MRS. KASEBIER
PHOTOGRAPHER
IS DEAD AT 82

Hailed As American Woman
Who Did Most To Make
Camera Prints A Fine Art

Noted as an Exponent of
New School Emotionalists

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She had chestnut brown hair which most of her life she wore in bangs over her very high forehead with coils wound around her head. Though her hair was as fine as a baby's, she had a great wealth of it. She always dressed differently than anyone else, a great source of pain to me as a child, not through any arfectation, but because she liked to be comfortable. She gave up wearing corsets entirely, in a burst of rebellion when corsets that laced the human form into something quite other than its original lines, became fashionable. She finally evolved a quite unique but very becoming style of dress for herself, and she stuck to it, with minor variations, for the rest of her life. She wore a generously-cut black skirt, broadcloth in winter and taffeta in summer, topped with a Chinese man's double-breasted shirt, usually grey or soft blue silk damask, with a tiny stand-up collar, and fastened with frogs of the same material down one side. Over this a short wide-sleeved Chinese jacket, elaborately embroidered for dress-up, and plain for every day. This outfit gave her freedom of movement and proved itself very practical. When she went out the made on a large black cape which reached the floor (sometimes trimmed with fur) and a tricorn hat rather like Napoleon's. She was an impressive figure when she swept into a room --- and she never just came in, she swept! In the dark-room she wore a heavy apron that engulfed her from neck to ankles: a necessary precaution as she usually came out splattered with chemicals from and with hypo on her shoes.

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We loved the stories of when she was a little girl, because instead of pointing a moral, as in most grown-ups' stories of "when I was your age", Granny's were the most exciting, even to the point of being blood-curdling, that we had ever heard. Her childhood was as full of adventure as a dime novel.

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The West at this time was sparsely settled, and there were no playmates for little Gertrude Stanton. She played among the rocks and fields, with birds and little field animals for companionship. She even tamed some of the birds so they would eat out of her hand. At this time she became attuned to the simple natural things which gave her so much joy, even through her later, more sophisticated life.

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The nearest shopping place was about forty miles from the Stanton cabin, and one Christmas the miners suggested to Mrs. Stanton that she hang up a pillow slip on the door instead of stockings at the fireplace. The men rode to Denver and bought everything they could find for Gertrude and her little brother. With these gifts, and some of their own gold nuggets, they filled the pillow slip. Among other things that tumbled out of this improvised Christmas stocking, were a gold ring and a primer filled with pictures. The ring rolled out of the bundle, across the floor, and fell between the cracks to disappear forever. But Gertrude did not mourn for it a minute; she was entranced with the picture book, which became at once her dearest possession. Pictures, even at that early age, were more priceless to her than a whole pillow-slip of gold rings.

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NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE Sunday, Oct. 14, 1934

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At one time Granny had an arrangement with World's Work to photograph all their notables. They made an appointment for Lord Northcliffe, and Granny didn't know who he was so she telephoned her friend Arthur B. Davies who told her that Northcliffe was a good American(Im spirit)

Lord Northcliffe said to Granny when she was photographing him
"It distresses me, Madame Kasebier, to see you work so hard knowing that I can do nothing to help you."
She replied "Lord Northcliffe, I love to work. I would pay for the privilege!"

In loud tones he boomed, "where were you born?"
She said, "I was born out west among the Indians and I never got over it."

Later Granny and Northcliffe became good friends and at the outbreak of the first world war, he wrote her a letter which went something like this;
My dear Gertrude;

(A few platitudes) ... It may be a long war but in the end we will win.
Yr. affec. Northcliffe

As every one at that time thought it would be a short war Granny felt this was an interesting comment and saved the letter ... rather treasured it as a human document, especially as its predictions were true. It wasn't until years later when she read the

Biography of Rose Lewis, the famous cook - that she came across a letter Northcliffe had written to Rose Lewis. She read:

My dear Rose;

[Some platitudes] - It may be a long war but in the end we will win and he sent her some soap.
Proposed Outline

Biography of Gertrude Kasebier

1852 - Born in Des Moines, Iowa (then called Fort Des Moines and situated on the Missouri River) in a log cabin. Only white child for many miles around. Daughter of Muncy Boone and John Stanton. Muncy Boone born in Kentucky - family owned slaves. Related to Daniel Boone (grandmother's father's brother). John Stanton born in Ohio, relative of Edwin Stanton, member of Lincoln's cabinet. She also had a brother Charles who, at the age of 15, went to Mexico and was never heard from again. Presumably killed in guerilla warfare.

