

After exhausting all the references in the Oxford Companion, I moved on to *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. In this volume, subjects pertaining to children's literature are arranged alphabetically. To start off, I looked under **American (United States) Literature, 1900-1945** written by Nancy Horton on pages 27 and 28. This section emphasized the importance of the Stratemeyer Literary Syndicate started by Edward Stratemeyer. The Bobbsey Twins, the Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew were mentioned as the most widely recognized of the Stratemeyer series.

In the **Mystery and Detective Stories** section on page 573 by Diane L. Chapman, we read, "Edward Stratemeyer recognized the potential for juvenile mysteries. ... In 1927, the detective series The Hardy Boys appeared, followed by its female counterpart Nancy Drew in 1930." Within this section, Stratemeyer was in all caps. As this indicated that an entry exists, I next looked at the section headed **STRATEMEYER, Edward** found on page 760 by Bernice E. Cullinan. The section opened up with a fact that I was not aware of, that Edward started his writing career one day by writing a story on a piece of wrapping paper while working in his brother's tobacco store.

Near the end of the section it mentioned how Edward supervised the creation of two new series, the Nancy Drew series and the Hardy Boys series in 1927 and how both eventually outsold all other series, except the Bobbsey Twins. It continued to read that after Edward died in 1930, "his daughter, Harriet Stratemeyer Adams, took over responsibility for the series and produced a new Nancy Drew book each year" (Continuum, p761).

It went on to mention that Harriet continued to ghostwrite The Bobbsey Twins, The Nancy Drew, and the Hardy Boys series. References that the author used for this entry included *The Secret of the Stratemeyer Syndicate* (1986) by Carol Billman, *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History* (1995) edited by Peter Hunt, and the *Encyclopedia of American Literature* (1999) edited by Steven R. Serafin.

At the end of the Stratemeyer entry, I saw "See also **SERIES BOOKS**", so I looked up the **Series Books** entry. This entry was found on page 706 and was by Adele Greenlee. Edward Stratemeyer was mentioned as the "person who most influenced the early series book publishing market in the United States. We then read:

His final creation was the Nancy Drew series for which he completed the outlines for the first three volumes. After his death in 1930, his daughter, Harriet Adams, oversaw their publication. The books follow a formula with a mystery quickly introduced on the first pages usually centering on some unjust and puzzling situation. Later, Nancy discovers a second mystery, amazingly interconnected with the first. The capable and independent Nancy locates lost wills, restores fortunes to their rightful owners, and uncovers spy rings with courage, cleverness, persistence, and

modesty in her unfailing successes. Nancy Drew, and the similar Hardy boys are the most enduring mystery series. New volumes continue to be written in slightly revised formats and the older ones revised to eliminate racial and gender stereotypes and to maintain a contemporary setting (Continuum, p706).

The author later writes how literary critics do not share children's enthusiasm for series books and how Nancy and the Hardys' had several decades of popularity before being purchased by most public libraries. Fortunately for me, I could easily find Nancy and the Hardys' in my library when I was growing up.

Moving right along, I next picked up *Webster's Dictionary of American Authors*. The only author having anything to do with Nancy Drew that was listed was Edward Stratemeyer. On page 360, it mentioned that he created the Stratemeyer Syndicate, which produced many series including the Nancy Drew series. We then go on to read about Harriet as "[a]fter his death in 1930, his company was largely directed by his daughter, Harriet Stratemeyer Adams (1893? – 1982), who under pseudonyms wrote many of the novels in the Nancy Drew, Dana Girls, Hardy Boys, and the Bobbsey Twins series" (Webster's, p360). Information was starting to repeat itself now.

The volumes of the *Encyclopedia of American Literature* were next. In the second volume I found an entry for Edward Stratemeyer that was similar to the entry in the dictionary I looked at. No new information was discovered.

A more interesting entry for Edward was discovered in the next reference work I picked up called *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*. What was interesting is what they wrote about Harriet.

... Harriet Stratemeyer Adams (1894 – 1982), his daughter, continued all of his series after her father's death, and expanded considerably on her father's three volumes about Nancy Drew, a girl detective whose exploits were described in works attributed to Carolyn Keene. Mrs. Adams was the major author of the Hardy Boys series, begun in 1927 by the Syndicate. (Oxford-American Literature, p644)

Another inaccuracy chalked up to Oxford. While Harriet may have written some Hardy Boys books, I would not consider her to be the major author of the series. Oh well, at least they did not have Nancy and the Hardys' only being published in the 1970s like the other Oxford volume had.

Continuing the search, I next picked up *Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary*. Once again, I found an entry for Edward. At the end of the entry it mentioned that Harriet "wrote some 200 books for the Hardy Boys, Bobbsey Twins, Tom Swift, Jr., and especially

Nancy Drew” (Merriam-Webster’s, p990). Looking in the *Concise Dictionary of American Biography*, I only found a one-line entry for Edward with no mention of Harriet or Nancy Drew. The final reference book that I found any mention of Nancy Drew was the *World Book Millennium 2000*. An entry was found for Edward and while there was no mention of Harriet, the entry found on page 920 did mention that he created Nancy Drew just before his death.

My search for Nancy Drew among the reference stacks was ended. I followed all leads as far as they would go. I believe that I discovered a good deal of information pertaining to Nancy considering that I was only looking in the reference section of a small branch library of a community college. This is a good thing. It means that more is being written about Nancy Drew and more people recognize her for what she is ... an important icon in our popular culture. So for now ... it is case closed. Happy Sleuthing everyone!

Works Cited

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