

*An American girl becomes embroiled in World War II after going to Paris to study painting for six months. She spends the five years of the war with a French family in the south of France and she could never have imagined the ways in which her life would change...*

## **The Secret of Stonewood Cottage - Second Edition**

by Barbara T. Browning

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The background of the cover is a photograph of a small, weathered stone cottage with a gabled roof and a chimney. The cottage is situated on a grassy cliffside. In the background, the ocean stretches to the horizon under a dramatic, cloudy sky with a soft glow from the setting or rising sun. The overall mood is serene and atmospheric.

THE SECRET OF  
*Stonewood  
Cottage*

*Barbara T. Browning*

*The Secret of Stonewood Cottage*

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Second Edition

1. Fiction / War & Military
2. Fiction / Historical

# 3

Bea grew up in a three-story white house named The Pines with her parents, William and Mae; Trudy, her younger sister; and a Prince Charles Spaniel named Albert. Bea was not especially pretty, but she was smart and talented. Her shoulder-length brown hair was lightened by thin blond streaks. Her hazel eyes were bright with constant excitement and expectation, fringed by long, lush brown lashes. Bright golden hairs grew haphazardly in different directions in her dark brown brows, creating an inquisitive expression.

She would paint for hours on end—her pallet full of vivid yellows, reds and purples, somber browns, greens, ochre, and black. She was bored with school, but she studied hard because she knew that a good education was important. Her friends wanted to get married right out of school. But Bea had other plans. Her dream was to study painting in Paris, France.

One lazy spring day, she sat in the swing under the huge oak tree in the front yard, daydreaming. Then her whole world was changed by the arrival of the LaValle family

from France. She met a new friend, Monique, and received an invitation to visit them in Passy near Paris.

Bea graduated from high school about a year later, just after her eighteenth birthday. For days she built up her courage. Finally, she asked her parents if she could go to Paris for six months to study painting. "I could stay with Monique and her family. They did invite us. Oh, please, please, Papa. Mama, please say yes." She teased, chided, and begged.

Finally, her mother wrote Francoise LaValle asking if it would be convenient for Bea to visit them. Bea waited impatiently for a letter from Madame LaValle. Her answer came from Monique instead. She received a cablegram one and half weeks later.

BEA stop LETTERS TAKE TOO LONG stop  
ALL OF PARIS TO SHOW YOU stop HURRY  
stop

Bea twirled with delight, hugging the good news. "Oh, Mother! I am really going to Paris! This is a dream come true. There is so much to do!"

They set the date and made final arrangements. Bea happily packed her watercolors, oil paints, sketchpads, and brushes, excited to be going to Paris. Her father would ride the train to New York with her and see her off at the airport. He would return to The Pines after an overnight stay in bustling New York City.

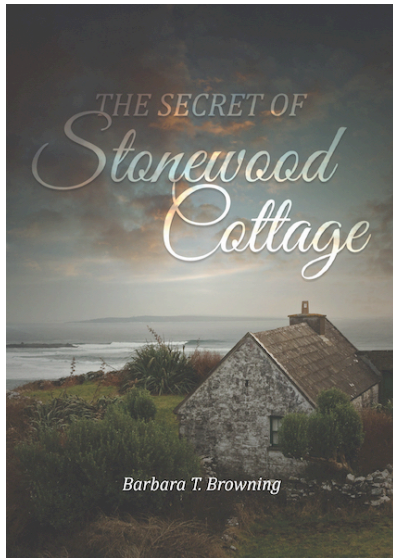
Trudy was upset and angry! “*You have all the fun. I never get to go anywhere.*” She whined and pouted until Bea was ready to board the L&N train that would speed her to New York. “I wish I could go with you, but Papa said *I can take a trip when I graduate. I will miss you, big sister. Please write to me. Promise?*” Bea promised and hugged Trudy tightly for a long moment.

Bea’s eyes brimmed with unshed tears as Mae took her in her arms. She hurried to the train and then turned and waved from the steps. She was excited and frightened. She had never been separated from her family for more than a few days. France was far, far away from her beautiful warm, safe home.

Once in the New York airport, Bea waited impatiently for the plane to Paris to begin boarding passengers. William turned solemnly to his daughter and put his hands on her shoulders. “Beatrice, your mother and I love you very much. We have taught you moral values—values that will serve you well in life. You are now a young lady and will be far from home. We know you will behave in a manner that will make us proud. Give our regards to Monique and her family. Please write to us often. Let us know how your art instructions progress. I have opened an account for you at Monsieur LaValle’s bank. He will give you money as necessary. Take care and have a safe and happy trip. We will await your return in six or seven months.” He embraced her warmly and kissed her forehead. She looked up with

glistening eyes. William watched solemnly as she boarded the plane.

Bea twirled a lock of hair as she looked out the window. New York quickly disappeared. She was embarking on an adventure. She would be astounded and terrified at the events that would soon impact her life.



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