A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lillian A. Wood". The signature is written on a piece of aged, yellowish paper with a dashed horizontal line above and below the text.

LILLIAN AGATHA DOYLE CONKLIN WOOD

(1893-1946)

A rectangular newspaper clipping with a black border. The title "Wood Rites" is in a large, bold, serif font. The text below is in a smaller, standard serif font. The clipping reports on the funeral and burial of Mrs. Lillian A. Wood in Saranac Lake, New York, on March 6, 1946. It mentions her birth in Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1893, and her death on Saturday night at a local nursing cottage. It also lists her survivors: two sisters, Mrs. F. J. Corrigan and Miss Frances Doyle of Hyde Park, Mass.

(Syracuse Herald Journal, Wednesday, March 6, 1946)

Lillian Wood was my grandmother's cousin. They were both born in Dedham, Massachusetts. The girls' mothers were sisters, born in Ireland and immigrating to the United States as young women.

I've given much thought to Lillian during this time of the Covid 19 pandemic; and Historic Saranac Lake Executive Director Amy Catania's thought-provoking "Letter from the Porch" writings have inspired me to share my ancestor's story.

Every stage of Lillian's life, beginning in the womb, was overshadowed by disease. And throughout, Lillian rallied. Her legacy to her descendants is that she tenaciously reweave her heartache into her life's fabric, a fabric that was textured with hope and love.

Scarlet Fever, 1893

An incidence of scarlet fever swept Dedham in the spring of 1893 when Lillian's parents, Frances "Fannie" and Daniel Joseph Doyle, a hostler and also an Irish immigrant, were awaiting the birth of their tenth child. This child would be Lillian.

Prior to that time, illness had already taken two of the Doyle's children. The scarlet fever outbreak of 1893 took three more -- Mary Alice "May" (age 17) and George (age 3), succumbed the same day; James (age 6) perished two and a half weeks later. All died at home. Hours after this third child's death, due to town-wide anxiety of the onset of a scarlet fever epidemic, Dedham officials evicted the Doyles from their house, the Board of Health having ordered an immediate fumigation.

Reportedly, the Doyles stood shivering in the nighttime cold of their yard, no one willing to take them in because of fear of contracting the disease. Finally, the family's attending physician stepped in and

negotiated a space for the Doyles in the attic of their home. Stories about the family's plight and the town's fear ran in Massachusetts newspapers, one banner reading, "THE HOUSE WAS FUMIGATED – RESIDENTS OF DEDHAM CENTRE NEED NOT FEAR DANIEL DOYLE'S HOUSE."

Interestingly, this article grapples with the dilemma of providing adequate shelter for those suffering in situations like that of the Doyles: *"Their case excites a great deal of sympathy, and the fact that they were exposed to the chill of the night air for hours suggests the need of a town shelter, wherein cases of contagious disease...could be housed comfortable while their homes were being fumigated."* (*Boston Journal*, Tuesday, May 16, 1893)

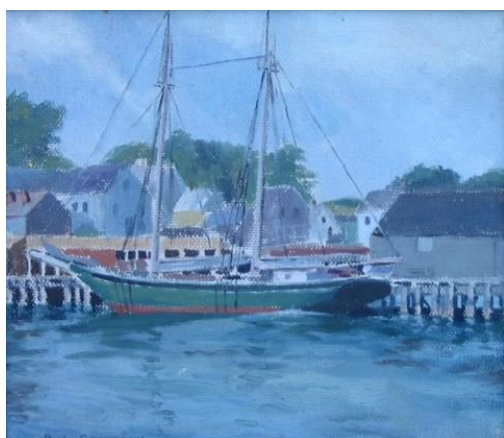
The May 16, 1893 edition of the *Fall River Globe* (Fall River, MA) reported that, because there was incidence of scarlet fever in another section of Dedham, *"The board of health is being urged to order the other tenants of the block in which Doyle lives to secure houses elsewhere until such time as it may be deemed safe for the to return."* Whether or not this neighborhood-wide eviction occurred, I have not yet been able to determine.

At any rate, Lillian Agatha Doyle came into the world the following month, on the longest day of light that year, Summer Solstice, June 21, 1893. The stigma of that Spring may have followed the Doyles for years, as they moved within the town of Dedham at least twice before the turn-of-the-century.

When Lillian was 13 years old, her father, Daniel, died at home. The cause of death was tuberculosis, the unwelcome visitor in too many homes of that time period. Daniel was 58 years old. Lillian went on to achieve a high school education. At the time of her first marriage in 1915, she was employed at the Norfolk County Courthouse in Dedham as a telephone operator.

