

Ericksen, Karen

“Carrie” Marie

(1876–1962)

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Carrie Ericksen, c. 1903.

Carrie Ericksen¹ was a missionary nurse to China in the early 1900s. Her Chinese name was *Piriyin ài ruì kè*).

Carrie, as she was known by her friends, emigrated as a young child with her parents to the United States in 1881 where they subsequently settled in Harlan, Iowa.² She was born on September 28, 1876, in Hjørring Amt, Denmark.³ Her passport application stated that as an adult she was 5 foot, 4 inches tall, and had blue eyes and brown hair. In 1895 and 1896 she attended Union College.⁴ She subsequently attended the Battle Creek Sanitarium nursing program for two and a half years after which she assisted with the Chicago Mission as a visiting nurse in the Halsted Street Dispensary.⁵ By early 1901 she had gone to work in Battle Creek.⁶ The next mention of her is leaving with Drs. Arthur C. and Bertha L. Selmon and Harry W. and Maude T. Miller, along with fellow nurse Charlotte Simpson (1875--1948), on the “Empress of India,” leaving from Vancouver on October 5, 1903.⁷ She arrived in Shanghai on October 24, 1903. According to Harry W. Miller, when they arrived the group was “so weakened from sickness and lack of nourishment that it was with trembling we stood erect.”⁸ They were met by J. N. Anderson, who welcomed them and helped them prepare for their missionary work. Carrie Ericksen based her missionary efforts at Sin Tsai Hsien.

As early as 1905 she received missionary credentials.⁹ She continued to retain missionary credentials through 1907, after which she returned to the United States. In 1906 she made a special request to adopt a Chinese girl who was “set out to die by her parents.”¹⁰ She apparently attempted to adopt the child but unable to secure a

visa was forced to leave the child behind. This action prompted a recommendation by the General Conference Committee not to allow single women to adopt children in the future.¹¹ Due to “broken health,” physicians advised that she and Simpson both return to the United States in late 1906.¹² By January 1909 she was working as a nurse in Los Angeles, California.¹³ She spent the rest of her life living in southern California with her friend Charlotte Simpson.¹⁴

Carrie Ericksen died on January 14, 1962, in Glendale, California.¹⁵ In many ways her life typifies that of the “new woman”—a strong, independent missionary woman who cared deeply for social action and uplift in both Chicago and China.

SOURCES

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Erickson, Carrie. “My First Month in Visiting Nurses’ Work.” *The Life Boat*, March 1902.

“Ericksen, Carrie.” Obituary. *ARH*, February 22, 1962.

Miller, H. W. “Our Trip to Central China.” *The Youth’s Instructor*, March 29, 1904.

NOTES

1. Sometimes spelled “Errichson,” “Erickson,” and “Errickson.”

2. <https://www.ancestry.com> [accessed 10/27/21].

3. *Denmark, Church Records, 1812-1918* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc, 2019. [accessed 10/27/21].

4. E-mail communication, Kenna Lee Carlson to Lawrence W. Onsager, October 13, 2016.

5. “Where Some of the Chicago Workers Are,” *The Life Boat*, May 1904, 156.

6. See “Workers and Visitors,” *The Life Boat*, March 1901, 18.

7. See “Our Inland Chinese Mission,” *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, October 28, 1903, 11.

8. H. W. Miller, “Going to China Twenty Years Ago and Now,” *ARH* Jan. 11, 1923, 10. In transposing the article, someone inadvertently put her name as “Brickson” instead of “Ericksen.”

9. Thirty-Second Meeting of the Foreign Mission Board, May 29, 1905, General Conference Archives, 8.
<https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCSM/1905/GCRS19050529.pdf> [accessed 10/27/21].
 10. See *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 3, 1906* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), 288-289.
 11. See resolution: "Adoption of Children by Missionaries," General Conference Executive Committee Minutes, December 27, 1910, 339.
 12. General Conference Executive Committee Minutes, March 28, 1907, 267; see also note in *The Educational Messenger*, February 15, 1907, 14.
 13. Her address is listed as 257 S. Hill Street, Los Angeles. See *Nurses Journal of the Pacific Coast*, February 1909, 93.
 14. Obituary, *ARH*, March 28, 1957, 26.
 15. Obituary, *ARH*, February 22, 1962, 21.
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