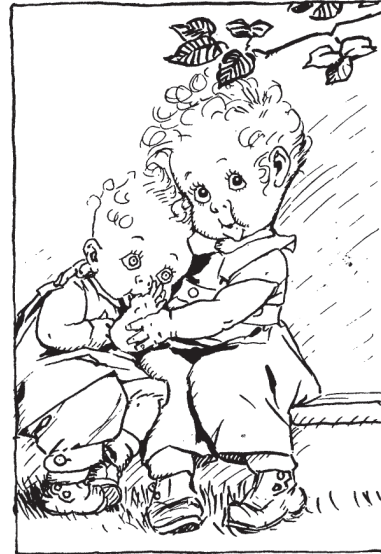




Montana Mother and Artist

# Fanny Cory



# Cooney

by Bob Cooney and  
Sayre Cooney Dodgson

*F. Y. CORY, written vertically in block letters, was an artist's signature seen frequently in turn-of-the-century periodicals and books, in the corners of Art Nouveau-influenced line drawings and delicately-tinted watercolors. Fanny Y. Cory was the byline that appeared above a cartoon called "Sonny's sayings," which presented a precocious five-year-old boy's view of the world to newspaper readers from 1926 to 1956. Fanny Cory Cooney was the name of a sprightly rancher's wife who raised three children near the tiny community of Canyon Ferry, Montana, where she was known as a gracious and lively hostess.*



All photos courtesy the authors



*All three of these names belonged to one woman, and they represent the three diverse careers combined in her ninety-four-year lifespan. Standing just over five feet tall, this sunny woman maintained an optimism that belied the tragedies she met in life. Determined and dedicated in all her undertakings, she made her accomplishments seem effortless. And, as our mother, she was both a strengthening and a brightening force in our lives.*



**“Fanny Y. Cory—By Herself”** was how *The Critic* magazine captioned this self-portrait in its July 1900 issue.

From stories we have heard, we enjoy picturing a determined little girl lying on the kitchen floor of her home in Waukegan, Illinois. She was so deeply absorbed in drawing that all other members of the family had to step over or go around her. As she would tell us, she could remember no time when pencils, pens, and paintbrushes were not a dominant part of her life.

This persistent little person, born in 1877, was Fanny Young Cory, who grew up to have two separate careers in art—first as a book and magazine illustrator and then, years later, as a nationally-syndicated newspaper cartoonist. And, most importantly to us, she was also our mother.

We once asked if she could recall some of those long-ago efforts, perhaps her first real drawing. She said, “Yes, I think so. I must have been about four.” Someone in the family—probably her father, who felt she would be better employed with a broom and dustpan—had criticized her artistic efforts. “I set to work,” she explained, “composing something of a self-portrait. I drew a little girl with long yellow curls; my hair, by the way, was short, straight and quite dark. The little thing was looking down at her own grave.” Mother smiled when she added,

“That is quite a trick if you can manage it.”

As this somber image might suggest, Fan’s childhood was not as happy as her later drawings of smiling children and magical fairies would imply. Her mother, Jessie McDougall Cory, was a very pleasant lady. But in contrast, her father, Benjamin Sayre Cory, was a cantankerous little man. As a traveling salesman, he was seldom at home, and he apparently provided rather poorly for his family.

Fanny was youngest of the four Cory children who survived to adulthood, her eldest and youngest brothers having died as children. Jack, J. Campbell Cory, was ten years older than Fanny. He became nationally known as a political cartoonist, although his first love was horse illustrations done for *Western Horseman* magazine. Bob, Robert McDougall Cory, was seven years older than Fanny, and seems to be the one responsible for getting the family to Montana. Agnes Lalia Cory, five years older than Fan, was an invalid for half her brief life.

When Fan was ten years old, their mother died of tuberculosis. Agnes had cared for Jessie Cory through the illness and became afflicted with it. She lived ten more years, becoming more and more frail.

In 1886, Bob had gone to Montana, trying his luck (with little success) searching for gold at Wickes. He was living in Helena and, two years after Jessie’s death, invited his father and sisters to join him.

