

Abby Ward Reed Kerr was born on November 24 in 1891 in Tehran Persia to missionary parents, Samuel Lawrence, and Irene Briggs Ward. When she was three years old her family returned to Ohio. At the age of 13, her family moved West from Ohio to California. Abby had six siblings, Samuel, Ben, Paul, Irene, Lawrence, and her twin Gertrude. In her youth she writes of walking from Glendale to the "January 1, 1907 "Flower Parade", five miles each way. On July 16, 1913, she married her second cousin, Lawrence Reed in Nevada. They had two children, George, born in 1915 and Mary Isabel, born 1916. Her husband, Lawrence Reed died May 14, 1918, during the flu epidemic. He worked as a miner and his death certificate lists Chalfant, California as the place of death. Sadly, her son George died the next year March 26, 1919 from mushroom poisoning. Abby worked as a medical social worker. In 1926, Abby married Peter Alexander Kerr from Lochranza, Isle of Arran, Scotland on June 8, in Prescott, Arizona. They gave birth to three more children, twins Pauline and Roberta on June 20, 1927, and Donald on December 12, 1928. Roberta passed away at the age of 5 on May 14, 1932. Abby is remembered as a strong and loving grandmother by her eight grandchildren. Her granddaughter Marie has two prominent memories of Abby. "When I was about 7 years old (1959) I asked Grandma Abby about her life, and she told me about the death of her first husband (Lawrence Reed) and shortly after the death of her four-year-old son George of mushroom poisoning". When I expressed my sadness, she said something like "tough things will happen in your life, and you just need to get over it and move on". Maybe a lesson from missionary parents, but one that stayed with me. My siblings and I thought of our grandmother as reserved and stoic. When I was 9, Grandma Abby stayed with us while my parents were out of town and one day she walked 6 miles to buy fabric and return to sew me a dress and bonnet to wear in the school play. Although never one to abundantly show affection, her caring, kindness and strength are my overriding memory. She passed away in 1972.



Abby Ward Reed Kerr and her twin, Gertrude Ward. About 1891



Gertrude Ward and Abby Ward Reed Kerr, about 1908



Abby Ward Reed Kerr about 1909



Lawrence Reed



Abby Ward Kerr and Peter Kerr, Hollywood Reservoir, about 1945



Abby Ward Reed Kerr, 1952, in Malibu, California