

“This is Vivian” Presentation Notes

This document is a script, or text annotation, to accompany the slides for a presentation I gave on June 23, 2016 in Phoenix at the annual Paper Doll Convention. The slides are posted as a 135 page PDF file on my web site, at

http://tpettit.verio.com/dolls/pd_scans/hm/Viv_Presentation.pdf.

Since the slides have no accompanying text, they are not easily understood as a “standalone” format. This document is meant to be read side-by-side with the slides being displayed full-screen (or at least single-page full window) in Adobe Reader, using the arrow key to advance the pages. Since your main window will be occupied with the PDF pages, you will probably want to either print this file out, or view it in a separate device. (These notes were written after the talk was given. I just ad-libbed it and did not have prepared text.)

Page 1 and 2, Title Page and Short Bio

These two images were not actually part of the presentation. Instead, I just talked while what is now Page 3 in the Presentation PDF was displayed. Most of what I said during the talk intro is covered in what is now Page 2. Additionally, I asked how many people in the audience had seen my web site, and explained that I would mostly be showing items that were not yet online.

I also described how I first got interested in Vivian, which was that when I was five to seven years old (1959 to 1961), we lived in suburbs of Kansas City (where Hallmark is headquartered), and at that time I wanted to grow up to be a Hallmark paper doll artist. I ended up becoming a computer software engineer instead, but always maintained an interest in greeting card illustration. Then in 1984 at my first paper doll convention, I came across some of the “This is a Hallmark Paper Doll” cards, and was immediately hooked on collecting them, eventually branching out into Vivian’s other art.

Page 3, Christian Science Monitor article from October 1948

Most of the biographical information I have about Vivian is from one newspaper article published in 1948, two magazine articles published in doll magazines in the early 1980’s, while she was still alive, and 100th Anniversary retrospective book called A Century of Caring. I am going to start out by showing all the pages of those articles, but I’ll just flip through them pretty fast rather than trying to describe much about what they say. I’ll be putting all the slides from this talk online, so if you want more details, you can download that file and read the articles there.

There are also some mentions in other Hallmark promotional material, as well as online references, but for the most part it just duplicates what is in the articles I’ve included.

The most astonishing thing about this article to me is that it was written at a time when Vivian had already been working at Hallmark for 24 years, 20 of them as a designer, yet she was at the very beginning of the “attributed” stage of her career. If the 240 cards per year

estimate is accurate, she had at this time already designed about 5,000 cards! Yet, since the cards described and pictured were contemporary ones at that time, virtually none of her cards from before about 1946 are identifiable. It's fairly easy to identify her greeting cards that are similar in style to the paper dolls, but we essentially have no way to know which of the Hallmark cards published during the 1930's and early 1940's are among her 5,000 early designs. Some card subjects mentioned in the article are animals, flowers, humor, and specialty formats like poster cards, easel cards, multi-page story booklets, and cards with embellishments like ribbons and feathers.

Page 4, Genealogy chart

My other big hobby besides collecting paper dolls is doing genealogy research. I have a huge database of relatives, mostly from east Kentucky, containing over 70,000 people. But I also like to combine my two hobbies and research the genealogy of my favorite paper doll artists. This is an outline of Vivian's family tree.

Her father, William Trillow was born in England, immigrated to the U.S. in the 1880's, where he owned and operated a florist shop, first in Des Moines, and later relocated to Kansas City while Vivian was in high school. Her mother, Grace Estelle Ostrow (she went by both names, appearing in some records as Grace and others as Estelle or Estella), was born in Minnesota to a French Canadian mother, who divorced while she was a young child, and raised Grace and her two siblings on her own.

Vivian had already been working at Hallmark for 12 years when she married John H. Smith Jr. in 1938, at the age of 33. They had no children of their own, but John was very close to his nephew Harold Weygandt Jr, known by the family as Hal, a son of his older sister Audry. I'm not sure what became of Audry, but in the 1920 census she is living with her parents (and John Jr.), recorded as married but with no husband in the household, and in the 1930 and 1940 censuses Harold Jr. is living with John's parents, listed as their grandson, but Audry is not to be found.