Agnes traveled with her father, but for some reason Fan went first, alone on the train. As an adult she was just five feet, one inch tall. On this trip, the ten-year-old girl carried a doll in her arms and hoped other passengers would believe she was a mature woman traveling with her baby.

In Helena, Fan was not very interested in school. She told us she hadn’t finished eighth grade, but that she had read almost every book in the public library. Art classes were the only studies she cared for, and in them she was heartily encouraged by Mary C. Wheeler. Miss Wheeler, a painter trained in Boston and Paris, was then early in her forty-year career as art supervisor of the Helena school system. She was convinced Fan had a great deal of talent and urged her to continue formal studies.

Fan drew and sketched on everything she could find. Once, with her father and brother

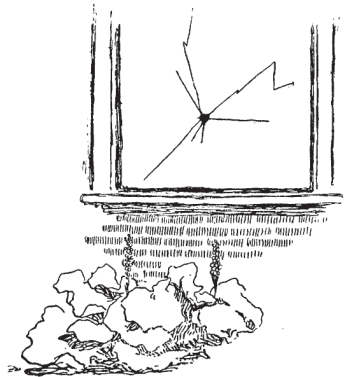
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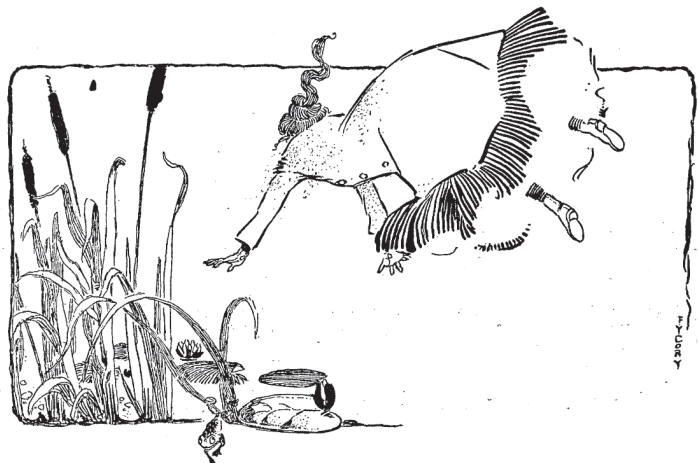
A

# Fanny Y. Cory

## Sampler



Illustrations for humorous essays and poems that appeared in *Century* magazine during 1901 and 1902.





In the *Fairy Alphabet*, the letter Y stands for Youth, represented by Peter Pan. The artist's verse wishes "Let's stop if we can in the Never Land with Peter Pan." Below are two preliminary pencil sketches, dated 1926. Jotted notes in the same scratch pad indicate that Cory considered "Yawn, Yellow bird, Yellowjacket, Yodle [*sic*], Young, Youth." Color illustration courtesy of F. Y. Cory Publishers, Inc., 2904 So., West Camano Drive, Camano Island, WA 98292, who are now publishing the *Fairy Alphabet* in print and notecard form. Sketches courtesy Bob Cooney.

## A Fairy Alphabet

Y stands for youth  
~~So fly if you can~~  
~~Stay young if you~~  
 can -  
 and play on a ship  
 like Peter Pan



Y is for youth.  
 fly if you can  
 to the Never Land  
 with Peter Pan -





# The Fanny Cory Mother Goose



The Bobbs-Merrill Company published *The Fanny Cory Mother Goose* in 1913. "Little Boy Blue" is one of the twelve color plates; black and white sketches decorate every page.

## Sonny

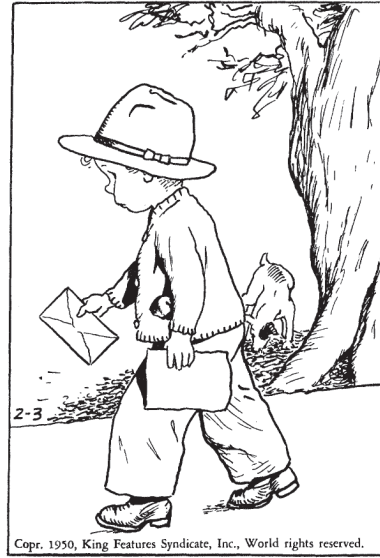
The cartoon "Sonny'sayings" did not appear in color, but the artist added water-color to this original pen sketch, as a gift to son Bob.



