



Michael's Museum

FEATURING ANTIQUE MINIATURE PORTRAITS
OF THE TORMEY-HOLDER COLLECTION

FEATURED ARTIST: ARTHUR DENOON YOUNG (1864-1920)

by Michael I. Tormey
January 16, 2017

Art collectors know how difficult it can be to attribute an unsigned painting to the correct artist. Oddly enough, however, even attributions of signed works can prove problematic, especially those works signed with abbreviated names, monograms, or surnames only.

Miniature portraits by Arthur Denoon Young (1864-1920) serve as a perfect example of this, as he never signed his paintings with a complete signature. Rather, in most cases, he applied the abbreviated name of "A. D. Young" (see fig. 2) and, in a few cases, he signed as "A. Denoon Young". In no case known to this author did he include the full name of Arthur in his signature.

Young being a fairly common name, Arthur Denoon Young's use of an abbreviated signature has, not surprisingly, led to some confusion in the 97 years since his death. Making matters all the more confusing, at some point in the past, someone presumed Arthur's initial "A" to refer to Andrew and confused our subject with a Scottish painter and photographer by the name of Andrew Young (1854-1925). Sadly, over time, the identities of these two men have been mistakenly conflated into the pseudo identity of Andrew Denoon Young.

Proving that even the best of experts can make mistakes, several auction catalogues, online databases and even scholarly reference manuals list neither artist individually and, instead, list the conflated pseudo identity of Andrew Denoon Young (most assigning to



Figure 1:

Young, Victorian Era Lady in Profile View

*by Arthur Denoon Young
(signed A. D. Young)*

dated 1895

watercolor on ivory

2 1/4 x 3 inches (sight)

Tormey-Holder Collection

him the dates of birth and death of Andrew Young: 1854-1925). Additionally, works of art by both Andrew Young and Arthur Denoon Young have been erroneously attributed in such sources to this pseudo identity. This represents, of course, an injustice to the real and separate Youngs and muddies their respective bodies of work.

Arthur Denoon Young and Andrew Young were contemporaries (Andrew being just ten years older than Arthur). They shared the same last name, they were both born in Scotland, and they were both artists; but they were, in fact, different and unrelated individuals. This becomes clear when examining census records and other public documents that consistently place the adult Andrew Young (indicated as being a photographer and artist) in Burntisland, Fife, Scotland, while concurrently placing Arthur Denoon Young (indicated as being an artist/painter) in London, England.

Digging deeper into such records, utilizing the tools available to any genealogist, one finds a wealth of information that illuminates the life of our subject, Arthur Denoon Young.

ARTHUR'S ORIGINS

Arthur Denoon Young was born on December 9, 1864, in Perth, Scotland.¹ He was the youngest of 11 children (7 girls and 4 boys) born to Charles Denoon Young (ca. 1822-1887) and Hannah Cupples (1824-ca. 1895).

Like his father, his three aunts and his two uncles, Arthur was given the middle name of Denoon, the maiden name of his grandmother, Catherine Denoon (1781-1840) who, in 1807², married Arthur's grandfather, Rev. James Young (ca. 1788-1854), a minister of the Church of Scotland.³

In 1840, having raised six children and faithfully supported her husband in his ministry for 33 years,



Figure 2:

Close-up of Arthur Denoon Young's abbreviated signature, as appears on the miniature portrait featured in fig. 1.

(Note that the last character of Young's name is hidden underneath the edge of the gold frame.)

Each capital letter of the signature being slightly less than 1/16 of an inch tall, the signature is barely visible to the naked eye.

Catherine Denoon Young died at the age of 59.⁴ She predeceased Rev. Young by 14 years; and her death appears to have left a void in the hearts of her family. Providing testimony to this are the words carved into the large and prominent stone marker erected over her gravesite:

...The tears of undying affection are shed, still silently over thy dark, narrow bed. The pure flame of faith still brightly illumines it. The fragrance of hope still sweetly perfumes it. With thee we shall rest, but with thee we shall rise and gather around thee once more in the skies.^{5, 6}

Considering the high esteem in which Catherine Denoon Young was held, it is little surprise that so many of her children and grandchildren were given the Denoon name. It is surprising, however, that, despite having this unique name, Arthur Denoon Young's identity was so easily confused with that of Andrew Young of Burntisland, Fife.

