

Ruth Alta Wendt Meyn - a fortuitous life

from sheep ranch to civic leader

The Principals

Ruth Alta Wendt Meyn (2nd cousin 1x removed of the author)

BIRTH 5 DEC 1923 • Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas

DEATH 7 FEB 2025 • Prairie Village, Johnson, Kansas

Biological Parents:

Friedrich Theodore Wendt Jr (1st cousin 1x removed of the author)

1892–1957

BIRTH 1 OCT 1892 • Wyandotte County, Kansas

DEATH 15 JUN 1957 • Shawnee, Johnson, Kansas

Alta Smith (Wife of 1st cousin 1x removed of the author)

1904–1932

BIRTH 29 FEB 1904 • Spencer, Douglas, Missouri

DEATH 9 NOV 1932 • Phoenix, Maricopa, Arizona

Adopting Parents:

George John Meyn

1893–1975

BIRTH 22 NOV 1893 • Armourdale, Wyandotte, Kansas

DEATH 26 JAN 1975 • Bonner Springs, Wyandotte, Kansas

Emma E Wendt

1896–1981

BIRTH NOV 22 1896 • Kansas City, Wyandotte, Kansas

DEATH 12 JAN 1981 • Bonner Springs, Wyandotte, Kansas

Husband:

Robert Haynes Bingham

1922–1987

BIRTH 31 JUL 1922 • Columbus, Cherokee, Kansas

DEATH 10 NOV 1987 • Prairie Village, Johnson, Kansas

The Story

Little was known of the one and, apparently, only wife of Fred Wendt Jr (1892-1957). To date, all trees have had her listed as "Alta" with no maiden name and only a smattering of public information. So, I set about to see if I could find more details about her life. With one daughter, Ruth Alta Wendt, born Dec, 1923, it's likely Alta and Fred Wendt Jr married about early 1923, probably in Wyandotte County, KS. However, no record of the marriage has been found.

A 1925 Kansas State Census shows Fred Wendt Jr (age 33), Alta (age 21) and Ruth Alta Wendt (age 1) living in Wyandotte County (RR1).

01	205232	Wendt	Wilson	Heper	1	M	W	75	7
02	206223	Wendt	Fred Jr	Head	R	M	W	33	1
10			Alta	Wife	R	F	W	21	
11			Ruth Alta	D		F	W	1	

The 1930 census record shows Alta Wendt (age 26) and daughter Ruth Wendt (age 6) with Alta's marital status as **Married**. Alta was employed as a housekeeper at a sheep ranch in Apache County, AZ (northeast of Phoenix). Her daughter Ruth was listed as a student. How Alta and Ruth got there and why remains an open question. Alta listed her birth location as Missouri, her father's birth location as Arkansas, and her mother's birth location as Indiana. [NOTE: Also listed in this census is an 83 year old male, R.R. Smith, born in IN. It's not clear if this Smith was related to Alta.]

Meanwhile, the 1930 census for Fred Wendt Jr shows him in Kern County, CA, as a boarder and farm laborer; marital status as **Married**. He was not associated with any other immediate family member. He apparently was living alone.

Residence records for 1931 and 1932 show Alta Wendt as a beauty shop operator in Phoenix, AZ. Her home was at 803 N 3rd St.

Alta Wendt died Nov 9, 1932 in Phoenix from Pulmonary Tuberculosis with diagnosis / onset in April, 1931.

STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF DEATH				ARIZONA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH		BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS	
1. PLACE OF DEATH				State: <u>ARIZONA</u>		State File No. <u>129</u>	
Country: <u>Maricopa</u>				City: <u>Phoenix</u>		Registered No. <u>1176</u>	
Township: _____ or Village: _____				No. <u>Valley Heights Sanatorium</u>		Ward _____	
(If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give the NAME instead of street and number)				Length of residence in city or town where death occurred _____ yrs. _____ mos. _____ da. How long in U. S. if of foreign birth? _____ yrs. _____ mos. _____ da.			
2. FULL NAME: <u>Alta Wendt</u>							
(a) Residence: No. <u>Valley Heights Sanatorium</u>				(If nonresident give city or town and State)			
PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS							
3. SEX <u>Female</u>	4. COLOR OR RACE <u>White</u>	5. SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, or DIVORCED (Write the word) <u>Unknown</u>					
6a. If married, widowed, or divorced HUSBAND of (or) WIFE of <u>Unknown</u>							
6. DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, and year) <u>Feb. 29, 1906</u>							
7. AGE		Years <u>27</u>	Months <u>8</u>	Days <u>12</u>	If LESS than 1 day, _____ hrs. _____ min.		
8. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinner, weaver, bookkeeper, etc. <u>Unknown</u>							
9. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, saw mill, bank, etc. _____							
10. Date deceased last worked at this occupation (month and year) _____				11. Total time (years) spent in this occupation _____			
12. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (state or country) <u>Unknown</u>							
13. NAME <u>Unknown</u>							
14. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country) _____							
15. MAIDEN NAME <u>Unknown</u>							
16. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country) _____							
17. INFORMANT <u>Norma Sehl</u>							
(Address) <u>Valley Heights Sanatorium</u>							
18. BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL							
Place <u>Forest Lawn Cemetery</u>				Date <u>Nov. 16, 1932</u>			
19. UNDERTAKER <u>A. L. MOORE & SONS</u>							
MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH							
21. DATE OF DEATH (month, day, and year) <u>Nov. 9, 1932</u>							
I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from <u>May 7, 1931</u> to <u>Nov 9, 1932</u>							
I last saw him alive on <u>Nov 3, 1932</u> Death is said to have occurred on the date stated above, at <u>10 P.</u>							
The principal cause of death and related causes of importance were as follows: _____							
Other contributory causes of importance: _____							
22. If death was due to external causes (violence) fill in also the following: _____							
Where did injury occur? (Specify city or town, county and State) _____							
Specify whether injury occurred in industry, in home, or in public place. _____							
Manner of injury. _____							
Nature of injury. _____							
24. Was disease or injury in any way related to occupation of deceased? <u>No</u>							
If so, specify _____							
(Signed) <u>M. J. Philson</u> M. D.							
(Address) <u>Phoenix, Ariz</u>							

NOTICES

WENDT, Alta, passed away November 9 at a local sanatorium. Friends may call between the hours of 3 and 6 p. m. at the mortuary of A. L. Moore and Sons.

[**NOTE:** Before the advent of bacterial treatments in the 1940's, Arizona was a haven for tuberculosis sufferers. They went there because they thought the dry air would help to cure them. Thus, there were many tuberculosis sanatoriums in the Tucson and Phoenix areas. Tuberculosis was a big business.]

Before she died, Alta apparently was hospitalised in a TB sanatorium: Valley Heights Sanatorium in Phoenix. In fact, this may have been why she and daughter Ruth and not Fred Wendt were in Arizona - to treat her tuberculosis, possibly contracted and diagnosed in Kansas City.

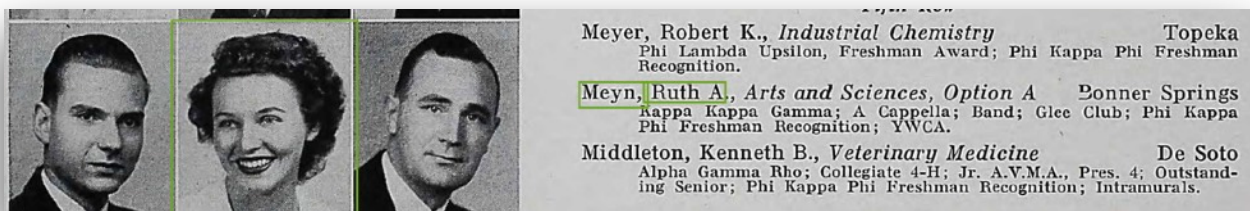
Alta has two Find a Grave records; one at Huffman Cemetery, Douglas County, MO. The other is at Greenwood Memorial Lawn Cemetery in Phoenix, AZ. The Huffman memorial has a birth date of Feb 9, 1904. The Greenwood memorial has a birth date of Feb 9, 1906. Her death certificate, filled out by the TB sanatorium, also has a birth year of 1906. Both Find a Grave records show a death date of Nov 1932. Why there are two graves for Alta, one in AZ, the other in MO, is an open question. Where is Alta actually buried? I speculate that the MO grave is a marker only, added by her parents since she could not be brought back to MO (due to TB?) for burial.