# Sonnysayings



Oh! Ain't *drandmas* nice though? This un showed me where the cooky jar was kept—an' the doughnuts, an' just said "He'p yer sef." (August 18, 1926)



My mother ain't got much conference in me. She's afraid I'll mail the grocery list and give Mr. Boggs the letter. (February 3, 1950)



Baby is playin' I is *her* baby, an' her is puttin' me t'sleep—We is bofe satisfy. (March 14, 1931)



Baby's kissin' Rag-Anna to make me jelly—an' I'se pertendin' to cry. (October 11, 1928)

Although he was always five years old, Sonny did change a bit over the cartoon's lifespan, as the top two panels from 1926 (his first year) and 1950 reveal. Baby sister, who never had a name, and her beloved homemade doll appeared in many panels over the years. The original drawings were 4" x 6", but newspapers printed them the same size as on this page. Panels courtesy Bob Cooney.





The group portrait at left includes teenaged Fanny Cory (center) along with her beloved sister Agnes (left) and sister-in-law Bertha (Mrs. Jack Cory). Below, a pensive Fanny during her New York art school days.



gone and no fuel in the house or money to buy any, Fan went down into the dirt basement of their rented house and tore up a plank walk to burn the lumber. As repayment to the landlord, she painted murals in the kitchen and bath. She hoped he shared her appreciation for art.

In 1894, when Fan was seventeen, Jack and his wife Bertha invited Fan and Agnes to come to New York City to stay with them. This proved to be the big chance for her to go on with formal art training.

Fan was accepted by the Metropolitan School of Art in 1896, and by the prestigious Art Students League the following year. The latter, a self-governing school, accepted new students who had completed six months' formal training and met the League's high standards. After a year of these classes, Fan decided to strike out on her own. She didn't want to be a burden to her brother any longer and was very anxious to make her own way, and take care of Agnes as well.

Mother enjoyed telling us of her first attempt to sell her drawings, while still a student in New York. With her portfolio clutched tightly and her heart pounding, the diminutive young artist climbed to the third floor of an old brick building in the Bowery—where Harper's publishing company had its offices.

She opened a door marked Art Department, and was confronted by a young man in a pink shirt, apparently an official of some kind, sitting

behind a big desk and filing his fingernails. "I introduced myself and put down my drawings in front of him," she said. "He casually ruffled through them.

"You are a student?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. He tossed the drawings back to me, not really looking at them.

"You must get yourself a reputation, you know, before you come here," he said.

"I walked out boiling mad."

When she later sold many drawings to *Harper's Bazaar*, one of the company's publications, she hoped that young man saw them.

We children enjoyed Mother's telling of her first sale. "I was rather nervously showing some little pen and ink drawings to Mr. Drake, editor of the *Century Magazine*," she would say.<sup>1</sup> "He seemed to like one and marked \$25.00 on the margin. As I remember I gasped and said, 'Oh, that's too much.' He obligingly erased the figure and put down \$20.00. Anyway, that was the

1. Probably Alexander Wilson Drake, art director of the *Century*.



beginning of a very pleasant relationship with that magazine and many others." And, although she was far too modest to admit it, she was soon to become one of the finest illustrators of children's books and magazines of that time.

By the turn of the century, her drawings of babies and children, and of humorous subjects, were appearing on the covers and within the pages of such national magazines as *Life*, *Scribner's*, *Century*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Liberty*, the *Saturday Evening Post*. She was among four "representative American women illustrators" working in character portrayals who were profiled in a 1900 magazine article. That author quoted Fan as saying, "With terse humor," she had come east "to do things," and characterized the Cory imagination as one "that can catch at the rainbow and not be unmindful of the fact that there is rapid transit on earth..."<sup>2</sup>

She did a great deal of work, including covers, for *St. Nicholas Magazine*—a publication she herself read as a child. She especially enjoyed this work, although she told us that occasionally her zesty style was "too brazen" for that sometimes "very pious" magazine. The example she gave was of having to lengthen the toga on a little Roman boy. When *St. Nicholas* had its youthful readers vote for their favorite illustrator, she was delighted (and, with her usual modesty, surprised) to be chosen.