Arthur's father, Charles Denoon Young, was an engineer, iron works manufacturer and contractor. He entered the iron works business in 1840, at the age of 18, initially working in partnership with his older brother, William Denoon Young (1815-1882), seven years his senior⁷. The two brothers worked side by side for seven years, until Charles was sufficiently able to branch out on his own.

In 1847, by the young age of 25, Charles founded his own, independent iron works engineering and contracting firm, known as Charles Denoon Young & Co. Within a mere four years, the firm had grown to employ 300 men and 60 women⁸, and had operations in five Scottish and English cities: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and London.⁹

Despite this resounding success, however, Arthur Denoon Young's father would fall on hard times. A souring economy in the 1850s and mounting losses from unpaid customer bills, pushed his once-high flying iron works company into bankruptcy court in 1858.¹⁰ Young successfully rebuilt his firm thereafter; but, sadly, the cycle of prosperity to bankruptcy repeated itself two more times over the next 16 years. Young was forced to appear in bankruptcy court in 1862 and again in 1874,¹¹ at which time he was confined for seven months to a debtors prison in Perth.¹² Thereafter, Charles Denoon Young & Co. remained a small fraction of its once prosperous self.

The ebb and flow of Charles Denoon Young's business fortunes had an impact on all his children, but perhaps more so on our subject, Arthur Denoon Young, than any other. As the youngest of eleven children, Arthur was the least involved in his parents' day-to-day lives. By the age of 6, in fact, he was far removed from his parents and was, with five other siblings, living under the watch of caretakers in an Edinburgh mansion, while his parents lived 45 miles away in Perth, where Charles managed his faltering iron works business.¹³ Shortly thereafter, Arthur was sent to the town of Dollar, in Clackmannanshire, as a boarding student at the highly-esteemed Dollar Academy, where he remained until 1881.¹⁴

ARTHUR'S LIFE AS AN ARTIST

In 1881, at the young age of 17, Arthur relocated to London, where he immediately began to work as a miniature portrait painter. That same year, he began exhibiting at the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers (commonly referred to as the Royal Miniature Society, or the RMS) – an annual ritual he participated in for the next 19 years, while also exhibiting his work intermittently at both the Royal Society of British Artists and the Royal Scottish Academy.¹⁵



Figure 3:

A glimpse of London as Arthur Denoon Young saw it when he arrived to the city in 1881.

Pictured is an area commonly referred to as Ludgate Circus, the junction where Farringdon and New Bridge Streets cross Fleet Street and Ludgate Hill. The dome of St. Paul's Cathedral can be seen in the distance.

(Photographer Unknown.)

Interestingly, Arthur's parents had also relocated to London by 1881. In July of that year, Charles Denoon Young, his wife Hannah and their oldest daughter, Kate (Katherine Denoon Young, 1846-1939), were recorded as tenants, renting rooms in a boarding house owned by a Mr. Harry Nyth, in Hornsey.¹⁶ Of course, renting rooms in a boarding house stands in stark contrast to when the Youngs themselves owned as many as three homes at one time in Scotland. The Youngs being of much diminished means, therefore, it seems doubtful that they were able to offer much financial support to their youngest son, Arthur, when he arrived to London.

Thus far, no records have been found that detail Arthur's artistic training. Being skilled enough to paint professionally and exhibit works at the Royal Miniature Society by the age of 17, however, one easily assumes that he received private training as a young man in Scotland. It is also likely that he received continued tutelage upon arriving to London – surely from one of the many highly regarded miniaturists of his day.

Other than his exhibition record, little is known, likewise, about Arthur's life in London during the decade of the 1880s. By 1891, however, he was recorded as living at Holbein House, located on Pimlico Road in Central London. There, he rented a small, but respectable apartment that also served as his studio. Arthur remained at Holbein House throughout the entire decade of the 1890s, which proved to be the greatest period of his work as an artist. Thereafter, his work entered a period of decline, as did his personal fortune.



Figure 4:

A late nineteenth century photo of the London apartment building known as Holbein House.

During the decade of the 1890s, Arthur Denoon Young lived in Holbein House No. 58. Arthur's then-widowed mother, Hannah Cupples Young, also lived at Holbein House, in No. 17, until her death in 1895.

(Photographer Unknown.)

ARTHUR'S ART

Though not the most remembered of miniaturists of the late Victorian Era, Arthur Denoon Young produced many fine portraits of superior quality.

