

Grace Centennial

A Saga of Service: the Wards - and Others

An Interwoven Tapestry: Elizabeth Kyle Ward; Herbert L. Ward; George Wright; Nancy Wright Ward; the Rev. Robert Griesser, Lorne George Ward and Mary Griesser Ward.

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The people who founded Grace Church were also key players in the establishment and development of Glendora and its neighboring communities. Their pioneer spirit prevailed and their success was abetted by the fact that they had not only energy and initiative, but strong faith! Among those who fit this profile were the Wards, Wrights, and Griessers.

Mrs. Elizabeth Kyle Ward and her son Herbert Ward were in attendance at the 1910 meeting which was the beginning of an Episcopal Mission Church in Glendora. How important their family story is in the history of Grace, and of our city! The Wards and their descendants made great contributions, as did their relatives by marriage, the Wrights and the Griessers.

Elizabeth Kyle was born in Ireland in 1841. Her parents were David and Nancy Walsh Kyle. In about 1842, the family immigrated to Canada, where they became farmers. In 1858, Elizabeth, then about 16, married Robert Ward, who had been born in England. The 1861 Canadian census states that they are living in Woodham, Ontario and that Robert is a farmer – and an Episcopalian! The couple went on to have a large family – certainly not uncommon in those days. The youngest son was Herbert Lorne, born in 1874. In addition to their own youngsters, Mr. and Mrs. Ward fostered a number of other babies and children over the years. The 1901 census records that Elizabeth was living with her (now adult) daughter Margaret and son-in-law William K. Smith in Port Rowan, Ontario. Robert Ward had died in 1899. Mrs. Ward was now a widow. She immigrated to the United States in about 1906.

Mrs. Ward's son, Herbert Lorne had already arrived in the U.S.A. in about 1902 (he'd have been about 28 years of age). Both mother and son were Glendora residents in the year 1910. After they had attended the famous "concept" meeting for the Episcopal Mission, headed by the Reverend Henry Quimby, each began a lifetime of dedication to Grace Church. Elizabeth continued to be devoted until her death in 1926 at age 85.

In 1907, Herbert Lorne Ward married Nancy Louise Wright. She was the youngest daughter in a family of great prominence in the history of Glendora and Azusa. Her father, George Wright (1815-1905) was a true pioneer. There are copious stories about his colorful life.

After having lived in New England and the Midwest, he brought his family to California, settling in Los Angeles in

1861. Wright was a man of intelligence and talent. Essentially self-educated, he served as a schoolteacher, practiced law, and was a surveyor and civil engineer. He was progressive, teaching his daughters that they were as smart as their brothers. He believed every child should have an education. His daughter Nancy Louise exemplified this attitude.

In 1870, the Wright family moved from Los Angeles to the Azusa/Glendora area and purchased 95 acres. Today, Citrus College is on much of that land. Over the years, George acquired more property and helped to start the company that brought irrigation to the region. As each of his many children married, he deeded property to them for the establishment of homes on his extensive estate. Before his death on December 15, 1905, he built a house for Nancy.

Much of George Wright's acreage was devoted to citrus growing. Indeed, Herbert Lorne Ward and Nancy Louise Wright had met when Herbert was working for one of the Wright orchards. The newlyweds moved into Nancy's home, which was located where the Citrus College administration building is today. In 1908, the couple became parents of a son, Lorne George Ward. Two other boys, Clarence and Herbert Wright Ward, followed.

Throughout their lives, the Wards, mother and son, were devoted to Grace. Elizabeth was especially active in the Women's Guild. Daughter-in-law Nancy followed in her footsteps. An item in the Oct. 9, 1921 issue of the *Glendora Gleaner* newspaper announced that the Guild would meet at the residence of Mrs. Elizabeth Ward [Mrs. Robert Ward]. Mrs. Ward would serve tea and a "silver offering" would be taken for the benefit of the Guild's ministries. It is noted that this was by order of the President, Mrs. Herbert Ward [Nancy]."

Herbert Lorne Ward, Nancy Ward, and son Lorne continued to be leaders of Grace through the years. Herbert began as a member of the Governing Board of the Mission and later continued for years serving on the Vestry as Warden. He participated in many ministries at Grace. So esteemed was he that after his death on March 25, 1930, a special meeting of the Vestry was held on April 3, 1930. Its purpose was to propose a resolution honoring him. This document praised him for his high ideals, great faithfulness, loyalty, and devotion. An excerpt:

"Therefore be it resolved:

That this Vestry express[es] its appreciation [for his]

wise and kindly sympathy...friendly and considerate habits which always marked him as a neighbor and citizen...unusual strength and gentleness of character..."