Find a Grave 1: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/45342016/alta-wendt>
Find a Grave 2: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/192341021/alta-wendt>

Knowing Alta's parents birth locations (see above), Alta's year of birth in MO, burial location in Douglas County, MO, I searched for a 1910 census record for Alta (no last name) in Douglas County, MO and found her parents: William Smith (born in AR) and Evaline Glover Smith (born in IN). And, her parents were buried at Huffman Cemetery just as Alta was. From these records I was able to reconstruct much of Alta's life.

It's apparent that Alta's daughter, Ruth Alta Wendt, was adopted soon after Alta's death in 1932 by Fred Wendt Jr.'s (Ruth's father) sister Emma Wendt (Ruth's aunt) and her husband, George J Meyn. In the 1940 census she was listed as the 16 year old daughter of George and Emma Meyn - no mention of the surname Wendt.

In 1944, she entered Kansas State University, graduating in 1947 with an Arts and Sciences Degree. By 1950 Ruth was employed as Probation Officer Secretary in the US District Court - which is likely where she met her future husband, Robert Bingham.





In 1951, Ruth married Robert H Bingham. The marriage announcement indicated she was a graduate of Kansas State University and Robert as a graduate of the KU School of Law. Ruth and Robert Bingham lived out their lives in the KCK suburbs; Bonner Springs, Mission, Prairie Village. Robert and Ruth had 4 sons. Ruth was a deeply involved in numerous civic endeavours in the Kansas City area.

It's not known how much Ruth knew of her biological parents, Fred and Alta (née Smith) Wendt. However, it's clear that her life greatly benefitted by being the adopted child of George and Emma Meyn; stability and support, loving and generous, providing education opportunities.

Ruth's biological father, Fred Wendt Jr, lived until 1957. Ruth must have been in contact with Fred since she is listed as his Next of Kin on his burial interment orders - Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery. You have to wonder what Ruth's life would have been like if her mother, Alta, had not died in 1932. Sometimes the most improbable things happen to people setting them on a new life course.

Also, it's interesting to note that, although Ruth's middle name was Alta, sometime after 1960 she started using the middle initial "Meyn" instead of "Alta". Was using "Meyn" an honorarium to her adopting parents?

**Ruth Meyn
Bingham**
December 5, 1923
- February 7, 2025



Prairie Village, Kansas - Ruth grew up in Wyandotte county, graduated from Bonner Springs High School in 1941, attended Kansas State University, married Robert Hains Bingham, moved to Prairie Village where she raised 4 sons who survive her. She has 5 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. The family will have a reception / celebration of remembrance for Ruth at Village Presbyterian Church on March 20 from 4 to 6 p.m. in Friendship Hall.

Ritchie L
September 1, 193



Kansas City, Missouri - She was born in Lakefield, MN on 9/1/1931, where she graduated as a member of the National Honor Society from Lakefield HS. She then went on to nursing school in St. Paul, MN, graduating in 1952. Ritchie was a LTJG USNR_NC, and served the Navy as an RN at St. Albans Naval Hospital, NY City, and at the Balboa Naval hospital, in San Diego, CA, where she was honorably discharged in October 1957. She pursued her career as a private duty nurse for several years, then retired from the VA Medical

Dea Olson

© John R Baldwin and AllKinConsidered.Blog. Unauthorized use and/or duplication of this material without express and written permission from this site's author and/or owner is strictly prohibited. Excerpts and links may be used, provided that full and clear credit is given to John R Baldwin and AllKinConsidered.Blog with appropriate and specific direction to the original content.