His small paintings have a soft, almost dream-like feel to them – well attuned to Victorian taste – with some portions painted vaguely and others painted with sharper detail. He, likewise, tended to depict his subjects in artistic poses, as opposed to traditional portrait poses in which the subject typically looks toward the viewer. Using our featured portrait as an example, rather than depicting his subject with a forward looking gaze, Young depicted her in a profile view that draws the viewer in to the beauty of the subject's soft, porcelain-like complexion. The viewer's eyes wander from the arch of the subject's nose to the gentle curve of her jaw, to her perfectly painted ear (rarely attempted by most miniaturists, and rarely ever so well painted). One is struck, too, by the texture and dimension of the subject's hair – each strand delicately placed with precision. The beauty of this portrait and the skill with which it was painted is even more pronounced when one considers that the subject's face, from the tip of her nose to the farthest curve of her ear, is a mere one inch wide. Such finely executed miniature portraits surely became prized possessions of the patrons for whom they were painted.



Figure 5:

Close-up of the miniature portrait featured in fig. 1, showing the detail with which Arthur Denoon Young painted the subject's face and hair.

A PERIOD OF DECLINE

The period of Arthur's greatest work was in the 1890s, the decade of his 30s, when he lived and maintained a studio at Holbein House, in the Pimlico area of central London. Upon entering the twentieth century, however, over the last two decades of his life, both the quantity and quality of Arthur's work diminished.

In 1900, he exhibited paintings at the Royal Miniature Society for the last time. Records of that exhibition note him to have, by then, moved to 33 Warwick Square,¹⁷ a Pimlico boarding home owned by his brother-in-law, Charles Leiske, husband of one of Arthur's sisters, Rose.¹⁸ A decade later, at the time of the 1911 census, he was found to be living at 12 Paulton Street, where he rented a room in the home of a Mr. Jesse Mattocks.¹⁹ Thereafter, the final years of his life were spent in a tenement at 72 Cadogan House, in London's

Sir Thomas Moore Buildings, an affordable housing complex for the poor.²⁰ There, he lived with his spinster sister, Kate, 18 years his senior.

It is not known what specifically contributed to Arthur's decline. Perhaps he suffered a debilitating injury of some kind that lessened his ability to paint. Alternatively, perhaps he suffered from a prolonged illness. It is speculated, for example, that he might have had diabetes, which would have affected his eyesight as well as his physical well being.

Arthur Denoon Young died on September 30, 1920²¹, at the age of 55, in the tender care of his sister, Kate. He was buried on October 5, 1920, at London's St. Pancras Parish Chapel.²²

EPILOGUE

Perhaps future scholars will uncover more details that will help further document Arthur Denoon Young's life story. In the meantime, it is hoped that this brief biography will serve to resurrect his legacy; and it is further hoped that effort will be made by both historians and art dealers to correctly attribute Arthur's paintings to the man who so ably painted them.



Figure 6:

A large (29.9 x 50 inches) oil painting by Andrew Young (1854-1925) of Burntisland, Fife, Scotland. Titled "A Scottish Fair", this work by Young, painted in 1910, has long been misattributed to the pseudo identity of Andrew Denoon Young (the conflated identities of Arthur Denoon Young and Andrew Young). The painting is featured here to provide an example of how the two artists' work differed. Coincidentally, Andrew Young of Burntisland, Fife, did occasionally paint miniature portraits (of quite a different style and technique than Arthur Denoon Young), but he was mostly known for his larger paintings in oil on canvas, and for his photography.

ADDENDUM: FAMILY GROUP SHEET
FAMILY OF CHARLES DENOON YOUNG AND HANNAH CUPPLES

Husband: **CHARLES DENOON YOUNG**

<u>Born</u> : 1822	<u>Location</u> : Legerwood, Lanarkshire, Scotland
<u>Married</u> : July 4, 1844	<u>Location</u> : Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland
<u>Died</u> : 1887	<u>Location</u> : Islington, London, England
<u>Father</u> : Rev. James Young	<u>Birthplace</u> : Falkirk, Stirlingshire, Scotland
<u>Mother</u> : Catherine Denoon	<u>Birthplace</u> : South Leith, Midlothian, Scotland

Wife: **HANNAH CUPPLES**

<u>Born</u> : March 12, 1824	<u>Location</u> : Legerwood, Berwickshire, Scotland
<u>Died</u> : 1895	<u>Location</u> : London, England
<u>Father</u> : Rev. George Cupples	<u>Birthplace</u> : Swinton, Berwickshire, Scotland
<u>Mother</u> : Sarah Turnbull	<u>Birthplace</u> : London, England