Lillian's Marriage to Roy Ives Conklin – 1915

How Lillian met her first husband, Roy Ives Conklin, remains elusive. What is known is that the two eloped to Provincetown, Massachusetts, and were married by a Congregational minister on the last Saturday in August of 1915.

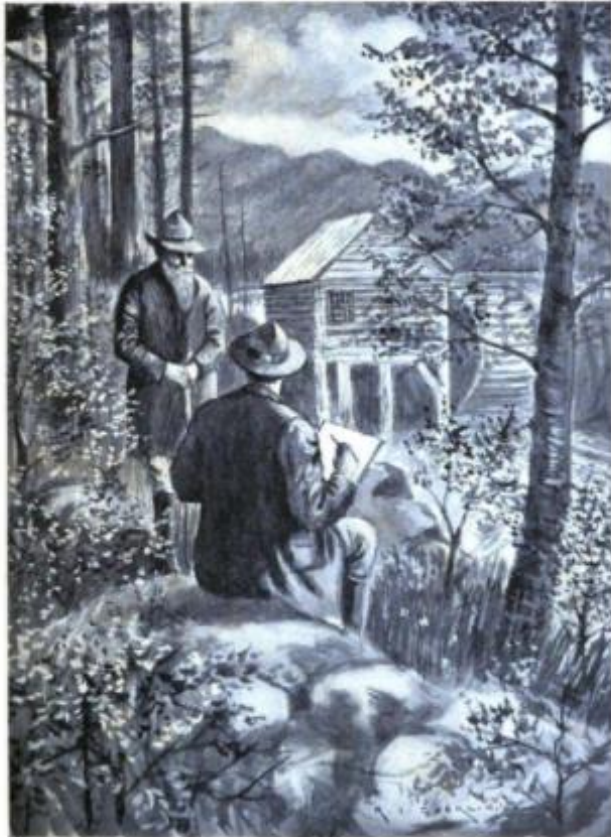


Roy was an up-and-coming Boston illustrator and artist and, most likely, was part of Provincetown's summertime artists' colony. Prior to his death, Roy studied under Arthur Merton Hazard, a painter of the Boston-based artist community known as the Boston School (American Impressionists).

This painting (left) was done by R.I. Conklin in 1913. Its provenance is unknown to me, only that it appeared briefly on the Internet some years ago when it was for sale in a Provincetown, MA art auction house.¹

¹ "Pier Scene" (1913) by R.I. Conklin. Image from Outer Cape Auctions 2012 website (outercapeauctions.com)

At the time of their marriage, Lillian was 22, Roy six years her senior. She was Roman Catholic. He was Protestant. The earth's axis in the Doyle household may have shifted when the newlyweds arrived back in Dedham and announced their marriage to Lillian's mother, Fannie, because the following Saturday, Lillian and Roy were married (again) at 8:00 a.m. in the rectory of Dedham's St. Mary's of the Assumption Catholic Church.



“Well, stranger, how do you lak these parts?”

Lillian's first husband, Roy Ives Conklin, “R.I. Conklin,” was a brilliant illustrator and artist. Prior to studying with Arthur Merton Hazard, he is known to have studied under famed American painter/illustrator Eric Pape, whose style Roy emulated in his illustrations.

Among Roy's surviving works today are illustrations appearing in novels published by the C.M. Clark Publishing Co. of Boston. At least six of these novels, by varying authors, are available online.

Pictured (left) is one of Roy's illustrations in *Girl of the Ozarks* by Elizabeth Montgomery Summers (1911).

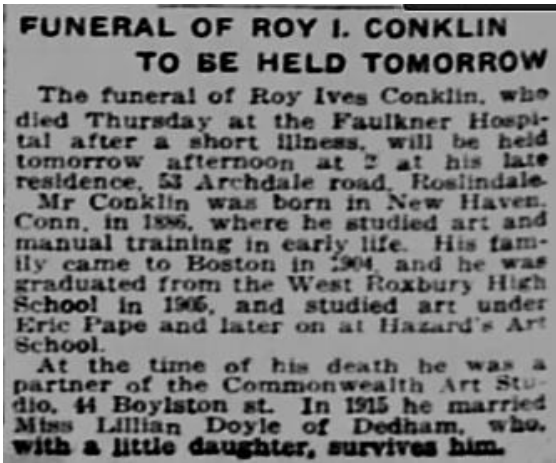
C.M. Clark was Carro M. Clark, who held the distinction of being the first woman publisher of her time. In her private life, she was identified as “Mrs. Charles Atkinson.”

