ANNE SEWELL YOUNG

Billeci Sofia
Sirchia Morena

Anne Sewell Young fu un'astronoma americana e fu professoressa di astronomia al Mount Holyoke College per 37 anni. Anne Sewell Young nacque a Bloomington il 2 gennaio 1871. Visse con i valori di una famiglia religiosa e coscienziosa, che aveva una buona reputazione. Un esempio importante nella sua vita fu suo zio, Charles A. Young, professore di astronomia presso l'università di Princeton, noto per la sua osservazione dell'eclissi di una linea luminosa nello spettro coronale.

Nel 1892 prese una Laurea in giurisprudenza al Carleton College, in Minnesota. Nel 1906 conseguì il dottorato di ricerca presso l'Università della Columbia, la sua tesi si basava sulle misurazioni delle prime fotografie e stabilì che la costellazione di Perseo NGC 884+NGC 889 aveva il doppio delle stelle come si pensava in precedenza. All'epoca lei era una delle poche donne a laurearsi in un campo scientifico. Dal 1892 al 1895, Young fu istitutrice e professoressa di matematica al Whitman College. Nel 1898 si laureò al college di Chicago.

Streatham, where his observing was continued in spite of his heavy air-raid-warden duties, was beyond praise and an inspiration to all other observers. Apart from the positive contribution of his observations it is indeed his never-flagging energy in helping others, largely by means of most painstaking correspondence, in any way that might encourage them to take an increasing interest and active part in their astronomy, that will most be remembered by those who knew him in his astronomical context.

Though most of his zeal was thus expended in the service of the sister Association we may yet say that the Society has lost in him one who seems truly to have taken its motto to heart.

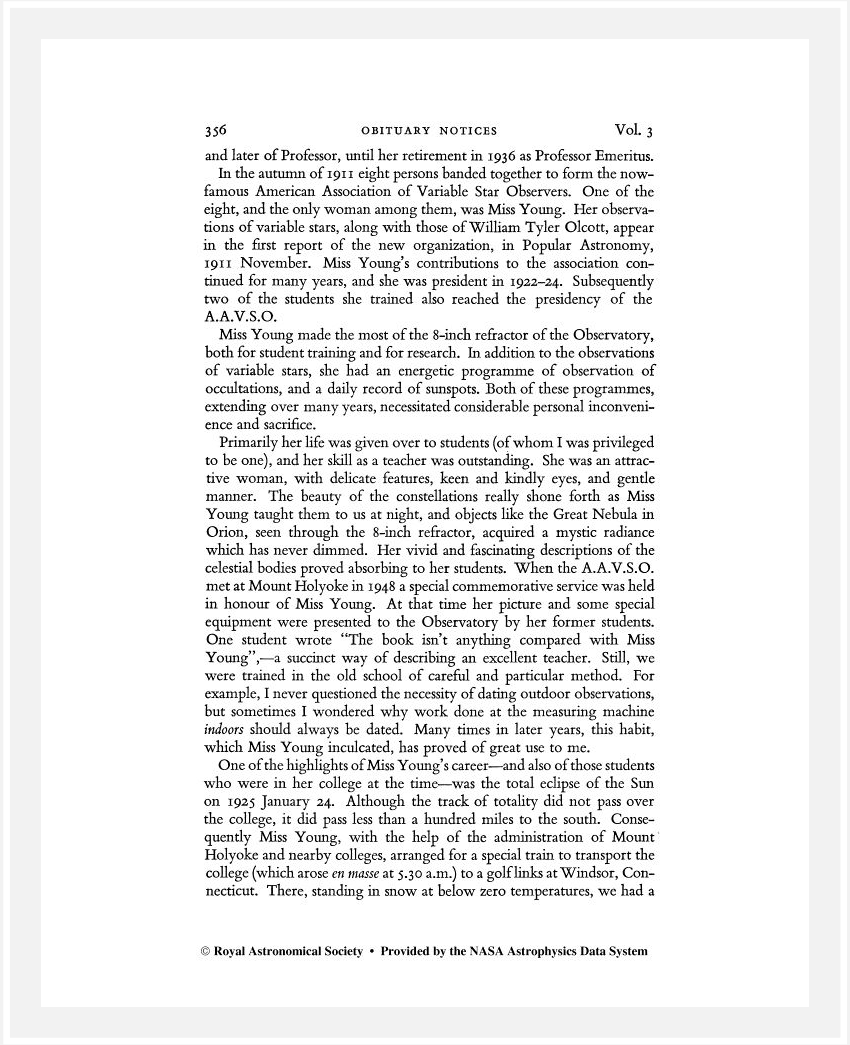
W. M. LINDLEY

ANNE SEWELL YOUNG

On 1961 August 15 a long and beautiful life came to an end when Dr Anne Sewell Young died in retirement at Claremont, California. For 37 years Miss Young had kept the flame of astronomy burning brightly at Mount Holyoke College in the valley of the Connecticut in Massachusetts.