Child 1: **KATHERINE ("KATE") DENOON YOUNG**

(Female)	<u>Born</u> : 1846	<u>Location</u> : Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland
	<u>Married</u> : never married	<u>Location</u> :
	<u>Died</u> : 1938	<u>Location</u> : Chelsea, London, England

Child 2: **CHARLOTTE HANNAH YOUNG**

(Female)	<u>Born</u> : 1848	<u>Location</u> : Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland
	<u>Married</u> : April 4, 1872	<u>Location</u> : Tibbermore, Perth, Scotland
	<u>Died</u> : unknown	<u>Location</u> :
	<u>Spouse</u> : Clement Boarse	

Child 3: **CHARLES EDWARD YOUNG**

(Male)	<u>Born</u> : 1849	<u>Location</u> : Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland
	<u>Married</u> : August 21, 1880	<u>Location</u> : Brixton, Surrey, England
	<u>Died</u> : unknown	<u>Location</u> :
	<u>Spouse</u> : Louisa Eunice Holdom	

Child 4: **FRANCES EMILY YOUNG**

(Female)	<u>Born</u> : 1852	<u>Location</u> : Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland
	<u>Married</u> : October 5, 1882	<u>Location</u> : Hornsey, London, England
	<u>Died</u> : unknown	<u>Location</u> :
	<u>Spouse</u> : Arthur James Morris	

Child 5: MARY ELIZABETH YOUNG

(Female) Born: 1854 Location: Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland
Married: Location:
Died: unknown Location:
Spouse: unknown

Child 6: LOUISA MARGARET GRACE YOUNG

(Female) Born: 1855 Location: Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland
Married: Location:
Died: December 13, 1936 Location: Tonbridge Wells, Kent, England
Spouse: unknown

Child 7: GEORGE FREDERICK YOUNG

(Male) Born: 1856 Location: Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland
Married: Location:
Died: 1881 Location: Alverstoke, Hampshire, England
Spouse: unknown

Child 8: FLORENCE ANNIE YOUNG

(Female) Born: 1860 Location: Perth, Perthshire, Scotland
Married: Location:
Died: 1921 Location: Tonbridge Wells, Kent, England
Spouse: unknown

Child 9: ROSE HELEN YOUNG

(Female) Born: 1861 Location: Perth, Perthshire, Scotland
Married: January 21, 1898 Location: Chelsea, London, England
Died: August 30, 1937 Location: Kensington, Middlesex, England
Spouse: Charles Frederick Lietke

Child 10: FRANK BROADFOOT YOUNG

(Male) Born: 1863 Location: Perth, Perthshire, Scotland
Married: November 23, 1887 Location: Stroud Green, Middlesex, England
Died: October 26, 1944 Location: London, England
Spouse: Kate Pearson

Child 11: ARTHUR DENOON YOUNG

(Male) Born: 1864 Location: Perth, Perthshire, Scotland
Married: Location:
Died: September 30, 1920 Location: Chelsea, London, England
Spouse: never married

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ancestry.com. *UK and Ireland, Find A Grave Index, 1300s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

Ancestry.com. *Web: Global, Gravestone Photograph Index, 1265-2014* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016.

Autobiography of a Bankrupt, an article that originally appeared in the *European Times* and was reprinted in the *South Adelaide Advertiser* (Adelaide, South Australia), October 20, 1858, page 3.

Blättel, Harry (1992). *International Dictionary of Miniature Painters, Porcelain Painters and Silhouettists*, Arts & Antiques Edition (English version), Munich, Germany, pages 980, 981.

Board of Guardian Records, 1834-1906 and Church of England Parish Registers, 1813-1906. London Metropolitan Archives, London; Call Number: p90/pan1/209.

Cases Decided in the Court of Session, Court of Justiciary, and House of Lords, from July 20, 1874 to August 13, 1875. Fourth Series, Volume II, 1875, T. & T. Clark, Law Booksellers, Edinburgh, Scotland, pages 292-294.

England & Wales, Death Index, General Register Office. *England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes*. London, England: General Register Office.

Register of Electors, Spring, 1919; Parliamentary Borough of Chelsea, Administrative County of London, page 56. *Electoral Registers*. London, England: London Metropolitan Archives.