Fan was also very busy with book illustrations at this time. From 1899 through 1902, ten books appeared with her artwork, including her own version of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. L. Frank Baum, best known for his Oz series, chose her to illustrate a short story in 1901 and during the same year she did the drawings and paintings for his novel *The Magic Key*.<sup>3</sup> She would do a second book of Baum's, *The Enchanted Island of Yew*, two years later.

These years of early success had been marred by the tragedy of Agnes's death in 1897. Fan had left the Art Students League prematurely in order to get to work and support herself and her sister, as well as their father. Fan was devoted to Agnes and loved to bring "my darling" little surprises to brighten her housebound days. She had been

warned that Agnes's pulmonary tuberculosis was active and that a fatal hemorrhage could come at any time.

Cutting herself out of the interesting social life she could have enjoyed among New York artists, Fan rushed home to Agnes daily. She knew how much the invalid enjoyed sharing her adventures, if only vicariously. Mother told us of being invited to a tea or reception by Mary Mapes Dodge of *St. Nicholas* (author of *Hans Brinker*). Fan politely declined but gave no explanation, and felt that the author never quite forgave her.

When Agnes's death came, Fan held her sister in her arms until she "saw the light go out in her eyes." After Agnes was buried in the Cory family plot beside their mother, the artist was depressed and even physically ill for some time. Hoping to cheer her up, her brothers planned a summer of camping around 1897. Jack was able to move his cartooning work with him, and happy-go-lucky Bob quit his low-paying post office job. Rounding out the party were the brothers' wives and a girlfriend of Fan's from art school.

She returned to New York for a few years, but moved permanently to Montana sometime early in 1902. She continued to publish illustrations in national periodicals, and to illustrate books published in the East—six in 1903 and 1904.

Jack and Bob had become very interested in gold mining in the York area northeast of Helena, and were developing a prospect they called the Cory Brothers Mine. When they invited their sister to join them, Mother would smilingly tell us, "I was making pretty good money and guessed they needed a little financial backing."

Those turned out to be happy days for the little artist. There wasn't much return from the mine, but the Corys enjoyed thinking they might strike it rich almost any time. The three of them had cabins built on Beaver Creek, near the little post office of Nelson and not far from the mine. Jack and Fan called theirs studios, and continued to produce their respective cartoons and illustrations.

They enjoyed outdoor activities in the area, as Fan would throughout her life. They fished, hunted grouse, and rode horseback in the mountains. One summer they packed back into the headwaters of the South Fork of the Flathead River, now part of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area.

2. Regina Armstrong, "Representative American Women Illustrators: The Character Workers," *The Critic*, July 1900, p. 53.

3. Douglas G. Greene, "Fanny Y. Cory," *The Baum Bugle*, Spring 1973, p. 18. Information on books illustrated by Fanny Cory is taken from Greene's "Fanny Y[oung] Cory, 1877-1972: A Preliminary Checklist of Her Illustrated Books," *ibid.*, p. 20.



Fred Cooney, about 1940. Above, he leads a string of cavalry-bound horses across the bridge at Canyon Ferry. At top right is Cemetery Hill, now tiny Cemetery Island in the lake that flooded this area.

They were pretty good riders but knew very little about packing, and as Mother later described it, the trip was pretty much of a disaster at first. Packs were constantly turning and being bucked off. "It all changed for the better," she said, "when we met two forest rangers back there." They were "Kid" Charles Young and Frank Haun. "They must have taken pity on us. Each time we moved camp one or the other of those capable men would give us a hand with the packs. The trip was a lark after that."