Nancy was now head of the Ward household. Church, community, and family continued to be the focal points of her life throughout her senior years. For example, records show that she gave a lecture at a meeting of the Glendora Historical Society in 1957. In the talk, she reminisced about growing up in Glendora.

Her son Lorne clearly possessed the same ideals as his forebears. Lorne George Ward was intelligent, industrious, and well educated, having graduated from both Citrus College and Pomona College. His work and love of travel took him to Canada, the Chicago World's Fair, several eastern and southern states, and France. In 1936, Lorne married Mary Amelia Griesser. This ceremony united two families that were key players in the history of Grace Church. Mary's father was the Reverend Robert Albert Griesser, an Episcopal priest.

Robert Griesser had a long and varied career. His ministry had taken him and his wife upon a mission to Soochow, China, where his daughter Mary Amelia was born. When she was two years old and her younger brother just nine months old, the family sailed to San Francisco. Apparently, the Reverend Griesser's wife, Mary, tragically died sometime after the return to America, although we do not know the date nor the circumstances.

The widower continued in his Christian mission, returning to China in 1915. However, by 1918, the little family was once in again in the U.S.A. and living with Robert's mother, Amelia S. Griesser in Visalia, California. This is borne out by the record of his World War I draft registration card.

Ships' manifests record that Mrs. Amelia Griesser loved to travel and took her grandchildren on a number of trips. By November of 1928, the Rev. Griesser was a California resident, and was teaching high school in Visalia. Sometime between that date and April 1930, he remarried. His new wife's Christian name was Marguerite, but we do not know her maiden surname. They established a household, which, of course, included his daughter, now 17, and son, 16.

The clergyman/teacher had been investigating new career opportunities, which would bring him to Southern California. In July 1930, a letter was sent from the office of Bishop Stevens in Los Angeles to the Vestry of Grace Church.

Below is an excerpt from the Bishop's letter:

"A clergyman has just come to Claremont...and is to be connected with Pomona College next year... the Archdeacon of the District of San Joaquin writes very highly of him and says that he would like to have some Sunday duty... His name is the Rev. Robert Griesser."

Thus Mr. Griesser became a supply priest for Grace of Glendora. His interest in Grace was very keen. Not only did he preside at Communion services, but he also became concerned about the church's financial affairs. This proved to be a blessing.

At this time, Grace was having severe monetary problems. On November 14, 1930, a special business meeting was held at the Legion Hall. Forty parishioners were present. A financial report was given; prospects looked bleak. A motion was made to close Grace Church and join with Holy Trinity in Covina! At this point, Robert Griesser opposed the motion and gave an inspiring, optimistic talk. As a result, the motion was not carried. In addition, many members volunteered to increase their pledges so that an independent church could continue. Therefore, Mr. Griesser was instrumental in the very survival of Grace. It truly was a turning point in our history! His involvement continued: In February of 1931, he encouraged the new Young Peoples' Fellowship; also, he supported Clarence Ward (younger brother of Lorne George Ward) to replace his father, Herbert, as Warden.

In 1932, Mr. Griesser's daughter Mary Amelia enrolled at Pomona College. She became a librarian in Visalia. Later, she was to return to Southern California where she became a teacher in Glendora, serving on the faculties of North School, South School and Whitcomb Elementary.

Clearly, the lives of Mary Amelia Griesser and Lorne George Ward were already intertwined. How fitting, then, that they married in 1936. They had two children, Lorne Herbert and Nancy Louise. The Rev. Robert Griesser proudly baptized his grandson. The family continued as dynamic members of Grace. Lorne served as a vestryman and sang tenor in the choir. Mary also sang in the choir, was active in the Women's Guild, and taught Sunday School with great dedication.

Lorne Ward described himself as a farmer, for he continued to husband the land his forbears had homesteaded. He served on the Board of the Glendora Irrigating Company, which his grandfather had helped to found. A particular interest was beekeeping. Garbed in an appropriate helmet, veil, protective suit and gloves, he would give talks at local schools about apiaries (beehives) and the importance of bees in nature – most particularly in agriculture.

These people, most of whom are now deceased, deserve to be revered for their huge contributions to the history of our beloved church and our community. Indeed, they are an inspiration!