Hal served in World War II as a U.S. Navy fighter pilot based in England, and married an English gal there. After the war he settled in Los Angeles, and invited his uncle/foster brother John Smith to form an aviation company there. Hal was the pilot, and John was the business manager. In those days, a husband's career always took precedence over his wife's – if she had one at all – so Vivian went to Mr. Hall in tears, explaining that she would have to leave her job with Hallmark. Instead, they made what was a very unusual arrangement for the time, that Vivian would work from California, communicate with her editors by telephone, and submit her artwork, both the preliminary sketches and the final work, by mail.

So all the Hallmark doll cards, paper doll cards, play houses and other items we are so familiar with were designed and painted by Vivian at her home studio in California, and shipped by mail to Kansas City. She was a pioneer of what later became known as "telecommuting". Hallmark must have been very anxious to keep her on staff to make such a virtually unprecedented arrangement. And again, remember that this was done two years *before* the release of the cards she first became famous for!

Pages 5 and 6, Century of Caring article

The Century of Caring book, published in <fix me>, contained short retrospectives on several of Hallmark's more well-known or influential artists. This two-page spread about Vivian features two of the Hallmark doll cards, and four of her greeting cards from the 1950's. The Santa card at the top is a personalized design where the toys are inserted in the top and printed with names of family members.

Page 7, Pieces from Santa card

This is my copy of that Santa card, which I bought used on eBay. I'm missing two of the toys shown in the book – the drummer and one of the two angels. It's possible that Hallmark shipped the cards preassembled, including only the toys matching the family names, but I suspect more likely the pieces were delivered with the "extra toys" having blank tabs, and the person sending it chose not to include the pieces that were not labeled.

Pages 8-12, Article from 1981 Doll Reader

This 4-page article on Hallmark Doll Cards from the April 1981 issue of Doll Reader was written by Bette Wells, who used to be part of our paper doll community. She made a lot of cute paper dolls back in the 1980's, mainly of animals, that were printed in doll magazines and by Shackman. It probably has the most biographical detail of all the articles in print, since Bette was able to interview Vivian's best friend and fellow Hallmark artist, Ethelwyn Dills.

The first page of the article also displays two promotional pieces for the doll cards, from the collections of two other well known paper doll collectors, a merchandise bag from the collection of Janie Varsalona, and a cardboard store display piece of two stuffed horses with feathered headdresses from the collection of Betsy Slap. The horses originally came pulling a coach, not pictured here. Betsy probably has the best collection of rare Hallmark items, but I've never been fortunate to see it. I do have the gift bag, though, which is coming up on another slide.

[Slide 9] The Hallmark doll cards were released in three series: sixteen Dolls from the Land of Make Believe in 1947 – mostly based on nursery rhymes, although a few like Cinderella were from fairy tales, a second set of sixteen Dolls of the Nations in 1948, and finally in 1949 four dolls based on the MGM film of Little Women. The second page of the article shows this last set.

[Highlighted passage on slide 10] One other very juicy tidbit of information in this article is the news that Vivian and Ethelwyn did some weekend moonlighting on children's books for Merrill! How I wish I knew what they were, but they would have been either anonymous or under a pen name, and this would have been before 1945, and thus before Viv had developed a style that I would be able to recognize. If anybody has any inside track on Merrill history from the 30's and 40's, this would be a great detective project to figure out which books they worked on.

Pages 13-16, Article from 1984 National Doll World

This second article, from the March 1984 issue of National Doll World, covered much of the same material, but in color. (The author was Anne Flores, which is not a name I'm not familiar with. Probably she moved in the doll collecting circles rather than paper dolls.) It shows the first version of the collector's album. There were at least three different designs for the collector's album, this red one, a blue one that was released with the Dolls of the Nation series, and a green one that accompanied the 1954 reprints of the Dolls from the Land of Make Believe.