The Great Influenza and Widowhood

On June 5, 1917, like all men in the U.S. between the ages of 21 and 30, Roy registered for the draft. He listed his occupation as “artist.” He and Lillian were living at 53 Archdale in Roslindale, a neighborhood of Boston. Roy completed Line 12 on his draft registration card, “Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)?” as follows: “Dependency of wife and expectation of her confinement this summer.”

(Left) Roy's signature on his WWI draft registration card. His physical characteristics recorded were: medium [height], slender [build], eyes/blue, hair/light/balding.

On July 31, 1917, Lillian gave birth to their daughter, Barbara, at Faulkner Hospital, in nearby Jamaica Plain, Boston. As it turned out, Roy never saw military service during the war. But his life wasn't spared. Roy succumbed to "bronchopneumonia from influenza" on January 9, 1919. Ill for only eleven days, he died in the hospital where his daughter was born. The year 1918 had witnessed over 4,700 deaths in Boston from the Great Influenza and related pneumonia cases.² The city's fatalities from the pandemic continued into the New Year and beyond, Roy's death included.



Roy was interred in Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston, Massachusetts. (Left) Obituary from the Saturday, January 11, 1919, *Boston Globe*.

Having lost her husband to the pandemic, Lillian and her daughter moved back to Dedham. The town, like every other community during the pandemic, had walked through fire. My grandmother spoke of the Spanish flu and coffins lined up in Dedham Square, the center of town.

Lillian and Barbara lived with her mother, Fannie, and three of her four adult siblings. She resumed work as a telephone operator. This, according to the January 1920 U.S. Federal Census.

Tuberculosis and Saranac Lake, New York

Lillian's return to Dedham would be brief. Sometime after January 1920, pulmonary tuberculosis caused the young widow to make the heartbreaking choice to separate herself from her child. Lillian sought treatment in Saranac Lake's curing community, one of that era's renowned meccas of tuberculosis care. Her toddler-age daughter remained behind in Dedham with Fannie.

There is no question that Lillian had been exposed to the disease. An infant brother, Francis Louis, died of TB in 1896 when Lillian was three years old. Her father, as mentioned, died of the disease in 1907, during a time period when tuberculosis was prevalent in their neighborhood.

Lillian ailing from TB circa 1920 begs several questions – what motivated Roy Conklin to express his concern about Lillian's impending confinement on his 1917 draft registration card? Was he "just" a first-time expectant father, doting on his wife, or was Lillian's pregnancy complicated by tuberculosis? And, when so many women still delivered their babies at home, was Lillian so frail that she gave birth in a hospital?

Lillian's Marriage to Leon Herbert Wood – 1922

On August 14, 1922, Lillian married Leon Herbert Wood in Bloomingdale, New York, a village in close proximity to Saranac Lake. It is my belief that Lillian and Leon met while both seeking the cure.

Leon was a World War I veteran from Oil City, Pennsylvania. He was born in that state on May 21, 1893, exactly one month prior to Lillian's birth. By age 17, he was a tank builder in the oil industry. In May 1917, immediately following the United States' entry into the war, he enlisted in the United States Navy Naval Reserve (USNRR) Coastal Artillery. He served as a Seaman Second Class at Wissahickon

² <https://www.influenzaarchive.org/cities/city-boston.html#>

Barracks, Cape May, New Jersey; Lewes, Delaware; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was engaged in active duty until March 1919 and was honorably discharged on May 8, 1921.

According to his obituary, Leon was “declared a total disability at war’s end.” It is unknown if he was injured in the war, but clearly tuberculosis, at least in part, contributed to his physical challenges. It’s possible that Leon had been exposed to the disease before entering the military, as his mother, Mary Herbert Wood, suffered from TB as early as 1916. Mary died from this disease the year following her son’s enlistment.

Somehow, in the cycle of seasons between Leon’s release from the military and the summer of 1922, he and Lillian found each other. Like all persons who suffered from active tuberculosis and had removed to a cure community, they weren’t only navigating the disease, but navigating loneliness, as well. Moreover, they were faced with the reality that chasing “the cure” could take years.

For Lillian and Leon, it would take the rest of their lives. From the time before their marriage in 1922 and ever after, Lillian and Leon would live in the village of Saranac Lake, the curing cottages their most frequent residences. The 1925 New York State Census shows them living in Harrietstown, Saranac Lake. Leon’s occupation was listed as “patient.” Lillian could have made temporary strides with her health, as she was listed as “housekeeper.”