1859 - John Stanton went west to Colorado to mine gold in Leadville. Mrs. Stanton and Charles and Gertrude followed the next year in a covered wagon with her sister and her husband (a Methodist minister). Chased by Indians, her Aunt repulsed Indians by throwing false teeth at them. She saw Indians buried with heads, hands and feet sticking out of the ground, as a warning not to molest the covered wagons. On the prairies they were at a loss for fuel, as there was no evidence of lumber of any description. They depended on Buffalo chips, and when Gertrude was sent forth to gather them, she fastidiously lifted her skirt to grasp them without soiling her fingers.

1859-1864 - The family settled in a log cabin in Ureka Gulch, Colorado (about forty miles from Denver). Mr. Stanton had a mill nearby where the gold was taken from the rocks. This gold was brought home to the cabin - usually in balls about eight inches in diameter - where it was weighed and accounted for. Gertrude was allowed to pick up the crumbs of gold, and she had a little bottle with a wide neck which finally came to be filled with these gold fragments. She tied a rag around the neck of the bottle and stored it in a chimney in the cabin, for there was no place for miles around where she could buy anything with her gold.

One day a report came that the Indians were coming to attack them. Her cousin was in the kitchen busily engaged in making cartridges, while her small brother stood beside him watching him pour powder into the shells. Suddenly a spark from the fire ignited the powder, and an explosion followed. Her brother's hand was so badly burned that the skin hung in ribbons from his fingertips. They took her cousin, whose face was badly burned, into the woods where they applied fresh manure to his wounds, as this was the only method of cure practised in those early days.

The West at that time was sparsely settled. Developments were primitive. Wild beasts including mountain lions, sheep etc. were in evidence, as well as 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 their hands.

Her aunt (the wife of the minister) was accustomed to making wine for the church from unfermented wild grapes and Gertrude was allowed to lick the spoon.

There were no women or children within forty miles of where they lived and Religion was the only stimulus and excitement they had. One day a strolling preacher came along, and he held services in a little cabin set aside for that purpose far over the mountain. Her father, taking her small brother on his arm and herself by the hand, with her mother following closely behind, went along the path over the mountain to the cabin as there were no roads at all. When they arrived the cabin was filled with miners, whom the minister exaltedly requested to partake of communion for the forgiveness of their sins. Gertrude tottered down the aisle after them, her knees shaking under her skirt, and knelt at the altar to receive
communion. The sight of the small child walking alone to the altar
in the midst of those men caused great excitement and when they
returned home her mother said to her "Oh! Gertie, I was so proud of
you today". To this she did not reply, nor did she mention it there­
after, but when Prohibition came in she remembered going to the altar
for some of that wine.

When she was five or six years old, she saw a crowd of men passing
the cabin door one day with a man with a rope around his neck in their
midst on their way to a lynching. She started after them, but her
mother pulled her back (to her great displeasure) and said "Wait until
I curl your hair, Gertie". (It seemed to her she was forever getting
her hair curled!) Her mother lifted her to a chair, fixed her hair
and fluffed out her skirts, then as Gertrude ran to the door she dis­
covered that the lynching was over and the men were coming back. She
never got over this disappointment until many years later when Buffalo
Bill came East. Then she took a bus load of poor children to see his
show, and there witnessed a fake lynching which got the matter out of
her system once and for all.