Since these doll cards were sold literally by the millions, and promoted as collectibles to be placed in albums, unlike most paper ephemera there are a lot of surviving copies in good condition, making them easy to find on eBay. They start at about \$6 for the ones that are missing the feathers, are signed or otherwise slightly damaged, and going up to about \$20 for those in excellent condition. If you have the money to spend, it is not hard to put together a complete collection in a month or two.

[detail on slide 16] The last page of this article shows a treasure chest box which was sold as an alternative way to store your doll cards. (I have a copy of this treasure chest in very good condition.)

Page 17, Polly Flinders

Since most of you are probably familiar with the doll cards, and since I have a lot to get through, I'm only going to show two of them from my collection, plus a few of the promotional items. This is Little Polly Flinders who sat among the cinders, from the Make Believe series. Notice the purple sequin at her throat. All the dolls had their own color of feather and sequin.

Page 18, Sandy

... and this is Sandy of Scotland, from the Dolls of the Nations. His sequin is up on his hat. He has a black feather, which is on my copy of the card but I cropped off the picture to better fit the doll.

Page 19, merchandise bag

This is the copy I have of the special bag that retailers gave customers to hold their card purchases. It's about 6 by 8 inches, big enough to hold a thick stack of cards.

Page 20, Bookmarks

Another promotional giveaway in 1948 was this set of bookmarks showing the first 8 dolls in the series.

Page 21, Brochure page with checkout stand

This is one page of a 16 page marketing brochure sent to Hallmark retailers to push them to prominently display the doll cards in their stores. This picture shows the stand full of cards displayed right next to the cash register, and emphasizes that the doll cards function as a gift in their own right, not just as a greeting card.

Page 22, Brochure page with stage coach

Here is another page of the brochure, showing the display piece with the horses and the coach.

Pages 23-25, Dolls of the Nations with display stands

The final marketing doll card pieces in this presentation are a group of individual display stands with background scenes for the Dolls of the Nation series. (They may have only been made for the first eight dolls.)

Page 26, Poinsettia doll Christmas gift tag

This little card here is a gift tag, about half the size of the doll cards. The copyright date is 1947, the same date as the first doll cards. I wonder if there were any more of them?

Page 27, Early bunny cards

OK, moving on from the doll cards that made her famous, I'm going to jump back in time to the early to mid 40's, showing some of Viv's cards that came just before the doll cards.

On the right hand side here is an enlargement of one of the illustrations from the 1948 Christian Science Monitor article. On the left is one of the cards from my collection with a stuffed rabbit with a similar face. Also notice the flowered hat which is similar to hats in several of the paper doll cards.

Page 28, Scribbles

One of Hallmark's most popular lines from 1945 through 1947 was a series of character dolls illustrated by Vivian, where the character's name was shown next to the copyright on the back. They were the precursors of later card characters from American Greetings like Strawberry Shortcake, Holly Hobbie and Peppermint Rose.

The leading man was a little boy in floppy brown overalls, red bandana and pointed hat, known as Scribbles. In the middle is one of the large standup easel cards referenced in the Christian Science Monitor article. These easel cards were about 8 to 9 inches tall. The card in the upper right is a regular sized diecut card, and the other two are smaller quarterfold cards, about 3 inches square.

Page 29, Doodles

Doodles was Scribbles' girlfriend. She is shown with curly hair tied up in a ribbon, a white puff-sleeved blouse, brown vest, and long full skirt, usually in yellow with red dots, although sometimes in red with white dots. Collectively, the cards in this series are often referred to as Scribbles and Doodles cards, although there were several other characters in the cast.

Notice the similarity of the face shapes, with the small mouths, wide cheeks and very low eye placement, to those on the Hallmark doll cards.

Page 30, Cuddles

Cuddles is a younger girl than Doodles. She wears a red or pink hat with a scalloped brim, a black or navy blouse with a white eyelet collar and scalloped wide bell sleeves, and a skirt to match her hat.

Page 31, Dee Dee

Dee Dee is another young girl. She wears a conical green hat adorned with springs of berries and Lily of the Valley flowers tied in a bow under her chin, and a yellow and green plaid dress. She is usually pictured in an outdoor setting, often with woodland animals.