Fan also enjoyed golfing with Jack and their friends in Helena. She bicycled, and recalled biking trips out to Canyon Ferry for picnics. In the wintertime, she went on skating parties.

A young man from a pioneer ranch family in the Canyon Ferry area became increasingly evident at these informal gatherings. Mother told us she had known who Fred Cooney was for quite a while. "As kids we both went to school in Helena," she said. "I didn't like him much then and he didn't seem to know I existed."

After Fan settled in Montana, it became evident that those feelings had changed. Fanny Cory and Fred Cooney were married in the spring of 1904, having eloped to the little church at Canton, near Townsend. The Cooney ranch on the east shore of Canyon Ferry Lake (Lake Sewell) became home for them for nearly fifty years.

That ranch had been settled by Fred's father, Thomas, in the early 1870s. Avalanche Creek, flowing down out of the Big Belt Mountains, entered the Missouri near the log buildings they constructed. Their land included beautiful native wild hay meadows along the river. They raised beef and vegetables for sale to miners in neighboring gulches.

When the first Canyon Ferry Dam was built in 1898, it flooded the Cooney hay land. The family took this in stride and moved most of the log buildings to higher ground. By then, Fred and his brother George were contracting to furnish horses to the U.S. Cavalry. They ran wild horses into trap corrals in the Big Belt Mountains, and, after breaking them at the ranch, trailed them twenty miles to the railroad in Helena.

Fanny Cory Cooney continued producing book illustrations, under her maiden name, from the Canyon Ferry ranch. Six books she illustrated from 1905 through 1913 include *Our Baby Book* (1907)—a scrapbook for recording a child's growth, and *The Fanny Cory Mother Goose* (1913), for which she both chose the verses and did the illustrations.





But during this time began the years when her artwork, although it didn't stop completely, took a backseat to raising a family. The woman who had created so many delightful children by way of pen and paintbrush was determined to have some of her very own.

She once told an interviewer that when she was newly married she had hoped to have thirteen children. At first, it seemed there might be none. The Cooneys lost their first baby at birth and Mother came close to death herself. Her doctor warned that further attempts to have children would be serious threats to her life, just as he had warned against this first one. Partially because of his warning, she worked feverishly throughout the 1905 pregnancy, producing illustrations to pay off a \$2000 debt incurred to aid brother Bob in a new business venture. She wanted the debt paid in case she did not survive childbirth.

Fortunately for us, courage was one of her dominating qualities, and she ignored the doctor's warnings. In 1907, our sister Sayre appeared in the Cooney household. Bob was next in 1909 and brother Ted was born in 1910.

During our early years, Mother practically abandoned the place she had earned in the art world, to become a full-time mother and ranch wife. She was always busy, and work was a pleasure to her. Our home on the edge of the lake,

although such a fine place to grow up, had few conveniences. Water was brought in from a picturesque rock well and heated on a wood range in the kitchen. Huge washings flapping in the breeze outdoors are vivid memories. The house was lighted by candles and kerosene lamps. A large, well-kept garden (enthusiastically planned over the Burpee catalog in late winter) provided countless jars of vegetables, carefully processed and stored away in the root cellar—often with labels the artist decorated by hand.

She was an excellent cook, and preparing huge Sunday dinners for friends seemed amazingly easy for her. There was often short notice regarding the numbers who would be sharing meals with us. Neighbors traveling through the valley, duck hunters pulling their boats off the lake, men drifting through to look for work as ranch hands, were all welcomed around our big dining room table. We especially remember the great meals of spring chicken, sweet corn, garden peas, homemade ice cream, and sometimes, for a special treat, a watermelon that had been cooling, buried deep in the sawdust in the icehouse.

We remember her once telling us how she enjoyed washing the mounds of dishes after a big meal, because she found this to be a time to relax and do some of her best creative thinking. This attitude typified her lack of the traditional "artistic temperament." Although she probably never



On opposite page, at left: Fanny Cory Cooney in 1913 with children (l. to r.) Sayre, Bob, and Ted at the log stable on their ranch. Next, a winter view of the ranch house that appears in our cover illustration. Above, Fred and Fanny Cooney with Ted and Bob in 1930. At right, Fanny and Sayre in 1939.



thought of it, she must have possessed a great deal of self-discipline. None of us ever saw her flustered or disturbed. She carried out the many things she did in a quiet, orderly way—probably the reason she accomplished so much.

