Who Wrote Nancy Drew?  
Secrets from the Syndicate Files Revealed  
by James D. Keeline

Although complete contract records from the Stratemeyer Syndicate have not yet been seen, some information about the authorship of the three principal series produced by the Syndicate can be revealed. Since the 1980 lawsuit of Grosset & Dunlap vs. the Stratemeyer Syndicate and Simon & Schuster, it became clear that Harriet S. Adams did not write all of the Nancy Drew volumes since her father’s death in 1930. During that trial, Mildred A. Wirt’s name first became widely known by collectors. Because of the nature of the creation of these volumes, outlines filled in by ghostwriters, it has become generally accepted that Harriet S. Adams wrote few of the volumes and merely supervised the series. The reality is found to be somewhere in between these two extremes. While ghostwriters were frequently used, with some of the best writing appearing while Mildred Wirt was writing, Harriet S. Adams also personally wrote many volumes. For those volumes that Harriet did not write, she or her sister, Edna C. Squier supplied outlines to the ghostwriters. Edna’s role has been largely overlooked by Syndicate historians who thought she left very shortly after 1930. However, she remained an active partner until 1942, twelve years after Stratemeyer’s death and she supplied a large number of plot outlines during that time. However, relatively few other names connected with this series were known. Syndicate partner, Nancy Axelrad prepared a list of the Bobbsey Twins, Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew series in her effort to compile a history of the Stratemeyer Syndicate. This and many other papers were donated to the Beinecke Manuscript Collection at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Although the files from the Syndicate are scheduled to be donated to the New York Public Library, cataloging requirements will not permit access to this information for nearly three years. Once available to researchers, this information may be confirmed and we may be able to learn the names and identities of all Syndicate series large and small. Several of the names revealed below are new and worth our collective investigative time.

1 The Secret of the Old Clock 1930  
2 The Hidden Staircase 1930  
3 The Bungalow Mystery 1930  

Mildred A. Wirt (1905–) wrote these volumes based upon outlines supplied by Edward Stratemeyer (1862-1930). Although Stratemeyer did not like the characterization of Nancy Drew in the first manuscript supplied by Wirt, Grosset & Dunlap did and asked for two more by the same author. Stratemeyer edited these three volumes. They were published shortly before his death in May of 1930.
4 The Mystery at Lilac Inn 1930
5 The Secret at Shadow Ranch 1931
6 The Secret of Red Gate Farm 1932
7 The Clue in the Diary 1932

Mildred Wirt wrote the manuscripts to these stories based upon outlines from Harriet S. Adams (1892-1982) for volumes 4 and 5 and from Edna Squier (1895-1974) for volumes 6 and 7. In each of the above four volumes, Harriet S. Adams edited while for volumes 6 and 7 she is described as having rewritten the manuscripts.

8 Nancy’s Mysterious Letter 1932
9 The Sign of the Twisted Candles 1933
10 The Password to Larkspur Lane 1933

Walter Karig wrote these manuscripts based upon outlines by Edna Squier for volume 8 and Harriet S. Adams for volumes 9 and 10. Harriet S. Adams edited the three volumes and significantly rewrote volume 9.

11 The Clue of the Broken Locket 1934
12 The Message in the Hollow Oak 1935
13 The Mystery of the Ivory Charm 1936
14 The Whispering Statue 1937
15 The Haunted Bridge 1937
16 The Clue of the Tapping Heels 1939
17 The Mystery of the Brass Bound Trunk 1940
18 The Mystery at the Moss-Covered Mansion 1941
19 The Quest of the Missing Map 1942
20 The Clue in the Jewel Box 1943
21 The Secret in the Old Attic 1944
22 The Clue in the Crumbling Wall 1945
23 The Mystery of the Tolling Bell 1946
24 The Clue in the Old Album 1947
25 The Ghost of Blackwood Hall 1948

Mildred Wirt wrote the manuscripts for these volumes based upon outlines by Edna Squier for volumes 11-14, 16, and 18 while Harriet S. Adams supplied the outlines for the other volumes and edited all of the above volumes.

26 The Clue of the Leaning Chimney 1949

George Waller Jr wrote a manuscript based upon an outline by Harriet S. Adams that was rejected. Harriet S. Adams revised the manuscript.