Page 32, Blue Jean

Blue Jean was a 1940's teen, usually shown as here with loose rolled up denim jeans, a yellow peasant blouse, magenta head scarf and matching loafer shoes.

Page 33, Smarty Pants, Hank & Hattie, and Tommy

Some of the other characters include Smarty Pants, whose patched yellow skirt usually billows up to show the bloomers beneath it, the country couple Hank and Hattie, and the farm boy Tommy, who sometimes appears with a turtle and other times with a puppy.

Make special note here of Hank's hat, with the zig-zag brim. This is a signature Viv hat motif, and can be used to help assign other cards.

Page 34, 1947 Date book

Each year during the Christmas season Hallmark hands out a free date book with store purchases. The 1947 calendar, distributed in late 1946, was illustrated by Viv mostly with her characters from the greeting cards. I don't recognize the girl from October, and I'm not sure whether the boy on the March page was a spruced up version of Hank with his hair slicked down, or a separate character.

Page 35, Girl with duckling

The same face shape Viv used for the character dolls and the Hallmark doll cards also appears on many other cards of the 1940's, such as this diecut birthday card from 1948.

Pages 36-40, Little Bo Peep

Before I show the series of true paper doll cards, I'm going to jump ahead a couple decades, to the late 1960's. Some of the last cards that Viv designed before she retired was a set of standup dolls harking back to the Land of Make Believe doll cards. These cards are labeled "Designed by Vivian Smith" on the back, giving us a reference for her late 1960's style.

The only one I have is this Little Bo Peep card. Like the original set, they were double-sided, but with an additional skirt or apron flap, so that there were three colored layers rather than just two, and a separate slotted double-sided hat brim, making them dressable paper dolls, if you count hats.

Page 41, Little Miss Muffet

This picture of the Little Miss Muffet from that series is a snap from an eBay auction that I lost. (I actually lose a pretty lot of the auctions I bid on. There are other Viv collectors out in eBay land with deeper pockets than me.) There was reportedly a third doll in the series, but I do not have a picture of her, and am not sure what the character was. Another collector told me she thought it might have been Mary Quite Contrary.

Page 42, Dutch girl

Also released the same year as the standup nursery rhyme dolls was a set of small 10 cent diecut cards, harking back to the Dolls of the Nations concept. This one of a little Dutch girl has a Valentine greeting inside. I wish I had more of them, since they fit the theme of this convention.

Pages 43-44, Screen shots from my web site

Moving on to the paper doll cards! The first four of these were issued at the same time as the second series of standup doll cards, and are listed on the inserts. They continued to be released through the early sixties. I'm not going to focus on them much, mainly because most of you have already seen them. If not, you can explore them at leisure on my web site.

[Page 43] This is a screen shot of the top of the first page of the Vivian section that site. The bottom of that page contains small images of the fronts of all the Viv paper doll cards that I know of, plus a few more Hallmark cards of the same format which were probably by other artists. About half of the small images link to pages where you can view and download the paper dolls at a resolution suitable for printing and cutting.

[Page 44] This is one of those pages. Since my mother is named Ann, and she looks a lot like the "This is Ann" card, I formatted that page differently from the others, as a birthday greeting to my mm.

Pages 45-56, The first four “This is ...” paper doll cards

This next set of slides shows the insides and outsides of the first four “This is a Hallmark paper doll” cards. These first four were all occasion cards, rather than mentioning a birthday or any holiday, continuing with the “collectible” theme of the standing doll cards.

[Page 45] The cards contained a punch out outfit on the front, with the doll tucked inside on a separate heavy card, with the head sticking through a slot. So on this Janet Sue card, the hat, coat and umbrella punch out, but the legs don't. [Page 46] The two inside pages contained costumes, as did the back of the card. [Page 47] Here you see the back and front together, with the front displayed without the doll. The next three cards are all in the same format.