We always thought of her as an especially happy person and we are sure that is the image her many friends had as well. She kept very much to herself the sadnesses that had crossed her early life. She also told us very little of her early art career in the wider world, and seldom posed us for the occasional drawing she did at that time.

Good books had always been important to Mother, and she made them a big part of our lives. On long winter evenings, we would sit close around her (even Dad frequently joined the audience) in the warm flickering light, and she would read Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, Kipling, and others. She made the characters come alive with dramatic renditions that kept us enthralled.

She made up stories as well, and we especially enjoyed the ongoing adventures of the Nine Little Green Men. The best part of these fanciful tales was that Sayre, Bob, and Ted would appear as important characters in them.

We children had chores to do, such as carrying wood from the woodpile outdoors into the

woodbox in the kitchen, and working the garden all summer (with more or less zeal). We were always fascinated with the goings-on at the corrals, where Dad and hired men would be busy breaking horses or branding cattle. (After World War I, the ranch went back to cattle when the cavalry contract ended.)

Mother seemed always ready to undertake anything that needed doing, including some that were a bit large for her tiny size. One time we kids were prowling around at the corrals and discovered a cow that had gotten her head stuck in the fence in trying to reach her weaning calf. She had slipped and was hanging by her neck. Dad was a long way up in the hayfield, so we dashed for mother. She picked up an ax as we hurried back to the corrals.

She began chopping on one of the poles holding the cow while we watched wide-eyed—never before having seen our mother use an ax. Chips flew and the cow was soon free and on her feet. The ungrateful animal then turned on her benefactor. Mother quickly joined us on top of the corral fence!





**Fanny Cooney poses before her seldom-used studio. Thomas Cooney's old log cabin with a screened porch added on. At right, a 1911 scene of the children with grandfather Thomas Cooney, Sayre standing, Bob seated, Ted in buggy.**



Another, more memorable event occurred late on a cold winter afternoon while Dad was at Canyon Ferry getting the mail and supplies. Mother was looking out now and then, expecting to see him coming up over the ice with the team. Just before dusk, she was startled to see, through the blowing snow, a dark object on the ice—but not in the direction Dad would be taking. She bundled up and headed out into the storm. The dark object turned out to be a man; snow was drifting over him but she recognized a bachelor neighbor who lived in a gulch below our ranch.

She shook him awake and he mumbled that he had hiked across the lake to Winston and was on his way home. He said something he had eaten had made him sick, but Mother suspected by the smell of alcohol that it hadn't been entirely what he'd eaten.

Because it was getting dark and the temperature was below zero, Mother knew she would have to do something quickly. It was no easy task to get him to his feet and keep him moving as they headed toward the flickering light in the ranch house window. She told us, "He continued to be very apologetic and just wanted to lie down in the

snow again." But she did get him to our house—and probably saved a life that winter evening.

Neighbors were widely scattered but got together for card parties and dances now and then. I remember winter trips over the ice to Canyon Ferry, where dances were held upstairs in Court Sheriff's old stage station. Mother covered us with blankets and we burrowed down in hay in the back of the sleigh. We kids would manage to stay awake till about midnight when food would be served, then we fell asleep on benches around the hall.

Mother and Dad enjoyed dancing very much, as well as the visits with neighbors they

didn't see very often. Daylight would be showing in the eastern sky as we headed back up the lake toward home.

Our carefree days of being very young passed quickly. The need to provide an education for us presented many problems, as it did for all families living on isolated ranches. I don't think we fully realized the sacrifices our parents made so we could attend school. For a time, a teacher lived there at the ranch with us. Another year, we hiked about three miles to our nearest neighbor where the ranch wife qualified as our teacher.

