher of Cold Spring Farm, Westford and of Belmont, donor of the J.V. Fletcher Library. They lived in the house built by his father and also took care of his grandfather's house across the street, next to the church. Catharine lived in this house for many years and was very active in the church and community. The Abbots had two children — Fletcher, who died when he was 21, and Robert, who later moved to California and was active in the Motion Picture industry.

The Southwick family continued their association with Westford, and one of the cottages on Chebacco Island in the mouth of the Essex River, was owned by the Abbots and Camerons for about 100 years. This was always known as the Southwick Cottages.

From Troy, New York, Rev. Young and his family moved to Santa Barbara, California and it was there that his wife died, in 1877, living the two little daughters Ann, 7 years old, and Sheila, 4 years old. Later the family moved back east and Rev. Young had churches in Dorchester, Woburn and Lawrence.

With this background of Sheila Young's parents and their connection with Westford, more should be told of her life.

Sheila studied painting while living in Lawrence, under Benjamin Chapney, a famous painter of that day. She later continued her studies in Boston and North Conway, New Hampshire. She attended the Cornwall Art School located in the Back Bay section of Boston. Her Paper Doll Series, for which she is so famous, are almost impossible to find today, as they were literally worn out

by the children and their mothers of that day. Besides those in the Ladies Home Journal, some were copied and reprinted in children's magazines.

Miss Young painted and wrote verses for Christmas cards for Miss McNicol. Many of her salutations on these cards were great favorites, the best known one probably being: "Little Prayer go far and wide Bless all our friends this Christmas Tide."

In one scene of the Motion Picture "Dust and Ashes of Embers and Dreams", featuring Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford is cutting out one of Sheila Young's Paper Dolls.

Sheila lived most of her life in Boston and did a great deal of her professional work in that city. She later moved to Framingham where she now resides (1972) at the age of 97.

Westford is justified in taking great pride in the work of this famous artist, as her mother grew up here as a girl, her father was ordained here as a minister and served the town well for six years. She returned many times to visit relatives and friends and always cherished her associations with Westford.

The author, Mr. Allister MacDougall has been able to find twelve sheets of Miss Young's Paper Dolls; has a small original painting that she gave to her cousin Lucy Abbot Cameron and Mrs. Cameron, in turn, passed on to the author's mother; a picture given him by Miss Young showing Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin and one of the Paper Dolls; copy

of the Order of Exercises at the ordination of George Henry Young in Westford on October 25, 1866; as well as a personal letter from Miss Young written to him in January 1969, when she was 94 years old.

P.S. In 1912 the Ladies Home Journal offered a reward to any girl who made three new subscriptions, an 18" Daisy Doll from Germany. Sheila Young designed the wardrobe for these dolls.

Presently there is a Lettie Lane Paper Doll Club of California with membership in 17 states. Every year a convention is held on the Pacific Coast. Mr. Allister MacDougall has been made an honorary member because of his knowledge and extensive research.



Pages of paper dolls as they appeared in the Ladies Home Journal from 1908 to 1920. On one side is Betty Bonnet and on the other side are those of the Lettie Lane Series. All were created by the artist Sheila Young.