Born in Des Moines, Iowa— in 18—. Then called Fort Des Moines and situated on the Missouri River, a jumping off spot for miners.

Came east to N Y at the age of 12. 
Grand-Mother born in South. Owned slaves. 

Father went west in 1859—Mother followed next year. Both born in Ohio. 

Grandmother's father was the brother of Daniel Boone. (get name)
My earliest recollection was when I fell out of my high chair and knocked out my first front tooth.

My next keen est memory was when I was given the charge of my small brother and every time he wet his pants I got spanked.
We crossed the plains in a Covered Wagon and there were no children or women within forty miles of where my mother was. We had no churches, no automobiles, no moving pictures.... nothing but Religion for stimulus and excitement.

One day a strolling preacher came along who was going to hold services in a little cabin way over on the mountain top, which was set aside for such purposes.

My father took my little brother on his arm and led me by the hand and my mother followed in the path behind us, for there were no roads over the mountain. When we got there, the cabin was filled with miners, whom the minister exaltedly requested to partake of communion for the forgiveness of their sins. I tottered down the aisle after them, my knees shaking under my skirts - and knelt at the altar to receive communion. Then I got up, walked back to my seat and sat down. The sight of a small child walking alone to the altar in the midst of these men caused a great excitement and when I got home my mother said to me: "Oh Gertie, I was so proud of you today!"

To this I did not reply - nor did I say anything about it thereafter, until Prohibition came in - and then I knew that I went up to the Altar to get some of that wine!

... * * *

I had an aunt, the wife of a minister, who used to make the wine for the church out of unfermented wild grapes and she used to let me lick the spoon....

Age about five.
The West at this time was sparsely settled. Developments were primitive. Wild beasts including Mountain lions, wild sheep etc. were in evidence. Great eagles and wild birds of many descriptions. Many of these birds came to be tamed by the settlers to the extent of eating out of our hands.
On the prairies we were at a loss for fuel for fire, as there was no evidence of lumber of any description—only short grass and tumble weeds in scattered locations. We depended on Buffalo chips for this purpose and I clearly recollect as a child, when I was sent out to gather them—that I fastidiously lifted my skirt to grasp them without soiling my fingers.
I was five or six years old and I saw a lot of men going past the door with a man with a rope around his neck - whom they were going to lynch. I raced after them but my mother pulled me back - greatly to my displeasure. She said: "Wait until I curl your hair." (It seems I was always getting my hair curled!) She lifted me on the chair - fixed my hair and fluffed out my skirts and as I reached the door I discovered that the lynching was over and they were all coming back. I never got over this disappointment until Buffalo Bill came east. Then I had an opportunity to see a fake lynching at the show and get the matter out of my system.
When I was about seven years of age, we were going East by Stage Coach. The stage route was established at this time and we used to travel back and forth to the East. Passengers rode both inside and atop the coach with the result that travelling was none too comfortable.

On this particular trip we rested as the coach stopped on the road, to remove our shoes. Our feet were so swollen that it was impossible for us to replace our shoes and the coach went ahead without us—leaving us to wait for the next coach. This we did, and when we arrived in the East we learned that the coach in which we had originally started had been attacked by the Indians and every one of the passengers had been massacred.
One day a report came that the Indians were coming on to attack us, and a nephew of my father's was busily engaged making cartridges in the kitchen. My small brother stood beside him as he poured the powder into the shells when suddenly a spark from the fire ignited a speck of the fire and caused an explosion. My brother's hand was so badly burned that the skin hung in ribbons from his fingertips. After taking care of him they took the young man, whose face was badly burned out into the woods where they applied fresh manure to the wounds — and this was the only method of cure practiced in these early days.
My father had a mill located near Ureka Gulch, where our cabin was—about forty miles from Denver. This mill was used to get the gold out of the rocks and they used to bring this gold to the cabin—usually a ball about eight inches in diameter... to weigh it and take account of it.

I was allowed to pick up the crumbs after they were through and I had a little bottle with a wide neck which finally came to be filled with these gold fragments. I had a rag tied around the top of it and stored it away in a chink in the cabin for it was of no use to me because there was nothing near us that I could buy.
The nearest shopping place to where we lived was about forty miles away and one year just before the approach of Christmas, the miners suggested to my mother that she hang a pillow slip instead of a stocking on the door of our cabin... which she did. The miners then rode to Denver and bought all the things they could find for both my little brother and myself. Among other things that tumbled out of this improvised Christmas stocking were a gold ring and a Primer - illustrated with many pictures. The ring rolled out of the bundle scurried across the floor and fell down between the cracks in the floor of the cabin. But I was not concerned with the ring at all. The Primer was the thing that took my eye at once for the primer contained pictures and pictures to my mind even at this early time were more priceless than a whole pillow slip of gold rings.