27 The Secret of the Wooden Lady 1950

Margaret Scherf wrote this volume based upon an outline by Harriet S. Adams who also edited. Although Scherf’s name was known for several years, it was associated with volumes 36 and/or 37. Margaret Scherf (1908-1979) wrote three other juvenile mysteries for Franklin Watts: the Mystery of the Velvet Box, 1963; the Mystery of the Shaky Staircase, 1965; and the Mystery of the Empty Trunk. The first two of these volumes features a character named Harriet who solves mysteries.
28 The Clue of the Black Keys
Wilhelmina Rankin wrote the manuscript for this volume based upon an outline by Harriet S. Adams who edited and rewrote the manuscript.

29 The Mystery at the Ski Jump
Alma Sasse wrote the manuscript based upon an outline by Harriet S. Adams who also edited. Alma Benecke Sasse wrote two mysteries under her own name. The first was *Mystery of the Chinese Box* published in 1939 by Crowell, a library publisher. The second was called *Terry Carvel’s Theater Caravan* in 1943 published by Doubleday, Doran.

30 The Clue of the Velvet Mask
Mildred Benson (Wirt) returned to write this one volume based upon an outline by Andrew E. Svenson (1910-1975). Harriet S. Adams edited and rewrote the manuscript.

31 The Ringmaster’s Secret
Harriet S. Adams wrote the outline and manuscript.

32 The Scarlet Slipper Mystery
Charles Strong wrote this volume based upon an outline by Harriet S. Adams who also edited. Charles Stanley Strong (1906-1962) wrote Hardy Boys volume 34 in the same year along with several dog stories and nonfiction for a variety of publishers and a 1956 volume for Grosset & Dunlap: *We Were There with Byrd at the South Pole* that was illustrated by Tom Swift Jr. illustrator Graham Kaye.

33 The Witch Tree Symbol
Harriet S. Adams wrote the outline and manuscript.

34 The Hidden Window Mystery
Patricia Doll wrote the synopsis to this story. Harriet S. Adams revised the synopsis, wrote the outline and manuscript.

35 The Haunted Showboat
36 The Secret of the Golden Pavilion
Harriet S. Adams wrote the outline and manuscript; June Dunn edited. Jane Sanderson cut down the manuscript.

37 The Clue in the Old Stagecoach
38 The Mystery of the Fire Dragon
39 The Clue of the Dancing Puppet
40 The Moonstone Castle Mystery
41 The Clue of the Whistling Bagpipes
42 The Phantom of Pine Hill
43 The Mystery of the 99 Steps
44 The Clue in the Crossword Cipher
45 The Spider Sapphire Mystery
46 The Invisible Intruder
The Mysterious Mannequin 1970
The Crooked Bannister 1971
The Secret of Mirror Bay 1972
The Double Jinx Mystery 1973
The Mystery of the Glowing Eye 1974
The Secret of the Forgotten City 1975
The Sky Phantom 1976
Strange Message in the Parchment 1977
Mystery of Crocodile Island 1978
The Thirteenth Pearl 1979

Harriet S. Adams wrote the outlines and manuscripts for these volumes.

A Nancy Drew Cookbook: Clues to Good Cooking 1973
The recipes for this book were sold to the Syndicate for one dollar from Patsy Bogle.

B Nancy Drew Sleuth Book 1979
Who Rewrote Nancy Drew?

As times changed, stories became outdated in subject matter and social content. It became necessary to revise the stories to make them acceptable to a new generation of readers. Beginning in 1959, the stories in the series were revised and in many cases, substantially rewritten.

1. The Secret of the Old Clock 1959
   Harriet S. Adams wrote the outlines and manuscripts for these stories based upon the original stories from 1930.

2. The Hidden Staircase 1959

3. The Bungalow Mystery 1960
   Patricia Doll revised the original story. Harriet S. Adams rewrote the manuscript.

4. The Mystery at Lilac Inn 1961
   Harriet S. Adams edited.

5. The Secret at Shadow Ranch 1965
   Grace Grote wrote the outline and manuscript; Harriet S. Adams edited.

6. The Secret of Red Gate Farm 1961
   Lynn Ealer condensed the original story. Harriet S. Adams edited and rewrote the manuscript.

7. The Clue in the Diary 1962

   Harriet S. Adams wrote the outlines and manuscripts for these stories. Harriet S. Adams edited volume 8. For volume 7, Jocelyn Starzyk edited.

9. The Sign of the Twisted Candles 1968
   Patricia Doll cut down the original story; Harriet S. Adams edited and rewrote.

10. The Password to Larkspur Lane 1966
    Patricia Doll cut down the original story; June Dunn edited. Grace Grote revised the story; Harriet S. Adams edited and rewrote the manuscript.

