

Alice Damrosch Pennington Kiaer

18. Mai 1892 – 23. April 1967 NY



Alice Damrosch Kiaer (Pennington) li

Alice Damrosch Pennington - Christmas, 1929

Gästebücher Schloss Neubeuern Bd. VII



Alice Damrosch Pennington, **Thomas K. Finletter** (Schwager), **Gretchen Damrosch Finletter** (Schwester), **Walter Damrosch** (Vater)

Aufenthalt Schloss Neubeuern:
Weihnachten 1929 / 16. Juli 1930

Alice Damrosch Kiaer was the eldest daughter of famed Conductor **Dr. Walter Damrosch** and **Margaret (Blaine) Damrosch**. She was the granddaughter of Secretary of State **James G. Blaine** and **Harriet (Stanwood) Blaine**. As a child, she spent a great deal of time on the slopes near her family home in Austria. In the 1920's, she was the first American woman to scale the Matterhorn from the North face. During that time, **Alice** worked as an assistant to her father. She suggested that he commission **George Gershwin** to write a piece that the New York Symphony Orchestra could perform. (Her father was the conductor) **Gershwin** accepted and his "Concerto in F" was first performed in 1925. (**Gershwin** played piano for the performance with **Walter Damrosch** conducting the orchestra) In 1932, she was the first US woman to win the Parsenn Derby in Switzerland. She organized and managed the first United States Woman's Olympic Ski Team in 1936 and in 1948 she also managed the team that competed in Switzerland. During the war, **Alice** served on the American Red Cross Relief to Prisoners of War Service and lectured throughout the United States. She was active with the International Ski Federation. She was married three times. Hall Pleasants Pennington (1st marriage - divorced) **Dudley Wolfe** (2nd marriage - divorced. He later died on a climbing expedition to K2 mountain) Her third marriage was to Herman **S. Kiaer**. He was the President of Fearnley and Egar Shipping Company in New York. Alice also maintained a summer home in Bar Harbor, Maine. She died at her home on East 71st Street in New York and was buried in the family lot with her parents and her maternal aunt, Harriet Blaine Beale in Bar Harbor.

Family links:

Parents:

Walter Damrosch (1862 - 1950)

Margaret Blaine Damrosch (1865 - 1949)

Spouse:

Dudley Francis Cecil Wolfe (1896 - 1939)*

Siblings:

Alice Damrosch Kiaer (1892 - 1967)

Gretchen Damrosch Finletter (1895 - 1969)*

Leopoldine Blaine Damrosch Howard (1899 - 1964)*

Anita Blaine Damrosch Littell (1903 - 1982)*

Burial:

Ledgelawn Cemetery

Bar Harbor

Hancock County

Maine, USA



Alice Kiaer and America's Red Stockings
Classic Lodges: Timberline, Oregon

Alice Kiaer and Her Remarkable Red Stockings

The driving force behind America's 1936 women's team was elegant, tough, tenacious—and well, remarkable.



New England Ski Museum

(Above) The Red Stockings and Hannes Schneider at St. Anton, 1936; (from left) Lili Susann, Mary Bird, Ethel Ayer Smith, Grace Carter, Otto Furrer, Schneider, Hannes Tschol, Helen Bouton-Leigh, Clarita Heath, Betty Woolsey, Marian McKean. Haus Angelika, the Americans' home away from home, is at upper left. A chairlift rises from this spot today. (Right) Alice Damrosch Kiaer.



By Nicholas Howe

Alice Kiaer was present at the creation. Or, at least, very close to it. Others had gone before her, but not many of them, and Alice's life and the people around her tells us something about our youth and a lost time, a Garden of Eden for the skiing world.