The nearest shopping place to where they lived was about forty miles
away, and one year just before Christmas, the miners suggested to her
mother that she hang a pillow slip instead of a stocking on the door
of the cabin, which she did. The miners rode to Denver and bought
everything they could find for Gertrude and her brother, and with these
and some of their own gold nuggets they filled the pillow slip. 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, across the floor and fell between the
cracks in the cabin floor. But she was not concerned with the ring at
all. The Primer was the thing that took her eye at once, for the Primer
contained pictures and pictures to her mind even at this early age,
were more priceless than a whole pillow slip full of gold rings.

Even as a child she always wanted to make pictures. One day she sat
by the door of the cabin with a piece of old ruled note paper and a
pencil. She wanted to draw the mountains. Her mother, who hadn't
an atom of artistry in her whole being, said to her "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 much the child suffered or how much she grieved in the pre­
sence of such misunderstanding.

One day her father's partner came to him and told him that for several
ights he had seen a group of men on horseback riding past the mill.
So he decided to hide among the logs that night and listen, if possible
to their conversation as they passed. He discovered that they were
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After they arrived in the East they went to live in New York and Gertrude started her formal education here. She later went to Moravian College in Pennsylvania, and afterwards told many stories of the "bundling" that went on while she was there.

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The first time she went to Europe to visit her husband's people, she had her little son with her and to her great disgust, they put her in the Ship's Manifest without asking her the facts. They had her age as 27 years and she was so outraged as she considers this the age of a very old woman.

Her 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 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, and was never invited to the family house. But Gertrude always made a bee-line to his house when she went to Germany, as his wine was good and his hospitality famous.
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At this time everybody in Europe went in for titles. One time when she went to a coffee party, which were as popular there as tea parties are here, she was introduced to Frau Upper Criminal Inspector Schmidt.

Subsequently, two daughters Gertrude and Hermine, were born to the family in New Durham, New Jersey. Gertrude milked the cow, tended the horses and chickens, helped with the garden, wore hip-boots, chased trespassers with an unloaded rifle. Eduard commuted to work in New York. There were Newfoundland dogs and carts for the children, too. They stayed on this farm four years, and they moved back to Brooklyn, where Gertrude enrolled at Pratt Institute and studied painting for ten years. During the last of these years she wanted to go to Paris to study, but her husband objected. Finally she was offered the opportunity to chaperone a class from Pratt going to Paris for summer school and she took it. Among the children in this class were Eduard Steichen, Willard Paddock and Clara and Charlotte Smith. It was about this time that she bought her first camera and started working with it for fun. Photography was in its infancy and very little artistic work had been done in it. Steichen also became interested in photography at this time. They developed their negatives in little rivers outside of Paris on moonless nights - as they had no darkroom. She was surprised with the results she achieved and gradually laid aside her brushes and paints and gave up the Academy Julien, and the camera became her one consuming interest. When she returned to New York she realized her lack of technical skill. One day she went into a photographic shop to buy some supplies. The boy in charge of the shop was very stupid, and could not help her, but there happened to be an old priest waiting there who evidently knew something about this. He said to her, "Let me see your plates, Madame". And after looking at them he told her exactly what to do. She told him that that was all very well but that she would not be able to remember it all after she got home. He then

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She went to a little photographer, Mr. Lifshey, in Brooklyn, and told him she wanted to learn from him. He said he didn't want a woman around getting in his way, but she turned up the next day anyway and set to work. As he couldn't get rid of her he made the best of it, but she butted into his sittings, corrected his lighting and composition. He always said she taught him all he ever knew about taking a picture.

All this was very embarrassing to her conservative German husband, who felt him disgraced by a wife who would work, but there were still many embarrassments to follow for the poor man. He was a kind, gentle man who adored his family, and never became accustomed to his very unconventional wife. Her frankness was a constant source of uneasiness to him. They went to the World's Fair in Chicago in 18-- with a business associate of his. As they rode through the grounds in a carriage, Gertrude spied a log cabin - a replica of Lincoln's birthplace. "Oh! Let's stop", she cried, "I want to see that". Eduard nudged her to keep still. "But I must see it," she said. Another nudge. "But I was born in a house like that", she shouted. Eduard's humiliation was complete. Genteel German people didn't get themselves born in log cabins and he never could understand the pioneer spirit that was part of his wife. He must have lived in constant suspense, never knowing whether he would find a house full of Indians (who must have amazed him), or artists, whom he understood even less. Patience is hardly the word for the virtue he must have possessed.