For the remainder of our grade school years, Mother moved down to Canyon Ferry during the winters so we could go to school there. We stayed in a little house near the river, just below the original dam. During high water, Mother worried that this wooden, rock-cribbed structure might go out—but she had a plan. Each night we neatly placed our clothes on chairs beside the beds. “If the dam should go,” Mother told us, “grab your clothes and run for the hill” (now Cemetery Island in Canyon Ferry Lake). Although we often fell asleep with the river roaring in our ears, we fortunately never had to try out our emergency plan.

When we reached high school age, Mother spent the winters in Helena with us; Dad remained by himself at the ranch. We sometimes got back on weekends, but it must have been a lonely time for them.

During these years of our childhood, Mother had pretty much put her artwork aside, doing no book illustration after 1913. Around 1916 she had attempted a newspaper cartoon series with small success. *Ben Bolt*, or, *The Kid You Were Yourself* consisted of a single panel with a short verse, sometimes humorous but often bittersweet reminders of the sad as well as good times of childhood.

As we approached college age in the late 1920s, our parents were determined we would be able to go on in the fields we might choose. But the agricultural depression of the Twenties and early Thirties left our ranch, which had been such a wonderful place to live, unable to provide the money needed for our further education.

Mother decided to take up her pens and paintbrushes again, hoping to pick up where she had left off. It soon became apparent that many new artists had moved into the illustrating field,

and the competition was very keen. She did illustrate a book in 1924 (Gladys Nelson Muter's *About Bunnies*) but illustrating was not going to answer the problem.

Her brother Jack encouraged her to try newspaper comics again, and this time she succeeded. In 1926 the Philadelphia Ledger Syndicate began distributing the daily panel, signed Fanny Y. Cory, called *Sonnysayings*. Sonny was a curly-haired boy about five years old, gifted with endless energy and a sparkling ability to express the amazing thoughts of childhood.

Sonny's adventures and his comments on the world came from our own childhoods as well as Mother's imagination. As the comic spread to papers throughout the nation and abroad, our neighbors and readers far away contributed quips their own children had made, that Mother often used.

By 1929, Sonny was popular enough that E. P. Dutton of New York issued a collection of the cartoons in book form. Six years later, the large King Features Syndicate took over *Sonnysayings* and also began a new strip Mother illustrated (and later wrote as well), *Little Miss Muffet*. This latter, an adventure series featuring a young girl and designed to compete directly with *Little Orphan Annie*, was never as dear to Mother's heart as *Sonnysayings*.

Although Grandfather Cooney's log cabin at the edge of the lake but near the ranch house was supposedly her studio, she seldom worked there—not wanting to miss what was going on. Our memory is mostly of her working with a drawing board on her lap, by the north window of the ranch house living room. She once wrote, about her cartooning:

Perhaps the most frequent question asked me is, “How do you work?” and “What is your studio like?”

I hope I shall disillusion nobody when I confess that I have no studio. In fact, I work all over the ranchhouse—sometimes with a board on my lap, sometimes perched on an old high chair that was left over from the children's baby days, and even sometimes at the dining room table.

Thus I can dismiss my work in a few sentences.<sup>4</sup>

4. Fanny Y. Cory, “My Own Story,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 30, 1930, p. 16.



In the rest of this lengthy 1930 newspaper article, she went on to describe ranch life for the sake of those “who wonder how on earth we exist on a ranch...” This typified her attitude of dismissing her work and placing family and home first, even when keeping relentless deadlines. The talent she used so effectively was never a tool to gain personal acclaim but always for the benefit of those who were close to her—in the years of caring for sister Agnes and her father, and then later in sending us to college.

Mother was convinced that her daughter had even more artistic talent than she, a belief Sayre did not share. Sayre attended the Philadelphia School of Art but when she decided not to pursue an art career, she met with no arguments. Mother wanted us to be happy in fields of our own choosing. Sayre became a nurse, graduating from St. Patrick’s Hospital in Missoula. Ted graduated from the St. Louis University Medical School and practiced medicine in Helena with his uncle Sid Cooney before opening his own practice in Cut Bank. Bob graduated from the University of Montana forestry school and began a long career with the Montana Fish & Game Department. Irrepressible little Sonny had helped so much with all those years of tuition.