Arnold Lunn of Great Britain organized the Alpine Ski Club in 1908, then he published the book *Ski-ing* in 1913, and in 1923 he invited his wife and two other women of standing to form the Ladies' Ski Club. (Some said this was so they wouldn't join the Alpine Ski Club, a scurrilous charge that Lunn always denied.) In *Ski-ing*, Lunn wrote

Sale-Barker was 14th. The officials entered an epochal debate. As one put it: "The development of ski racing among ladies has its dangers. Are ladies capable of taking part without danger to their health?" The race in question was a 3K cross-country, and the officials decided that it would be too taxing for the fair sex.

Alice Kiaer (pronounced "chair") was at the races, and she was impressed by Audrey Sale-Baker: "She's very tall, extremely slim, her height accentuated by trousers so long that they touched the ground around her boots. Pale, honey-colored hair, a vague dreamy expression, and when she skied I can only describe her as a sleenwalker with

the course so the early starters would not have to race in unbroken snow. The women faced old tracks that had frozen hard in an intervening cold snap, and a steep side-hill traverse to a gap in a fence with a large oak tree just below to catch the unwary. There was breakable crust over deep snow on either side of the track here, then a humpy slope down to a marble-hard stretch of ice near the finish.

Helen Boughton-Leigh started first and finished in 3:55.8. There were numerous overtakings on the course, and Christl Cranz of Germany won, as she usually did. Helen was 10th for the Americans, Betty Woolsey 15th, Faith Donaldson 23rd, Lilo Schwarzenbach 25th, Mary Bird 30th. The combined was the real score and here Helen was seventh, the others in the 20s. Arnold Lunn wrote, "I was particularly impressed by the cool courage and judgment on these slopes of a lady who is new to international racing, Miss Woolsey of the United States."

The 1936 Olympic year brought a higher level of national organization in America and a cadre from the Pacific Northwest to strengthen the Easterners of the previous season. Don Fraser had been selected for both the nordic and alpine teams, and he provided a compact example of the protean qualities found at the top of the league. Skis from Eastern makers were usually shipped through the Panama Canal, and cargo holds of the slow freighters were so hot and damp that skis often arrived with warped bodies and, when fitted, rusty edges. Don made his own skis for jumping, cross-country, and downhill. He also made his poles and climbing skins, and, with the help of a friend, he made his own boots. He installed brass edges that he tried on the sides of his skis before deciding that bottom edges were better, and he usually used Bakelite for

accommodations. Clarita had grown up in Pasadena, California, and in the summer of 1934 she and her mother set out on The Grand Tour, several years among the museums and cathedrals of Europe that prepared a well-placed young lady for her future in society.

Alice Sets the Rules

The Heaths stopped for Christmas in Kitzbühel and stayed four years. Clarita played flute in the town marching band, the only women who'd ever been invited to join, and she learned to ski well enough to attract the attention of Dr. Oberholzer, who was involved with sports at the University of Innsbruck. He told Alice about the young American in Kitzbühel, and soon Clarita was living in Haus Angelika. Alice's girlies gathered there early in January, and she established the rules: eight hours of sleep a night, no more than two glasses of beer or wine at dinner, and no more than six cigarettes a day.

Mary Bird was a gentle Bostonian who hated the very thought of ski racing. "I liked the life and being over there with the nicest people who skied in those days. I had lots of friends and I loved it, all but the racing part. I had to race because that was the way to get over there and be with the team and have all the fun."

Mary did her best to comply with Alice's training program. She said that she liked the part about wine and sleep, but as for no more than six cigarettes, "I don't think I can possibly smoke that many."

There was no pre-season conditioning program, though Clarita Heath did have a taste of that when she was in Kitzbühel. Sigi Engl (who would later go on to direct the Sun Valley ski school) was her instructor there, and during the



American skiers march in during Olympic opening ceremonies at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 1936.



New England Ski Museum

*St. Anton's Friedl Pfeifer, far left, would go on to play a major role in the development of U.S. skiing. Mary Bird, in white hat at left, is next to **Alice Kiser**; Helen Boughton-Leigh and Betty Woolsey are at right.*