Scotland, Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.

The Edinburgh Gazette, Edinburgh, Scotland, October 13, 1874.

The Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, 1900, the Seventy-Fourth Exhibition, in the Royal Academy Galleries, published in Edinburgh by the Edinburgh University Press, page 51.

1851 Scotland Census. Parish of Edinburgh St Cuthberts; ED: 58A; Page: 2; Line: 5; Roll: CSSCT1851_183; Year: 1851. General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

1871 Scotland Census. Parish of Tibbermore; ED: 4; Page: 13; Line: 18; Roll: CSSCT1871_68. General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

1881 Scotland Census. Parish of Dollar; ED: 2; Page: 6; Line: 10; Roll: cssct1881_130. General Register

Office for Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

1881 British Isles Census. *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1881*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1881; Class: RG11; Piece: 1376; Folio: 142; Page: 63; GSU roll: 1341335.

1901 British Isles Census. *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1901*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 87; Folio: 163; Page: 1.

1911 British Isles Census. *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA), 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 412.

NOTES

¹ *Scotland, Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950*. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.

² There are no public records documenting the exact date of marriage of Catherine Denoon and James Young. Family tradition has it, however, that they married in 1807. This would be consistent with the fact that their first child was born in 1809.

³ Rev. Young, Arthur's grandfather, was a minister of the established Church of Scotland until 1843, when he and 449 other ministers broke with the church and formed the Free Church of Scotland in a schism commonly referred to as the "Disruption of 1843".

⁴ Ancestry.com. *UK and Ireland, Find A Grave Index, 1300s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

⁵ Catherine Denoon Young and her husband, Rev. James Young are buried at New Calton Cemetery, located on the southeast slopes of Calton Hill, at 10 Regent Street, near the Palace of Holyrood House and Edinburgh's ever popular Royal Mile.

⁶ Ancestry.com. *Web: Global, Gravestone Photograph Index, 1265-2014* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016.

⁷ *Autobiography of a Bankrupt*, an article that originally appeared in the *European Times* and was reprinted in the *South Adelaide Advertiser* (Adelaide, South Australia), October 20, 1858, page 3.

⁸ As noted in the 1851 Scotland Census. Parish of Edinburgh St Cuthberts; ED: 58A; Page: 2; Line: 5; Roll: CSSCT1851_183; Year: 1851. General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

⁹ *Autobiography of a Bankrupt*, page 3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Cases Decided in the Court of Session, Court of Justiciary, and House of Lords, from July 20, 1874 to August 13, 1875. Fourth Series, Volume II, 1875*, T. & T. Clark, Law Booksellers, Edinburgh, Scotland, pages 292-294.

¹² *The Edinburgh Gazette*, Edinburgh, Scotland, October 13, 1874.

¹³ 1871 Scotland Census. Parish of Tibbermore; ED: 4; Page: 13; Line: 18; Roll: CSSCT1871_68. General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

¹⁴ 1881 Scotland Census. Parish of Dollar; ED: 2; Page: 6; Line: 10; Roll: cssct1881_130. General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. 1901 British Isles Census. *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1901*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 87; Folio: 163; Page: 1.

¹⁵ Blättel, Harry (1992). *International Dictionary of Miniature Painters, Porcelain Painters and Silhouettists*, Arts & Antiques Edition (English version), Munich, Germany, pages 980, 981.

¹⁶ 1881 British Isles Census. *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1881*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1881; Class: RG11; Piece: 1376; Folio: 142; Page: 63; GSU roll: 1341335.

¹⁷ *The Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, 1900, the Seventy-Fourth Exhibition, in the Royal Academy Galleries*, published in Edinburgh by the Edinburgh University Press, page 51.

¹⁸ 1901 British Isles Census. *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1901*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 87; Folio: 163; Page: 1.

¹⁹ 1911 British Isles Census. *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA), 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 412.

²⁰ *Register of Electors, Spring, 1919; Parliamentary Borough of Chelsea, Administrative County of London*, page 56. *Electoral Registers*. London, England: London Metropolitan Archives.

²¹ *England & Wales, Death Index*, General Register Office. *England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes*. London, England: General Register Office.

²² Board of Guardian Records, 1834-1906 and Church of England Parish Registers, 1813-1906. London Metropolitan Archives, London; Call Number: p90/pan1/209.



Copyright © 2017 Michael I. Tormey (mtormey22@mac.com). All rights reserved.