Pages 57-70, Some later paper doll cards

Viv continued to draw several paper doll cards per year throughout the fifties and early sixties. [Pages 57-58] These were often released in multiple variations, to various relatives like daughter, niece, granddaughter, or just to “a special girl”. Sometimes the costumes have color variations. [Page 59] They do not have copyright dates, but sometimes I get copies that are dated by the sender when they were signed, or in envelopes with a postmark. [Pages 60-61] In the sixties, some of the cards started to use a combination of painting with photographed embellishments, like the ribbon and yarn on this robe and coat.

Pages 71-72, More fronts only

I won't have time to do through all of the paper doll cards, because I want to move on to the other items. Here are the fronts of 16 more cards.

Pages 73-76, Cathy and Bill

Some of the cards I have not yet been able to acquire, and have only images captured from eBay, or sent to me by other collectors. One of them I really want to find is this wedding card. The images are fuzzy. If anybody has this card, I would love to get full res scans!

Pages 77-79, Here's Sue

Hallmark also released some paper dolls designed by Vivian that were in other formats than greeting cards, such as wrapping paper, party favors, or large envelopes to be given as gifts. This large doll with three outfits came in an 8 by 10 envelope, and had movable arms connected to brads. The neck brad is disguised as a charm on a choker.

Pages 80-83, Party dolls

This set of 8 double-sided dolls, just under 7 inches tall, came in an 11 x 14 inch envelope. Their dresses are flocked and glittered. The dolls were to be assembled, and stood in a ring around a cake. Each guest was given a doll to take home as a favor, with extra costumes on the place mats, which were sold separately.

Page 84, Dancing Debbie

This is a screen shot of one of the two sets of wrapping paper on my web site. The other one was for a cowboy called Wee Willie. Each set came with two copies of the doll on gift tags, and two sheets of wrapping paper with the outfits. This square you see here is only a part of one sheet, enough to show all the costumes. There were six repeats of this pattern on each sheet. So hopefully a wrapped gift would show at least one uncreased copy of each outfit! On my site, I've also reorganized the dolls and costumes so that they can be printed larger on letter sized paper, to make a regular paper doll set.

Pages 85-91, Almost paper dolls

This next section shows a few other paper toys that I call "almost paper dolls", such as walking dolls, cone dolls, and puppets. (I have more of them than I'm showing here.)

Pages 92-103, Christmas calendar

For the 1956 Christmas season, Hallmark sold a card that followed the format of the risqué pinup calendars of that era. The similarity of the faces to the paper dolls makes it clear these cards were designed by Viv. I doubt you could get away with these little characters today, with their childlike cherubic bodies in suggestive poses, but I think the card is very cute.

Pages 104-106, Hallmark Visitor Center

When we had our convention in Kansas City in 2010, we had a field trip to the Hallmark Visitor Center. One of the rooms was devoted to displays of some prominent Hallmark artists of the past. I photographed all the items by Viv, which provided more examples for my project of learning to identify unsigned works of hers. (I also showed a couple of my binders to the archivist. Unfortunately she was not allowed by their legal department to confirm my identifications, but she did agree that I had developed a good eye, so I'll take that as she saw no obvious misattributions.)

Pages 107-112, A Child's Prayers

In the 60's and 70's, Hallmark released a lot of little pocket sized hardback books, to be given as small gifts. One nice thing about these books is that, unlike the cards, the artists and writers were all attributed. Most of them were by other artists, but one was by Vivian. The illustrations serve as excellent examples of her mid-sixties style. Notice how similar the children are to the Little Bo Peep and Miss Muffet standing doll cards that I showed earlier.

[Pages 111-112] Observe the spindled chairs with the tall backs that the family are sitting on. This style of chairs also appears in the Paper Doll Playhouse, which we'll see soon. I'm making note of it because there are a series of Victorian scenes that are not attributed, and those chairs can help identify the cards as Vivian's.

Page 113, Nativity card

This is one of the very few regular greeting cards that was signed by Vivian. The way the angels and other figures are drawn is also similar to those on the Victorian scenes, which I will get to soon.