Anne Young was born on 1871 January 2 in Bloomington, Wisconsin and she lived her life with the background of a religious and conscientious family devoted to good works. Obviously one of the guiding stars in her life was her distinguished uncle, Dr Charles A. Young, Professor of Astronomy at Princeton University, known for his eclipse observation of a bright line in the coronal spectrum, and author of several textbooks of astronomy which for their time remain unexcelled.

Miss Young received her B.L. from Carleton College, Minnesota in 1892 and her M.S. in 1897. Carleton honoured her in 1955 with a citation "for her unusual accomplishments in research and college teaching in the field of astronomy". In 1906 she obtained her Ph.D. from Columbia with doctoral work on the Double Cluster in Perseus, based on measures of the early photographs taken by Lewis M. Rutherford. It should be borne in mind that in these years very few women were doing graduate work in any science. During the years 1892–1895 she was Instructor and Professor of Mathematics at Whitman College, in 1898 Principal of the High School at St. Charles, Illinois, and she studied at the University of Chicago in 1898 and again in 1902. But the main gift of her life was to Mount Holyoke College to which she went in 1899 as Director of the John Payson Williston Observatory and head of the Department of Astronomy. These positions she held, first with the rank of Instructor



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and later of Professor, until her retirement in 1936 as Professor Emeritus.

In the autumn of 1911 eight persons banded together to form the now-famous American Association of Variable Star Observers. One of the eight, and the only woman among them, was Miss Young. Her observations of variable stars, along with those of William Tyler Olcott, appear in the first report of the new organization, in Popular Astronomy, 1911 November. Miss Young's contributions to the association continued for many years, and she was president in 1922–24. Subsequently two of the students she trained also reached the presidency of the A.A.V.S.O.

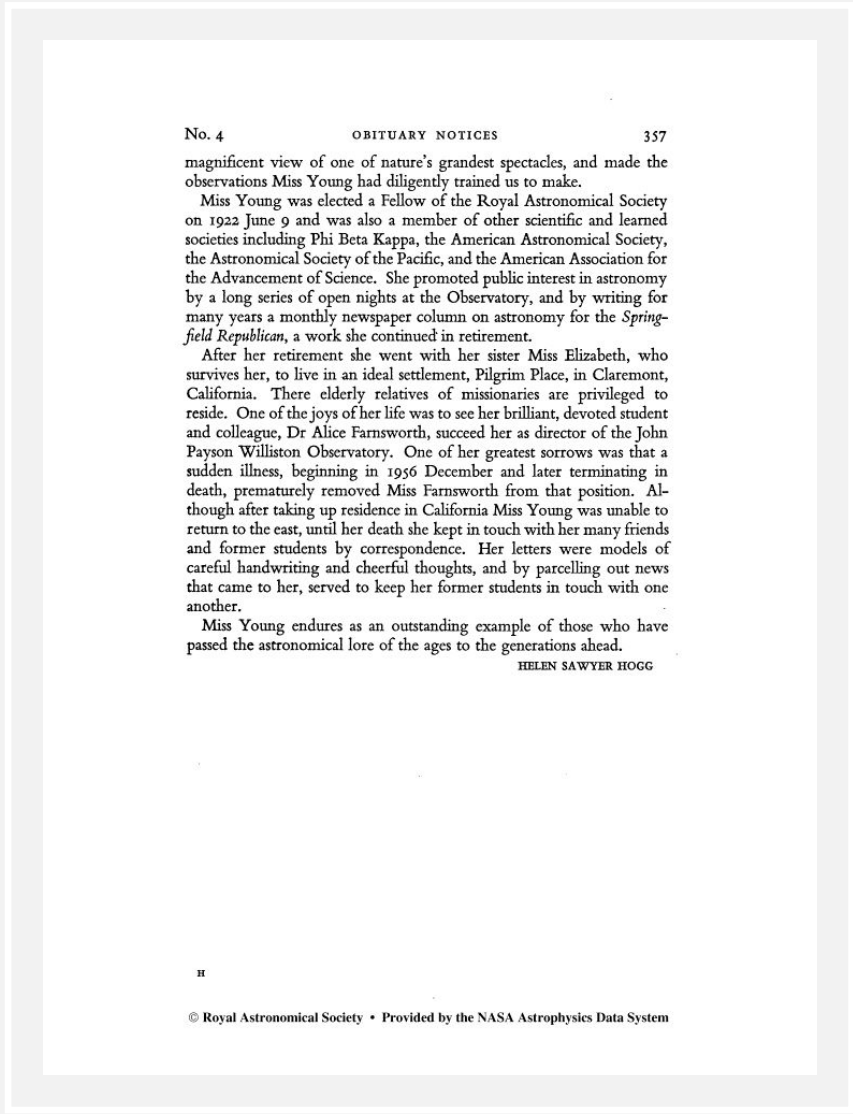
Miss Young made the most of the 8-inch refractor of the Observatory, both for student training and for research. In addition to the observations of variable stars, she had an energetic programme of observation of occultations, and a daily record of sunspots. Both of these programmes, extending over many years, necessitated considerable personal inconvenience and sacrifice.