11. The Clue of the Broken Locket 1965
    Harriet S. Adams and Grace Grote wrote the outline. Harriet S. Adams wrote the manuscript; Jocelyn Starzyk edited.

12. The Message in the Hollow Oak 1972
    Grace Grote wrote the outline and manuscript; Harriet S. Adams revised.

13. The Mystery of the Ivory Charm 1974
    Priscilla Baker-Carr cut down the original story. Harriet S. Adams revised the manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

    Harriet S. Adams wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.
15 The Haunted Bridge 1972
Priscilla Baker-Carr cut down the original story. Harriet S. Adams revised the manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

16 The Clue of the Tapping Heels 1969
17 The Mystery of the Brass Bound Trunk 1976
18 The Mystery at the Moss-Covered Mansion 1971
Harriet S. Adams wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

19 The Quest of the Missing Map 1969
20 The Clue in the Jewel Box 1972
21 The Secret in the Old Attic 1970
22 The Clue in the Crumbling Wall 1973
23 The Mystery of the Tolling Bell 1973
24 The Clue in the Old Album 1977
25 The Ghost of Blackwood Hall 1967
26 The Clue of the Leaning Chimney 1967
27 The Secret of the Wooden Lady 1967
28 The Clue of the Black Keys 1968
Priscilla Baker-Carr cut down the original story. For volume 20, Julie Irish assisted in cutting down the story. Nancy S. Axelrad edited volumes 19, 20, 22, and 23 with Lilo Wuenn assisting on volume 22. Harriet S. Adams edited volumes 19, 21, and 28; she revised volumes 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27.

29 The Mystery at the Ski Jump 1968
Ann Shultes cut down the original story; June Dunn and Harriet S. Adams edited.

30 The Clue of the Velvet Mask 1969
Priscilla Baker-Carr cut down the original story. Harriet S. Adams and Grace Grote edited the manuscript.

31 The Ringmaster’s Secret 1974
June Dunn cut down the original story; Harriet S. Adams edited.

32 The Scarlet Slipper Mystery 1974
33 The Witch Tree Symbol 1975
Ann Shultes cut down the original story; June Dunn and Harriet S. Adams edited.

34 The Hidden Window Mystery 1975
Mary Fisher cut down the original story; June Dunn and Harriet S. Adams edited.
Who Wrote the Wanderer Nancy Drews?

In 1979, the Stratemeyer Syndicate moved its publishing rights to Simon & Schuster, the company that would later purchase the Syndicate in 1984. These new volumes were published under the Wanderer imprint.

57 The Triple Hoax 1979

58 The Flying Saucer Mystery 1980

59 The Secret in the Old Lace 1980
Harriet S. Adams wrote the outline and manuscript. Nancy Axelrad rewrote the manuscript.

60 The Greek Symbol Mystery 1981
Nancy S. Axelrad wrote the manuscript based upon an outline by Axelrad and Harriet S. Adams.

61 The Swami’s Ring 1981
Harriet S. Adams wrote the outline. Nancy Axelrad expanded the outline and wrote the manuscript.

62 The Kachina Doll Mystery 1981
Sharon Wagner (1936-) wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

63 The Twin Dilemma 1981
Nancy Axelrad wrote the outline and manuscript; Lilo Wuenn edited.

64 Captive Witness 1981
Richard Ballad wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

65 Mystery of the Winged Lion 1982
Nancy Axelrad wrote the outline and manuscript; Lilo Wuenn edited.

66 Race Against Time 1982
Sherry Lemmon (a pseudonym for James Duncan Lawrence (1918-1994)) wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

67 The Sinister Omen 1982
Richard Ballad wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

68 The Elusive Heiress 1982
Sharon Wagner wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

69 Clue in the Ancient Disguise 1982
Sherry Lemmon (a pseudonym for James Duncan Lawrence) wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.
70 The Broken Anchor 1983
Sharon Wagner wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

71 The Silver Cobweb 1983
72 The Haunted Carousel 1983
James Duncan Lawrence (1918-1994) wrote the outline and manuscript; Nancy Axelrad edited.

73 Enemy Match 1984
74 The Mysterious Image 1984
75 The Emerald-Eyed Cat Mystery 1984
Authorship of these volumes were not recorded in the Beinecke papers.

76 The Eskimo’s Secret 1985
Sharon Wagner wrote the outline and manuscript.

77 The Bluebeard Room 1985
James D. Lawrence wrote the outline and manuscript.

78 The Phantom of Venice 1985
James D. Lawrence wrote the outline and manuscript.