Mother worked five weeks ahead of publication on the daily comic strips. Sometimes, if weather or mechanical problems prevented using the car, Dad would ride horseback to mail the artwork from the Canyon Ferry post office. Later on, the ranch was on a rural mail delivery route and he would meet the postman at our mailboxes on the road.

During these years, she found moments to indulge her love for beauty in the creation of a series of watercolors. She said she had no special plans for these paintings she called “A Fairy Alphabet,” and she filed them away in a bureau drawer, although she considered them her best work. They consisted of a painting and a verse for each letter of the alphabet. The scenes, ranging from whimsical to ethereal, were done in the soft colors she always favored and included dainty fairies and imaginary creatures surrounded by flowers, birds, butterflies, and small animals. They were displayed once at the Montana Historical Society, in the mid-1950s, but are only now being published.

Dad passed away in 1946. Mother, now



entering her seventies, lived on at the ranch and continued her work. She welcomed her grandchildren there, making it possible for them to experience the wonderful ranch life her own children had known, that had not changed in a generation.

Over the years she found time for some speaking engagements, and enjoyed her membership in the Soroptimists. This group, whom she had served as national vice president, was active in her selection as Montana Mother of the Year in 1951, an honor she treasured.

A profound change in her life came about in 1953, when the large new Canyon Ferry Dam was completed. It flooded the original dam, the little community of Canyon Ferry, and most of the Cooney ranch. Mother had a couple of the buildings moved up onto a high bench that was all that remained of the old place, but it was never the same for her or the family. It seemed that most of our memories were now beneath the waters of the much enlarged lake.

Mother retired at last from her second art career in 1956, when she was seventy-nine years old and her eyesight had begun to fail. She used to smile when she would say, “I think thirty years was long enough to keep Sonny five years old.”

She moved to Camano Island, Washington,



Sketches from *Our Baby Book*, published by Bobbs-Merrill (1907)

near Sayre and her family. Mother purchased a cottage that looked across Puget Sound toward the Olympic Mountains. Following the custom of her new neighbors, she named her strip of beachfront; naturally, it was "Montana Beach." She settled in, planting flowers as she always had on the ranch and fixing up her home with furniture brought from our ranch house. She made new friends, who enjoyed this self-reliant, alert little lady who always looked on the bright side of things.

Despite her vision problems, she continued to paint, experimenting with oils for the first time in her life. She spent many pleasant hours with her daughter and grandchildren. They often painted views of the sunspecked waters of the Sound and the snow-capped mountains beyond. From memory, Fan painted a view of the Canyon Ferry ranch house, surrounded by shrubs and trees, with the now-changed lake and its bluffs in the background.

**Bob Cooney** served for twenty-five years as Chief of Game Management in the Montana Fish and Game Department, and then several years as assistant chief in charge of recreation for the department's Recreation and Parks Division. Since retiring in 1971, he worked three years as the Wilderness Society's travel planner and has published several articles on wildlife and historical topics. **Sayre Cooney Dodgson** studied nursing for a year in Seattle before attending St. Patrick's Nursing School in Missoula, from which she graduated in 1935. She married Seattle doctor Thomas Dodgson, and after some years in Utah, the family moved to Camano Island, Washington. Her brother, Dr. Ted Cooney, left his Cut Bank practice to work at the Veterans Administration hospital at Fort Monroe, Virginia, until his partial retirement. He continued working part-time in drug rehabilitation therapy until his death in 1978.



Fanny Cory Cooney, after a long and eventful life, died at her daughter's home in 1972. She was ninety-four years old.

There was no overwhelming feeling of sadness at the burial service in the Helena Valley that bright summer morning. We were surrounded by the familiar skyline of the mountains she had loved. And we were caught up in a rush of memories of lovely days at the ranch and later at Camano Island. We were recalling how often we had been strengthened by her courage and gladdened by her sparkling wit. And, perhaps most of all, we were thinking of little children, tripping joyously from her talented pen, through all those years. *AM*