It was during the Civil War that we lived there. My father had a Sawmill located a short distance from our cabin. One day his partner came to him and told him that for several nights he had seen a group of men on horseback riding past the mill. So he decided to hide among the logs this night and listen if possible to their conversation as they passed. He discovered that they were bound for the cabin of a neighboring settler who lived a mile or so away from us. He went to this man's cabin and asked him what it was all about but the man said he could not tell him - it would be worth his life. The partner, whose name was MacClellan (a relative of General MacClellan) then said to this man: "You're a Free Mason and so am I and you are bound by oath to tell me of this." At this the man agreed and disclosed that these men were Southerners who were planning to rob and kill us. When my father heard of this he sent a messenger to Denver by pony - and the Colonel in charge of military activity in this section rode forty miles to our place during the night without being discovered. When he arrived, my mother hid his horse in the kitchen of our two room cabin and as I followed her about, hanging on to her skirts, the horse, rather than the heroic colonel, aroused the curious interest of my childish mind.

The next day, a regiment of soldiers arrived from Denver and the sympathizers were arrested and sentenced to be imprisoned in Fort Larimore. This was three days distance from where we lived... but the men who accompanied them returned three days sooner than they were expected and said these southerners had escaped. Of course we knew what had happened...
When my son was born, I had an Irish servant girl who was very much upset because the child had not been baptized. In order to pacify the girl I told her she might take him to the Catholic Church and have him baptized in that faith. This she did—and the boy became a Catholic a fact which gave her happiness and comfort.

Years later he became blind. He was operated upon and shortly after as I sat by his bedside at the hospital I asked him if he could see me. He said he could—but only a white spot for my face. I was heartbroken. I went downstairs to the surgeon and said "Will my son ever see any better?"

He said: "No. His eyes may get stronger but he will never see any better than he does now. I don't know how I got home. I was so terribly grieved that I scarcely remember opening my door. Then I received a message from the hospital. A great mistake had been made. I was asked to call immediately. On my way I dug my foot into a hole in the ground and revealed a small crucifix lying in the mud, and in this moment, all the religion of my forebears came to me. On arriving at the hospital almost sick with fear, I was greeted by the surgeon who said that the nurse, in removing the hot poliomyelitis from my son's eyes, had discovered that his sight was not permanently endangered—and that he would soon see again.

Not long after this a young priest visited me from Newfoundland. He was practically dying with consumption and had been told he had about six weeks to live. He asked my advice or opinion in regard to his health and I told him that fresh air and exercise accompanied by healthgiving, nutritious food was all I could suggest. I also explained to him that it took me four hours to travel back and forth to my work daily—and before I left I gave him my crucifix and told him its story. By this time I naturally did not wish to part with it but as he was so anxious to have it I finally gave it up, with the stipulation that it was later to be returned to me.

I photographed him before he left, with the crucifix clasped in his hands and he went away.

Time passed and I did not hear any word from him so one day I left for Newfoundland with a friend to inquire after him. Nobody knew where he was. Then this friend
of mine came to me and said there was to be a dedication of an orphanage at which all Catholic Priests would be present. While I did not wish to go - the thought that this priest might be there compelled me to do so.

During the dedication my friend pointed to a robust, fine looking man and said: "Is that your priest." I looked intently at the man and said: "No." Later on I walked up to this man, told him the story of the crucifix and asked him if he knew the whereabouts of the priest. He looked at me and said that he was the priest I was looking for. I said "Where is my crucifix?" and he replied "Here" indicating the region of his heart. He seemed afraid that I was going to take it away from him so I told him he could continue to wear it. Later on he was made an Archbishop and when a big steamer was wrecked he said the prayers for the dying. I have not heard from him to this day - nor my crucifix either.
I was talking about my son's blindness to a lot of doctors - telling them of the incident of the crucifix. One of the doctors interrupted and said: "Can your son see now?"