Of course, in those days women did not go into business, and when Gertrude opened a studio, it must have been a bitter blow to him. He very likely had learned by then that she couldn't be swayed from anything she was determined to do, and so he bore his pain in silence.

She won a prize of $50 with one of her photographs and this spurred her on to harder work. She showed some of her photographs to Alfred Steiglitz and he advised her to open a studio. She opened her first studio on E. 30th St. in what was then the Women's Exchange Bldg. Several years later she moved to 273-5th Ave. Had great success. Work very new and different from anything being done. Showed great courage in departure from conventional methods. Was hailed by some criticized by others but remarked by all.

1901- Exhibited and won medals and recognition in England France Germany and South America as well as in the U.S.

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She became friends with many of the interesting people of her day. On one of her trips abroad she had a letter of introduction to Rodin. She found him very simple, very honest, and very sincere. 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 drawing—watching the model all the time, and never looking at his paper.

Granny made a photograph of him, and when she returned to this country, sent it to him in care of a friend. 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 admire it.

A prominent society woman came to Granny's studio one day and saw a Rodin bronze and some drawings, this woman always treated Granny with condescension because she was a "working woman". When she saw the Rodin things she showed great surprise and said "Where did YOU get those?" Granny replied "Mr. Rodin presented them to me" "Well!" said the woman, catching her breath and becoming very confidential, "When I go to Paris I always send him a red rose, then he knows who is coming." Granny thought "you damned fool" but said nothing. "You know...he kissed me once" continued the woman. "That's nothing" said Granny "Just the French Form of salutation...he kisses everyone" Silence. Granny: "Did any one see him kiss you"? Woman: "Most certainly not!" Granny: "Nobody saw him kiss me either."

Rodin sent Granny the bronze and drawings in appreciation of the pictures she had made of him, he also autographed one of her pictures of him "De tout mon coeur d'artiste a un autre artiste, affectement"

A connoisseur of fine art came to her one day and said "Where is that Rodin I hear you have, Madame Kasebier?" she said "It is here, Mr. Eddy-" indicating the photograph she 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" She said "You haven't got it quite right, Mr. Eddy, that is Rodin in the presence of a woman."

Granny had some strange experiences, which she called physic. She said she developed this sense because she was deaf, and therefore her other senses became keener to compensate. One of these experiences concerned Rodin. It seems that she had made an enlargement of a picture she had taken of him in profile, and sent it to him. He died just at this time and she did not know if he had received it. One day a cloud formed within the range of her vision, and Rodin appeared to her. He would disappear then return but always in profile. She said, "I want to see you full face." he answered "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 she 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.

Granny accepted these so called "visions" very casually and often made drawings of what she had seen. Sometimes...perhaps coincidentally...pictures appeared in the paper a few days later depicting the same scenes and events that she had recorded.
She became friends with many of the interesting people of her day. On one of her trips abroad she had a letter of introduction to Rodin. She found him very simple, very honest, and very sincere. 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 drawing—watching the model all the time, and never looking at his paper.

Granny made a photograph of him, and when she returned to this country, sent it to him in care of a friend. She took it to his studio and 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 admire it.

A prominent society woman came to Granny's studio one day and saw a Rodin bronze and some drawings; this woman always treated Granny with condescension because she was a "working woman." When she saw the Rodin things she showed great surprise and said: "Where did YOU get those?" Granny replied: "Mr. Rodin presented them to me." "Well," said the woman, catching her breath and becoming very confidential, "When I go to Paris I always send him a rose, then he knows who is coming." Granny thought: "you damned fool" but said nothing. "You know... he kissed me once" continued the woman. "That's nothing" said Granny. "Just the French Form of salutation... he kisses everyone." Silence. Granny: "Did any one see him kiss you?" Woman: "Most certainly not!" Granny: "Nobody saw him kiss me either."

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