Five years later, the 1930 U.S. Federal Census reported that the couple was living in a nursing cottage at 84 Park Avenue, Saranac Lake. This time, both were listed as patients, neither held occupations. The cottage, according to the census, boasted a radio, which must have provided the household with great entertainment. News, music, radio plays, quiz shows, and other programming would have filled their evenings, especially those of winter. That year’s number one song, hitting the charts a few months after the Wall Street Crash of 1929, was, paradoxically, “*Happy Days Are Here Again.*”³

The hit song’s sentiment was not yet the case for Lillian, though, as Barbara, now 12 years old, was still living in Dedham with her grandmother. At age 77, Fannie was head of household. Having remained with their mother throughout the years, three of Fannie’s adult children also shared the home. Despite the unfavorable situation of Barbara being separated from Lillian, Fannie Doyle’s house provided a secure haven and consistent family unit for the young girl.

By 1934, however, the winds had changed and happy days were, indeed, here again, the song’s lyrics coming true for mother and daughter. “*So long sad times, Go long bad times, We are rid of you at last...*” Finally, after years of separation, Barbara now lived with her mother and step-father at 1 Johnson Road in Saranac Lake. She attended Saranac Lake Central High School and subsequently, Russell Sage College in Troy, New York.

By 1940, having once again moved, Lillian and Leon were living at 163 Park Avenue in St. Armand, Saranac Lake. That year’s U.S. Federal Census indicated that the Woods owned their home. Leon’s occupation was listed as office clerk, but coded him as “unable to work.” Lillian was listed as keeping house and Barbara as having completed two years of college.

³ Milton Ager (Music), Jack Yellen (Lyrics), Copyright 1929, published by EMI Robbins Catalog, Inc./Advanced Music Corp.

The following year, on September 5, 1941, when the U.S. was on the brink of entering World War II, Leon Wood passed away. He and Lillian had just celebrated their nineteenth wedding anniversary, a testament to their courage on that long ago day in August 1922, when they turned their backs on their futures skewed by tuberculosis, and, instead, took a vow “for life.” The cause of death stated on Leon’s death certificate was pulmonary tuberculosis with the contributory cause, thorocoplasty, the surgical removal of multiple ribs. This procedure was “a last resort in gravely ill [TB] patients.”⁴

Leon H. Wood.
Word has been received in Oil City of the death on Sept. 5 of Leon H. Wood, son of the late B. L. Wood, of Oil City. He was a World War veteran, having enlisted with the Coast Artillery. He was declared a total disability from that service and has spent the past 25 years in various sanatoria and at Saranac Lake, N. Y.
Mr. Wood graduated from the Oil City High School in 1911, and at the time of his enlistment was an employe of the National Transit. Surviving are his wife and foster daughter, residents of Saranac Lake.

(Left) Obituary from *The News-Herald* (Franklin, Pennsylvania), September 15, 1941

(Right) Upright granite military headstone that Lillian applied for, honoring her husband’s service to his country. Leon Herbert Wood rests in Pine Ridge Cemetery, Saranac Lake.



(Photo courtesy Ancestry.com)

Later that year, the day before Pearl Harbor, Lillian lost her mother, Fannie. Fannie was 88 years old. At the time of her death, only three of her twelve children survived her: Lillian, Helen “Nellie” Corrigan, and Frances Doyle. (A daughter, Jennie “Jane,” had passed away in 1930 and son, Daniel, Jr., in 1938.) Barbara Conklin was Fannie’s sole grandchild.

After Leon’s death, Lillian remained in Saranac Lake. Her last residence was 25 Helen Street in Harrietstown. On March 2, 1946, at age 52, Lillian passed away at home. The cause of death cited on the death certificate was acute congestive heart failure. Also listed was a long term condition, severe displacement of the heart, a result of pulmonary tuberculosis.

Given that her sister, Nellie Corrigan, was the informant on the death certificate, it is apparent that Lillian did not die alone. Most likely, their sister, Frances, who lived with Nellie, would have made the 300-mile trip from Boston also. On March 5, Lillian was laid to rest in St. Bernard’s Cemetery, a Catholic section within Pine Ridge Cemetery.

⁴ <http://learningradiology.com/>

I have no photograph of Lillian, but I do have the image of her signature, as appearing on page one of this history. A signature, I believe, can reflect the soul. Lillian's is from September 6, 1941, the day after Leon's death. She was applying for her husband's military gravestone. And she signed her name with grace, with strength, and with dignity. This is the essence of Lillian Agatha Doyle Conklin Wood.



As I've only recently discovered Lillian's marriage to Leon Wood and their subsequent years in the Saranac Lake curing cottages, my research is ongoing. And -- like mother, like daughter -- the life of Barbara Conklin after 1941 remains elusive to me (at least for now).

Sally Seufert Holmes

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