Primarily her life was given over to students (of whom I was privileged to be one), and her skill as a teacher was outstanding. She was an attractive woman, with delicate features, keen and kindly eyes, and gentle manner. The beauty of the constellations really shone forth as Miss Young taught them to us at night, and objects like the Great Nebula in Orion, seen through the 8-inch refractor, acquired a mystic radiance which has never dimmed. Her vivid and fascinating descriptions of the celestial bodies proved absorbing to her students. When the A.A.V.S.O. met at Mount Holyoke in 1948 a special commemorative service was held in honour of Miss Young. At that time her picture and some special equipment were presented to the Observatory by her former students. One student wrote "The book isn't anything compared with Miss Young",—a succinct way of describing an excellent teacher. Still, we were trained in the old school of careful and particular method. For example, I never questioned the necessity of dating outdoor observations, but sometimes I wondered why work done at the measuring machine *indoors* should always be dated. Many times in later years, this habit, which Miss Young inculcated, has proved of great use to me.

One of the highlights of Miss Young's career—and also of those students who were in her college at the time—was the total eclipse of the Sun on 1925 January 24. Although the track of totality did not pass over the college, it did pass less than a hundred miles to the south. Consequently Miss Young, with the help of the administration of Mount Holyoke and nearby colleges, arranged for a special train to transport the college (which arose *en masse* at 5.30 a.m.) to a golf links at Windsor, Connecticut. There, standing in snow at below zero temperatures, we had a

Il suo risultato più significativo fu frequentare il Mount Holyoke College nel 1899. Divenne Direttrice dell'Osservatorio John Payson Williston e Capo del Dipartimento di Astronomia. Però, non si avvaleva degli strumenti dell'Osservatorio solo per la formazione degli studenti ma anche per la ricerca. Oltre alle osservazioni delle stelle variabili, aveva un programma di osservazione delle occultazioni e una registrazione quotidiana delle macchie solari. Nel 1911 si unì all'American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO); le sue osservazioni sulle stelle variabili apparsero, insieme a quelle fatte da William Tyler Olcott, nel primo rapporto della nuova organizzazione, in Popular Astronomy.

Nel 1925, con l'aiuto dell'amministrazione del Mount Holyoke e dei college vicini, organizzò un treno speciale per trasportare gli studenti del college a un campo da gol a Windsor, Connecticut dove fece assistere ai suoi studenti ad un eclissi solare totale. Fu eletta presidente dell'organizzazione nel 1923. Nel 1929, Young collegò la cometa 31P/Schwassmann-Wachmann con un oggetto identificato erroneamente nel 1904 come il pianeta nano "Adelaide" (A904 EB). Dopo il suo pensionamento, nel 1936 si trasferì con la sorella, Elisabeth Young, in California, dove morì il 15 agosto 1961.



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magnificent view of one of nature's grandest spectacles, and made the observations Miss Young had diligently trained us to make.

Miss Young was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society on 1922 June 9 and was also a member of other scientific and learned societies including Phi Beta Kappa, the American Astronomical Society, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She promoted public interest in astronomy by a long series of open nights at the Observatory, and by writing for many years a monthly newspaper column on astronomy for the *Springfield Republican*, a work she continued in retirement.

After her retirement she went with her sister Miss Elizabeth, who survives her, to live in an ideal settlement, Pilgrim Place, in Claremont, California. There elderly relatives of missionaries are privileged to reside. One of the joys of her life was to see her brilliant, devoted student and colleague, Dr Alice Farnsworth, succeed her as director of the John Payson Williston Observatory. One of her greatest sorrows was that a sudden illness, beginning in 1956 December and later terminating in death, prematurely removed Miss Farnsworth from that position. Although after taking up residence in California Miss Young was unable to return to the east, until her death she kept in touch with her many friends and former students by correspondence. Her letters were models of careful handwriting and cheerful thoughts, and by parcelling out news that came to her, served to keep her former students in touch with one another.

Miss Young endures as an outstanding example of those who have passed the astronomical lore of the ages to the generations ahead.

HELEN SAWYER HOGG

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