I thought for a minute, looked at him and said: "He doesn't see me very much often."
When I was 27 years old, married and living in the East, I went to visit my mother in the mountains, where she kept a tourist's hotel and this Colonel, then a man of eighty, happened to be there. I was so intrigued with the memory of his heroism so many years ago that I would not let anyone else wait on him. There was a sightseeing coach which left the hotel at this time, carrying ten tourists to the top of a nearby mountain to see the volcano. This coach arrived at the hotel with eight sightseers and I dismissed the driver so that I might personally drive the four mule team and provide the seat of honor next to me for the Colonel himself. On the return trip down the mountainside there was but a single rut road to drive over and in order to prevent the coach from toppling over the side, it was necessary to give my attention entirely to driving the mules at a swift but steady pace. Imagine then, my astonishment when the old colonel, probably realizing my predicament—leaned over and insistently pinched my leg! This continued to my extreme discomfort for almost the remainder of the homeward journey and as my defenseless position made it impossible for me to physically repulse him, I had to console myself with the thought that even a one-time hero could become a roue over a given period of time.
Even as a child I always wanted to make pictures. One day I sat outside of the cabin with a piece of old ruled note paper and pencil. I wanted to draw the mountains. My mother, who hadn't an atom of artistry in her whole being, said to me, "Wait a minute Gertie, let me help you." She then took the paper and pencil, and with the aid of a saucer, drew scallops around it for mountains. Nobody knows how deeply I suffered or how much I grieved in the presence of such misunderstanding.
The first time I went to Europe was for the purpose of getting acquainted with my husband's people. (somewhere in the 70's). I had my little son with me and to my very great disgust, they put me in the Ship's Manifest - without asking me the facts. They had my age as 27 years and I was outraged as I considered this the age of a very old woman.

I went to Paris to study art - and over to Germany to visit my husband's people. One of my legs became lame from climbing five flights of stairs every day and my mother in law called in the family doctor. He asked me how I felt and I told him my heart hurt me.

He said: "Heart?" "HEART?"..... you have no heart!"

"And what have I then " I asked.

He said: "You have a camera box."

He was merely voicing the opinion of the German people at that time who could see no reason for a woman to deviate from her home duties.

Many years later this doctor had become so crippled with rheumatism that he could hardly walk. But he hobbled in to visit my mother in law one day and said:

" I have come to congratulate you upon your celebrated daughter in law. "

He was greatly enthused over some of my work he had seen on exhibition.
At this time in Europe — everybody went in for titles. For instance, one time I went to a coffee party which was as popular as tea parties are here, and I was introduced to Frau Upper Criminal Inspector Schmidt.
My husband’s sister had married a Bismark (nephew of etc.) and the two remaining daughters of the family felt that they could not afford to marry below this rank— but as there were no other Bismarks lying around loose one of them married a piano manufacturer. He could buy and sell the whole family— but he was in trade and therefore not eligible to the family circle, which was why he was never invited to the family house. But I always made a bee-line to his house when I went to Germany. His wine was good and his hospitality was famous.

One time when I went there his wife served us a delicious meal— served it herself— and clasped his napkin around his neck like the German women did and we all sat down. Presently he looked at me and laughed boisterously... and I said to him in German "Heinrich, why are you laughing?" He said: "You are so funny" and laughed some more. And I said: "Why am I so funny?" "Why" he said, still laughing, "You always tell the truth and nobody here ever tells the truth—and when you tell the truth they think you are lying."
I took a course in painting at the Pratt Institute for four years and then went to summer school in Paris. My husband did not want to let me go to Summer School but when they offered to take me over as a chaperone he let me go.
I had a letter of introduction to Rodin and found him to be very simple, very generous and very sincere. He had the greatest aura I had ever seen. It stood around him like a halo. He liked mature minds better than young ones.

Instead of posing his models he would allow them to wander around the studio until they happened to fall into a position that pleased him. Then he would tell them to hold it and start his drawing - watching the models all the time and not looking at his paper.

I made a photograph of him and when I got back to this country, sent it to him in care of a friend of mine who could speak French. She took it to his studio and he asked her to wait as he had to address a meeting of French artists. When they had gone away - she showed him the picture and he said: "Oh I am not as beautiful as that."... and he ran after the French people who had left and brought them back to look at it.

Some time later I made an enlargement of his profile which I had taken before, and sent it to him. But he died about the same time and I did not know whether or not he got it.

One day a cloud formed within the range of my vision (physic) and Rodin appeared to me. He would disappear then return but always in profile. I said:"I want to see you full face." And he replied: "This is to demonstrate to you that I got that profile picture before I passed away.