Pages 114-117, Paper Doll Playhouse

This Paper Doll Playhouse is one of the easiest to find Vivian items. It is signed on the back. You can nearly always find a copy for sale on eBay. It came in three versions, this one with the blue roof and red door being the first and most common. The second version was very similar, but with some Christmas touches like a tree. The third version had yellow walls and an orange roof, and the verses were moved from the top of the inside scenes to the floor. (I do not have a copy of that one. It shows up on eBay rarely, and I've bid on it several times but never won.) The inside of the house contains four standup rooms with punch out accessories, and a young couple and their baby to occupy the house.

Page 118, Congratulations on your Twins

Here we see a congratulations card for the parents of twins, where the proud parents are almost identical to the couple with only one baby who live in the Paper Doll Playhouse. This card is, of course, like nearly all the others, not formally identified as illustrated by Vivian, but I think you can see that there's no doubt. (Flipping back and forth between this slide and the previous one.)

Page 119, Chairs from the Playhouse

These are the chairs from the Paper Doll Playhouse. Observe their similarity to those in the little book of prayers.

Pages 120-121, Victorian scenes

Here are two of the Victorian scenes I mentioned earlier. They popup to make a 3D setting. There were dozens of these cards. I have about 7 or 8 of them. You see on both of these Vivian's signature black spindled high back chairs, and the figures with faces drawn similarly to those in the nativity card.

Pages 122-123, Droopy eyed animals

These next two cards are from a very large series of cards Hallmark released in the early fifties, featuring animals with large droopy eyes and red or black noses. There were hundreds of these, most dated from 1951 through 1953. I am not sure they are by Vivian, but I suspect so. The animal faces are nothing like those on the paper doll cards, or her signature look of the late fifties (which I'm much more fond of), but the lettering is exactly like hers, and some of them have the crinkle edged hats and the triangular bow ties that were among her trademarks. Perhaps they were collaborations. But as I mentioned at the outset, Viv was very versatile, and did not stick to just one look, like many other greeting card illustrators did. So you need to use these little features to tie them together.

Pages 124-126, Cakes

Since cakes often appear on birthday cards, Viv's way of drawing them is one of the clues you can use to identify her work. In this first image, I show the cakes on some of the cards where the girls holding them are similar to the paper doll girls or the character dolls from the late forties, so that you have the girls to mark it as a "Viv card". From that you learn how she draws cakes, and then you can find those cakes on other cards that don't have human figures. They are nearly always adorned with roses. The sides are usually slanted rather than straight. The candles are usually, although not always, clustered together in the middle, with a single glow around all the flames.

Page 127, Droopy eyed rabbits with cake

Here is another one of those droopy-eyed animal cards, with a cake on it. This cake has the roses and slanted sides, but the candles are spread out.

Pages 128-133, Baby Record Book

Some of Viv's most adorable cards are multi-page elaborate baby cards. This one is a card for Baby's First Christmas in the format of one of those albums where you put pictures and mementos. It's so cute I'm going to show all the pages. [Page 129] On this first inside page, notice the little Victorian house. This style of tall house with a wrought iron railing at the top of the roof will appear on other cards. [Pages 130-132] The next three spreads can be filled out with photos and memories, but although my copy is used, and signed at the end, the fill-in pages were left as is. [Page 133] On the last page, there is a pocket to tuck other cards given to the baby inside, and save them all together.

Page 134-135, Viv Originals!!

Finally, here is one of the treasures of my collection. Two original pastel drawings, signed by Vivian. I got these framed, from someone who bought them at an antique store in California. The seller had no idea where they came from, but since Viv lived in California, as do the children of her nephew Hal who was her sole heir, most likely they were made as gifts for either one of their children or a friend, and somehow drifted into the secondary market. I've brought them for you to look at.

There are many more examples of Vivian's work on my web site, including some cards of rabbits, and cats. Be sure to follow all of the links! On my Facebook page there are photos of some of the pop-up cards, some more baby albums, and angels.

See:

http://tpettit.verio.com/dolls/pd_scans/viv_index.html

https://www.facebook.com/teri.pettit.adobe/photos_albums