Then he went away.

A few days later another cloud appeared in which I could see his full face. He turned his head this way and that way and finally said:"Now I shall never come again". And he never did.
Arthur B Davies.

When I came back from Europe after studying there, nothing satisfied me here. Then my teacher at the Pratt Institute told me of this man Davies, and in order to satisfy her I went to the West Galleries to see his pictures. It was a big house and I went down to the basement where some of his things were and I stayed there so long that she came down to see what had happened to me.

I said to her: "This is what I thought was art until they taught me something else." I worshiped his work and bought some of his pictures at a time when he was very poor. He often came to see me. He never cared about photography but always discussed his paintings.

Sometimes later a friend came to visit me and told me that he had had two strokes. I went to see him and noticed that his face was brightly splattered with red. I could see at once if he had another stroke he would not live. He told me he was going to Europe. He bought each of his sons a farm and bought his wife a car. Then he went abroad. Shortly after, he died over there and his body was cremated. His wife didn't even know where he was until she arrived and received his ashes. He was a wonderful man - the aesthetic jewel of my life.

At one time he was so poor that he used to paste two pieces of worn canvas together to paint on. He was very shy. One day when my daughter Hermine had a lot of girls at the house, he walked in and when he saw the girls - turned around and walked out again. He had been carrying a wet umbrella which had dripped all over my carpet and when I entered the room I said to my daughter: Who did this? She replied, "Oh Mr. Davies - he came in but hurried out again - he's so shy!"

He lived only for his art.
Rodin autographed his photograph for me in French. He also sent me a bronze (from the Gate of Hell) together with some drawings... in appreciation for what I had done for him.

A connoisseur of Fine Art came to me one day and said "Where is that Rodin I hear you have, Madame Kasebier?"

I said here it is, Mr. Eddy - " indicating the photograph I had done of him.

He said: Well, that is Rodin. That is the best thing I have ever seen of Rodin. But - with a woman's privilege you have flattered him."

I said: "You haven't got it quite right, Mr. Eddy." "That is Rodin in the presence of a woman!"
When I wanted to take up photography I went into the store where I bought my camera to buy some supplies(?). The boy in charge of the shop was very stupid - and could not help me but there happened to be an old priest waiting who evidently knew something about this. He said: "Let me see your plates, Madame." And after looking at them he told me exactly what to do. I said; That's all very good but I'm afraid I shall not be able to remember it all when I get home. He then asked if I would permit him to visit my home so that he could show me just how it could be done. I told him I would be grateful. He came to the house several times and started me on my way to photography. I wanted to know what I could do to show my appreciation and he said simply to pass my knowledge on. I took prizes for my work and he was very proud of me.
The story of Who's Who.

My studio was located on the 11th floor of an office building at ------. I was alone there one morning, setting up for the day when a very dandified looking fellow came in and said he represented Who's Who and wanted to obtain some data regarding me. I answered his questions and when I got through he buttoned up his coat and said: "Now I think this ought to be worth about $150 to you."

"I don't understand you," I replied - who asked you to come here anyway?" Finally he came down in his price to $50, yet he didn't seem to realize that I resented his very presence in my studio.

So although I was alone in the building - I promptly took him by the arm and threw him out... and with it, my chances for getting in Who's Who! I had no desire to be in it anyway, as I figured I would have to reveal my age - a thing which never helps a woman in business.

* * * *

I could draw a perfect circle and an accurately straight line but I was never any good at figures. One day, in order to determine my age, I looked up my birth date and subtracted it from the current year. This I figured out as 196 years - which I've always maintained to be my age for two reasons. First - it's funny and second, it covers all contingencies.
I had a man one day whom I was photographing... who was sort of wooden and stodgy and who did not respond in any way. I said to this man: "You know I can read people's minds with my camera. I discovered a criminal that way one time."

He gave a leap, grabbed his hat and beat it. And I have never seen him since. He was a lawyer.
I had an arrangement with the World's Work to send me all their notables to photograph.

They sent me Lord Northcliffe and I didn't know who he was. I telephoned to Mr. Davies and he said he was a good American (in spirit).
Lord Northcliffe said to me when I was taking his photograph:

"It distresses me, Madame Kasebier to see you work so hard - knowing that I can do nothing to help you."

I replied:

"Lord Northcliffe, I love to work. I would pay for the privilege!"

In loud tones he boomed:

"Where were you born?

I said:

"I was born out west among the Indians - and I never got over it!"